

Gateways

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From the Editor

Nancy Blanning

In 1989 there was an important event for American Waldorf early childhood educators. Many of the European “greats” came to North America to present a conference. The group included Werner Glas, Freya Jaffke, Margret Meyerkort, Bronja Zahlingen, Elizabeth Moore-Hass, and Dr. Helmut von Kügelgen. I attended this conference with anticipation and excitement. I had been in the kindergarten long enough to begin to realize how much I did not know or sufficiently understand about our work. And here were experts assembled to tell us how to do it the right way. It was so bewildering, then, to hear these deep, anthroposophically-steeped, experienced Waldorf educators express differing, even contradictory, views in their presentations. The styles of puppetry could not have been more different. How could anyone collect these differing pieces into a coherent picture of Waldorf kindergarten?

My initial shock and disappointment were ultimately replaced by feelings of heady liberation mixed with sober responsibility. I had been naïvely hoping for someone to tell me what to do and was shown that there is no “right” way, no “recipe” for what will serve the children in our care. The freeing part lay in realizing that there is no single way—there can be many. These master teachers were sharing the diverse ways they had found to manifest essential truths in their classrooms. The sobering responsibility part was the reminder that we must each constantly deepen understanding of the foundational indications for Waldorf early childhood and how these can appropriately and truthfully be expressed in our classrooms. Whatever a teacher embraces from another’s suggestions or which grows out of her or his own inspiration and creativity must be authentic and true.

I am re-experiencing these feelings now as the new editor of *Gateways*. There is excitement and joy in the opportunity to bring pictures of the width, breadth, and diversity of our work—parent/child, small-group home programs, birth-to-three, nursery, mixed-aged kindergarten, extended care, and parent work, to begin

the list—all of which WECAN embraces in its membership. To gain inspiration from other’s ideas and delight in new movements, songs, and stories will be so enriching for all our work. Each offering from our colleagues will describe how the essentials of Waldorf education are expressed in that individual program. Yet each will also be situation-specific—dependent upon the educator, the age-mix and needs in the group, and the regional and cultural expectations in which the program lives. We need to hold this in mind as we consider what will suit our own situations.

Now here comes the sober warning. There can be a tendency to think that if something is in print, it must be true. Here is where the “responsibility” part is echoing in my ears. As we publish different educators’ experiences and views, each will be describing its truth for that teacher and group. We may also encounter contradictions. What one teacher has found just right for her or his group may not be appropriate at all in another setting. So our personal responsibility is to thoughtfully discover where the threads of truth lie that validate each experience and consider what will be true for our own situations.

It was with these thoughts, which are important for each of us to read, that I had wanted to end this editorial. But I was afraid my prose might not be compelling enough to carry every reader to the end. So consider that we have begun this meal with a tart glass of lemon-water to wake us up. Now we can get on to the substance and elegance of the meal.

The subject of **movement** is in the air. While it was not chosen specifically as a theme for this issue, much of the content revolves around how helpful and essential physical movement is for young children. We begin with the first part of a masterful article by Renate Long-Breipohl, “Movement with Soul,” previously published in the British Waldorf/Steiner early childhood journal, *Kindling*. This is such a well-researched consideration of movement development in children that we would like every reader to have this as a reference to refer back to often. This first part deals

primarily with infantile reflex patterns and therapeutic approaches to help these mature away if too long retained. The second part of the article will appear in the fall *Gateways*.

Movement was also the theme of the East Coast WECAN conference this last February. Jane Swain's presentation on movement development in the child from birth to three, and the part reflex patterns play there, enlightens and expands the picture that the first article begins. Laurie Clark's presentation follows about life in the mixed-age kindergarten. Looking at how so many children "get stuck" at times of transition, she describes ways she has found in her kindergarten work to assist these children both in practical ways and through the soul embrace of the teacher to pass through these thresholds. An article by a colleague teaching in Denmark, Christine Christiansen, pictures the practical and movement experiences she has found suitable for a very young group of under-three-year-olds.

The topic of movement also figures internationally in the theme for the World Waldorf Early Childhood conference to be held in Dornach the week before Easter 2012. Brigitte Goldman describes for us the questions the IASWECE planning group is considering for this gathering, including the question of how movement assists the incarnation process of the individual "I" into the physical body. International work is further described by Louise deForest's article about last autumn's IASWECE gathering in Budapest and the early childhood work going on there.

A serious opponent we see to children's healthy incarnation through active movement and engagement in the world is our society's obsession with media. Lauren Hickman, director of Waldorf Early Childhood teacher training at Rudolf Steiner College, shares the "best practices" her master's degree research found in approaching parents on this issue. This will supply us with more practical tools for interacting with parents with this challenging subject.

For your pure delight, we have a Michaelmas circle written by our Mexican colleague, Sol Velasquez, translated by Louise deForest. Two vignettes that colleagues, Franca Bombieri and Sarina Cirianni-Jones, have created to bring more movement into their circles are included. You will also find an excerpt from the *Movement for the Young Child: A Guide for Euryth-*

mists and Kindergarten Teachers by Estelle Bryer, soon to be republished in a new edition by WECAN. And for a bit of whimsy, on this page we have a tribute to earthworms by former *Gateways* editor Steve Spitalny.

Putting together each issue of *Gateways* will be both a joy and challenge with the mixture of freedom and responsibility that surrounds each issue. It is also a huge practical task. The easy part is mine in getting to select the content for each issue. The huge part is managed by Lory Widmer, our copy editor. She is the technical genius and practical wizard who determines how much content an issue can hold. She also handles copy-editing, layout, and printing, with the help of Melissa Lyons and Janet Baker in the WECAN office, and Rich Cichoski at Alphagraphics in Pittsburgh, PA. Without them, this journal would not be in your hands right now. Thank you!

The choice of content in this issue has been guided in part by responses received from the *Gateways* survey. Thank you sincerely to each respondent. And guess what? Many responses contradicted others. It will be a work in process to distill the common threads of what is essential to include in these volumes. Please offer descriptions of your experiences and research that you think will be helpful to colleagues, imaginations, circles and movement vignettes, and practices that have strengthened and enriched your programs.

I hope that this issue will provide food for movement, both within our inner selves and with the children outwardly.

**The earthworms dance with a wriggle and a slide;
They make tunnels in the soil and let the air inside.
Plants like the air; it helps their roots.
When the roots are healthy up grow the shoots.**

**The earthworms dance with a wriggle and a bend—
Soil goes in the front and comes out the other end
Worms even turn the compost into soil
But they have to stay wet so they don't boil.**

**A worm is so little and crawls along the ground;
If it weren't for the worms no farms would be around.
The earthworms are dancing night and day.
They are busy, busy helping in so many ways.**

—Steve Spitalny

Moving with Soul: Supporting Movement Development in the Early Years (Part One)

• Renate Long-Breipohl

This article is an extended version of a lecture given at the National Early Childhood Conference at Ringwood Waldorf School in England on October 17, 2009. Part Two of the article will be published in the Fall/Winter issue of Gateways.

Significant research has been done on the importance of movement for the development and learning of children. Sally Goddard Blythe's work on brain development and the understanding / treatment of retained reflexes in the movement patterns of children with learning difficulties should be mentioned here (Goddard, 2002 and Goddard Blythe, 2004). Audrey McAllen, who was a Steiner teacher, created "The Extra Lesson" remedial program, which is partly based on movement therapy and is used in many Steiner schools around the world as learning support for children at school age (McAllen, 2004).

Last but not least, mention should be made of Karl König, an anthroposophical medical doctor and embryologist (König, 1989). He contributed to the understanding of the spiritual dimension of disturbances in the realm of movement. He was the founder of the worldwide Camphill Movement in the service of disabled human beings. Like Audrey McAllen's work, so is his work deeply rooted in the understanding of the human being given by Rudolf Steiner. König points to the archetypal gestures behind the ways in which human beings approach the world. In discovering and understanding these archetypal gestures König then developed treatment of disturbances for disabled children and adults. For me these archetypal images of the incarnation process involving body, soul and spirit became the key with which to unlock the secret of movement development in young children in general and I have used it for what follows here.

The development of movement in the young child

Karl König has given three images for the purpose of understanding the incarnation process. They provide a good foundation for the understanding of the first

three years of life. These images relate to developing a relationship to the spatial dimensions of earth existence, to making judgments related to the earth environment, and to the development of thinking and I-consciousness. Movement is essential to all three. It is not confined to movement of the body alone, but also is an inner process that finds expression in one's ways of feeling and thinking.

Uprightness and the incarnation into the earth realm

In *The Child's Changing Consciousness*, incarnation is described by Rudolf Steiner as the process of finding one's place in the world, of becoming conscious of and at home within three-dimensional space—the vertical or frontal plane, the horizontal plane, and the sagittal plane (Steiner, 1988, lecture 2). For the young child the frontal plane arises fully when the upright, vertical posture of the human being is achieved, in which the standing human being is able to have different experiences of the front space and of the back space. The child experiences the space in front quite comfortably, as the eyes can see what is there. The back space causes slight uneasiness in young children. While the front is explored through all forms of moving forward, movement into the back space is undertaken cautiously or not at all, because for moving backwards one has to rely on the sense of hearing and therefore it remains the most unknown. However, eventually the child will learn to have trust in moving backwards. If the child does not succeed in finding a balance between both the front and the back space, insecurity and a fearful attitude towards life can develop.

In the process of incarnation many steps are already taken in the womb when the embryo and then the fetus practice elements of what will finally be visible in the complex posture of uprightiness. Incarnation is described by Rudolf Steiner as a process of the spirit human being descending and taking abode in the material substance of the body. It is a process of contraction, leading from the vast expanses of the

cosmos into the tiny body of an unborn child. Some of the primary reflexes, which are already present in the womb, are wonderful images of the incarnation process, of moving from the expanses of the cosmos into the contraction of the small space of a body. The withdrawal reflex, which is activated when the fetus is touched, leads to the fetus curling up in a gesture of contraction. The Moro reflex, on the contrary, which is activated when support under the head is withdrawn in holding the baby in supine position, is an image of expansion, when both arms are moving sideways and outward in a gesture of openness.

The tonic labyrinthine reflex expresses contraction in bending forward and expansion in bending backward. The symmetrical tonic neck reflex expresses expansion in the wonderful upward stretch of head and arms while the lower body is crouching, contracting. Vice versa, when the legs are extended and the bottom lifted up (expansion) the head is lowered towards the ground and the arms are bent (contraction), conveying an image of reverence.

Primary reflexes supersede each other in sequence within the healthy development of movement and are steps towards coming into uprightness. These unconscious, instinctive gestures are gradually replaced with willed, conscious movement. Yet on the level of the soul they will remain as the archetypal gestures of contraction and expansion, of withdrawal and openness, of devotion and surrender and as reactive gestures within the psychological repertoire of the individual. They are gestures of the incarnating ego filled with a bodily religious mood. For more on this amazing sequence of primitive, transitional and postural reflexes see Sally Goddard's book *Reflexes, Learning, and Behaviour* (2002), chapters 1 and 2.

Goddard's research into the phenomena of "retained reflexes" and her therapeutic approach are based on the hypothesis that all children go through the same sequential pattern of primitive reflexes. While these reflexes have an important role at a certain point of development, they would become a hindrance for the healthy development of the postural reflexes and the mastery of willed movement if they were to be retained beyond their time.

Goddard designed a developmental movement program with the aim of helping to overcome these retained reflexes. In this therapeutic movement program the sequence of reflexes is repeated through exercises in the order in which they are normally occurring with the expected outcome that these exercises would lead to the disappearance of these

retained reflexes, as would have happened under normal developmental circumstances. Many therapists working in Steiner/Waldorf education have integrated these repetitions of the sequence of primary reflexes, called "floor exercises," into the Extra Lesson remedial program for school-aged children and sometimes also into the movement program for kindergarten children. However, Audrey McAllen herself states that such remedial/therapeutic work should only be done with children older than seven years in order to allow the etheric forces the full seven-year period of early childhood for the completion of the development of the physical body and its organs (see McAllen, "Birth to Seven Years," in Willby, 1998).

Through her work with learning difficulties of children Goddard has made some important discoveries about the superior role of the sense of balance and the vestibular system for the prevention and therapy of learning difficulties. As the sense of balance is part of the brain stem, it is fundamental for any movement development leading to free deliberate movement. Therefore in her therapeutic program Goddard emphasizes the stimulation of the vestibular system, hearing, and balance, and she was able to produce evidence that musical therapeutic programs clearly benefit children with movement disturbances and resulting learning difficulties (Goddard Blythe, 2004).

In 2004 a former co-worker of Goddard, Wibke Bein-Wierzbinski, published a PhD research thesis (available at www.paepki.de) in which she proved the therapeutic success of a movement therapy that did not repeat the sequence of primary reflexes, but was based on specific movements that according to her findings play a key role in normal movement development. She questions programs based on the theory of repeating all stages of primitive reflexes and suggests that a child may have overcome the primitive reflexes initially anyway, but at a later time and possibly under stress may have returned to primitive reflex patterns. Based on her research she suggests that all primitive reflexes may be present in an inactive state within the human being and that they can "flare up" under certain circumstances.

Bein-Wierzbinski proposes that rather than repeating the sequence of primitive reflexes in therapeutic programs, only certain key developmental movements should be practiced in order to avoid reinforcing patterns that do not belong to those healthy movements, which hold a key position in achieving uprightness.

She points out that there is a critical age at around four to six months for these key movements. If they

are mastered, they will set the child on the track of subsequent normal development. Bein-Wierzbinski suggests that these particular movements should be practiced and strengthened through therapy.

They are described as follows:

- First, the full body stretch as occurring naturally between four to six months of age. The back is straight, and legs and arms are straight as well. The head and the body are supported by the hands and by the legs from the hips downward.
- Second, a movement with the opposite quality to the full body stretch: bringing both feet to the mouth with the help of the hands. The entire body is curved.

Both movements together convey the image of an expansion – contraction movement sequence. Bein-Wierzbinski was able to show that if these two movements are performed correctly and frequently, then the process of becoming upright proceeds normally.

Bein-Wierzbinski confirmed through her research the validity of a movement therapy program that has been developed by Doris Bartel of Germany. It is based on certain key movements and the avoidance of a repetition of reflexes and is called “Rota therapy.”

Rota therapy focuses on achieving free rotational movements of the spine. The critical step for the development of free deliberate movement is seen in the shift of initiating a rotational movement from the head to the area of the lower spine and hips, resulting in a rotational movement that makes the head free and independent from the movement of the rest of the body. Bartel interprets retained reflexes as being caused by a disturbance in the regulation of movement in the central nervous system, which leads to an increased muscle tone and therefore to a limitation in the range of movement that is possible for the child. In her therapeutic approach Bartel uses rotational exercises in all three dimensions of space. She could show through her patients’ histories that these exercises lead to a change in the central regulation of the muscle tone and in consequence to a normal movement development.

A set of movements is used which is based on variations of turning sideways and rolling over, as they naturally occur in movement sequences of children in the first year of life—crawling, rotation, sitting, rotation to change direction, crawling in new direction, rotation, sitting, and so on. According to experiences with Rota therapy, the practice of rotation will lead to the alleviation of a whole range of developmental

and learning disturbances. Rota therapy is mainly done through enabling parents to practice movements regularly at home in consultation with the therapist. Currently there are movement therapists working with Rota therapy in Germany and Austria.

Ingrid Ruhrmann of Hamburg combines treatments derived from anthroposophical therapies with Rota therapy for children who display retained reflexes among various disturbances (see Ruhrmann’s article “Examples for Remedial Support,” in Glöckler, 2006). She uses anthroposophical therapies to strengthen the etheric forces of the child, for example through water applications, nutrition, and rhythm and in addition she uses the approach of Rota therapy for retained reflexes. It is worth noting that Rota therapy for younger children can be given with the child sitting on the mother’s lap. Thus the child experiences these exercises in the warmth and closeness of the mother/child relationship. Only the older child will practice the movements on the floor. Existing reflex patterns are diagnosed but are not part of the movement patterns of the therapy as they are seen as hindrances to normal development.

Ruhrmann suggests the following indicators for normal development:

At age two-and-a-half the child should have achieved the following milestones:

- Upright posture, the child is able to stand still (balance)
- Free head rotation without causing either arms or legs to move
- The head does not tip to the front nor is the neck extended towards the back
- The arms swing freely while walking
- Movement is intentional
- The hands can be brought together at the vertical midline at will
- The hands move freely in the horizontal plane, above and below the horizontal midline (butterfly)
- The speed and force of movement can be varied at will and adapted to different situations
- The center of gravity and the rotation point of the spine is in the hip area
- The face is relaxed while moving, which means that the child does not spend extra effort in maintaining posture and balance
- Uprightness and the ability to use control and balance in moving one’s body form the foundation for all further differentiation and

refinement of movement, such as one wishes to achieve with children through the work in morning circle time. If uprightness and balance are not yet achieved, the child will still be absorbed in gaining control over basic movements of the body and will have difficulties in imitating the gestures of the teacher and in confidently moving within all spatial dimensions.

Author's Note:

This scope of this brief article is not enough to give a full picture of Rota Therapy. There is a very informative article on the website of Doris Bartel called "Grundlagen" (Foundations). This article is now available in English translation at www.rota-therapie.de. Bartel has also published a book with the title *Der gesunde Dreh* ("The Healthy Turn," not yet available in English), which contains an overview of developmental disturbances, the principles, aims and areas of application of Rota therapy, as well as case histories. The actual exercises are not described, as these need to be individually adjusted to the specific situation of a child and can only be given by a trained therapist. The book was published in 2009.

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Web Resources:

www.rota-therapie.de

www.paepki.de

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Pikler, Point and Periphery

• Jane Swain

The Competent Infant

Emmi Pikler (1902-1984), was a pediatrician who founded the Pikler Institute in Budapest, Hungary. Early in her career, she lived in Trieste, Italy for a year, where she spent time on the beach observing parents with their infants. Pikler witnessed parents teaching their infants to sit, stand and walk before they were able to do so on their own. She asked the question, does this communicate to the child that what he is doing is not good enough, and that he should be doing something of which he is not yet capable? Essentially Pikler's answer was that what the infant is capable of doing at a particular time is the perfect thing for him to be doing.

Pikler saw this teaching gesture of the adult as a distrust of the child's inherent ability to guide his own motor development. It seems apparent that Pikler had a tremendously well-developed sense of the ego of the other. In her time, just as today, infants were usually seen and treated as objects. It was, and is, considered the adult's job to teach the child to sit and to walk. Pikler strongly disagreed with this, and saw each infant as a unique individuality, capable of guiding his own motor development—in fact, infinitely more qualified than any adult.

How is it that an infant is capable of guiding his own motor development? Steiner describes that the child from birth to three has a “telephonic connection” with the spiritual world, and through this connection the child learns to walk, speak and think. Pikler did not refer to the spiritual world, but she clearly had an understanding that the genius of the child was at work, and that it must be allowed to do its work.

For the infants in Pikler's care, there was no propping the child up into a sitting position, no holding the child's hands and helping him learn to walk, no use of exersaucers, johnny jumpers, or baby seats. Instead, Pikler allowed each infant to come into the vertical positions of sitting and standing entirely through his own efforts, *and in his own time*. Pikler wrote a

book describing this process, *Lass Mir Zeit* (Give Me Time). Anna Tardos, Pikler's daughter, who is the current director of the Pikler Institute, says, “What's the rush, we have our whole lives to be vertical!” The gesture of letting infants take their time goes against our “get ahead, sooner is better” culture. However, based on my thirty years of experience and study, I believe there is no correlation between early walking and later athletic ability.

Pikler came to these practices out of her own tremendous powers of observation. She was not an anthroposophist. Rudolf Steiner is in agreement with Pikler, and goes further with a stern warning. “Here again the rule holds good that we should leave everything to the child itself. Of its own accord it will raise itself to an upright position when the right time comes. Premature efforts at walking and standing or gymnastic exercises (only proper to a much later age) can only do damage. They may even affect the nerve-life for the whole of later life in the most disastrous way” (Steiner, 1994, p. 3).

The infants at the Pikler Institute are given a protected, safe environment for self-initiated motor exploration. Of equally critical importance, Pikler recognized that *self-initiated motor exploration is a function of the relationship with the primary caregiver*. This relationship is tended to and developed during the caregiving activities of feeding, dressing, bathing, and diapering, whereby the child is treated as a competent person capable of participating in each activity.

The child is “filled up” with the presence and attention of the adult during these times, and then the child is allowed time on the floor for free motor exploration. These two practices—being fully present for the child, and then letting the child have time by himself for motor exploration—reinforce each other, and give the child a feeling of competency and security. Self-initiated motor exploration also provides incredible opportunities to strengthen the will and to integrate the primitive reflexes.

Primitive Reflexes

The baby is born with essentially no coordinated movement, no balance, and no sensory experiences of the world outside of the womb. For example, he has moved before, but in the buoyancy of a fluid environment. Therefore he has never had to control his body weight in the gravitational field in the same way as he does after birth.

It's a nearly overwhelming task to manage the onslaught of sensory experiences in the early weeks and months of life. The primitive reflexes provide a means of responding to the physical world; this is the start of sensory motor integration. The reflexes are crucial for survival and protection of the physical body. Researchers believe the Moro reflex facilitates the first breath of life. They also believe the primitive walking reflex helps the baby position himself upside down in the womb in preparation for birth, and then other kicking reflexes of the legs help to initiate the contractions of labor.

Every typically-developing baby has the same progression of primitive reflexes. At a certain stage of development, in utero or after birth, particular reflexes and reactions emerge, gain strength, have their "hey-day," and then fade away into the background. The reflexes overlap with each other in time, in a finely-tuned ebbing and flowing. There is profound wisdom in the sequence of the reflexes. Each particular reflex lays a foundation that supports the child to take the next step of development in a well-prepared way.

In a typically-developing infant, the blatant manifestations of the primitive reflexes cease by six to twelve months. The more subtle manifestations of the reflexes gradually cease by about six years of life. At this point the reflexes are said to be "integrated." The reflexes never really go away; they are always lurking in the background, and they will manifest even in adults under stressful circumstances, such as fatigue.

In the typically-developing baby, the moment-to-moment manifestation of the reflexes is related to the child's current state and is influenced by fatigue, hunger, handling, noise level, etc. A protected environment and sensitive caregiving are crucial so that the reflexes are not constantly being triggered. The reflexes have a purpose, and they need to be there, but ultimately they need to be integrated, to go to sleep. The Pikler caregivers are masters in these arenas of sensitive caregiving and environmental support.

As balance increases, primitive reflex activity decreases; the two are inversely proportional to each other. If given time on the floor, the baby will spend

an incredible amount of time learning to balance. Balance develops in two ways—when the child shifts her weight *within* each developmental position (such as reaching for her foot while lying on her back, or reaching for a toy in lying on her side) and when she transitions *between* positions. It is very important that the child has time and space to learn to balance. It is also important that she be picked up and carried in such a way that she doesn't lose her balance, as the development of balance is a crucial factor for the healthy integration of the primitive reflexes.

The Spatial Journey

Primitive reflexes are stereotypical movement patterns. When the primitive walking reflex is triggered, the movement of every baby looks the same. Here the movement is not permeated by the individuality, as it is with mature walking, where each gait is different. One can also change the way one walks according to his purposes and to the social situation. Here the movement is peripherally-oriented; it is in relationship to the world.

When we're around a new baby, there's a glow in the room; the baby takes up the whole room. The baby is actually more in the space around himself than in the space of his body. The primitive reflexes help the infant come *into* the space of the physical body. This is readily apparent with the suck reflex, where everything goes *into* the mouth: nipples, hands, feet, toys, and pieces of fuzz! The gesture is also *into* the body with the other primitive reflexes, in that the muscle tone increases when the reflexes are triggered. This helps to establish body scheme or body geography and allows the infant to feel his body.

In contrast to the peripherally-oriented mature movements, the primitive reflexes are point-centered, or body-centered. This is good; the baby needs to come into the space of his own body. However it's not healthy to become stuck there, a prisoner in the body, cut off from the periphery.

The primitive reflexes are etheric pathways. They are akin to river beds in the space around the body. Initially the pathways are one-way streets, *in* towards the body. When the primitive reflexes are integrated, the pathways become two-way streets, coming *in* and going *out*. With the sucking reflex, for example, initially the direction is *in*. Soon the baby starts to babble and to do "raspberries" with her lips, where the pathway reverses and goes *out*. When children are older yet, they blow dandelions, bubbles, and pin-wheels. They sing, blow *out* birthday candles and spit

out watermelon seeds.

If this reflex doesn't become integrated, the child may suck her clothes, hair, and lips. In its severe form the child may have unclear speech, low volume, and stuttering, where she can't get the words *out*. The mature pattern is well-articulated speech, which is in relationship to the periphery; we speak differently to different people. The integrated pathway is *in and out*, as we can still employ sucking when we choose, such as sucking on a straw, but we are not bound to it.

Supporting the Child's Work

Just as we can not teach the child balance, neither can we integrate the reflexes for the child. This the child must do this for herself. However there is an incredible amount that can be done to support this work of the child. Initially sturdy, smooth, incoming pathways must be built. As Jaimen McMillan says, "in the early period of life, the child is nursing off the breast and off the rest, of everything!" It's important that what's coming in is pleasant, and that it's freely given by the adult in a selfless, unconditional way. Then the pathways are strong and untainted. What eventually happens is that the child turns around and rides out on the same pathways. The reflex pathways that create the bridges for the child to find her home *within* her body are also the ways back *out*, the means to find her place in the world.

Physical and soul warmth help the child come out on the pathway, as do practices which support the developing four foundational senses. The sense of touch is formative in enabling the child to know the boundary of the body. Spatially the primitive reflexes bring the child *inside* the body. The child needs to be touched and held in such a way that she can spatially come *out* to the border of the body. If the handling is harsh, spatially the child recoils and is driven back *inside*. This is the spatial definition of tactile defensiveness. This also can happen with trauma. Sensitive handling skills are learnable and can provide tremendous opportunities for healing. It is important that the adult develops the sensitivity to perceive the spatial activity of the child.

Whenever the child *actively and successfully meets* a situation in the world, the outgoing pathways are strengthened. For example, when routines and rhythms are woven into the child's surroundings, this gives the child an opportunity to actively *meet* the expectation. The British saying "Well met" describes it accurately. This does not happen when movement is imposed upon the child, or when the child is forced

to do something. This does not mean that the child should not be given a boundary. The important factor is *how* the boundary is given, optimally with the adult giving space for *self-initiated compliance* from the child.

As a general rule, the Pikler caregivers do not place toys in the hands of the infants, but rather the toys are placed around the infant, and the child is allowed to roll and crawl and to reach *out* for the particular toy in which he is interested. When the limb *rays out* and *meets* the toy, the hand will successfully form to the shape of the object. Essentially, it is interest in the world that integrates the reflexes. The latin root, *interesse*, means between. Interest is the bridge between being in the body and being in the world. It is a vehicle by which one can come out of oneself and find one's destiny in the world.

Balancing involves the height of the center of gravity and the width of the base of support of the physical body. If one's balance is challenged, one will lower one's center of gravity and widen one's base of support, as one naturally does on an unstable surface such as a rocking boat. If given time on the floor, the infant will gradually develop his balance by raising his center of gravity and narrowing his base of support *in each of the developmental positions*. Here the child is *meeting* the geometry of the situation.

The relationship with the primary caregiver—whether professional or parent—is the most important factor in the life of the developing child. Self-initiated movement is a function of the quality of this relationship. It is of paramount importance that the professional never use his or her knowledge of motor development in a way that implies to the parent that the parent has done something wrong. This may negatively affect the tender relationship between parent and child.

Preparation for Life

At birth, the infant is essentially bound to the face of the earth, but the child is far from helpless. He is getting help from the periphery, through his "telephonic connection" with the spiritual world. The task of the adult is to not interfere and to provide the time and space in which the child can do this majestic work. The infants are warriors in an archetypal battle against the merciless and unyielding forces of gravity. If infants are allowed to engage in their own unique and gradual processes of coming up into the vertical, they will emerge victorious and will be strengthened for life.

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Author's Note:

This article is based on the author's study of the work of Jaimen McMillan (founder of Spacial Dynamics), Rudolf Steiner, and Emmi Pikler.

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Carving a Manger in the Heart: A Place Where the Child Can Move to Become

• Laurie Clark

Colette Green, a good friend of mine who is a Waldorf nursery teacher, relayed this anecdote to me from a four-year-old child in her class. He began by saying, "Everythin' in the world is changin', you're changin', I'm changin'. The whole world is changin'!" He paused for a moment and then said, "We just have to remember what we once were." This is a profound statement "out of the mouths of babes." What did he mean when he said, "Remember what we once were?" Was he pointing to the memory of the spiritual world and the resolves that we brought with us into earthly life?

The etymology of the word "remember" is an interesting one; *re-member* (*re*: back; *memoris*: mindful) means to look back and be mindful. The original intentions to incarnate have to do with the essence of the will in each individual making the decision at the midnight hour in the life between death and rebirth to return to earth. This is an essential movement where the marriage of the heavenly forces and the earthly life is consummated. The Rosicrucian principle of bringing spirit into matter and the hope of bringing matter into spirit becomes a deep resolve. The young child who has just come from the spiritual world is fresh with this memory as a living epiphany in his entire being. He seeks the archetypal match in the human beings that surround him to reflect this resolve. The world as it is now is not a place that reflects this truth, with its virtual ways and its fast-paced materialistic life. Early childhood teachers can be mediators who honor this kind of "re-membering" and mirror this resolve in their own soul life in order to be the true introducers to earthly

life for our little friends who have come here to join us. In holding these truths close to our hearts, we can assure the children that they have made a good choice to incarnate and truly welcome them.

The last sphere that the human being goes through before coming to earth is the moon sphere. Here we pick up our gifts and often a full basket of struggles. The basket of struggles is very heavy to carry for some of the children that are coming to meet us. Many of these children have difficulties finding a true "home" in their bodies, feeling uncomfortable and unable to fully "move in."

When we look at an archetypal child's drawing of a house we find the bottom half is a square. These four walls should offer a sense of protection and security. One way to think of this is to imagine that each of these four sides represent the four lower senses, which when well nurtured give a strong foundation for life. This square is a crystalline form and can symbolize the physical/etheric body. The triangle roof shape points up to the heavens and symbolizes the soul/spiritual nature of the human being. Perhaps we can picture that the four higher senses reside in this roof form. These higher senses give the possibility of social graces and spiritual capacities for the future. From inside the house the middle senses act as mediators between these two. How can we as teachers find ways to helpfully invite the children to "fit" into their house with a sense of well-being?

When entering a house or any room, one has to cross the threshold. A threshold is a point or a place of entering from outside to inside. As adults, we can

picture how hard it is to step into a room where we must face a difficult situation. For children who are hesitating to move into their bodies, any transitions from one place to another are exceedingly difficult and painful. Their movement becomes static when asked to cross from self to environment or from environment to self. These “threshold children” often have a hard time entering into the kindergarten, moving from parent to teacher, and extreme difficulty in simply stepping into any new situation. Sometimes these threshold moments are unpredictable and are characterized by obstinacy, tantrums, even hitting and kicking. It is a way for the child to say, “Stay away, I don’t feel safe. I can’t move out of myself into the world, I don’t fit into the environment yet. I cannot make myself step over the threshold.”

How can we as teachers help these children move through the many thresholds that life brings? Letting go of any preconceived ideas we have about the child is essential in order to begin to make room for the child’s experience to live within us. Henning Kohler describes what the teacher must do to receive the children each day in a gracious manner: “In the evening of every ending day, I must strip the past of its power. I must literally watch all grudges that have accumulated melt away, everything in the way of habit and routine that has crept into my relationship with the child—all this I must watch melt away before the unprecedented event of warmth that consists in the child giving itself to me again day after day. Is not the durability of this trust striking, when I consider how often I lack patience and understanding?” (Kohler, 2003, p. 123) So it is that every day we have the opportunity to redeem ourselves from the mistakes we have made the previous day and strive to understand the child in a new way. This warmth that Henning expresses is a healing force that can pervade everything that we do with the children. When the teacher offers a soul-warming approach, it entices the child from self into the environment. This ability to receive and give warmth to others is similar to the chimney in the child’s house drawing that indicates the warming inside of the house all the way up through the top where the smoke is reaching up to the heavens. The sense of warmth comes from inside the human being and reaches out and connects to others. When warmth is consciously permeated in the realm of the higher “I” of the individual, it inspires enthusiasm and true joy.

In the second lecture of *Education for Special Needs* Rudolf Steiner describes the soul process the teacher must undertake to help the child who gets stuck and cannot move through a situation. He explains that if the teacher can deeply feel the same stoppage the child feels

and simultaneously develop utter compassion in her soul for the child’s experience, understanding for the situation the child is in will develop. Every trace of subjective reaction must be eliminated. When the teacher is able to meet the situation without any excitement or irritation but with a calm and composed attitude then progress can be made with the child. The teacher educates herself and carves an opening in her own being for the child to move through. It is like a kind of conscious imitation that Steiner asks of the teacher—just as the young child unconsciously imitates adults in order to feel what it is like to be like them, a kind of slipping into our skin. Perhaps it is a conscious imitation that is being asked of the teacher, to be able to feel so deeply *with and into* the child that the necessary mood of soul is created and a raw openness to the child’s being is recreated in the teacher in order to understand the child from the inside out.

A practical way to help children move across thresholds is to consciously make sure that the rhythm of the kindergarten day breathes and moves from one activity to the next in a hygienic manner. The way the kindergarten day is structured can give the balanced doses of an in-breath (a structured group activity) and an out-breath (creative independent play). Receiving the children in the morning with warmth of heart and perhaps warm, sweet herbal tea helps the child take the first step into the room and facilitates the separation from mother to teacher. After a long car ride and a rushed morning, it is a welcoming gesture to move into the day with an early morning walk. Kierkegaard said, “Every day, I walk myself into a state of well-being.” Even in an urban setting there are visits to make; Mrs. Magnolia Tree waits for us to arrive each day, the squirrels and the birds in the trees are in a garden around the corner from the school. There we close our eyes and listen to the song of the birds. We point to where we hear them singing. This is a practice of moving our listening from outside, moving it into inner hearing and then reflecting and digesting the sound and moving it back out. The possibility of knowing which direction a sound comes from is part of the sense of movement. Later, this can metamorphose into the ability to truly hear another person, to be a receptive vessel. In order for this to happen, one must achieve balance in oneself and create the inner hearing space to be a receptive vessel for another.

Circle time follows the walk and is a great opportunity for integrating and orienting the body in space with true archetypal movements, gestures and imaginations. It is a way of inviting the children to “move into their house.” Movements of the muscles contract

and expand and are pulsed through by the will of the individual. The entire movement organization is in the service of the “I.” Edmond Schoorel says “When movements and the sense of movement are well developed, the sense of freedom will arise as a capacity of the soul” (Schoorel, 2004, p. 141). Later in life this sense of movement will give us the ability to change the direction of our life, to put one foot in front of the other in difficult times, and to be able to move towards the future. These are inner movements that can blossom as an adult when the sense of movement in childhood is healthy and free.

Snack time is an important aspect of early childhood pedagogy. Food is quite a difficulty in these recent times with allergies galore, limited food choices, and touch sensitivities in the mouth with various textures of food. The middle senses of smell and taste take substances from the outside world directly into the body—a huge threshold to cross. How can we help the children move across this abyss with food and entice them so that they can be nourished? Is it still a sustainable idea to just serve a grain at snack when many of the children do not eat it? Often, those who do not eat the food that is offered are the very children who have these sensitivities. In the activities that follow snack, these children often fall apart as their blood sugar drops. Finding creative solutions such as having lovely cooking smells when the children enter the room (toasting almonds), adding proteins (considering allergies) such as cheese cut into sticks, seeds, nut butters, and yogurt are worth considering. Adding lovely seashell noodles to the soup with the vegetables cut very small helps some children feel more comfortable to try the vegetables, as many are just noodle eaters. Later in life, the sense of taste will become an inner perceptibility. To have good taste in an artistic sense is a social grace.

Creative play moves the inner imaginative life out into the social environment. Often, when children play together, they use the phrase, “Let’s say that. . .” and then go on to describe the next event in their game. This means, “You come into my world while I say what happens,” and then the companion player will take over to add, “Then, let’s say. . .” which means, “Now you come into my world.” This is a way for the children to cross over to one another and learn to give and take, moving back and forth cooperatively.

All of the activities in the kindergarten morning give ample opportunity to practice moving through the many thresholds that a young child must cross in early childhood. Each of the children who come to meet us holds a mystery. How will we know what to

do with each of these children who have various needs in our care? Steiner asks this question to the teachers in the tenth lecture in *Education for Special Needs*. He asks how they can come to intuitive perceptions about the children and assures them that it is possible. He implores them to act with esoteric courage and in a spirit of self-sacrifice and to say to themselves over and over, “I can do it.” Then he reveals how they “can do it” in a meditation for the teachers that is the heart of this lecture course. Every evening one is to picture a blue circle with a yellow point in the middle and say to oneself, “God is in me.” In the morning, one pictures a yellow circle with a blue point in the middle and says to oneself, “I am in God.” It is a practice of turning inside out and gives mobility and flexibility in order to acquire inner intuitions and inspirations with the children. That which was a seed of God’s light that was with us at night shines around us like a bright sun during the day. It is like a heartbeat, a spiritual muscle that develops. The living light of God that brought insight during the night leaves me pregnant with possibilities and potential for birthing these insights out into the day. In attempting this practice, the teacher consciously moves across the greatest threshold that exists, from the self to the divine and from the divine to the self. This striving of the teacher stands as a living example and can be brought as a humble offering to the children who have a painful experience of threshold crossing. Steiner gives us this great treasure to practice, so that we can carve out a manger in our heart where the child can find a safe lodging—a hopeful place where the child can come to be and move to become.

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Children Under Three: Some Thoughts About the Song Circle and Storytelling

• Christine Christiansen

One of the pitfalls when establishing a group for children under three, whether as part of a kindergarten for one- to six-year-olds, or as a separate group, can be that of taking kindergarten life and transferring it directly to the under-three group. The important thing to remember is that there isn't a formula, and that we are still at the stage of observing and deepening our knowledge (through continual study) of the young child. Our observations can help us to formulate questions so that we can work consciously to create child-care that meets the needs of the children.

Observing how the child moves in relation to the adult, and how the adult moves in relation to the child, was my starting point when thinking about whether to incorporate the song-circle and storytelling in our daily rhythm. The one-year-old, for example, doesn't move far from the adult. As the adult washes up, irons, or cleans the windows, the child is nearby—playing at her feet, crawling or walking away, and then moving back again. She “circles” round the adult, moving out into the world and back again. And if the child moves too far the adult will move towards the child, so that they are “connected” again. (Compare this with the six-year-old who plays on the periphery of the permitted area, often out of the immediate sight of the adult.) The two-year-old ventures a little further, and can look up from the sandpit and connect with the adult visually, and then at three can call across the garden “Look at me.”

This one-to-one contact is fundamental, particularly in the first years of life, and though we care for children in groups it is important to be conscious of this, when considering the size of a group, for example. The young child moves individually in circles round the adult—so for children under three it is important not to force the form of the traditional song circle, but rather to transform it. Where does the circle arise naturally?

For us, this is in the mornings, at nine o'clock, after the parents have left. We gather in the cloakroom to get ready to go into the garden. After we are in our

outdoor clothes, and while we are still sitting on the floor, we sing the song that starts every morning. Then we sing two or three finger games, appropriate to the season or festival, and end with the song “Come, let us go into the garden.” Our little gathering never lasts for more than ten minutes, most often less.

Songs are part of our day before we eat our meal, when we put the children down for their nap, and in a less formal way throughout the day: when a child is having her diaper changed, or sitting on my lap for “Ride a cock horse. . .” Such traditional rhymes and songs nurture the relationship between the child and adult, and thus the child's sense of self.

For the same reason, storytelling is first appropriate when children are over three.

By setting the children in a group around herself to tell a story the adult distances herself from each child, separates herself—sometimes even physically by arranging a story table with dolls. This interrupts the flow of togetherness between the child and adult, where the adult should be engaged in the tasks of everyday life like baking, hanging out the washing, sweeping the garden path, while the child is next to her or playing and exploring nearby.

In our group we have picture books. Sometimes nearly-three-year-old Selma, who is the last to be put down for her nap, will sit next to me on the sofa and “read” a book. We look at the pictures together, sharing. The physical back and forth in the garden transforms into a conversation, with Selma pointing to a dog or asking what the little cat is called. It is important to cherish this one-to-oneness with each child in the toddler group, and not force it into the group circle form.

And then, when the child is three, a huge transformation happens. The child, who has both literally and metaphorically held the hand of the adult, can reach out with his other hand and take the hand of the child standing next to him and be part of the song circle. Though he has said “I” for many months, this is a further sign of the child's “centredness,” for it is only

when we have integrated something in ourselves that we can express it in a physical way. The period of “circling” around the adult, the games of running round and round objects (a tree, the dining table)—all these activities and more have nurtured the child’s sense of self. And with this comes the sense of the other, and the first steps into social life.

Christine Christiansen has worked with children under three in kindergarten settings with one- to six-year-olds in Copenhagen, Denmark, for nineteen years. In 2000 she and a colleague established a group with eight children, open from 8 am till 3 pm.

Working with Parents to Reduce Children’s Media Exposure

♦ **Lauren Hickman**

Excerpts from “An Exploration of Parent Education Practices Used by Waldorf Kindergarten Teachers to Reduce Media Exposure for Young Children in the Home,” a Master’s Thesis by Lauren Hickman.

We are well aware as Waldorf educators of the insidious damaging effects of screen time on the young child, on family life and relationships. Obesity, attention disorders, poor self image, violent or cruel behavior, and increased inability to focus and listen are hallmarks of the media exposed child. Parent education is a key component of a successful Waldorf early childhood program. Today’s teachers are charged with introducing parents to the concept of the harmful, limiting effects of movies, computer and cell phone games, and television as they relate to the young child.

How do we inspire parents and caregivers to move to the will activity of actually reducing or eliminating screen time? For my Master’s degree research project completed in 2009, I conducted a qualitative and quantitative study to collect parent education practices utilized by fifteen Waldorf kindergarten teachers. For the purposes of the study, I referred to television, video games, cell phone texting and games, computer and DVD/movie consumption as “screen time.”

Despite the good intentions of schools, teachers encounter different levels of resistance when striving to educate parents of about the detrimental effects of media exposure. Waldorf schools do not have a standardized parent education curriculum that would clearly outline the risks involved. Schools and teachers try different approaches that have varying degrees of success without always knowing how effective they are in influencing parenting practices in the home.

I found that if the teacher is an effective communi-

cator of the implied values inherent in Waldorf education, such as protecting the child’s developing imagination by limiting media exposure, parents can help their children experience positive change. The teachers surveyed utilized a variety of different approaches to parent education methods at different stages of the parent’s entry into the school system: as part of the inquiry and enrollment process which includes the application and interview, during the school year via conversations, parent teacher conferences and lectures, and by handing out articles and teaching parents how to observe their children’s behavior and reactions to screen time exposure. By collecting anonymous surveys, I found that the parents wanted to make their own observations and decisions about their children and screen time. They did not want to be told what to do, whether by a teacher’s recommendation or through comments from a peer. Another area of concern raised by parents that I did not anticipate was the challenges that parents faced in split families with shared custody when it came to decision making about media for their children.

Looking Towards the Future

While individual efforts have been made by Waldorf early childhood educators to connect with and inspire parents to limit media exposure for young children, it is clear that more work needs to be done. Parents today learn differently than a generation ago when the teacher was viewed as the authority. As my study indicated, they want to do their own research and make their own decisions about their children. This includes the need for a greater awareness of media exposure in young children as a public health issue.

Many organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association

have called for reduced media for young children. I hope that more educators, not only Waldorf educators, will join together to create curriculums and to educate the general public about media and young children.

This worthy goal can best be accomplished by teachers developing methods that allow parents to observe and understand their children's behavior and what factors play a role in affecting their behavior. When the parents make their own observations and draw their own conclusions about the way their child acts and is affected by exposure to screen time, then change in media consumption habits can occur. When the teacher and parents have similar observations about a child's behavior and learning style, both at home and in the classroom, they can create a plan together to ensure the child's continued success. A secondary goal would be to have the parent consider the effects his or her choices have on the developing child when it comes to making decisions about media time, diet, family rules, and values.

I have compiled a list of preferred parent education practices used by Waldorf early childhood teachers to inspire parents to reduce or limit media exposure for their young children. The existing research available indicates that there is much more research needed into the effect media exposure has on the developing child—physically, emotionally, academically, mentally, and in family relationships. The study found that a multidisciplinary approach to parent education worked the best from the teachers' perspectives, and that over time, parents could make more informed choices about media exposure for their young children.

Preferred Parent Education Practices compiled by Lauren Hickman, 2009

- 1.** Make a personal connection with the parents. Listen to their hopes and dreams for their child. Ask the parent what he or she wants for the child.
- 2.** In the case of a split household, make a connection with each parent or caregiver for the child. Listen to the hopes and dreams for the child.
- 3.** Is there a habit around media consumption? For instance, does the family have a weekly or monthly "movie" night? Explore some alternatives to this habit—can a tradition be created around a festival observation, a craft night, a family meal night, etc. What can be done to make a festive shared time together as a family?
- 4.** Have an expert on brain development come to your

school community to give a lecture on brain development and the effects of screen time on the developing young child. Some suggested presenters could include Joseph Chilton Pearce, MD, Susan Johnson, MD, Jane Healy, PhD, Bruce Perry, MD, Joan Treadaway, Eugene Schwartz.

5. Create a parent conversation series with a variety of topics including media and screen time. Invite experienced parents and new parents to share in small discussion groups about their observations of their children with regards to media. Create a warm, non-judgmental atmosphere that fosters relaxed conversation.

6. Create a direct experience for the parents to observe and to then relate their experiences to the group. For instance: Do a puppet show, and then show television clips. Have the parents talk about their reactions to the different presentations.

7. Create a wall chart and give parents sticky notes to visually list what priorities they give to media and screen consumption by their young children. Give weekly handouts on various child development topics including screen time.

8. Invite a Waldorf alumni speaker's panel to your school community to discuss various topics such as how Waldorf students do in the real world. Ask the alumni pointed questions about their media/screen time experiences.

9. Have an Experience Waldorf morning on a Saturday, where parents can experience the work and play activities that the young child does. Have them share about their "media free" experience of the morning.

10. Brainstorm with parents about play and technology and use a flip chart to write down the results. What did they play inside? Outside? What toys were available? What technology is available? Break it down by decade—what were parents doing and playing with in the 50s? What technology was available?

11. One Waldorf early childhood educator stated, "Families today have replaced the fireplace or 'hearth' with the television set. This is where they gather to tell stories by the light of the . . . screen. (Only they don't tell stories, they are fed media stories and advertising.) They meet here together, laugh together, get up and get food and drink for each other together. They relax. The TV even resembles a hearth, with the chairs and sofas facing it, with the flat screen anchored to the wall and decor surrounding it. Like a fireplace, the screen

is more satisfying the bigger it is. *Consumer Reports* recommends buying the largest screen you can afford because perceived satisfaction is related to size. You can immediately see the problems with this; there are many. For one, the screen is cold, whereas the hearth emits warmth and scent.” Define screen time to parents—work with them to list the types of screens available on a daily basis and ask them to consider whether this is the “new hearth”?

12. At parent teacher conferences, give a written report. Check in with the parents about the amount of screen time the child is receiving—has there been any shift since the beginning of the school year? What are the parent’s observations? What are the teacher’s observations? Is it time to make a new agreement about the amount of screen time the child is exposed to?

13. In the interview process ask about screen time, explain the school’s media policy, offer understanding and make an agreement that the child will not have media on school nights and before school to start. In addition, agree that if the teacher observes media play in the classroom it will be okay to check in and have a further conversation and subsequent agreement.

14. As a teacher, and possibly as a parent, share personal stories about your own journey in relation to media and how you came to the conclusions you have today. Be willing to express vulnerability and openness to the parents who are listening to you.

15. Explore with the parents the reasons why they have screen time for their children. Babysitting? Fear of being unable to compete in today’s world? Convenience? Appeasing relatives such as grandparents?

16. Help families plan their response to different social scenarios: family party, holidays such as Thanksgiving where the television is on. Brainstorm about what to do, for instance bring along a story basket, some simple toys, take a walk, and play with children instead of visiting with the adults.

17. Your children want to go to a neighbor’s house where the television is on. Create a dress up box, Waldorf toys, etc. Make your home inviting for the neighborhood children—it is a sacrifice, but worth it.

18. Try a two-week media free period and share your experiences. Participate in the national Screen Free campaign each April—visit www.screenfree.org. Share articles about Screen Free Week challenges in the school newsletter.

19. Divide parents into two groups and have them go into two different rooms. In one room, have parents “play” with action figures, in the other room; have the parents “play” with Waldorf toys. Then have the groups switch and experience the other toys. Bring the groups together and have a conversation about the observations.

20. Encourage parents to at least take the television out of the living room and put it in a back room. That way it doesn’t dominate the family space. It is an in-between step but it allows them to experience family space without the television and adjust to “putting it in the garage” as a next step.

21. Parents are becoming increasingly aware that screen time is unhealthy for children, not just physically unhealthy, but also socially unhealthy. Parents are asking how to create a more family-oriented, child-friendly world. Help parents look at how they pay attention to childhood essentials such as loving relationships, conversations, shared meal times, stories, reading, rhythmic days, enjoying nature, games, making things, and celebrating together. Assure them that limiting access to screen time can result in a calmer, more fulfilling family life where all family members can thrive.

22. Encourage parents to talk to their children about electronic media and the reasons for their decisions and rules. From the viewpoint of children, think of strangers on screens as you would think of them in real life. Talk to parents about never leaving the young child unsupervised in the company of anyone in whom they do not have utter confidence.

23. Talk to parents about making it a family rule that no young child has a television or computer in his or her room. If they do, brainstorm with the parents about ways to get the television or computer out.

Web Resources:

www.screenfree.org
www.turnoffyourtv.com
www.truceteachers.org
www.thetvboss.org

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The I and the Body: World Conference 2012

• Brigitte Goldmann

The 2012 World Kindergarten Conference theme “The I and the Body” is especially interesting for working in the kindergarten and with groups of very small children. The IASWECE conference planning group has been active with the following questions:

From the spiritual world, from pre-birth existence, the “I” comes in, bringing its destiny, and forms the vessel of the body in the first years of life. Spiritual beings are also active in this process, accompanying the development of walking, speaking and thinking.

Only in the third year of life does a preliminary *I-consciousness* appear, but the *I-activity* is there from the very beginning. It is visible through the physical body, above all through movement. Already in achieving uprightness, the guidance of the I is visible through the overcoming of gravity—the penetration of the I is visible down into the feet of the child. One can observe, for example, how the child walks: strong and secure, or insecure and on tiptoes.

This is all connected to the peripheral activity of the I. In our times, this is hindered through accelerated development. In the little child we see shortened maturation processes and early *I-consciousness*. By learning to read and write too early, the development of the inner bodily form (“gestalt”) is premature and the imitation phase is shortened. This can lead to later disturbances.

Through imitative activity the I anchors itself in the physical body. The drive to imitation is something the child brings with him—it is an activity of the I.

Sense impressions, when they are not virtual but are experiences in reality, give bodily experience and bodily form (“gestalt”). The I is connected to every perception and is only able to experience itself through sensory content. It needs the physical body in order to come into appearance. The body does not create the soul life; it is the necessary mirror for soul-spiritual activity that takes place outside.

Sense impressions are often difficult to digest today; the bodily vessel becomes damaged and therapeutic support is needed. Hindrances must be removed so that the individuality can penetrate the body and complete

its formation in a healthy way. In the first seven years this has to do primarily with the formation of the physical body.

Thus the task of the kindergarten becomes clear. Children need the feeling that they can play in a protected way, experience the world through their own activity, and discover, experiment, and have social experiences rather than conceptual training, information and explanations.

The task of parents and educators has become more difficult. Little children today are much more awake, self-conscious and often extremely sensitive. Their will is not stimulated enough and is not guided through rhythms and meaningful activity; instead, the head is expected to understand, remember and achieve. Expectations of children have changed. Harmonious movement, dexterity, and the training of capacities often remain undeveloped.

Naturally we must ask whether this situation is just a problem or incapacity, a new development, or perhaps both?

We must also ask whether the thoughts and feelings of the adult are not the most important educational tools to reach the peripheral I and make it possible for the child to open its soul and form relationships.

When the adult engages in work with her whole body, this is a great support for imitation. Large movements such as sweeping the floor, hanging up the laundry, and so on, allow a better consciousness of the periphery, a feeling experience of space, whereas work with small things creates a consciousness of the point. The aesthetic element in the work should not arise from the head, but should flow from the will.

Educators must exert themselves, discover sources of strength for themselves, in order to be able to radiate the inner peace and equanimity that form a necessary sheath for the group and create a common experience of the present with the children. In order to be able to work at all with today's children, one's own inner spiritual path of development is essential and a well-grounded training is the foundation.

Waldorf Education in Hungary

• Louise deForest

Budapest. The name alone gives rise to flights of fantasy. As I walk the streets here, I am struck by the complexity of these two cities—Buda and Pest—divided by the quiet, deep waters of the Danube. Much of Buda is a World Heritage Site and walking along the cobblestone streets it's easy to get a sense of how life was 150 years ago. Budapest's former reputation as a cultural center lives on in the ornate architecture on both sides of the river. Exquisite ironwork supports the balconies and the doorways, there are friezes, art-deco doors, free-standing sculptures, fountains, domes, palaces and churches everywhere, not to mention the grand hotels, slowly and quietly deteriorating here and there around the city. At night, with all the spires and domes, castles, bridges and palaces illuminated and reflected in the Danube, I feel as if I have entered a fairy tale and there is no more beautiful place on earth.

However, when I take a closer look, a different picture emerges, perhaps a less romanticized one. These beautiful buildings, which have stood the test of time, have also stood the test of history; many of the facades of the houses, storefronts and stations are pock-marked by bullet holes and mortar shells and the stormy, not-so-distant past comes into the daily reality of Budapest. Especially heart-wrenching were the metal casts of shoes lining the walkway on the Pest side of the Danube, a war memorial to all those who removed their shoes before being shot and thrown into the river.

Into this tortured history, Waldorf education has entered and taken root. The Fall, 2010 IASWECE meeting was held just outside of Budapest in Nagycovacska, once a village and now a suburb of Budapest. Each house in this quiet suburb has a substantial yard behind it, filled with vegetable gardens, fruit, and especially walnut and chestnut trees; and by each front door there are profusely blooming flower gardens. While the Council was there we had an opportunity to attend the teacher training seminar in a nearby town and to meet several leaders of Waldorf education in Hungary.

Waldorf education is on the threshold of adulthood in Hungary. The first Waldorf school was established in 1989, and there are now 44 kindergartens and 26 schools. There was very dynamic growth in the first years of Waldorf schools; but lately the growth has diminished, mostly due to a strained economy. State funding of schools has been reduced—the state now only pays one seventh of a school's expenses, with tuition now covering the rest—while the constraints have increased and recent laws have made it more and more difficult for Waldorf Schools to be self-determining. Waldorf schools in Hungary are struggling to survive. The upside of this challenge is that parents and teachers are working ever more closely together. All our meals during the Council meeting were made by parents, and during our meeting we were treated to a lovely puppet show, also performed by parents.

Most schools belong to the Federation of Waldorf Schools, created as an umbrella organization to support not only the Waldorf schools but all work coming out of anthroposophy—therapeutic eurythmy, Böttcher Gymnastics, extra lesson work, biodynamic agriculture, and teacher training. Unfortunately, the Federation has been plagued by conflicts and a perceived lack of clarity, which has given rise to many misunderstandings. Schools have also been hard-pressed to pay the yearly dues. Several years ago, a group was given a mandate to transform the organizational structure of the Federation and, while it is still a work in progress, membership is open to all schools in the country now and the dues are voluntary contributions. Within the Federation, a group of teachers is actively involved in creating criteria which schools must meet to be able to call themselves Waldorf Schools, much along the lines of what AWSNA and WECAN have been doing in North America. Unfortunately, there are very few, if any, early childhood teachers participating in this group; most early childhood programs are isolated, stand-alone kindergartens with a lead teacher and an assistant teacher in each group, making it difficult for a teacher to be away from her class.

Council members, during our visit to the Teacher Training Seminar, had the opportunity to attend a lecture given by Tamás Verkerdy, a clinical child psychologist and former Waldorf class teacher, and presently an advocate for Waldorf education in conversations with the Hungarian government, as well as a teacher in the Seminar. He reminded us that the fact that we are entering the age of the Consciousness Soul does not mean we are getting better; it means we are becoming more anti-social. If Waldorf education is to succeed in this century, he says, we must follow Rudolf Steiner's advice to become citizens of the world. He reminded us that Michael is a cosmopolitan Being, open to many ways of being and doing and embracing a world-wide reality. He drew our attention to two polarities: "Be who you want to be and I'll support you" (a Michaelic gesture) and, "Be who I want you to be and I will help you become that," a gesture he sees in some of the Waldorf schools and in education in general. He emphasized the fact that in Waldorf schools, the main person in the school is the child (not the teacher, as is true in many other forms of education) and our Waldorf principles should meet the child, not the other way around.

Of course, teacher training plays a huge role in the preparation of the next generation of Waldorf teachers. Here, too, Waldorf education is greatly challenged. Up until now, Waldorf schools and seminars have been free to determine the curriculum for teacher training and set teacher qualifications; but this is about to change. In spite of the fact that teacher training initially began with the early childhood training, it is the only training program not accredited by the State; even trainings to become a co-worker in Camphill Communities or in eurythmy are accredited. However, the full-time training can no longer support itself without some radical changes; one idea is to have teacher training become part of the State Technical University, which has many branches and may afford the possibility of full-time accredited teacher training programs. And there is also active work towards the early childhood training becoming fully accredited with the State.

Full-time teacher training (started in 1996) for all teachers is four years long and a B.A. is a prerequisite. There are also several part-time options available, including evening programs, which meet several times a month and then gather for a summer camp of several weeks, much like the part-time trainings we are familiar with in this country. And, as elsewhere, the questions of how we prepare teachers to meet the need

for clear communication, creative discipline in the classroom, and conflict management are ongoing, as is the question of how, once trained, teachers can create new methods and solutions.

Most young children attend some kind of State-run early childhood program before coming into a Waldorf program; most parents work full time after their children are three (maternity leave is three years in Hungary, though there is a movement to reduce that time) but most Waldorf early childhood programs do not offer spaces for children under four. They also do not usually offer afternoon care for children, believing that home is the best place for these young children. This translates into fewer families being able to opt for the choice of a Waldorf School for their young child, and it also means that the schools do not get any funding from the State. Dr. Verkerdy pleaded with the early childhood teachers to reconsider their position, both to support the needs of families with children and for the life of their schools and programs. Among the early childhood teachers and students there was much resistance to this idea, and I was reminded of similar conversations we had in our schools back in the early nineties.

As in many of the European Waldorf Schools, the State sets the age for children to enter first grade. Until fairly recently, children had to be seven years old during their first grade year to go to first grade; now, however, it has been reduced to six and, following the trends in many other places, may soon be reduced even further.

On the bright side, Waldorf education has had a positive impact on public education in Hungary. Not long ago, the state curriculum was rewritten and many of the people who had input into the changes were Waldorf parents. Although perhaps with a different interpretation than in Waldorf schools, the State education now emphasizes free play and kinesthetic learning in the early years, and more and more State school psychologists are referring children and their families to Waldorf schools.

In a country that lost 71% of its land and 66% of its population after World War One, that was occupied by first the Germans and then, in 1947, by the Communist regime, and whose last uprising was in 1989, Waldorf Education offers an antidote to the troubled past and provides an opportunity to strengthen the cultural richness of these proud, courageous and passionate people.

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

Helping Our Brothers and Sisters Around the World

WECAN acknowledges the severe disasters that have happened recently in Brazil, New Zealand, Japan, and elsewhere. We wish to raise awareness that we are part of an international organization (the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education, or IASWECE) that is striving to bring hope and healing into struggling parts of the world. We hope to facilitate the sending of support of all kinds to our brothers and sisters around the globe. Please see the websites and addresses below for more information and opportunities to donate:

Brazil

www.valedeluz.org.br

This is a direct link where donations can be made online at the site administered by the Escola do Vale de Luz.

New Zealand

Checks can be made out to NZ Steiner Federation and mailed to:

Mark Thornton
655 Findlay Road
Miranda 2473
New Zealand

Japan

Green Meadow Waldorf School is collecting funds which it will send for Japan relief. Go to Green Meadow's web page, www.gmws.org, click the link to "Japan" and contribute through the donate button, noting "Japan" in the notes field. Green Meadow is sending funds to the Freunde der Erziehungskunst and an organization known as JEN, which is doing work in the field.

One can also donate to an organization that is sending funds directly to Japan at www.sogojapan.org. Donations can be made either through Paypal or by credit or debit card online.

IASWECE Website: www.iaswece.org

The following is an excerpt from an article written in response to the Japan disaster. It has been found helpful by many teachers and parents in finding the right mood for being with children in these difficult times.

From "How Do I Find and Create Goodness for My Children?"

by Susan Weber, Sophia's Hearth Family Center

In difficult times such as these with environmental disaster of almost unprecedented scale and concern about friends and others in Japan at the forefront of our thoughts, it is not easy to feel the goodness in life. In an external crisis, our urge is often to listen and see the news and to share our feelings with other adults. As a consequence, it is easy for the children around us to be exposed to things that they cannot understand, to become fearful about situations they will never see and cannot change even if we think that the media or adult conversations are not attended to by the children. Even pre-verbal children can sense profoundly the distress in our inner being.

But nothing brings stamina for life and daily well being to our children more directly and strongly than surrounding them and immersing them into an atmosphere of goodness and joy. For us as adults, the message they seek from us is this: I am happy to be alive, I am interested in the world around me and I want to find a place for myself within it. Children are born with an openness to meet what their lives will bring. Despite their individual destinies and challenges, this openness is present and as the adults in the child's world, we have tremendous potential to cultivate this openness.

* * *

The entire article can be downloaded at www.sophiashearth.org.

The Blacksmith: A Michaelmas Circle

♦ Adapted by Sol Velazquez from *El Corro del Herrero*, *El Paso del Año* from the *Escuela Libre Micael*; translated by Louise deForest

Early in the morning

The fog descends unbidden

In the middle of the forest
The blacksmith's hut is hidden.

Hardworking is the blacksmith
His forge is always burning;
From the village one can see
In the air the smoke is turning.

Upon his great steed
A knight gallops near.
His scabbard is empty;
He'll find a sword here.

Galloping, galloping, galloping along.

"I am the blacksmith
Who forges the steel.
My hammer does sing
It so happy does feel."
Tin, Tin, Tan; Tin, Tin, Tan; Tin, Tin, Tan. Tin.

The bellows are full
From bottom to top,
The steel turns to crimson
The flames do not stop

Oh, what a lovely game
The steel turned to flame.
The sword is made
And into a hand laid.

Raise arms from mid-chest to above head, hands close together but not touching; spread hands apart as though picturing an open sky
Slowly lower arms, palms facing down, as though pressing down to shoulder height
Slowly lower hands back into center of chest
Arms are rounded and protecting head, head lowered and slightly tipped forward

Gesture of striking the anvil with a hammer through these three lines

Arms weave criss-cross across chest as smoke rising

Galloping in place

Palms up, hands gesture empty
Right hand lifts as though holding a sword

Galloping around the circle. Repeat enough times so everyone makes one full rotation around the circle.

Hammering on the anvil through this stanza

Repeat 2-3x to experience the rhythm

Hands lifted above head, clasped together at midline.
Move hands as unit down and then up in rhythm with speech as though pumping the bellows.
Hands swoop downward and then up as a shooting flame

Hammering gesture again
Hammering gesture
Hammering gesture
Hands spread apart, palms up in gesture to receive the Sword

Into water it does go
SZT.....
The sword it is tempered
It will vanquish the foe.

The blacksmith does polish
Both high and both low.
The long-bladed sword
Does glisten and glow.
Fst.....

Three long days
The blacksmith does labor;
Sharpening and shining
The clean-edged saber.

Upon his great steed
A knight gallops near,
His scabbard is empty
He'll find a sword here

Galloping, galloping, galloping along.

Thank you, dear blacksmith,
For all of your work.
I'll take the sword

The dragon does lurk.

The knight takes his leave
Upon his brave steed.

Galloping, galloping, galloping along.

O, dear knight so true and brave,
With the strength of this steel

You will all of us save.

Plunging sword downward
Repeat twice, emphasizing the T sound at the end
Raise sword up triumphantly
Swing sword down decisively but not harshly

Left hand gestures holding handle of sword. Right hand slides out from hilt, palm facing down, extending along length of sword to burnish the sword. Repeat polishing gesture through end of next line.

Hammering this line and next

One hand holds sword, other reaches out to smooth and rub each edge. Tip hand to show alternation.

Galloping around circle until last line of stanza

Raise right hand up as though holding sword

Continue galloping until whole group has galloped around at least once

Standing in place, bow, bend head downward in thanks

Reach out, both hands extended, palms upward, to receive the sword

Galloping again through this stanza

All standing in place, upright posture emphasized
Arms extended forward and slightly up with confidence, suggesting strength
Bring hands together and clasp at midline

Jack and Jill

• Franca Bombieri

An opening movement verse to gather the children's attention for circle.

*Movements created by Franca Bombieri,
Rudolf Steiner School (NYC) Early Childhood teacher*



Jack and Jill
Went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.

Jack fell down

And broke his crown

And Jill came tumbling after.

Then up Jack got

And home did trot
As fast as he could caper.

He went to bed

And plastered his head

With vinegar and brown paper.

Begin by marching in place.

Standing, jump straight up once, then fall to knees.

Bring hands to the side of head, just above each ear with fingers pointing up to form the sides of a crown.

While still kneeling, clap hands three times to the rhythm of the verse.

While still on knees lean forward placing hands flat on floor. On "up," hop onto feet while hands stay flat on floor and then stand up straight.

While standing jump straight up and down to the rhythm of the verse

Still standing straight, bring hands together to the right ear in a sleeping gesture, slightly lean head onto hands.

Place both hands on top of each side of the head.

Place hands on hips and skip three times to the rhythm of the verse, while bringing knees up high.

At Home I Have a Little Bed

♦ Sarina Cirianni-Jones

Movement verse by Sarina Cirianni-Jones, Princeton Waldorf School Early Childhood teacher

At home I have a little bed
so cozy and so snug

Mother rocks me off to sleep
with her sweet songs of love

Outside the blustery wind does blow
while in my bed I lay

I pull the covers up so high

And throw my cares away

But in the morning when I wake
I jump right out of bed

I stretch my arms and give a yawn
and shake my little head!

Lying on back with knees pulled into chest

Rocking back and forth on back

Repeat as in line above

**Straighten legs with feet flexed and toes pointed upwards/ hands in fists under chin, elbows out to sides off the ground, head and shoulders off the ground to check if “toes are tucked in”
Arms thrown floppy straight back and legs too**

**Roll over into crouch
And jump!**

Stretch arms, yawn, and shake head



The Peter Stories

• Estelle Bryer

The following is an excerpt from the book Movement for the Young Child: A Handbook for Eurythmists and Kindergarten Teachers, a new edition of the book formerly titled Eurythmy for the Young Child by Estelle Bryer. As can be seen from the example given here, the circles and games that Bryer has brought together out of her decades of work in the kindergarten are not just for eurythmy lessons, but can be adapted for the nursery or kindergarten circle. Following the stories we have included some of Bryer's advice on movement in the kindergarten.

To simplify matters, we have not included the indications for sounds and other eurythmy gestures that Bryer gives in her book, but only those which can be appropriately done by the nursery/kindergarten teacher.

In her introduction to the Peter stories, Estelle Bryer writes, "These stories have been joyously done by the children, both in eurythmy and as pure dramatization or storytelling by the teacher. They can be added to and are suitable for ages three to six. Shy children cannot resist the 'chewing' bits and can easily be enticed into joining in through that particular part. The following is as would be done for three-year-olds, with short sentences."

Once upon a time, there was a young boy called Peter. Peter woke up in the morning.

A sunbeam came through the window and said:

*Wake up, wake up, the sun shines bright,
The dark is conquered by the light.*

Peter jumped out of bed. He washed his face. He brushed his teeth. He combed his hair. He put on his clothes. He ate his breakfast. Mummy said, "Peter, go to the farmer and fetch a cabbage for supper, I want to make cabbage soup."

"All right, Mummy," said Peter, "I'll take my cart." The wheels of the cart went round and round, the wheels of the cart went round and round **(in circle)** and he stopped. There in front of him was a tortoise. **(Walk like a tortoise—get inside its skin!)**

The tortoise stopped and said, "Good morning, Peter. Where are you going?" "I'm going to the farm to

get a big, big cabbage," said Peter.

"May I come with you?" asked the tortoise. "Yes," said Peter.

The tortoise climbed into the cart and there he sat.

Peter pulled the cart and the wheels of the cart went round and round, the wheels of the cart went round and round, and he stopped. **(In circle as before)** There in front of him was a rabbit. **(Put up hands to "bunny-ears" and hop)** "Hop, little bunny, hop little bunny, hop, hop, hop." **(Repeat)**

The rabbit stopped and said, "Good morning, Peter." **(Repeat conversation with Peter as for tortoise)**

The rabbit climbed into the cart and there he sat next to the tortoise!

Peter pulled the cart, and the wheels of the cart went round and round, the wheels of the cart went round and round, and he stopped. There in front of him was a duck.

Put knees together, hands as tail and waddle—here one can quack with each waddle or add the following verse.

Have you seen the little ducks going to the water?

*Father, mother, baby duck, granny duck and
grandpa,*

Quack, quack, quack, quack, quack, quack, quack. . .

*Quack, quack, quack . . . quack. (They love
unexpected pauses here)*

Continue as with the others but drinking up the water, then swimming in the water, then coming from the water.

The duck stopped and said, "Good morning Peter." **(Repeat conversation as with the others)** And there he sat, next to the tortoise, and next to the rabbit!

Peter pulled the cart, and the wheels of the cart went round and round, the wheels of the cart went round and round, and he stopped.

There in front of him was a frog. **(Jump like a frog)** The frog said "Good morning, Peter." **(Repeat conversation as above)** Into the cart hopped the frog, and sat next to the tortoise, and the rabbit, and the duck!

Peter pulled the cart, and the wheels of the cart

went round and round, the wheels of the cart went round and round. Peter came to the farm. Where was the farmer? He was chopping wood. **(Clap hands and stamp feet from side to side)**

*The axe swings, the steel rings
With a bang and a clang
And a leap it bites deep.*

The farmer stopped and said, "Good morning Peter, what do you want?"

"Good morning, Mr. Farmer," said Peter, "I want a cabbage, please."

"Pull one out yourself," said the farmer.

Peter pulled and pulled and pulled and up came the cabbage, but when he wanted to put it in the cart, there sat the animals. He put the cabbage down, "Out," he said. The animals climbed out. Peter put the cabbage into the cart. "What about me?" asked the tortoise, "What about me?" asked the rabbit, "What about me?" asked the duck, "What about me?" asked the frog. "You can sit on top!" said Peter, and the animals climbed up, and Peter pulled the cart, and it was heavy! Peter pulled the cart, and the wheels of the cart went round and round, the wheels of the cart went round and round. **(In circle)**

All sit.

Now, while Peter was pulling the cart, the tortoise said, "I'm hungry," The rabbit said, "I'm hungry," The duck said, "I'm hungry" "Me too," said the frog.

"Let's have just a nibble," they said.

Animals eat; get "inside" each animal in turn.

The tortoise went **(chew with lips in, bite on them)**. The rabbit went **(bottom lip tucked in and top teeth showing over)**. The duck went **(both lips pouting well out)**. The frog went **(tongue curling out and in beyond lips)**.

Dwell on each type of chewing in sequence, then speed up. This part is so funny and the children cannot resist. It is also extremely healthy for them as it puts the will strongly into the mouth.

(Whisper) The cabbage was gone! And there they were, fast asleep, with full tummies!

Snore, breathing deeply in and out. All stand.

And Peter pulled the cart, and the wheels of the cart went round and round, the wheels of the cart went round and round.

Peter got home. There was his Mummy waiting for him. "Where is the cabbage, Peter?" she asked. "Behind me, Mummy," he said. He looked behind and there were the animals, fast asleep. They looked so funny that Peter and his Mummy laughed and laughed. "Ha,

ha, ha."

Peter's Mummy wasn't angry, but she said **(pointer finger held up and moved from side to side)**, "Be careful, Peter, those animals can be naughty. But never mind. We'll have carrot soup for supper."

The next time this story can be repeated with Peter going to fetch a big cauliflower, and his Mummy can warn him of the animals by using pointer finger as above. On the way back, they can just take a tiny nibble but again end up by finishing the whole cauliflower!

Also, Peter can take appropriate food for them and take them swimming. "Where are you going Peter?" "I'm going swimming!" A cabbage-leaf for the tortoise, a carrot for the rabbit and bread crumbs for the other two.

Here the duck, frog, and tortoise do different types of swimming, while the rabbit watches. They eat, and Peter has a sandwich (chew with mouth closed and upright to show the difference between human and animal). When he goes home, the duck and frog remain behind to swim some more.

Peter can also have a birthday party and invite the animals and then go into the making of the cake as well.

The children get to love the animals and their antics and, as a story on its own, many additions can be concocted. This story is a definite favorite because it is so funny, and children can relate to the animals.

* * *

Gesture and Movement During Circle Time: Why not eurythmy gestures?

Kindergarten teachers have at times voiced the question: "What kind of gestures must we do with our poems and songs? Can we do eurythmy gestures?" Over the years I have witnessed teachers trying to illustrate poems with eurythmy gestures which have been more like semaphore waving—well thought out, but empty. We know that the child in the first seven years is an imitative being who learns through imitating movement and gesture, but it is the quality within the gesture that is all-important. Gesture should never be empty, but filled with quality, intention, and feeling.

Many years ago at a Kindergarten Teachers' Conference, Dr. von Kügelgen, the "father" of the Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten Movement, explained that to do undescriptive, unfilled eurythmy gestures made no sense. He used the example that doing all the vowel gestures for "Golden sun in heaven blue" would not be nearly as effective as opening the arms to the imaginary sun while imagining the warmth and glory of it and all that it means for the earth, and filling the movement with this gratitude.

Rudolf Steiner said that it takes seven years to become a eurythmist. In the four-year training course, one learns thoroughly through movement how the vowels, which express our inner life, are related to the planets. For example, the sound *Ah* is connected to Venus; the quality of Venus is love and loving sacrifice. When we say *Ah* our throat is at its most open. As a gesture, we do this naturally without thinking when we open our arms to welcome someone coming towards us. In eurythmy, we make this gesture consciously for that sound by imbuing it with open loving feeling and bringing it so to life that it carries the physical without gravity in a conscious flowing movement while, at the same time, having as a background the planetary qualities, planetary movement and also the three colors and tension points which Rudolf Steiner gave for each sound. Every sound has a foundation such as this and nothing is arbitrary.

The consonants are connected to the zodiac signs in the same way. They are also related to the four elements: *f, s, sh*: fire, *r*: air, *b, p, d*: earth, and so on. What the speech organs do are translated into the equivalent descriptive movement and these movements can be done qualitatively with almost any part of the body, e.g. fingers, legs, shoulders, feet, elbows.

The kindergarten eurythmy teacher uses few movements, but each one is thoroughly penetrated with the above. These are "primal" movements. These qualities are cultivated through endless practice, which permeate the gestures with the healing and up-building substance that the child takes as living imitation. (This is why it is so important for children to have eurythmy before the change of teeth. They imitate cosmic movement!)

Eurythmy therapy is a further study in how to adapt the movements and allow them to penetrate even deeper as a healing for many ailments. But this should be done in conjunction with a doctor wherever possible.

* * *

What Movements Should the Kindergarten Teacher Do?

The teacher should find descriptive gestures that fit the meaning of the song or verse and make them as beautiful as possible, not resort to eurythmy gestures. The teacher should at all times be conscious of the beauty, the purity and truth of the gesture. It should be filled with the soul of the teacher, and weave etheric forms. The child will imitate not only the physical gesture, but also the etheric form that is created. The outreaching arms embrace, the butterfly of the waving hands causes currents in the air around the fingers, and the upward stretch reaches to the heavens, connecting with what is beyond the fingers.

The teachers must also do a variety of movements: clapping, stamping; walking on tip-toe, walking on heels; skipping, hopping; finger-games; and more. Contrasts are important between loud and soft, vigorous and quiet, contraction and expansion, tension and relaxation. The possibilities are endless.

The "filled" gesture is important at other times as well. For instance, when lighting a candle one can make a beautiful "rainbow bridge" gesture with the flame to the wick, or, when setting the table, put the dishes down with care and precision. Passing the food graciously, opening one's arms when calling a child, greeting a friend or parent, beckoning to another, or even the way one lifts a chair: these can all be "filled" gestures.

The gesture of speech is also important, for it is the clarity of our consonants that helps to structure the children. It is how you say the words that is as important as the meaning within them.

When doing animal movements such as a bear walking or, as in the Peter stories, the various animals chewing, the teacher must try to creep into the movement of the animal from within, so that one feels as if one is actually the tortoise chewing. Movement belongs to the etheric kingdom, and it is the etheric that the child imitates.

We need to hold a consciousness in our thought, word, gesture, and deed which will not only form a healthy image for the child to imitate, but help form the healthy physical body of the child.

The task of the teacher is certainly not an easy one, but it is the striving to better ourselves that also penetrates the children and gives them a firm foundation for the rest of their lives.

Estelle Bryer *has been active as a kindergarten teacher, eurythmy teacher, therapeutic eurythmist, and teacher trainer in South Africa for many years.*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jun 20 – 24 2011, Highland Hall Waldorf School, Northridge, CA: **Storytelling as Nutrition for the Young Child** with Stephen Spitalny and Dean Pollard. One week workshop that will address the needs of the child and the ways that story can satisfy those needs. Story is both nutrition and healing for the developing etheric body and soul of the young child. Starting from an examination of early child development, we will address the needs of the child and the ways that story can satisfy those needs. Through movement and storymaking we will get a chance to explore many aspects of this important work. www.waldorfteaching.org or contact Mia Memel, 818-349-6272, office@waldorfteaching.org

Jul 4 – 8 2011, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Creating Programs for Parents and Infants: Building Family Relationships**, with Nancy Macalaster and Kim Snyder-Vine. This course will enable participants to develop a seamless continuum for parents with infants and young children from newborns to age three within the context of a facilitated playgroup program. The course will look at newborns, older infants, and toddlers and the playgroup needs of each age in forming the physical environment and the rhythm of the day, and insights into parents' changing questions and needs through these three stages. Contact Bonnie: 603 357-3755; bonnie@sophiashearth.org www.sophiashearth.org

June 20 - 24, The Waldorf School of Atlanta: **Home at School - A professional development course** designed for Extended Day providers in Early Childhood and Elementary School. For more information or to register contact Cynthia Aldinger: ck.aldinger@sbcglobal.net or Sondi Eugene: sondiatl@bellsouth.net

June 27-July 1 at the Waldorf School of San Diego: **Creative Listening: Toward a Living Music Pedagogy** with Pär Ahlbom. Sponsored by the Association of North American Waldorf Music Educators (ANAWME) & Waldorf Institute of Southern California - San Diego

Join music teachers, class & early childhood teachers, parents and others for the 14th Annual Waldorf Teacher Music Conference. We welcome with pleasure our guest teacher from Järna, Sweden, renowned Waldorf educator and musician Pär Ahlbom. As Pär demonstrates his unique approach to human development through art and movement, this conference promises to be an exciting blend of experiential and practical work with movement exercises, instrumental and singing improvisation, and novel pedagogical approaches. Specialized break-out sessions as in voice, lyre and the Waldorf music curriculum will bring opportunities to deepen our work with music in child development.

July 10-15, Denver, CO: **Nurturing the Roots: A Three-year Advanced Therapeutic Course** for Early Childhood Educators, with Nancy Blanning, Laurie Clark, Suzanne Down, and Adam Blanning, MD. First session of a three-year course; may be attended separately. The course comprises three week-long July summer conferences complemented by two late January four-and-a-half day workshops. The summer weeks will be devoted to instruction in child observation, hygienic circle movement, therapeutic puppetry and other therapeutic modalities, constitutional polarities, and developmental assessments for the kindergarten, first grade and second grade child. The winter workshops will focus more on practical implementation of these topics in the classroom setting. Summer sessions may be attended as a stand-alone experience; winter sessions are reserved for those who sign up for the whole course. www.denvertherapies.com/Therapeutic-ECE-Course.html / nancy.blanning@gmail.com

July 17- 22, Sound Circle Center, Seattle, WA: **The Twelve Senses: A Path of Development and a Foundation for Working with Children**. Lectures and discussion: Christof Wiechert and Johanna Steegmans. Arts: Storytelling with Ashley Ramsden, Eurythmy with Jenny Foster, Clay Modeling with Nancy Pfeiffer, Painting with Janet Lia. See: <http://www.soundcircle.org/files/12%20Senses.pdf> or contactinformation@soundcirclecenter.org

In this issue, we only had space to list a few of the exciting events happening in all corners of the country. For many more events, including workshops, short courses, puppetry, craft, and eurythmy events, and ongoing trainings, please visit our online calendar at www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/calendar.asp.

Please also be sure to 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, Center for Anthroposophy.

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

NEW FROM WECAN BOOKS



The Child from Birth to Three in Waldorf Education and Child Care

\$16

This small book is packed with information about the anthroposophical view of child development from birth to age three, and how it can best be supported in an out-of-home care setting. Translated from a German report, it has been thoroughly revised and edited for English-speaking readers. Beautiful full-color photographs enhance the text throughout.

Dancing Hand—Trotting Pony

\$28

The fourth book in the series of gesture games by Wilma Ellersiek has two sets of these lively and engaging games: one to get fingers, thumbs and hands dancing with rhythmic movement (and support speech development as well), and the other to help us enter the animal kingdom, transforming into snails, bunnies, ponies, and many other creatures.

The Seasonal Festivals in Early Childhood: Seeking the Universally Human

\$20

Edited by Nancy Foster, this collection of articles, circles, puppet plays, verses, and more aims to deepen our understanding of the seasonal festivals so that they can be brought to the children in a way that touches the universally human essence in each one of us.

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

\$16

What is the nature of children's play? How can we protect and foster it? This in-depth study by Renate Long-Breipohl is based on a research project conducted in Australia, and is illustrated with full-color photographs as well as many classroom observations by teachers.

Seeking the Spirit: Whitsun Inspiration for Individuals and Communities

\$16

This treasury of excerpts from the words of Rudolf Steiner and other authors (some unavailable elsewhere in English) addresses the question of how we can bring the spirit into life, through our efforts as individuals working in community. Wonderful for a faculty study!

***When you shop online at our new bookstore,
store.waldorfearlychildhood.org, all purchases
directly benefit WECAN! Member discounts available.***

Celebrating Rudolf Steiner's 150th Anniversary: 1861-2011

Week 1

Drawing with Hand,
Head, and Heart:
Finding Confidence in
Drawing for Grades 1-12
with Van James

Encountering Evil:
Exploring the Task
of Our Time
with Douglas Sloan

Traumatic Experiences
in Childhood: Healing
the Senses and Will
through Education and
Therapy with Tobias &
Johanna Tuechermann

Deepening Waldorf
Education through
Study and Art:
Meditatively Acquired
Study of Man, Balance
in Teaching, and
Curriculum Painting
with Georg Locher

AWSNA Mentoring
Course for
Experienced Eurythmists
with Leonore Russell &
Carla Comey

Academic Learning
through Artistic
Projects for Children 7-12
with Elizabeth Auer

Needlefelting:
Painting with Wool for
the Individual and the
Community
with Marcy Schepker

Veilpainting:
The Weaving of
Human Relationships
and the Divine
with Iris Sullivan

Teaching World
Languages in Grades
6, 7, and 8: Unique
Encounters with the
Genius of Language
with Lorey Johnson &
Kati Manning

Music in the Light of
Anthroposophy
with Juliane Weeks &
Monica Amstutz

Health-Bringing Aspects
of the Waldorf
Curriculum and the
Art of Teaching
with Christof Wiechert



2011 Renewal Courses



Week 2

A Celebration of the
Life and Work of
Rudolf Steiner after
150 years
with Virginia Sease

Form and Flow:
An Inner Schooling for
Understanding Water
with Jennifer Greene

Recreating the
Human Vessel:
Educating through
Rhythm and Craft with
Aonghus Gordon &
Master Craftsmen in
Soapmaking, Felting,
Woodworking, and Clay

Unveiling a New
Mythos: The Parzival
Story, the Philosophy
of Spiritual Activity,
and our Journey into
the Time of Michael
with Philip Thatcher

Puppetry Arts: Producing
The Bee Man of Orn
with Janene Ping

Making Math
Meaningful and
Inspiring in
Grades 6, 7, and 8
with Jamie York

Personal and
Organizational
Renewal: From Survival
to Success
with Leonore Russell &
Torin Finser

Transformation of
Self through Intuitive
Thinking and Artistic
Perception
with Georg Locher,
Douglas Gerwin, &
Hugh Renwick

Week I: June 26-July 1 · Week II: July 3-8

*Two weeks of five-day retreats
bringing together Waldorf teachers and others for
personal rejuvenation and social renewal through
anthroposophical study and artistic immersion.*

See our complete course listings at: www.centerforanthroposophy.org

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- Music
- Slides of R. Steiner's Blackboard Drawings
- Artistic Café-Soirees

Summer Study at Sunbridge Institute



2011 Offerings for Early Childhood Educators

June 13-17:

An Intro to Working with Children Birth to Age 3

NEW THIS YEAR!

with Susan Weber and Jane Swain of Sophia's Hearth

This course introduces participants to the unfolding world of infants and toddlers through the Anthroposophical picture of the human being and the insights of the Pikler Institute in Budapest, Hungary. Through discussions and active, physical exploration, this course will provide program approaches toward childcare, as well as a broader understanding of the development of the young child from a physical, social and spiritual perspective.

July 17-22:

please note different dates this year

Introduction to Waldorf Early Childhood Education

with Leslie Burchell-Fox, Connie Manson, and Patricia Rubano

This five-day immersion into the world of Waldorf early childhood education offers an excellent introduction to the rhythms and activities of the nursery-kindergarten including puppetry, handwork, music, and much more! Learn from three master Waldorf early childhood educators and share in their love and appreciation for working with the child before school-entrance age.

Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education Program

Susan Howard, Program Director

New Cycle begins summer 2012 – Now enrolling!

This diploma program includes courses in child development, practical activities, arts and crafts, and the inner foundations of Waldorf education, together with mentored teaching. This two-year course includes three-week summer sessions and five-day intensives in fall and spring.

The program is fully endorsed by the Association of Waldorf Schools and the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America.

Register for summer courses online: www.Sunbridge.edu

Information on travel, food, and housing available online.

Questions? 845.425.0055 x18 or info@sunbridge.edu

LifeWays Childcare Provider Training



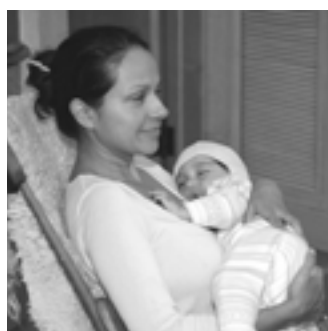
One-Year, Part-Time Training

Begins July 22-29, 2011

Provides 12 Core Early Childhood Education Units

This Course is Designed For:

Parents and Grandparents of Children Birth–Six Years
Early Childhood Caregivers in Centers or Home-Based Care
Parent/Infant/Child Educators



LifeWays is devoted to supporting healthy childcare and home parent/infant/child programs through trainings for caregivers and parent educators. The focus of the LifeWays approach to childcare—from infancy through age six—is to provide the best elements of care found within a healthy home. The childcare practices of a LifeWays family-style model are based upon: healthy sense development; continuity of care; development of mind and body; domestic, nurturing, and creative arts; and the development of social interactions. These activities are inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner and the experience of Waldorf education, and are supported by contemporary early childhood research, as well as the common sense wisdom of generations of parents.

This **one-year, part-time training** will meet for four intensive sessions: July 22-29, 2011; October 12-16, 2011; February 29-March 4, 2012; and June 18-30, 2012. This course provides **12 Core Early Childhood Education Units** for childcare providers in homes or private centers.

"LifeWays touches so many areas of life in a deep and meaningful way. Its wisdom will reverberate through all I do as a mother, caregiver, teacher, and ultimately will flow into the community and society at large. Its scope is broad—encompassing birth, parenting, infancy, toddlerhood, the young child, homemaking, nurturing relationships, caregiving, and spirituality. Truly transformational!"

—Tania Gonzalez, Sedona, Arizona; Rudolf Steiner College LifeWays Graduate

Cynthia Aldinger, Program Director, is Executive Director of LifeWays North America, and is a member of WECAN and the Alliance for Childhood. A former Waldorf Kindergarten teacher, Cynthia has lectured internationally and directs trainings across the United States.

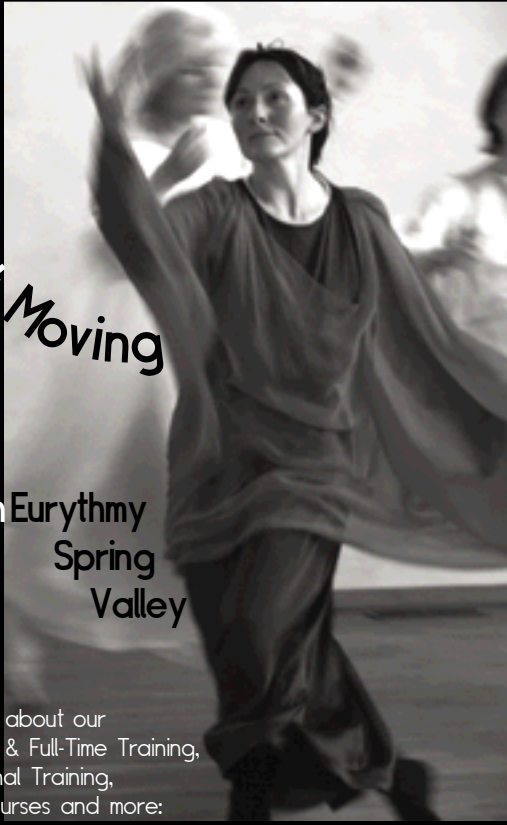


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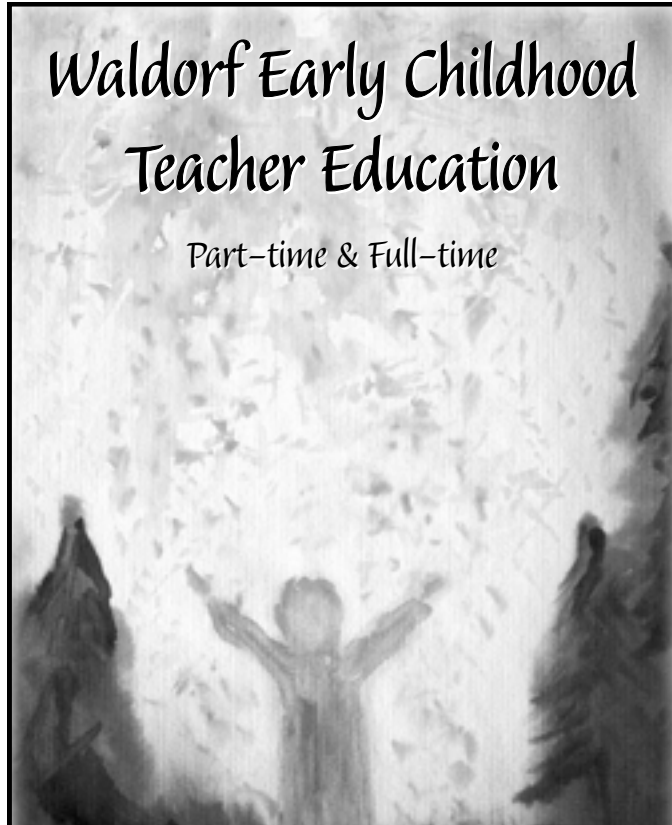


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Early Childhood Summer Institute and Teacher Training Program



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Creating Programs for Parents & Infants*

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NANCY MACALASTER, KIM SNYDER-VINE

July 11-15

The Young Child's Conversation With Nature

CAROL NASR, KIM RAYMOND

Nurturing the Child in the First Three Years I*

(Child Development)

KIM SNYDER-VINE, JANE SWAIN, SUSAN WEBER

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graduate credit**

July 18-22

Nurturing the Child in the First Three Years II* *(Child Development)*

JANE SWAIN, SUSAN WEBER, KIM SNYDER-VINE

July 18-22 Two Week Course

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-Marcy Andrew,
LifeWays Graduate



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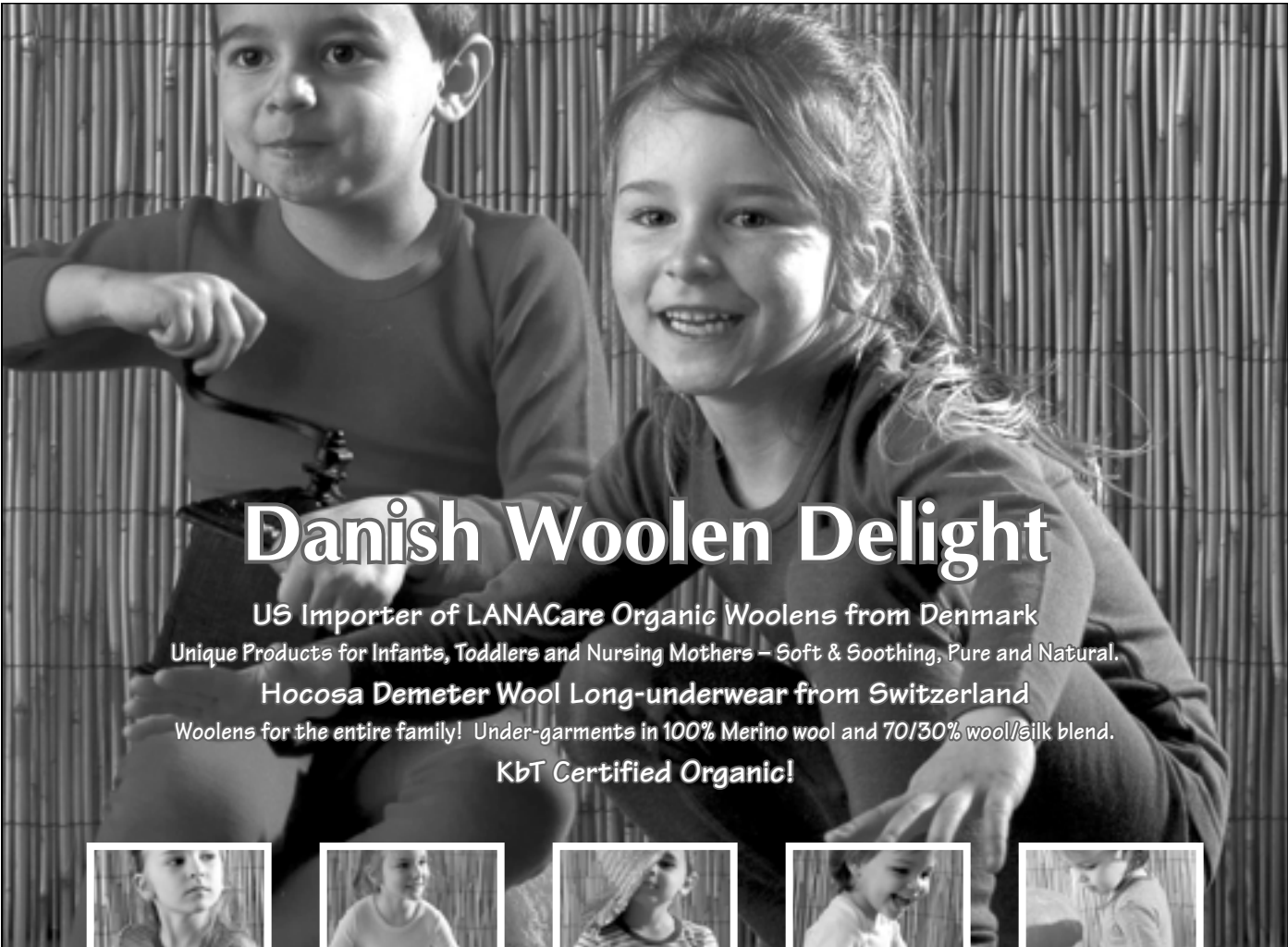
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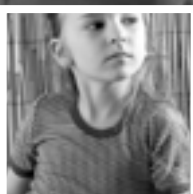
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Owned and operated by Morgan & Janice Emanuelsson. Janice Emanuelsson is a lactation consultant (IBCLC) and Swedish-Certified Nurse-Midwife.

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