

Gateways

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From the Editors

Nancy Blanning and Stephen Spitalny

In the early 1980s when I entered the Waldorf kindergarten as a (dare I admit) untrained, wide-eyed teacher with the best of intentions and “a good sense for kids,” the *Waldorf Kindergarten Association Newsletter* was a godsend. The few volumes available were treasures, and I collected them all. The rich body of published resources we now have was then only a dream. The newsletter was the primary source of songs, stories, circle activities, festival celebrations, and practical activities. Additional articles with insights into early childhood development and Waldorf pedagogy enlightened me: “so-that’s-why-we-do-what-we-do!” The newsletter offered a collective opportunity for professional development of its readership and was a first link in creating a teaching community.

That humble newsletter begun by Joan Almon grew into *Gateways*. In the last ten years under Steve Spitalny’s editorship, it has become a professional publication asking for clear thinking about our practices. We must be able to distinguish true anthroposophical representations of our pedagogy from “Waldorfisms,” things we have come to accept as part of Waldorf early childhood work without truly knowing their origins. In this vein we have become challenged to do our own research and deep study.

Through these years of *Gateways*’s evolution, the Waldorf Kindergarten Association became WECAN—the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America. It, too, has expanded and evolved to embrace the breadth of the different domains of early childhood. WECAN endeavors to hold the threads of work with parent-child, birth-to-three, nursery, mixed-aged kindergarten, extended care, parent work, and diversity and multiculturalism. Study of first-grade readiness and transition into the grade school has appropriately linked us to our colleagues in the upper school also. Awareness of and support for our international sister programs across the globe has grown for us in recent years.

The width and scope of Waldorf early childhood concerns expands almost exponentially.

This issue of *Gateways* includes wide representation of the diversity of our work and our commitment to understand both the practical and esoteric aspects of Waldorf early childhood pedagogy. Steve Spitalny’s article on the senses articulately considers how healthy sensory development for young children is critical for future intellectual, social, and spiritual life as well as enjoyable living in the physical body. Lisa Gromicko’s article on math in the kindergarten opens up appreciation of how the foundation for mathematical thinking is laid in the playful and practical things we do each day. . Work with our youngest children, birth-to-three, is featured in the report on lectures given last June at the international “Dignity of the Young Child” conference at the Goetheanum. Thank you to Kimberley Lewis for sharing this content. International work is shared in Louise de Forest’s report on the early childhood conference held last July in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The diversity of our work in this continent is pictured in Laurie Clark and Patrice Maynard’s article on Waldorf-inspired early childhood work going on at the Pine Ridge Lakota Reservation in Kyle, SD. Susan Weber gives us a review of the new WECAN publication of Renate Long-Breipohl’s *Supporting Self-directed Play*, a deeply considered and researched body of work. To give us something to play with, this issue also includes a movement journey/circle to help us joyfully roll and gallop through the folk tale from India of “A Drum.”

Standing by itself is the recollection and tribute to Ronna McEldowney, “Tante Ronna” to her kindergarten children. She was a dedicated teacher, wonderful colleague, deeply committed anthroposophist, and deliciously outrageous free spirit when the moment called for it. We are so saddened at her passing and honored that she can be remembered on these pages in the beautiful word

portrait her dear friend, Janis Williams, has provided for us to share.

Gateways enters a new phase with the passing over of editorship. Thank you to Steve Spitalny for the ten years of service he has given to all of us through the journal. Future issues will strive to maintain the high standards of research and professionalism he has established. We also want to share inspirations of what we do in the classroom with circles, songs, stories, and festivals, which the early newsletters so richly provided. *Gateways* will endeavor to recognize and honor the different domains of our work, from birth (or even pre-birth) onward. The protection, encouragement, nourishment, and support the growing child receives in each of these stages are what grow the whole human being. We must keep constantly aware of this continuum to recall where the child has come from and to where he is going. We invite contributions in all of these areas and look forward with excitement to see what comes.

This publication needs to serve the needs of its readership, all Waldorf early childhood educators.

You will receive along with this issue a questionnaire which asks how effectively this is happening for you. Please fill this out and return it to us. The *Gateways* editing team and WECAN board are very eager for your responses.

You will also find an invitation to offer a new “face” to *Gateways*. We invite submissions for a new cover design to keep our thinking fresh and in pace with all of the changes we have seen in the scope of Waldorf early childhood work.

As the new editor of *Gateways*, I am honored, excited, and a little bit scared. I will do my best to not let my passion for “incarnational support” with young children (to lessen or eliminate the need for therapeutic work later in the child’s life) to overwhelm me and these pages. I pledge to make issues of this journal as lively, artistically practical, and anthroposophically deep as possible—which is just what the children need us to be as we greet them in our classrooms each day.

With warm greetings and thanks for the chance to serve our work,

Nancy Blanning

As I was thinking about what to write in this, my goodbye *Letter from the Editor*, for some reason unknown to me this poem came to mind. I don’t know where I got it or from whom. And then I noticed the author’s name at the end. I just met Joseph Rubano for the first time this past summer while teaching a course in southern California. So thank you, Joseph, for these words of process and community, which somehow seem just right to start this goodbye letter.

*Who is my mother?
Who is my father?
When I am being created friend by friend.
I don’t remember who I was without you.
We have been tending fires for a long time.
We are wanderers drawn by the light of those fires.
Surrounded by darkness
Emerging out of darkness.
We enter into the sacred ceremony of each other’s lives.
We sing, we dance
Humbled by the power*

*Of each other’s presence, we pray.
We become prayers for each other.
We sing praises to each other.
And breath by breath, thought by thought, touch
by touch,
Music rises between us.
— Joseph Rubano*

This is a time for transitions. The definition of transition in my dictionary is *a movement, process or change from one position, state, stage, subject, concept, etc., to another*. Another definition relates to music: *a modulating passage connecting two sections of a musical composition*. These two taken together give the picture of a process of change that is connecting or linking two different things; a connecting of polarities.

A transition I want to mention here is the passing of a beloved colleague. Ronna McEldowney crossed the threshold this summer. She was especially well known throughout the western US and Hawaii. Her wisdom and humor touched so many of us and she will be sorely missed. I know we can count on her support

from the other side of the threshold.

After ten years, this is my final issue as editor of *Gateways*. I have both enjoyed the work and been challenged by it. I hope I have served you, the readers of *Gateways*, in ways that have supported your work with the young children of our world. Thanks to the Board of WECAN for allowing me the freedom to be editor as I have seen fit. Thanks to Lory Widmer for her wonderful work as copy editor these last few years. And thanks to Joan Almon, the previous editor of *Gateways* and past chair of WECAN, for entrusting the red pencil of editorship to me.

Thanks also to Nancy Blanning for taking up the mantle of editor (or is it the red pencil?). Best wishes for the work ahead. I look forward with interest to what new directions you might steer *Gateways*. I encourage all of you, the readers, to offer your thoughts *in writing* about your various interests and research areas to Nancy. She will not be able to be editor without your articles to edit and choose from.

I intend to keep writing, give lectures and workshops, and continue my work as a kindergarten teacher. I still have a mixed-age kindergarten of three- to six-year-olds at the Santa Cruz Waldorf School in California, and another school year has just begun. I have finished another of the numerous drafts of my as yet unpublished book, and plan to devote time to finishing it and getting it published. I am looking ahead to being involved in Waldorf early childhood work in new territories—Indonesia and Zimbabwe, and perhaps involvement in activities already underway in the surrounding regions. Please contact me with ideas and support!

A shortcoming I have in the realm of thinking and communicating is that I think my own ideas are right, and I have to work to remember there are other possibilities. I do strive for open-mindedness, and it is a struggle to have and present ideas without that feeling of rightness. My apologies for the times when, both in speaking and writing, I come across as if I know something. I am in the same boat with our dear colleague Margret Meyerkort who once said; *Just like you, I mean to do well.*

As editor of *Gateways*, I have tried to present a diversity of ideas and approaches, including some with which I didn't agree. I tried to reword articles that seemed to me to be presenting an "only possible answer." Some issues back we published an excellent article by Cynthia Aldinger entitled *The One and Only Way* and I have tried to emulate her thinking and be vigilant to ensure *Gateways* did not present any dogmatic approaches and

rigid answers. I have wanted *Gateways* to be a thinking-inspiring resource for the readers, not a warehouse of ready-made ideas. And I have wanted our pages filled with a living anthroposophy that observes the phenomena at hand and allows questions to live. Our own observing, digesting, processing, and thinking in relation to other's ideas, including the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, seems to me the one and only way forward. I hope you have experienced *Gateways* as a source of that openness and inspiration and it has given you both support and enjoyment.

In parting, I would like to again acknowledge the influence of the thinking of Rudolf Steiner on my work, and my gratitude for his ideas, but especially the practices for self-development and contemplation of ideas that he articulated. To honor the spirit and intention of what Rudolf Steiner gave us, I would like to offer in closing the following words from Owen Barfield from his book *Romanticism Comes of Age*, published in 1927.

I cannot think it is unduly paradoxical to say that it is really a kind of betrayal of Rudolf Steiner to believe what he said. He poured out his assertions because he trusted his hearers not to believe. Belief is something which can only be applied to systems of abstract ideas.

To become an anthroposophist is not to believe, it is to decide to use the words of Rudolf Steiner (and any others which may become available) for the purpose of raising oneself, if possible, to a kind of thinking which is itself beyond words, which precedes them, in the sense that ideas, words, sentences, propositions, are only subsequently drawn out of it.

This is that concrete (the word 'concrete' may here be taken as meaning 'neither objective nor subjective') thinking which is the source of all such ideas and propositions, the source of all meaning whatsoever.

And it can only take the form of logical ideas and propositions and grammatical sentences, at the expense of much of its original truth. For to be logical is to make one little part of your meaning precise by excluding all the other parts.

To be an anthroposophist, then, is to seek to unite oneself, not with any groups of words, but with this concrete thinking, whose existence can only finally be proved by experience.

It is to refrain from uniting oneself with words, in the humble endeavor to unite oneself with the Word.

Stephen Spitalny

The Senses as Doorways of Relating

• Stephen Spitalny

This is a chapter from Steve's as yet unpublished book on relating and speaking with young children, tentatively entitled How To Listen So The Young Child Can Speak.

Now, this means that the first three years of life are those which prepare the child to become a member of humanity. Man is born out of the isolation in which he existed in the maternal womb, because there he was nothing else but an isolated, developing being; a being given up to cosmic powers; a being spun into its own karma. This however is a germ which unfolds and grows into walking, into speaking and communicating, and into thinking and imparting, thereby developing the prerequisites for a social life. . . We also know that something else develops out of walking, speaking and thinking. The sense of word develops out of walking and thereby speaking comes into being; the sense of thought develops out of speaking and thereby thinking emerges, while the sense of Ego develops out of thinking and thereby the knowledge, the immediate sensory experience arises that the other person is an individual. You see, walking, speaking and thinking are the prerequisites for a social organism (König, 38-39).

Sense organs are the communication links between the organism and the world around. Through the senses we receive images, or information, by which we learn to relate to ourselves, the world around us, and each other. The senses are providing the information by which the *I* is able to be active and engage. Human beings perceive and experience the world through the sense organs. "Our sense perceptions provide the basis for the rest of our soul life," Rudolf Steiner wrote (*Anthroposophy*, p. 98).

The information, or images, received as sense impressions are taken into the human organism through the window of the soul leading to responses or reactions of thinking, feeling and/or willing.

*Let me put it this way: we are here; the world is outside us. We perceive this world, we take in what it has to give us, as it were, and we continue to carry this in our soul as we go about the world. The objects are outside us, the beings are outside us, and what they impart to us through our perception of them we carry with us in our soul. [as mental picture, as memory] (Steiner, *The Realm of Language*, 1).*

Young children, being primarily will-oriented beings, have an impulse toward imitating what they perceive, doing what they see. Adults may think about, or feel, or do something in response to a sense experience.

Adult bodies and souls are already formed, but young children are in a process of forming their bodies and developing soul response patterns that are affected by all of their experiences. Sensory experiences are part of what is forming them. The *I* interacts with the world through its own soul, and it is the soul and body that sense impressions imprint upon. Also at work are other levels of sense experience, not noticeable by most adults. Children before age seven directly experience moods of the adults in this environment, and what adults are feeling and thinking in their inner life. The young child is wholly a sense organ, quite a bit like a sponge, soaking in all levels of experience into the process of forming her physical body and her soul life.

All of these experiences, all of these sense perceptions and non-sensory awareness (of feelings and thoughts) relate to the developing child as formative qualities. The child receives myriad images from the natural world around him, from human adults in his world, and even in the light streaming towards him from the stars and planets, all as substance for his formative forces to utilize in forming the organs, and creating patterns of soul and personality.

It is important to consider the source of the images received by the child. Are they healthy for a developing being? Are the images truthful and

following laws of nature and cosmos? Are they images electronically created and crafted to create consumers? Adults have the responsibility to guide the young into the world, so a consideration of what images we want for our developing child, and what is the source of those images, must be part of our awareness.

There are at least twelve senses that are conduits for receiving images and perceptions of various kinds. It is through the senses that we relate to the world around us as well as to other human beings. All sense impressions are images of a kind: touch, sound, taste all are received by the human being as an image. One could say it is images that form the young child, images of all kinds including images of human activity in the environment, images streaming toward earth from the cosmos, and images from the world of nature. Human organs are formed and developed out of images received from the cosmos and from the human beings around them. We come from the cosmos, and cosmic images form our physical being and constitute our life forces

The etheric body which develops in the human being is a world in itself. One might say that it is a universe in the form of images...It is of extraordinary significance that we, in our descent into earthly life, draw together forces from the universal ether and thus take with us, in our ether body, a kind of image of the cosmos. If one could extract the ether body of a person at the moment when he is uniting himself with the physical body, we should have a sphere which is far more beautiful than any formed by mechanical means—a sphere containing stars, zodiac, sun and moon. These configurations of the ether body remain during embryonic development, while the human being grows together more and more with his physical body...Indeed they remain right into the seventh year, until the change of teeth (Steiner, “The Human Heart”).

Steiner described the life senses, or the lower senses, as those that give experiences of one's own body. Through the sense of **Touch** one experiences one's own limits. The sense receptors are the skin, the covering around our entire body. We usually are not aware of our sense of **Life** because it is a general feeling of well-being, of physical harmony. We only experience this sensing when our life processes are out of balance, as sensed by the body's inner organs. Then we feel out of sorts and ill at ease. This sense

is connected to how well one is nourished by rest, nutrition, and immune system health. The sense of **Self Movement** is how we experience our own body moving in space and how freely we move through space. Nerve cells in the muscles and joints are the sense organs. The sense of **Balance** is both the equilibrium of the body in space, as well as inner balance and calm. The physical organ that senses balance is the inner ear. These four lower senses deliver the relationship of self to body; it is vitally important to support the development of these four life senses in the young child.

Babies need to experience loving, warm touch. They need to be held and cuddled. We need to be aware of how much touch any particular child needs; some have difficulty with the same type of touch that others enjoy. There are “touch-sensitive” children and we have to support them in getting the particular kinds of touch they need. Many babies and young children are calmed by gentle foot squeezing and massage, though for some their feet are too sensitive and ticklish.

A life of daily rhythms supports the developing life sense in the young child. Regular meal times and sleeping times including napping. A calm adult presence at the table at mealtimes is also a big help.

Young children need the opportunity to move freely! Activities involving free exploration of nature, and climbing, and rolling all support the developing sense of movement. Bodily experiences of freedom are the basis for the possibility of inner freedom in the human being. Hindrances in this development include time spent in car seats, baby walkers and bouncers, and in front of electronic screen entertainments.

The developing sense of balance is also aided by rolling and climbing, and spinning round and round. Walking on narrow surfaces such as balance beams, and hopping from one step to another are examples of balance development activities.

Through the “middle” senses of **Smell**, **Taste**, **Sight**, and **Warmth** we bring some of the world into ourselves and become aware of our relation to the world. Smell, taste, and sight are well known in our usual understanding of the senses. The less-familiar sense of warmth has to do with both physical and soul temperature, sensed *in relation to* one's own warmth. Warmth perception stimulates the human being to warm or cool himself to the degree necessary to meet the other.

Through the “higher” senses we find our

connection to other human beings, and these can be considered the spiritual senses. The four higher senses develop out of the foundation of the lower or life senses, each of which supports the development of a particular higher sense as the individual grows and matures throughout life. The life senses give information about the human being's own body; the same function turned outwards gives similar information about another person. When one is receiving information through the so-called higher senses, it could be termed an out-of-body experience.

The child's sense of balance, whose sense organ is the inner ear, is a foundation for the sense of **Hearing the other**—not the words, but the way the words are used, the musicality of sound and tone. Through this we experience not the content, but the intent of the words we hear spoken. Young children understand the meaning of what is spoken long before they understand the words of a language. Hearing is the only one of the higher senses that is based in a physical organ. Hearing the other requires an inner stillness and calm, an inner quiet, so that sound sensations can be received.

The sense of our own body's movement through space supports a sense for the **Speech, or Word, of the other**. Through this sense one gets an experience of how the words of another human being move. And to understand another's ideas we must hear them expressed as words. When one has freedom and flexibility of movement, it is easier to move along with the spoken words of another person.

The sense of life, an inner sense of one's general physical harmony and well-being, is needed for a sense for the **Idea, or the Concept, of the other**. This is how one can experience the thinking of another human being. What is the idea this person is trying to express? Just as the sense of life is a sort of gauge for etheric balance, the sense of thought of the other is also a sensing of the etheric world, the world where thinking lives. We relate to each other in understanding by means of the thinking which is revealed in speech. Hearing, Word and Idea senses work together when one says "What I hear you saying is this. Is this what you mean? Is this the idea you are trying to convey?"

The sense of touch is the other end of the spectrum of the sense of the **Ego of the other**. A developed sense of physical touch underlies the capacity to touch the very being of another individual human being whom one meets and experiences. Rudolf Steiner wrote, "The perception of another human being is

image sensation; as actuality, stands the fulfillment of what the sense of touch gives, so that, in this inwardness, the reality is given wherein the sense of touch is grounded" (Steiner, *Anthroposophy*, 203).

The ability to sense the Ego of another is based on a confidence in one's own awareness of self. "I can let you into my inner life, because I trust in my awareness of who I am."

Man as far as he is at rest, as far as he is the motionless human figure which has so to speak the head at its center, is the organ of perception for the Ego of the other human being is the biggest organ of perception which we have and we ourselves are as physical man the biggest organ of perception which we have. (Steiner, *Das Ratsel des Menschen*, quoted in König, 137)

The sense of Ego of the Other works in sleeping and waking—we "fall asleep" into the other, and then immediately reawaken back in ourselves. This is a sort of higher breathing process which works in a matter of seconds. Empathy is based on sensing the other, and falling asleep to one's self.

Another way to think about Steiner's depiction of twelve senses is to consider them as eight senses. There are the four middle senses of Smell, Taste, Sight, and Warmth, and there are but four other senses. These other four have both an inward aspect and an outward aspect. They are Touch/Ego, Life/Idea, Movement/Word and Balance/Hearing.

However one categorizes the senses, they are the conduits for the images that are the "food" for body and soul of the developing child. By means of the flow of sensation and information through the sense organs raw material is received for the building up of body and soul. These images form the developing human being, in his physical form and functioning as well as his soul constitution.

The healthy development of the life senses, the four "lower" senses, requires a healthy diet of images so those senses develop to their fullest possibility. Then a sound foundation for the much later development of the higher senses, the capacity for sensing the other, is in place. These are truly social senses, and are the basis for understanding and empathy for others. Attention to the development of the senses is at the core of an education attempting to renew culture and create a fertile ground for human connecting. These twelve senses are the doorways to relating the self to the body, the self to the world around, and the self to other human beings.

The human being has a hunger for sense impressions, which form us at a young age and can nourish and rejuvenate us later in life. The modern world is bombarding us with images from media of all kinds, from electronic screens to billboards and magazines and t-shirts. They confront us when we are walking down the street, in stores, and even in our cars. One can sense a sort of image craving in our world, perhaps because the human being is seeking images that are “healthy” in the midst of so much that is not. Life-giving, life-affirming images are vitally important for the young child. The development of the senses in the young child, especially the four “life senses,” is a full-time activity for the child. Images and sense experiences of nature, of other human beings, of nutritious and wholesome food are what nourish the child as she develops her own sense apparatus and the neurological structure to process those impressions. Electronically-generated images are in fact a hindrance to this development, as writers including Joseph Chilton Pearce and Keith Buzzell have argued.

We can see the rise of what might be called cultural autism. The symptoms? Tunneled senses, and feelings of isolation and containment. Experience, including physical risk, is narrowing to about the size of a cathode ray tube, or flat panel if you prefer. Atrophy of the senses was occurring long before we came to be bombarded by the latest generation of computers, high-definition TV, and wireless phones....But the new technology accelerates the phenomenon. ‘What I see in America today is an almost religious zeal for the technological approach to every facet of life,’ says Daniel Yankelovich, the veteran public opinion analyst. This faith, he says, transcends mere love for new machines. ‘It’s a value system, a way of thinking, and it can become delusional.’ . . . In The Necessity of Experience [Edward Reed] wrote, ‘There is something wrong with a society that spends so much money, as well as countless hours of human effort, to make the least dregs of processed information available to everyone everywhere and yet does little or nothing to help us explore the world for ourselves.’ None of our major institutions or our popular culture pay much notice to what Reed called ‘primary experience’—that which we can see, feel, taste, hear, or smell for ourselves. (Louv, 64-65)

In sensing we have an experience of the thing sensed, the thing generating the sensation, but we do not

experience the sensing itself. We only experience that which is creating the sensation. The activity of sensing is below the level of conscious awareness. Young children, through their senses, touch the creator of the thing being sensed. They connect with the creator beings and living concepts that stand behind sense impressions. Images that are filled with life and that come from life nurture and nourish the young child. The child’s etheric body and his soul thrive through the experience of these life-enriched images, rather than a diet of electronically created images that have no origin in life.

If we allow the ego of the other to speak her ideas through her words, by truly entering into her being through deep listening, then our own ego stands naked, not judging, but open-hearted and vulnerable. If as adults we can truly stand freed of our me-ness, then our shining ego, truly ready to listen, allows the ego of the other to freely speak. Our ego gives strength to the ego of the other to free itself. Strength arises through being vulnerable and allowing another to be, and then we can experience truly meeting the other.

In deepening awareness of our own egoism lies the possibility of release from soul patterns and habits. We are freed for the connection with our higher ego. Then the one who meets the other is not our double, but our spiritual core. We truly live in the realm of the higher senses, which is the spiritual world. And our activity allows the other to connect with his ego as well, simply by our being present in that way. We give strength to the other by our allowing what is to just be. We learn to yield to what is. We give away our self, give away our power, in freedom and in consciousness, so our spirit-I can guide us. This conscious choosing to let go of the self is the path through the twelve senses to Love.

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Math and Science in the Kindergarten

• Lisa Gromicko

Steiner-based, early childhood settings abound with rich opportunities for the development of math and science concepts. This may be surprising to some who can easily see the beauty, coziness, and language-rich environment of the Waldorf kindergarten, but not necessarily the mathematical or scientific side. A primary focus of Waldorf early childhood education is on the care and development of the physical body of the child, and that of the child's environment. Considering the "physical" basis of the early years, it then becomes possible to glimpse the natural mathematical relationships. In reality, *all activities* of Steiner-based early childhood education are math- and science-based, including activities of language acquisition and pre-literacy, such as listening and word recognition, patterning, and story sequencing.

How do young children learn fundamental math and science concepts and skills? Concepts are the building blocks of knowledge, accumulated and built upon through experiences and physical movement in the world. Healthy children manipulate concrete materials (including their own bodies) in every situation, collecting "data," and through repeated exposure finding order for that "data." The order the child creates leads to the development of concepts. Young children are naturally astute mathematicians and scientists, learning vast amounts of information daily, as they explore the world and move their bodies. Without needing flashcards or structured lessons, the young child learns the fundamentals of math and science concepts with every sense impression, movement, and action. Research has shown that structured math and science lessons in early childhood are premature and can be detrimental to proper brain development for the young child, actually *interfering* with concept development.

The activity of *play*, especially, provides the child with the most enriched setting for the learning of concepts. "If we observe carefully, child's play is revealed to be excellent unconscious preparation for future education in mathematics and natural sciences,

provided this play can proceed freely, and without an adult agenda" (Patzlaff et al., 112). We can see in the young child, the brilliant genius of play in its most scientific essence. Like the archetypal scientist the child is totally absorbed, taking great interest, exploring and playing with the physical world.

Beginning in infancy, the young child is learning concepts. The free exploration of the early years provides the foundation for all future math and science learning. The infant begins to perceive the world and eventually to track the movements of activity in the surroundings, feeling the various textures of objects, the warmth of a caretaker's embrace, that of the sunshine, or the cold wind blowing on the face (*temperature*). The child is also unconsciously living and learning at this time about the powerful rhythms of day and night, the concept of *time sequence*. The child learns about the physical experiences of hunger: how the body feels, what audible expressions are needed to bring a caretaker with nourishment, the comfort in the body of having physical and emotional needs met.

Then, physical movement begins. One day, the child becomes aware of his limbs, and this begins the long process of discovering how to grasp objects. The child investigates every object within reach: tasting, turning over, rattling, biting, dropping objects to the ground. Concepts such as weight, texture, hardness, shape, taste, sound and temperature are all registered continually at this age through primarily *naturalistic* experiences, led by the child. These spontaneously initiated experiences are the primary mode of learning in the early years, and continue to be valuable for older children as well. An interesting and rich natural environment, with adults engaged in purposeful activity, provides the child with endless opportunities and motivation for interacting with the surroundings.

Mobile toddlers learn multiple concepts about *spatial* relationships with the world in their tireless efforts to stand up and walk, and then fall down

and get up again. Becoming upright and mastering movement through the three planes of space is a monumental accomplishment and informs all future concepts of spatial understanding. Activities such as crawling over and under, climbing, walking, running, and jumping naturally provide the essential bodily basis of geometry and physics. The child will now endlessly sort objects, pick them up, carry them, place them inside a container and then dump them out again, developing the concepts of *one-to-one correspondence* and *cause and effect*. It is very interesting (and fun!) to bang on pots with wooden spoons, drop food on the floor, build with blocks, and pick up the tiniest objects visible on the ground. Toddlers explore the concept of *weight*, especially that of “heavy.” They also experiment with throwing objects into the air. Being in water provides another “laboratory,” where this fluid medium allows for the experience of buoyancy.

Healthy physical development of the child is a critical prerequisite for proper mathematical and scientific education. Plenty of movement and opportunities for play provide physiological, neurological, and experiential foundations for learning about the physical world (Marxen). The young child needs tremendous amounts of movement (often under-estimated today), sleep, and a healthy diet rich in essential fats, in order to support the proper myelination of the brain, which is required for the successful development of sensory, motor, and cognitive functions, in preparation for academic readiness.

His consciousness slowly awakens to grasp the qualities of space and time, of quantity, number and geometric laws in correspondence to his physical development. That is why the healthy formation and maturation of the sensory organs and their functions, as well as the movement organism, are a top priority of preschool and kindergarten education, extending into the first few grades of elementary school.

Through their activities the children come to know the properties, qualities and patterns of their environment. For example, coming to stand upright and learning to walk are experiences of gravity and spatial dimensions. Later, similarly, the child bodily experiences momentum and buoyancy, gravity, centrifugal force, friction, and so forth, when he jumps rope, plays on the swings, merry-go-round, teeter-totter or slides. He can

comprehend these principles and transpose them into his play, when, for example, he lets chestnuts roll down the slope of a wooden board or when he builds runways for marbles or bridges and towers. In this process he also explores the laws of leverage, stasis and balance (Patzlaff et al., 113).

All young children delight in participating in concrete, everyday activities, all of which support math and science concept development. Those of the home or kindergarten environment are especially accessible at this age: taking the compost out to the garden, digging and preparing the garden, watching the plants grow, caring for pets, sweeping the floor, setting the table, chopping vegetables, serving food, dusting the furniture, woodworking, picking up toys and putting them away (*ordering*), sorting the onions from the potatoes (*sets and classifying*), sorting laundry, putting the boots by the front door in order, baking.

Singing together and playing live (unrecorded) music allows for proper development of the inner ear, forming musical and acoustical foundations for math and science. Movement in play and circle/ring time provides many opportunities for learning body geography. This also helps develop balance, spatial awareness and orientation, and vestibular, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic integration, all of which provide critical foundations for mathematics. Playing with logs, stumps, boards, bricks, ropes and so on allows for mechanical learning that can include levers, fulcrums, and pulleys.

Dramatic play includes dressing up, “house” building, and the imaginative (representational) use of objects. For example, a piece of wood may be used as an iron or telephone, or a puppet used as a character to tell a story, which provides the neurological foundations for the later use of abstract *symbols* (numbers and letters) to represent ideas. Cooking allows for learning the concepts of *measurement, parts and wholes, chemistry, volume*.

Preschool and kindergarten-aged children learn about the concept of *counting* by counting napkins, birthday candles, how many chairs are needed at the table? They enjoy rhythmic, repetitive language in storytelling and with counting, clapping, songs and verses, which support mathematical foundations. They love to sort toys, shapes, colors, animals, which develops the concept of *classifying*, a pre-algebraic skill.

Order, patterns, and sequence become very

important at this age as the young child begins to organize these concepts and have beginning capacities for abstract thought. The earlier acquired concept of *one-to-one correspondence* in infancy and toddlerhood is foundational for the concepts of this stage. Examples of this concept for the young child include: one mitten for each hand, one shoe for each foot, one hat for each head, one coat hook for each coat, one seed for each hole in the planting row, one chair/cup/bowl for each person, etc. According to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), *one-to-one correspondence* is a focal point for *number and operations* at the pre-kindergarten level (Charlesworth and Lind, 118).

The development of math & science “concepts and skills” from birth to age seven follows a developmental sequence (Charlesworth and Lind, 3). Several standard concepts are listed below, with examples of activities that may occur in a Steiner/Waldorf early-childhood setting or at home. In addition, young children naturally acquire standard science process skills, such as questioning, analyzing, reasoning, communicating, connecting, representing, investigating, and organizing through plentiful daily opportunities for cooperative and/or solo free play and practical activities.

From birth to age two (continuing to develop throughout childhood):

Observation

Watching the leaves fluttering on the trees, investigating toys, watching a caregiver, ants moving on the ground, reflections in the water, plants growing in the garden, seeing the rainbow or the stars. Is it day or night? Raining or snowing? Filling the bird feeder and watching the birds. Wet-on-wet watercolor painting.

Problem solving

Crawling or walking over and around objects, carrying objects, eating, stacking, filling up and dumping, picking up heavy objects. Building “houses” or other structures in play. Having enough of something to go around. Cracking nuts, sawing wood, buttoning or zippering a coat, tying shoelaces and tying/untying knots. Sewing. Finger-knitting.

One-to-one correspondence

“One for you and one for me,” putting on shoes/hat, lids on pots, one little bear in each boat, sitting on a chair, planting one seed in each hole, one ticket

for each train passenger, taking turns “one at a time.” Each puppet represents one character in the puppet play. Playing catch with a ball or beanbag. Hammering nails. Serving food to others.

Number

Three apples, two shoes, one kitty, one kiss, one baby, four children, one cake, three candles, and so on.

Shape (Development of tactile sense, pre-geometry and basis for learning concepts of sorting and “sets and classifying”)

Experiencing objects in the environment: ball, block, feather, soft blanket, chair, table, toy car, pinecone, rock, pencil, cup, mud, pillow, ice cube, mother or father’s skin. Hard/soft, smooth/rough, wet/dry. Playing in the sand and mud, playing in the water. Polishing shoes or wooden toys. Oiling cutting boards. Building with blocks. Blowing bubbles. Washing clothes with a washboard. Finger-painting. Crayoning. Manipulating playdough, bread dough, beeswax. In circle/ring time: making a circle, spiraling in and out of the center, expanding and contracting.

Spatial Sense (Activities that develop orientation and awareness of one’s own body in space, facilitating brain development and left/right hemispheric processing)

Circle/ring time, “Movement Journeys” (Blanning and Clark), obstacle courses. Crawling under, walking around, sitting on, stepping over, behind, next to, above, on top of. “Zoo exercises” (McAllen), “Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack jump over the candlestick,” “The Curly House of Snail.” Building and then playing inside of a “house” or “fort.” Building with blocks. Playing “The Hokey Pokey.” Eurythmy. Walking on logs, stumps, river stones, a balance beam. Bean-bag games. Finger-plays. Sweeping the floor (crossing the midline).

From two to seven years:

Sets and classifying (pre-algebra)

Sorting: laundry, buttons, seeds, carrots from potatoes, spoons and forks, toy cars from trucks, wooden animals. Grouping objects by color, use, etc. Collecting autumn leaves, stones, seashells, and other objects.

Comparing

Bigger/taller than, smaller/shorter than, “The Three Billy Goats Gruff,” “The Three Bears.” Heavy or light, color differences, taste, smell. Hot and cold.

Speech variation in storytelling, nursery rhymes. Does an object sink or float? Light and shadow. Loud and quiet, hard and soft, giant steps and tiptoe steps, yelling and whispering. “Breathing” in and “breathing” out. Contrast of rest and movement becomes a foundation for music.

Counting

How many carrots do we need so that each rabbit will get one? How many crackers are on the plate? “The Three Little Pigs.” Songs such as: “Five Little Ducks,” “This Old Man,” “Baa Baa Black Sheep.” Verses such as: “1 2 3 4 5, Once I Caught a Fish Alive,” “I Have Ten Little Fingers,” “One, Two, Buckle My Shoe.”

Parts and Wholes (Preparation for fractions in grade school)

Slicing a loaf of bread, cutting apples in half (to see the “star”), chopping vegetables for soup. Playing the game “The Farmer In The Dell,” where part of the group goes into the center and part stays in the outside circle. Peeling potatoes. Acting out stories. Cooking. Grinding wheat, rolling oats. Pizza slices.

Language

Communication during work or play, describing ideas or observations. Naming activities. Cooperative-play discussions among children. Storytelling, verses, nursery rhymes.

Ordering, seriation, patterning (logic, pre-algebra)

Daily, weekly, yearly rhythms; predictable daily events. Seasonal festivals. Circle games. Storytelling, poetry, verses—rhythm of language. Rhythmic clapping. Putting toys away into their places after playtime. In play: lining up cars, blocks or train cars in order of size, color. Stacking toys. Experimenting freely with materials to create a pattern, such as making tissue-paper “stained glass windows” or stringing beads.

Informal measurement: weight, length, temperature, volume, time, sequence

Measuring ingredients for cooking and baking, pouring tea, filling the bird feeder, growth charts (how tall am I?). Is it cold outside or hot? Ironing. Digging in sand and filling buckets, pouring water at a water table or bathtub (filling and dumping). Playing on a teeter-totter or using a balance scale: who/what is heavier? Planting seeds and watching seedlings grow. Sequential stories and nursery rhymes: “The Gingerbread Boy,” “Hickory Dickory

Dock,” “Little Louse and Little Flea,” “Henny Penny,” “Jack and Jill,” “Little Jack Horner,” “Brown Bear, Brown Bear.” Dipping candles.

Graphing (representational)

Daily chores list, growth charts, Advent calendar, birthday calendar. Pictorial “graphs” that show information, such as drawing pictures of what came to the bird feeder today.

Higher level skills:

Number symbols

Using numerals (symbols) to represent the amount of a group of things. “I am six years old.” My phone number is _____. Recognizing number symbols.

Groups and symbols

Matching a symbol to a group or a group to a symbol. Child takes play money, or a group of objects to represent “money,” and goes to the play store to “buy” things. Shopping at a children’s holiday market, such as the “Winter Faire” in many Waldorf schools. In the sandbox, a child makes a “birthday cake,” puts six candles on it, and may write the number “6” or have an adult write it.

Concrete (real objects) addition and subtraction

A child has two seashells and finds two more seashells – two and two make four. Giving away two seashells to a friend leaves two. “Bartering” play. Handing out party favors to friends at a party. Collecting and using tokens in a game.

Each day in the kindergarten, the wheel is “re-invented” in multiple ways. All physical laws are worked with unconsciously in play, as children test and discover new ways of working with the physical world around them. It is an exciting and innovative “flow” environment, where every idea is possible and each child is an inventor. The enormous “research” of early childhood in play and movement forms the essential physical basis for math and science.

The connections and associations that the child experiences through play, through experiments with the play materials, and through the use of his entire body coalesce into a still-unconscious physical-kinesthetic intelligence. This builds the foundation for the exacting, mathematical and scientific thinking and understanding in later life (Patzlaff et al., 114).

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The Dignity of the Small Child

• Kimberley Lewis

Introduction

Eighteen years ago the question of the care of the small child emerged as a topic distinct from the work of Waldorf kindergartens. Now we find ourselves at a re-birthing of the birth-to-three movement, a challenging task because it must take into account varied ideas and views, scientific findings, current practices, and public and private regulation.

The Dignity of the Small Child conferences began in 1999. The fourth conference was held at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland in June, 2010. About 700 participants attended from over thirty countries. Eight educators came from North America. Pedagogues from around the world offered twenty-six workshops on all aspects of the care of the young child. The next Dignity of the Small Child conference will be held at the Goetheanum in 2013.

The Medical Section of the Goetheanum organized the conference in cooperation with the Worldwide Initiative for Early Childhood Care and the German Association of Waldorf Kindergartens. Michaela Glöckler, of the Medical Section, has been the guardian angel of the Dignity of the Small Child conferences.

Questions and Themes

The main questions of the conference were, “What is it that keeps the young child healthy? What does Rudolf Steiner’s salutogenic (health giving) approach to infant pedagogy look like in practice, and how can it be further developed today?”

Participants were also asked to work with the following questions: How can the child’s environment be fashioned to give sufficient scope for developing autonomy (movement, will, learning to walk)? How can we support and nurture the child’s autonomy and will, so that personality can grow through trust and security (speech development, learning to communicate)? How should the young child’s surroundings be structured to allow the child to experience himself both alone and in relationship

to his environment (learning to think)?

Other questions and themes raised during the course of the conference were: Why has the young child moved into focus now? How do parents become competent and what support can we offer them? How do we meet the small child with respect and dignity? What does the young child ask of us? What are the standards, and are we meeting them? The following are summaries of some of the lectures given during the four-day conference.

The Dignity of Destiny and the Arrival on Earth

Christoph Meineke and Michaela Glöckler

Waldorf education is taking on the first three years by examining societal “necessities” such as day care for the young child. Sir Richard Bowlby (John Bowlby’s son) describes outcomes for children in early care: Babies and children are getting ill more often. Their immune systems are suppressed. They have too many infections such as meningitis. They have language and social disturbances. The insecurities in their relationships extend into three generations. They have hearing difficulties because of the excessive noise in day care settings. The stress hormone cortisone is weakening their defense systems and decreasing brain activity, which causes frustration, intolerance, and other psychological ailments. Boys suffer more than girls. No wonder that care outside the home was frowned upon by early Waldorf educators.

In general, we are finding that very young children are better off in family-style care with a secondary attachment figure, rather than in institutional settings. If there is no ready alternative to institutional care, how can it be structured so that it provides at least some of the benefits of home? We are finding that an important task for centers is not to endanger the child’s connection to parents. We must work with the parents to keep the parent-child connection strong.

We try to perceive genuinely what each child in its particular destiny needs from us. It helps enormously to work with parents, guiding them to look at the essence of the child—this will enable them to come to a decision about what is best. We also need to respect that the child has a field of experience from earlier lives.

Steiner says that people have many lives behind them. There is the possibility of breaking the shell of forgetting and bring forth what has been learned in the spiritual worlds before birth. But we can only remove the obstacles to remembering past lives if the adult looks at the child as a riddle to solve, so that what has been put there by the gods can be found. In this way we help the child to access his higher knowledge and fulfill his destiny.

During pregnancy, when the child is carried, we have before us the archetypal image of trust. This act of being held communicates to the child, “You are meant to be here; you are wanted,” and it instills what eventually becomes the forces of self-confidence. The transformation from trust to self-confidence happens gradually as the child moves into the world. We must let it happen at the child’s pace, allowing the right experiences at the right time.

When the child comes to earth, it must arrive well in three homes.

1. The **bodily home** is the physical body where higher forces can unfold. This is the theme of early childhood and the place of the four lower senses.
2. The **home “place”**—the surroundings, culture, town, country. At first it is simply a safe home; in time the circle of “place” expands. This is the place of the four middle senses.
3. A **social home**—the child’s relationships and social connections. This is the place of the four higher senses.

Above them all is a fourth, our spiritual home—a link to our source.

As caregivers we are responsible for shaping these homes so that the child has positive, nurturing experiences. Forming a primary relationship with an adult, usually the mother, within the first few months of life is vital to the health of the child. Loss of the primary attachment figure in the early years is stressful and fear-inducing and impairs the child’s

willingness to attach again to another.

We need to be present with the child through our touch, gaze and speaking. Research shows that if our thoughts are elsewhere while we care for a child, the child will display symptoms of stress. We must “beam” at the child. The child becomes healthier when the cheerful forces of our beaming are experienced.

When we care for a child, we need to tell the child what we are doing—not explain, but tell. Telling establishes a relationship. But don’t tell the child that you are trying to prevent something—a rash, for example. We want to reinforce that the world is a good place for the child, so don’t mention negative possibilities.

The spiritual forces that lead to the three essential achievements (walking, speaking and thinking) are gifts that we receive before birth from the archai, angels, and archangels. Each of these gifts needs a human example for its fulfillment. Walking requires space, freedom and love. Speaking requires truthfulness and authenticity of the adult. Thinking requires clarity in the adult.

As the adult, I stand opposite the child. I create a space and enter into a conversation. I ask myself: “What does the child want me to do? How do I listen? How do I speak?” The child and I both listen into the space. The child wants to know, “Does someone perceive me? Who is there for me? Who are you?”

The child has a will, an inkling of the later “I.” It is our own being and attitude that will help the child to become an “I am.” If I take the path of self-knowledge seriously, I will be able to meet the child authentically and directly, surrendering my uncertainties, insecurities, and prior planning.

Sensitive observation and perception of the being of the child is what is needed. How can the adult gain this capacity to truly perceive, and only then decide what to do? The Goethean approach is helpful: observe until the thing itself speaks to me. It requires attentive practice, perseverance, a protected space, and a genuine interest. It leads to practical things.

Babies cannot easily distance themselves from the adverse conditions of their lives (negative looks, responses or impoverished surroundings). With great effort the child has to work against impediments, and there is damage to the will if that effort is interrupted.

When working with little children, we must avoid distractions and interruptions (from cell phones

for example). Observe how you are thrown off and lose yourself in annoyance and thought when you are interrupted. You have to calm yourself before returning to equilibrium and conscious attention.

The Child's Autonomy—Walking

Michaela Glöckler and Claudia Grah-Wittich

Autonomy is a dramatic development in the human being. While autonomy appears to be the ultimate form of freedom, it is subject to laws. Goethe says, "Only the condition of laws can give us the awareness of freedom." The highest form of autonomy in the adult is neither self-indulgent nor egocentric. Rather, it is being socially competent and doing deeds for a global purpose toward the dignity of other people.

There are three variations of autonomy.

1. The autonomy of the eyes: Deep eye gazing touches us etherically. We "feel" the gaze even from behind. It is an etheric penetration. On the waves of the etheric forces a mutual "looking" is woven. Learn to look at children with love. "I felt myself in your eyes," says Goethe.
2. Waking up and becoming aware: "I want to do it myself." We take away from others (adults or children) when we do for them what they would rather do for themselves. It is clearly patronizing when we do it to adults, and it is also patronizing with children. Children need space and time to do things themselves. On days when you have a conflicting need that rushes the process, you may say, "Today we have so little time." Letting the child know you are aware that you are interfering preserves autonomy in the child.
3. Dependence on the adult: When the umbilical cord is cut, the child's body is independent from the mother's, but the child isn't. Children need lots of help to learn how to help themselves. This is the great paradox of human life! One needs to work through dependency to become independent. We "help" children toward autonomy.

The five points (like a star) that support autonomy are:

1. Physical body: Give space.
2. Etheric body: Consciously shape processes and bring rhythm.
3. Astral body: Give space at a soul level. Be loving and open. Have empathy.
4. "I": Unlimited interest in the other and

intentional joy.

5. Spiritual: Deepest trust in the destiny and development of the other.

Movement is the foundation for acquiring autonomy. The core skills needed are strength, perseverance, and mobility. Behind strength and perseverance are capacities we cannot see. All we see is the practicing of movements and then the happiness with the breakthrough to a new skill. Our task is to simply observe, to let the child be, and not to interfere.

To stand and become upright is a precondition of truthfulness. There is a natural and archetypal sequence for coming into standing and walking, although each child is unique and individual in the way he or she finds uprightness and balance. The foundation for independence grows from learning to walk. Walking is the archetypal picture of independence: "I walk my own path." Being conscious of where you want to go brings health. Try taking twenty minutes a day to walk *where you want to go!*

So many people have dependencies, all of which are deficits in autonomy. Drug addiction is one example. Dependency affects one's stance in the world; drug dealers recognize the walk of an addict. If the development of movement and gesture is supported by autonomy, it will be the strongest immunization against drug addiction or other dependencies in later life.

There are three types of walking:

1. Swaggering, leaning, bent—too incarnated.
2. On toes, looking up, in a dream—not incarnated.
3. Walking from the center—properly incarnated.

A child's own movements are always autonomous. Be attentive to what the child *can* do in movement, rather than what the child cannot yet do. A young child knows in her feet, hands and whole body how to find balance and autonomy—especially without interruption, and only when the accompanying adults do not have fear. The greatest obstacle to the child's movements is the adult's fears. One can tell from the movements of a child's hands and feet whether or not the child feels secure. Parent/child classes can help remove this obstacle by alleviating parental fears.

Once in a while, during exploration, the child will look for the mother's gaze (that etheric connection)

to know that all is well. The mother nods. The etheric body is not cut off yet. We need this etheric umbilical cord. Please discourage knitting in parent/child groups. How can one be attentive while doing something else?

Relationship Culture—Speaking

Michaela Glöckler and Birgit Krohmer

Speech is the metamorphosis of movement. The intelligence of language comes from movement patterns. Within bodily movement lies the whole language of gesture.

Language is only possible with air. Each word flies on air toward the listener. The etheric body gives language its life; the astral body gives language its feelings and emotions. These two bodies of the listener receive the words in air, and know, on a deep level, what the other is saying.

Air and breath are closely connected with feelings. Our innermost wishes, desires, feelings, motivations and thoughts can be expressed through language. Language comes from a longing to communicate and connect with another. As we enter into relationship through language, we become creators of culture.

There are three fundamental elements of relationship that protect young children and allow their personalities to grow.

1. Truthfulness: I can rely on what the other person says; the person means what he says. Confidence is built on this.
2. Loving understanding: Truth can be assertive and critical if it is within a loving relationship; hard truths are shared in a supportive and loving way.
3. Boundaries: Respecting the autonomy of the other person. This is the sphere of freedom; understanding the boundaries of the other.

The brain is the organ of relationship. It is shaped by a person's relationships, especially in the first three years. In neurobiology there is a new view of the brain. The concept of mirror neurons helps explain why we are able to perceive what another person does, feels and says. One person perceives another person's sadness, for instance, and mirrors it in his own brain. The brain records this information indelibly and is changed by it.

How something is said is imprinted at a soul

level. Children deeply take in language that is rejecting or aggressive. Asking kindly is the basis for peacefulness, but any language that isn't well-meaning is hurtful. Violence is so close to language that we speak of non-violent communication as a means of forming positive relationships. Aggression originates from disturbances in verbal development, a big challenge today. A person who cannot express himself freely becomes aggressive. Teenage criminals often have the language skills of a fourth grader.

"From my head to my feet, I am the image of God. From my heart into my hands, I feel God's breath," says Steiner. Say it with the children and learn it correctly. Imitation is at work in language so it is important that the adult's speech be grammatically correct, avoiding baby talk. Emmi Pikler said "Let us trust that the infant understands us when we speak in a natural way." How else will the child learn language? The wrong words (poor grammar) are damaging to the child's etheric body. The etheric body knows the entire wisdom and order of language. The etheric organism needs to be nourished by good words.

It is harmonizing when we speak *while* doing care activities. It helps the child organize herself. We speak purposefully with children in relation to an activity and also use the language of gestures. Hands are messengers in care situations. An open palm says, "May I have it?" We can ask for something silently.

The dialogue between mother and child starts very early. It is important that the child's signals are understood and accepted. The child then learns that she can influence and share in the care situation. It is so pleasant to be looked after this way. Discovering the gaze of the parent is for the little child like the sun is for the flowers! And we look into heaven when working with little children because the angels work with them. Both parent and child learn to be good for each other.

Even violent homes can result in healthy children when protective forces come in the form of a Goethean relationship (being truly seen by another). The child's healthy inner essence can be preserved through contact with one human being in whose eyes the child feels accepted. It does not have to be a parent. It could be a relative or a neighbor. A relationship like this is the strongest immunization against violence in later life.

Awakening to Surroundings— Thinking

Michaela Glöckler and Claudia Grah-Wittich

Development requires an encounter. Autonomy and relationship, the topics covered so far in the conference, can only take place through encounter. Encounters also take place in the spaces we create. Encounters with our surroundings involve the mystery of consciousness. Anthroposophy is really “the consciousness of my humanity.” I can ask, “Where is my consciousness, my attention, now?” God created the human “I.” If I had no consciousness of this “I,” what would I be? Meister Eckhart says, “If I were a king and did not know it, I would not be a king.” To what does a child say “I”? This is the mystery of self-development.

How can education promote self-development and so much joy in the Self that one wants to bring it more and more into consciousness? For the little child, the loving gaze imparts a feeling of etheric safety and reconnects him once again to the wholeness of the environment. Education is always a shared experience between child and adult.

The active, autonomous, co-shaping child at some point around age three says “I” in response to self-activity. From the first “I” experience, the I-consciousness will always be there. We observe everything (our world, another person, oneself) out of our “I.” In my reflective thinking, I can put everything outside myself. I can look at the conditions of my life; I am not those conditions. “I” am the one who sees them.

Steiner researched the essence of life, and reported that rhythm carries life. We can begin to see how we shape ourselves out of the rhythms of life. We can see how a lack of rhythm brings stress and disease in the life sphere. In childhood, the forces of life shape the physical body according to the laws of the sense organs. When these etheric forces are freed from the activity of shaping the physical body, they become thought processes. The thinking forces in human beings are transformed etheric forces. They are reflected in the brain as thought competence.

Thinking is a powerful, body-free experience. Through thinking we can order everything. So how does a child manage powerful thinking? She does it through her own life, in the space where she can speak and listen to herself, in the space and time where she can reflect and form her own sentences. She needs time and space for her own unfolding Self.

Intellectual violence, such as making a child repeat the names of items in a book, is torture to a young child and can be as damaging as physical violence.

Aesthetics and order arise out of clear laws, and these laws are to be applied wherever children are cared for. The environment of the young child includes the outer environment, which in the Waldorf movement we achieve beautifully. It also includes the inner environment of the human being, which also needs to be aesthetic and beautiful. Our outer surroundings will be shaped according to the beauty and order of our inner space.

We need moments of inner peace and calm if we are to work well with children. Take a moment to feel yourself. Pay attention to your body’s sensations. Are you here? Are you present? These calm moments keep you from getting tired. Clean out an inner space like this, especially if someone has taken you where you didn’t want to be.

Our heart is built in such a way that it stops for a split second between beats. In those moments of standstill, the etheric forces can exit the body. No longer needed for self-healing, they are used for spiritual healing. Ask yourself, “What can I do? What is essential that I do; what is not essential?” When faced with adversity, these good forces can heal.

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Educating the Movement Body

• Nancy Blanning

Steve Spitalny's article on the twelve senses, as indicated by Rudolf Steiner, describes the individual senses and their importance for human development. Our work in early childhood particularly focuses upon supporting the senses of touch (tactile), life, self-movement (proprioceptive), and balance (vestibular). While sometimes also called the "lower senses," they are in no way inferior to or less important than the better-known senses of smell, taste, sight, and hearing. To the contrary, they are literally the foundation upon which other sensory—not to mention academic and emotional—development depends.

The completeness and maturity of each of these sensory systems heralds how fully other skills related to these domains may unfold. For example, the sense of self-movement/proprioception gives the child her first "map" through the experience of body geography. Which are my shoulders, my elbows, my hands? What is their order in my body? Do I know them so well that I do not need to see where hands and arms are to put on my jacket? Can I sense how hard to pull to zip it up?

While self-movement gives us a geography of the body in relation to itself, balance gives us our orientation to the earth. It helps us sense the spatial orientation of other beings and objects around us. Through this sense we learn right and left, up and down, forward and back. These three planes of space are expressed in the architecture of the semi-circular canals of the inner ear, the physical sensory organs for balance. The development of this sense lets us begin to discern right and left directionality, ordering and sequence. If we think about this for a moment, we can see that many other skills will depend upon a firm foundation of directionality and sequenced order—writing, reading, numeral recognition, proper sequence of numbers in math problems, to name a few. In *Man as a Being of Sense and Perception*, Rudolf Steiner states that our relationship to mathematics literally grows out of the senses of self-movement and balance.

Henning Kohler takes further indications given by Rudolf Steiner to speak about how good sensory

development affects emotional health. His book, *Working with Anxious, Nervous, and Depressed Children*, describes how healthy touch is the foundation for developing trust and a sense of security in life. If the life sense is well supported by the caring adults around the child, the basis for flexibility and tolerance is laid. Out of healthy self-movement grows the soul capacities of empathy and compassion. And healthy, dependable balance is the physical correlate of what may become emotional equilibrium, the ability to balance and regulate our feelings so we are not swept away by them.

These all grow and strengthen through movement, particularly the free, unencumbered, richly diverse movements of early childhood. Our passive, intellectual, anxiety-and-fear-laden life style, however, badly restricts children's opportunity to move and explore in ways that develop sensory health. Teachers consistently report that children in our classes show problems with "sensory integration," clumsiness, timidity toward movement, or have a need to be in constant motion. Children have not been able to experience what they need to educate the movement body. So it is now an urgent requirement to help the children make up for what has been thwarted or missed developmentally. All the movement possibilities we invite the children toward are "medicine" for these ills. When we consciously provide enriched chances to experience balance and self-movement in imaginative ways, it is also enormously fun.

The following movement journey based on a folk tale from India, "A Drum," emphasizes movements to stimulate self-movement and balance. Jumping with the lower limbs, clapping with hands, galloping and coordinating upper and lower body all educate the self-movement system. Circling with the song, rolling, and somersaulting stimulate and activate balance. Whenever we bring these into our movement imaginations, we are giving the children a potentized dose of developmental support. We are having the joy of movement in the moment and encouraging strong and healthy capacities for the future as well.

A DRUM

A Movement Journey / Circle
Adapted from "A Drum: A Folk Tale from India"

Setup: Needed are **4-6 pieces of wood** (such as wooden dowels) or **cloths** to represent the wood, placed on the floor as path for the children to jump through. This is set up before the journey begins and the children are guided to it by the teacher. If one wishes to do somersaults for the rolling pot, a **gym mat or soft, padded surface** to roll upon should be already set up as well.

Drum Refrain:

G A G E G A G

How I wish I had a drum.

D D G G E D E

On it I would thrum, thrum, thrum.

G A G E G A G

Thrum, thrum, thrum throughout the land.

D D G G E D E

I would be a one man band.

Hands joined, circling round

Pause in circling—on thrums, clap thighs

Clap thighs, then circle again through end of refrain

Standing in place:

A boy and mother lived alone.

They had not much to call their own.

The mother washed and swept each day

To earn their bread. She could not play.

The little boy wished for a drum.

With it he would have such fun.

Arms extended out to show empty hands

Scrubbing up and down on "washed"; sweeping

gesture across midline of body

Sadly shaking head

Face alight with the thought

Repeat Drum Refrain as above

Children are guided toward the set-up "wood pieces" path during the course of the song

No drum,

But mother found some wood.

"Here, child. With this you shall do good."

The wood he set upon the way.

To jump and leap was fun to play.

But then he saw a woman sad.

Building a fire was going bad.

"Dear, mother friend, please stack this wood.

The flames will rise up like they should."

"Thank you, child. Please have some bread.

With this cooking fire, we'll all be fed."

Shake head

Extend forearms, elbows bent, hands cupped

upward, as though holding wood

Nodding head in affirmation

Lead children to jump through the path.

Repeat these lines until everyone is through.

Standing, interested look forward, as

though beholding the woman

Cross forearms, alternating one on top of the other,
like stacking wood for a fire.

Arms weave upward starting mid-torso (like an

upward-rising eurythmy "S") to suggest rising flames

Hands forward in offering gesture

Repeat Drum Refrain as above, circling round and stopping in place for next lines.

A child was crying, could not be calmed.
 “He is so hungry,” his mother sobbed.
 “Here, have this bread.” The child ate.
 To the boy she gave a pot to take.
 He rolled the pot along the road.

Spoken while standing
Appropriate gesture of concern
Hands extend offering /Hand to mouth in eating gesture
Arms circled, as though holding pot
Either everyone does log rolls along length of room
or each child does a somersault on a gym mat
already set up
Repeat until rolling is completed

“Ga-lip, ga-lop,” it sang and told.

Repeat Drum Refrain, stopping at end for next section.

An angry washer man by the river stood.
 His washing pot was broken. This was no good!
 “Please, have this pot,” the boy did say.
 “Thank you,” said the man.
 “Take this coat now on your way.”

Hands on hips, unhappy stance
Stomp foot on “good”
Hands extended in giving gesture
Make slight bow forward
Extending gesture again

Repeat Drum Refrain, stopping to speak the next section:

The boy saw a man, shivering, cold and blue.
 Some robbers took his coat and his shirt away, too.
 “Sir, take this coat. Of it you have need.”
 “Thank you, good child. Take my horse as your steed.”
 Now off the boy galloped on his way.
 To race like the wind was jolly good play!
 Whoa!

Standing, shivering, rubbing arms as though to keep warm
Offering gesture
Right arm extended out, as though handing over reins.
Galloping vigorously
Sudden stop
(Repeat this pattern two or three times, varying tempo)

But then he wished he had a drum.

Spoken quietly, wistfully

Repeat Drum Refrain, stopping to speak the next section:

Then beneath a tree with faces long
 A wedding party sang a mournful song.
 “Our groom needs a horse that he can ride.
 To arrive on foot we cannot abide.”
 “A horse is here! Please ride away.
 From your happy wedding you shall not stay.”
 The groom galloped off.
 The people jumped “Hurray!”
 The boy saw their happiness.
 He’d now go further on his way.

Hands denote a long face
Standing in place, gentle galloping movement
Extending hand, offering “reins”
Everyone gallops around the circle, but more gently than above. Stop and jump on “hurray.” Repeat 2-3X.
Spoken standing in place
Begin to walk along in circle

(Spoken slowly and almost reverently):
 But in the boy’s hands was placed a drum.
 “You have saved our joyous day.
 Now thrum, thrum, thrum.”

As though handing the boy the drum
Clap thighs

Repeat Drum Refrain. Come to sitting position at end.

The boy and drum now need to sleep.
With them we'll rest. God watch will keep.

Lie down

(Signal end of rest as is customary for your group or begin a gentle singing of the Refrain to let children know they can sit up with you.)

Additional notes:

Depending on the age of the group, the "thrum" clapping can be done in many different ways. If there are older children, it will be very satisfying to vary and surprisingly change how the clapping is done. For example:

- *Simple unison of both hands clapping thighs*
- *Alternate clapping of hands on thighs, first right, left, right*
- *Simple clapping of hands together*
- *Clapping of shoulders, arms crossing over chest*
- *Clapping on knees with any of the variations above*
- *Clapping on knees, right-on-right, left-on-left, then cross to opposite knee, back to same sided clapping.*
- *Alternate clapping of shoulders across chest*
- *Jumping in place, one jump on each "thrum"*
- *Stomping feet alternately on each "thrum"*
- *And so on*

The aim of this imagination is to emphasize rhythmic movement of hands and feet while also stimulating vestibular and proprioceptive systems and full body movement by galloping.

The story "A Drum" was first heard from the early childhood faculty at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City. Sincere thanks to them for adding this to our multicultural story repertoire. The adaptation by Nancy Blanning is drawn from several versions. Without hesitation, the boy gives away what he sees others need. Yet he has no expectation of receiving anything in return. Therein lies the simple beauty of the story.

A Drum: A Folk Tale from India

A widowed mother and her son lived together in poverty. She had to work hard each day just to earn enough for their food. One day as she prepared to go to the market place, she asked if there were anything she could get for him. The boy earnestly wished for a drum, but there was no money for toys. As she came sadly home, she saw some wood by the road and brought that instead to her son to play with.

The boy was playing with the wood and noticed an old woman whose cooking fire would not burn. He offered to her the wood, which quickly caught fire. In return, she gave to him a piece of bread.

The child walked along the road and soon saw a woman whose child was crying. "He cries because he is so hungry," said the woman. The boy gave to the child his piece of bread to eat, and soon the hunger was satisfied. In thanks, the woman gave the boy a large pot.

When he reached the river, the boy saw a washerman and his wife arguing. The man yelled that his wife had broken their

washing pot. Without hesitation the boy gave to the man his pot. The man handed the boy a coat to take along on his way.

Next the boy came to a man shivering with cold. Robbers had taken everything from him, even his clothes. The man was soon warmed in the coat the boy gave to him. "Take this horse," said the man in gratitude.

The boy galloped away on the horse and soon came to a wedding party. All sat under a tree looking sad. The boy asked about their trouble. A horse the groom was to ride upon had not arrived. The party could not proceed to the wedding with the groom on foot; he must arrive on horseback at his wedding. The boy smiled and gave his horse away to the groom. The wedding party now made their way joyfully.

As the boy turned to continue on his way, one of the party came to him. In his hands he held a drum. "Please," said the man. "Take this drum. You have saved our wedding day."

With joy the boy began to "thrum, thrum, thrum" on his precious treasure.

Childhood as an Impulse for Integrated Human Development

The 2010 Brazilian/International Conference

• Louise deForest

The International Early Childhood Conference took place on July 4–8, 2010, in the Escola Rudolf Steiner in São Paulo, Brazil. The theme of the conference was *Childhood as an Impulse for Integrated Human Development*. The Escola Rudolf Steiner is one of forty Waldorf Schools in the São Paulo area; it is hard for us to imagine so many schools in one area, but São Paulo is one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of 20 million people.

Waldorf education first came to Brazil in 1957, but as with so many other anthroposophic endeavors in Brazil, it has spread rapidly. There are now 73 Waldorf Schools in Brazil, twelve of them with high schools. Fifteen teacher training seminars exist, training 450 new teachers at present, and there are 2,050 Waldorf teachers throughout Brazil. In 2008, Brazil became a member of IASWECE (The International Association of Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education), making it the first country in South America to have representation on the Council. Sylvia Jensen, from Florianapolis, is the representative to the Council from Brazil.

All schools in Brazil must be authorized by the state; in 1972, the state authorized the Waldorf schools with the condition that there be an overseeing body. The Federation of Waldorf Schools of Brazil is that overseeing body, much like AWSNA and WECAN in North America, and is recognized as such by the Brazilian Ministry of Education. The Federation is made up of two representatives each from eight regions in Brazil and they meet several times a year to look at the state of Waldorf education in their country and to identify the burning issues around childhood.

As in many countries, the Waldorf Schools in Brazil are private schools and this often determines the student population. One of the major difficulties in Brazil is the economic disparity; all the schools make every effort to provide scholarship assistance to families but still the concern remains that the Waldorf Schools are elitist. To address this concern,

many early childhood programs are spreading into the poorest areas of Brazil, much as with Ute Cramer's work 30 years ago in the favelas (slums) throughout São Paulo. Each early childhood program and school has also been asked by the Federation to become socially active and to offer support for any number of social initiatives and impulses, with the hope that this would foster an international, or at least a broader national perspective, and to protect against becoming insular and isolated. Many have taken this to heart; I was able to bring back a donation of \$790.00 to support the ongoing work in China.

The conference itself was co-sponsored by IASWECE and the Alliance for Childhood and the conference was preceded by an Alliance conference. In Brazil, unlike in most other countries, the Alliance for Childhood has a very close connection to the Waldorf Early Childhood movement, though at the Alliance conference there were many more teachers from public and independent schools than attended the following conference. Christopher Clouder, from the UK, opened the Alliance conference by giving an overview of the evolution of thinking around the young child over the last century, from the child as an animal-like creature, to the image of an empty slate, to the present situation of the over-watched, over-loved, over-protected, misunderstood child of today. He also gave the opening lecture at the Early Childhood Conference, encouraging us to find simple language to be able to reach a broader community to help insure that Waldorf education can become a reality for all children. As he so often does, he encouraged those present to enter into a dialogue with the world outside of Waldorf education. To do this, he spoke about the Five Bases of Dialogue: modesty (asking for help and support rather than thinking that we have found *the* way); love of the world; faith in the human being (and gratitude to all the extraordinary people doing good work around the world); hope; and critical thinking.

He encouraged us to have confidence in our ideals, which should never become fixed, and reminded us that the space between confidence and doubt is where love can be found.

Helle Heckman, from Denmark, gave the second keynote address, focused on the outer movement of the child. She stressed that it is only when the child can experience his or her own physical body through movement that he or she can begin to feel interest for the other. Only when the child can say, "Here I am!" can he or she ask, "Who are you?" Helle prepared a DVD with eloquent images of children in her program with healthy lower senses, giving us a small picture of the variations of healthy development in children. A picture *can* be worth a thousand words! Helle reminded us that today the young child is loved as never before, but children are not needed in daily life and they are often frustrated with their inability to contribute and to find their place in the world. It is our task to review our thinking and ways of working to meet the needs of our children and to provide these young ones (and their parents) with homes.

I gave the next talk on the outer movement of the child and the inner movement of the teacher. In this talk, I focused on a child who was one of my most important teachers, pushing me beyond what I knew and engaging me in a more creative way of working. I described the difference between looking at a child, *seeing* a child, and then moving into beholding a child. Einstein once said, "Perhaps our insistence on answers is our last refuge from wonder." Out of respect for the divine being in front of us, we must be willing to not know or understand anything, and yet still be able to accompany the child with wonder and reverence for each individual.

Nancy Mellon led the next two lectures, taking us right into the inner organs, including the organ of our skin, and creating stories that can bring warmth to those organs. She mentioned that pictures—images, as in stories—of happy social life can build forces for the lonely children of today, and she drew our attention to the three different dresses of Cinderella as a picture of the building up of the layers of our skin. She then led all 550 of us in story exercises to warm the kidneys and to activate and warm the heart forces and she encouraged us all to imagine that we have a magic pocket in our aprons that contains just the right clothing for each child in our care. How would we dress the vulnerable, struggling child? The aggressive child? We could

even carry with us an invisible cape to provide any given child with a sanctuary. These imaginings are powerful forces and tools that we can use to surround the children with warmth and protection.

During the plenum on the last day, Luiza Lameirao, director of early childhood teacher training, recapitulated the themes of the lectures, quite masterfully taking us from the profound spiritual inner work of our vocations as teachers back to the outer work with the world around us.

Germany, Denmark, the United States, México, Finland, Norway, Belgium, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, all parts of Brazil and Holland were all represented among the 550 participants, making this a very international conference indeed. There were translators on hand to meet the needs of the English- and Spanish-speaking participants. Twenty-two workshops were offered, as well as many working groups and mini-sessions. Clara Aerts, from Belgium, a member of the Coordinating Group of IASWECE, spoke every morning about the work of IASWECE and offered mini-sessions daily to share the history of this international organization, to give an overview of the role it plays in supporting early childhood around the globe, and to clarify the membership process. In the evening, we were treated to a lyre performance by many early childhood teachers and an inspiring and innovative eurythmy performance by the young people of Monte Azul. At the end of the conference, tours were arranged to visit other Waldorf early childhood programs and to have a first hand experience of all that is being developed by Ute Cramer in the Monte Azul favela.

Food was delicious and plentiful and in spite of the large numbers of participants, there was little waiting. The mild and dry Brazilian winter allowed us to sit comfortably outside under the thatched roofs for every meal, accompanied by the ever-present parrots and surrounded by blossoms of every hue and size. All in all, it was a wonderful conference. Many thanks and congratulations go to the organizers and fundraisers for this conference, and to the Escola Rudolf Steiner, who generously donated all their spaces to the conference, an event that inspired, enlivened, and refreshed all those present.

Louise deForest is one of the representatives from North America to IASWECE, and leader of the Waldorf early childhood teacher training in Cuernavaca, México. She is currently EC Pedagogical Director at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City.

The Lakota Waldorf School

Mitakuye Oyasin, "We are all related"

♦ Laurie Clark and Patrice Maynard

The Mid-States Shared Gifting Group awarded AWSNA a grant that would provide two visits to the Lakota Waldorf School on the Pine Ridge Reservation in Kyle, South Dakota. The visits to this school were to determine the status and the level of sustainability of this school and to find helpful supports for its future development. Tom and Laurie Clark, long-time grades and kindergarten teachers at the Denver Waldorf School, received a call from Patrice Maynard, the Outreach and Development leader of AWSNA, to see if they would be interested in participating with her in such a project. They were in the midst of planning a half-year sabbatical and were honored to add this to the list of plans they had in place already, including Mexico and China. Theirs was not to be a restful sabbatical but a busy one full of lively adventures.

The first visit was in October of 2009 for three days. When they walked into the classroom, they met Verola Spider, the Lakota teacher. Verola spent these days working with Laurie Clark to make the room more inviting, and discussing the needs of the young child. Verola has many years of teaching experience and was taking the Lifeways training in Boulder, Colorado. Laurie and Verola were quick friends, comfortable with one another immediately; and they found commonality in their love of being with small children. Both shared humor and flexibility. These days of mentoring and coaching Verola in the classroom had Laurie demonstrating circle, cooking and baking, coloring, beeswax modeling, and story time. The children are given a hot breakfast, lunch and a snack each day before they go home at three pm, so there is a lot of cooking to be done! After the children left on the school bus, these two teachers would review the day together and plan for the following. They marveled at the strength and energy that the children had despite the destitution, the disruption, and the want that are part of all the children's lives at Pine Ridge. They are unusually beautiful children—open, and unburdened

by material possessions.

The next three-day visit in December of 2009 was spent deepening what had begun in October. Verola made a Lakota grandmother wool puppet with Suzanne Down in the Lifeways training. A goal for this program is to find ways to incorporate the Lakota language into the everyday life of the kindergarten day. The wool grandmother puppet (*umchee*, phonetically, in Lakota) would "help" by singing a lullaby in Lakota as she rocked her baby to sleep (*Ishteemah*) and told stories. They decided to have a parent evening and a community dinner for all of the families. The children helped prepare the meal during the kindergarten morning. They loved peeling and chopping the vegetables for a gigantic pot of soup. The community of the Denver Waldorf School had donated food, winter outerwear of all sizes, blankets, and toys for the children, which Laurie packaged carefully for each family to have as a gift. The Clarks brought all these things and much food with them in a trailer pulled by a borrowed SUV. The children were most delighted with the hula hoops and the warm mittens they received. One little girl, whose hands had chilblains because she had no gloves, was so happy with her mittens that she ate dinner with them on. There was much laughter, goodwill and fun that evening, with one particularly hilarious multi-aged moment with the hula hoops, and a beautiful traditional Lakota honoring ceremony for the three visitors. In the spring, Verola spent a week observing in Laurie's early childhood class at the Denver Waldorf School and stayed with the Clarks at their home. She is finishing her Lifeways training this fall in Milwaukee.

While Laurie Clark spent each day in the classroom, Patrice Maynard and Tom Clark spent long hours with the development coordinator, Isabel Stadnick. Isabel is a Swiss woman who attended the Basel Waldorf School from grades six through ten. She married Bob Stadnick, a Lakota tribal member, and they had three children together. When Bob died

in 1997, Isabel returned to Switzerland. While in Switzerland, Isabel obtained a degree in fundraising management. Since the founding of the school, Isabel has raised considerable funds in Europe and helped establish two foundations to be vessels of support for the school. Recently, Isabel wrote a book about her return to the Pine Ridge Reservation, *Wanna Waki*, which translates as “Now I am going home—My Life with the Lakota.” This book is a best seller in Switzerland and the proceeds from it also help to support the school. Tom and Patrice worked with Isabel and discussed the procedures that were in place for managing the school, fund raising, budgeting, and hiring practices. The financial records and practices were also reviewed in detail. The bookkeeping and accounting for the school is done by a CPA in Rapid City and the gifts are deposited directly through PayPal or direct deposit into the account set up for the Lakota School. The program is fail-safe and thorough. They also spent time with the board members of the school, engaging them in conversation about the history of the school, a master plan for future development, and procedural issues such as hiring and job descriptions. The managing Board of the Lakota Waldorf School comprises all Lakota tribal members.

Tom and Patrice also made two visits to the Education Department at the Oglala Lakota College (OLC) that is in close proximity to the Lakota Waldorf School. They met with the Chair of the Education Department, Tom Raymond, and engaged him in conversation about Waldorf Education. Mr. Raymond was extremely receptive. An experiential way of educating children with a spiritual basis has commonality with the Lakota ways. A seed was planted that would come to fruition the following year.

While there, the visiting teachers also attended two board meetings. Many topics were discussed and the groups recognized together the original intention of the school in 1992, which was to build the Lakota Waldorf School as a genuine Lakota school using Lakota language and rich culture as its heart. The Board has been working on the WECAN study and is making steady progress on this.

Following these two visits, Patrice Maynard helped the Lakota school apply to foundations in the U.S. Through her efforts in working with the board there has been a quickened interest in this school and the school has received the following:

1. A \$25,000 gift from the First Nations Development Institute for Capacity Building, organizational development for Board training and infrastructure building
2. A \$2,500 grant from RSF Social Finance to start a biodynamic garden for the school
3. A contribution of seeds for that garden from High Mowing Seeds in Vermont
4. An invitation from the Moore Charitable Trust for money to fund a teacher's salary and a new bus
5. A gift from an anonymous foundation interested in supporting the cost of Waldorf teacher education and preparation

The school initiative began in 1992 when several elders and parents joined together and formed the Wolakota (meaning “harmony of the Lakota way”) Waldorf Society. The founders of the school included John Haas, at that time the Vice President of the Oglala Lakota College; Matilda Montileaux, a longtime teacher; and Saunie Wilson, also working at Oglala Lakota College. Robert Stadnick, Richard Moves Camp, and Norman Under Baggage were also amongst the founders. This group wanted to explore ways to help their young people find new meaning and light a candle in the midst of the darkness and the difficulties that they faced. The Pine Ridge Reservation is among the most impoverished reservations in the United States. Unemployment rates are around 85%, infant mortality is 300% higher than the national average, and the life-expectancy average is the shortest for any community in the Western Hemisphere outside of Haiti. Schools on the Pine Ridge Reservation are in the bottom 10% of school funding by the U.S. Department of Education and the High School dropout rate is 70%, compared to a national average of 11%. Perhaps the most staggering statistic is the teen suicide rate—150% higher than the national average.

The Wolakota Waldorf Society felt that bringing a new impulse in the education for the children of the reservation would give the best possibilities for the future generations. After exploring various methodologies, they felt that Waldorf education would be the best fit for the Lakota children and wondered if it would be possible to combine it with the Lakota culture and language. In order to explore this further, three of the spiritual leaders of

the community, Robert Stadnick, Richard Moves Camp and Norman Under Baggage, along with Robert's Swiss wife, Isabel, traveled to Dornach, Switzerland, to the Goetheanum to meet with Heinz Zimmerman. Heinz Zimmerman had been one of Isabel's teachers when she attended the Waldorf School in Basel, Switzerland. They sat around a large table and discussed their ideas about the creation of a Waldorf School and asked Dr. Zimmerman, "Can we create a Waldorf school that would incorporate the Lakota language and culture?" Dr. Zimmerman replied, "It would not be a Waldorf School without including the language and culture of your people." He gave them a tour of the Goetheanum and then arranged for this delegation of Lakota leaders to visit different Waldorf Schools in Switzerland, which included the schools in Basel, Bern, and Aesch. This group was also advised to contact the German organization, *Freunde der Erziehungskunst* (Friends of the art of teaching). This organization was the first to give donations to the Lakota endeavor. In the following years they have continued to support the school through organizing tours for the interested Lakota people to see Waldorf schools in Germany, Switzerland, and Holland. They also helped arrange speaking tours so that Robert Stadnick and others could speak about the school initiative on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

In 1994, the Kindergarten was built. A contractor named Bill Loafer donated his time. In the fall of 1994, Gregory Hudson, a trained Waldorf teacher from California on sabbatical, taught the first kindergarten class. He also taught an introductory course in Waldorf Education for one semester at the Oglala Lakota College. A Lakota man, Tony Brown Bull, was his assistant. A series of Waldorf teachers that included Martha Cablk, Robert David McEldowny, Chris Young, and Susan Bunting, came to teach and give workshops in Waldorf Education at the little school for a period of one to two years each. Then for various reasons, including the early passing of three of its original founders, the school closed in 2004. Following upon the deep dedication of these teachers, Patricia Lambert, a trained Waldorf Kindergarten teacher, came from California with newfound enthusiasm and the kindergarten reopened in 2007. Alongside her teaching duties, she even drove the little school bus that was needed to pick the children up and bring them home each day. When the bus needed fixing, Patricia used a Skype camera underneath the bus and asked her husband

(who remained in California) for instructions to repair the bus. The devotion and commitment of each of these teachers provided the continued existence for the school and paved the way for the vision of its future.

In 2009, the original intention of the school became a reality as two Lakota people, fluent Lakota speakers steeped in the culture, became the teachers. Verola Spider and Tabor White Buffalo are the current assistant and lead teachers, yearning for full training, enthusiastic about children and Waldorf education.

For two weeks in September of 2010, an introductory course was taught by Patrice Maynard and Tom and Laurie Clark about Waldorf Education. This was hosted by Oglala Lakota College at the Pajuta Haka College Center in Kyle, South Dakota. This course, which was financed through an independent foundation, introduced the basic philosophy that stands behind the curriculum and provided descriptions of kindergarten and grade school along with artistic, kinesthetic, and scientific activities. Participants painted, made lanterns, drew with crayons, modeled with clay and beeswax, wove crowns, played Choroí flutes, and experienced demonstrations with electricity and chemistry from the upper grade school science curriculum. Circle work from kindergarten and the early grades graced all lessons. Eurythmy was taught each day, by John McManus during the first week Barbara Richardson the second. There were a total of ten participants, including some practicing teachers and homeschool teachers, along with board members of the Lakota Waldorf School.

During the two-week course, Hansjoerg Hofrichter, representative of the Waldorf Stiftung, and David Mitchell, from AWSNA Publications and the Research Institute for Waldorf Education, visited the course, the College, and the Lakota Waldorf School. They were impressed with what they found and answered questions about Waldorf education in an OLC Education Department faculty meeting.

During the final recall session, paintings, clay sculptures of cows, buffalo and rabbits, beeswax figures, main lesson books, May crowns of sage and sunflowers, and drawings filled a table and decorated the walls. Mabel One Horn explained that her back and knee pain had been eliminated because of eurythmy. Others remembered the temperaments, the letters in movement, finding letters in pictures, the hand game Tabor White Buffalo taught, the

different stages of development of the child, the Chladni plate designs, the electricity on our tongues, and a whole blackboard full of things remembered. Three qualified individuals have come forward from this group to be fully trained. A program is being formed for the next three years that will dovetail with the culture of the Lakota, be recognized by the Oglala Lakota College, adopted by our Waldorf Teacher Training Institutes, and will give the Lakota School the trained teachers it needs over time. The future looks challenging and promising. Everyone could see together in the two-week course what Waldorf education could give to the people of this beautiful and destitute land.

After the first day of the two-week course, one teacher went to the school and said, "I am going to be a Waldorf teacher for the rest of my life." If transformation and cultural strength can be found again for this small community, much might be possible.



TRANSITIONS

Ronna MacEldowney, 1953-2010

• Janis Williams

Ronna was born in Detroit in 1953, the middle child of three daughters. Her parents were Russian Jews and she had a very colorful upbringing. Ronna was always dynamic and adventuresome, even in her early childhood years.

I met Ronna in 1976 during the Foundation Year at the Waldorf Teacher Training Institute of Detroit. She was the youngest person enrolled in the Teacher Training, being 21 or 22. I remember being in snow for the first time, having grown up in Southern California. It was freezing, blizzards were happening outside and I was covered head to toe in wool and wearing boots. Ronna came breezing into the Institute dressed in colorful embroidered clothes from Guatemala. I loved her immediately. We bonded and formed a lifetime friendship that year.

Ronna completed the kindergarten training and then traveled to Vienna, Austria to train and work with Bronja Zahlingen, a renowned master teacher. After a few years she moved to Stuttgart, Germany

to continue her training and experience with another Master teacher, Freya Jaffke. While in Germany she developed a special relationship with Dr. Von Kügelgen, who profoundly influenced her teaching. Her desire for excellence led her to two foreign countries where she learned German while working in the kindergarten with the children. Joan Almon shared a wonderful story about her time in Vienna:

Bronja often told a story about Ronna's first coming to Vienna and helping Bronja harvest apricots at her garden in the Vienna Woods. They then had to carry the large, heavy basket filled with fruit on the streetcar back to Bronja's apartment at the other end of the city. Ronna took charge of the basket. She had lived in Mexico and was used to carrying things on her head. She hoisted the basket to her head and walked through town to the streetcar quite effortlessly. You can imagine how startled the Viennese were by this sight. Bronja found it delightful.

After her extensive training in Europe, Ronna returned to the warm tropical climate that she loved and took a position as a kindergarten teacher at the Honolulu Waldorf School. It was here that she met and married her husband Robert David.

While teaching in Honolulu, a group of families recruited her to create a new Waldorf school on the island of Kauai. Ronna was first and foremost a person of initiative, a pioneer at heart.

She leapt at the chance to begin a new school. Ronna was very happy creating a school from the ground up and these pioneer efforts became her legacy in the Waldorf Movement. Later she founded the Shepherd Valley Waldorf School in Boulder and the Boulder Waldorf Kindergarten.

From Kauai, Ronna returned to California and helped to establish the Cedar Springs Waldorf School with Nancy Poer. Ronna taught summer courses at Rudolf Steiner College and was a member of Gradalis with Bonnie River, Williams Bento, Thom Schaeffer and Prairie Adams. She also taught kindergarten training courses with Dorit Winter. She delighted in teaching kindergarten children during the summers in Maine.

Teachers from all over the world contacted Ronna for mentoring. She traveled to many schools to observe, mentor, evaluate and mediate difficult situations. When teachers from Germany would call for mentoring, she could be heard speaking German with the familiar Austrian sing-song accent. We often joked with her about it because she sounded like she was singing.

Ronna loved the parents in her classes and had a gift for counseling. She and Robert David created parenting workshops where they went into the home for a week at a time to help parents. She often counseled parents who were in conflict around child rearing. Because of her exceptional mediation skills, teachers often sought her out to help mediate conflicts. A member of the Anthroposophical Society and The First Class, Ronna also wrote a book called *Enlightened Parenting*.

Ronna was amazingly gifted with her hands. She had crafted exceptional table puppets, dolls, marionettes, and tiny babies inside walnut shells. She made soaps, lip balm, hand dyed garments, and numerous other handmade creations. Upon entering her kindergarten, one was filled with awe. Every detail was infused with artistry, vibrant color and impeccable organization. She ensouled the kindergarten with her joyful warmth and reverent

love for the young child. Ronna was like the Pied Piper, children following her wherever she went. Her strength of “Being” held the children with invisible threads from her heart to theirs. She had contact with many of the kindergarteners once they were grown.

Ronna had an enormous capacity for work and colleagues loved and respected her. During faculty meetings, when different points of view became polarized, she always asked us to “find what lives in the middle.” What does the “Being” of the School want? Her intuitive wisdom often could guide the group back to harmony. At the same time she fiercely adhered to her ideals and principles and could take up initiatives with her fiery choleric will. Ronna could be counted on to finish whatever tasks she took up, which were considerable!

Ronna was playful, athletic and adventuresome. She traveled the world, hiked mountains, kayaked in rivers and oceans and loved to dance. I have memories of her laughing and dancing with Robert in our living room. She could break out in a joyful dance and throw a million puns at us one by one until we too laughed. Ronna lived life with a passion and vibrancy which touched everyone who knew her in a deep and profound way.

She was the unique and indescribable Ronna!! We will always love her!!



Janis Williams founded *The Shepherd Valley Waldorf School* together with Ronna in Boulder, Colorado. Janis has been a Waldorf class teacher for 25 years. She has a MA in Education with a special focus in Waldorf education and is also a California credentialed teacher.

Supporting Self-Directed Play in Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education

• Reviewed by Susan Weber

Supporting Self-Directed Play in Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education

by Renate Long-Breipohl (WECAN, 2010).

In August, 2008 at the international conference in Wilton, a colleague from Australia took me aside to share the collection of photographs that she had brought with her. We spread the photos out all around us and I could not tear myself away from them. Here were children indoors and out, playing in ways that Pauline described as illustrating the whole history of humanity, in ways that I could never recall having seen.

I was filled with joy to see the fruits of her years of teaching in this artistic outpouring, but all I could think was that others as well as myself deserved the opportunity to experience these wonderful pictures. It's a book, I kept telling her, you must make them into a book!

Here, only two years later, we have not only the fruits of Paulene Hanna's artistic work and sensitive observing reflection, but the fruits of her colleague Renate Long-Breipohl's work as well. **Supporting Self Directed Play in Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education** brings together something most special, a true picture of the possibilities that lie within colleagueship. Renate's own work on play includes not only her own scholarship but also the fruits of the Play Project that she facilitated in Australia from 2006 to 2009. We have much for which to be grateful for in this little/big book.

Those who borrow my books know that the margins are often filled with notes, questions, reflections. Thank goodness the margins are so large here, for mine are already full of questions, *aha's*, and notes of gratitude for new insights. Renate gently but knowledgeably questions some of our accepted ideas about play and our roles as teachers, always pointing the way with careful observations and rich descriptions. She widens the dialogue and invites us

to consider new possibilities.

The book is rich with examples that may stand as models for other teachers, young and older, who wish to further develop their own capacities for supporting play. As the teachers in the Play Project overcome their own reservations and even fears, observe and learn from their own observing, and find the inner courage to loosen something inside themselves, we see and hear something new emerging for the children and for themselves.

The book is a treasury into which are slipped other themes that one might not immediately consider when studying play—for example, dream consciousness and sleep—that again raise new possibilities for us as we examine play through varying lenses.

For all of us—teachers in training, experienced teachers, teacher-trainers—there is an invitation to sit still, stop doing, and observe the children's play. I admit that I've been inspired and have already begun new observations with our one- and two-year-olds here at Sophia's Hearth Family Center. What will, without doubt, emerge for each of us is a new awareness and respect for the play of the child, and a recommitment to inviting the metamorphosis in our own early childhood settings that will lead the children to the future as Rudolf Steiner hoped.

Paulene's photographs led me into new territory: the blending of indoors and outdoors into a seamless whole, the richness of the children's play in the out-of-doors, the recognition of phases of historical development re-enacted in their play, and the correspondence between the individual child's play and his artistic creations. The glory of human potential shines forth in these photos, and those of the other photographers also. To realize that we, as Waldorf teachers, have the privilege to be with these children each day in this most extraordinarily creative period of their lives is a blessed gift.

This is a book that brings the higher principles into the practical. It brings the reader into the

deepest aspects of the human being and their expression in self-directed play, and simultaneously reveals types of self-directed play replete with concrete examples. It also provides clear, structured support for each of us as we strive to improve our capacity for facilitating play. A path of observation for the teacher is laid out, alongside clear questions for self-reflection. I hope that others take up the questions from the Play Project in their own work.

I was particularly struck with Paulene Hanna's reflection that "the play of the children gets better

with increasing consciousness of the adult. If one observes the play of the child, follows his movements with consciousness, then observing enhances the play rather than restricting it as one may fear."

The footnotes are gems; don't skip over them. This is an unprepossessing book—it does not have a hard cover or even a spine—in relationship to its importance for our work. But the quality of the design and of the photographs themselves is excellent. Thanks to WECAN for bringing this gem to us all.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

In this issue, we only had space to list major upcoming conferences. For many more events, including workshops, short courses, puppetry, craft, and eurythmy events, and ongoing trainings, please visit our newly revamped web calendar at www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/calendar.asp.

Please also contact our advertisers in this issue for information about their upcoming events: *Sunbridge Institute, Rudolf Steiner College, Eurythmy Spring Valley, LifeWays North America, Rudolf Steiner Centre Toronto, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, West Coast Institute.*

To submit or update an event, email Lory Widmer at publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

November 12–14, 2010, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: Early Childhood Symposium. **The Heart of Childhood: Cultivating the Wisdom of the Pure Heart.** First annual WECAN conference on the West Coast with Suzanne Down, Laurie Clark and Nancy Blanning. Join leading researchers and educators in exploring the therapeutic aspects of movement, puppetry, storytelling, and self-development. Professional puppet show, nurturing activities, and vendors' bazaar. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 x 117, lauren.hickman@steinercollege.edu.

February 11–13, 2011, Spring Valley, NY: WECAN East Coast Conference, **Movement: A Path Toward Freedom** with Nancy Blanning, Laurie Clark, and Jane Swain. Detailed conference information will be sent to WECAN members by email in late November and will also be available online by December 6. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Register early to ensure a place! Registration closes on January 24. Contact conference@waldorfearlychildhood.org or visit www.waldorfearlychildhood.org.

A flyer for posting is enclosed with this issue.

February 19–20, 2011, Vancouver Waldorf School, Vancouver BC: WECAN Pacific North West Conference, **Birth of the Etheric** with Dr. Johanna Steegmans. In the third part of a three-year cycle, Dr. Steegmans, out of her understanding of child development, will continue to lead us in an exploration of the growing child as a developing human being. This conference will address the kindergarten years. How have our earlier practises prepared and supported the children for these years and what environment is required as we accompany them towards the Grade One threshold and the birth of the etheric. Contact Annie Gross, 250 537 4644, anniegross@gmail.com.

February 20–23, 2011, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: West Coast Educator's Conference, **Child and Community: Therapeutic Challenges in the 21st Century** with Dr. Michaela Glöckler. A former pediatrician and school doctor, Dr. Glöckler works with teachers, physicians, and therapists worldwide, focusing on the essentials of healthy childhood. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 x 117, lauren.hickman@steinercollege.edu.

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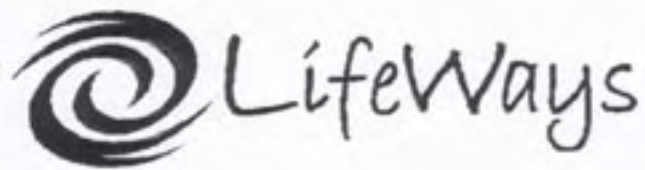
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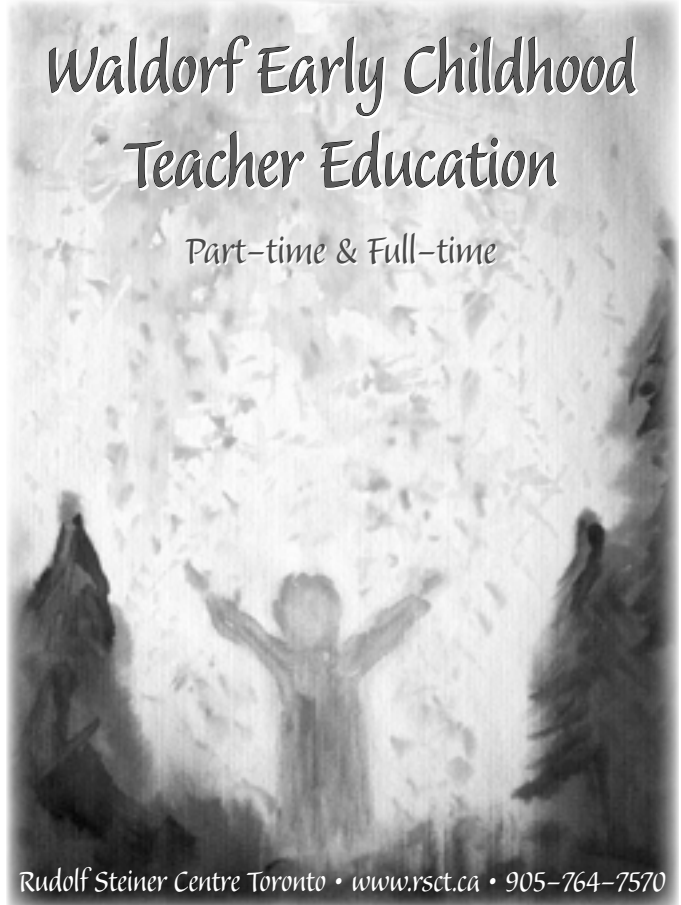
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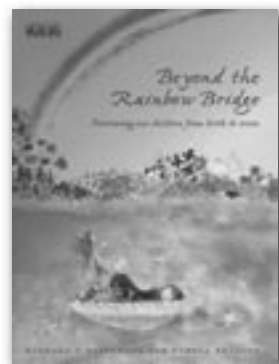
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