

Editor's Introduction

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It is a sign of progress, or at least of progressive-ness, when an educational movement more than a century old keeps exploring ways to adapt itself to the times, places, and circumstances into which it has grown. The fact that the foundation and wider worldview of Waldorf education have convinced those of us who practice within it that it is so solidly right in its view of the child, of human development, and of the roles of the teacher, could make progress and innovation challenging. Why would you change, how could you change when the foundations ring so true and the insights of the founder still inspire us over the decades, lands, and languages that they have transcended to reach us?

And yet, the times they are a-changin', the world is transforming, the earth is... well, you know, and our societies are diversifying. In view of all of that, Waldorf education, too, is seeking ways to adapt and transform while not losing the essential form that lies at its foundation.

If the previous issue of the *Research Bulletin* featured some broader views of Waldorf curricula and the explorations of change, we are offering more space in the current issue to specific classes and courses that aim at the rebirth of old impulses in new surroundings.

In this context, Brian Scannell, writing from the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School in New York State, lays out an apt, detailed course plan and practice in his "Renaissance in Florence and Harlem." While the curricular instructions laid out at the foundation call for the focused study of the European Renaissance in grades 7 and 11, Scannell offers his innovation by teaching that period alongside the Harlem Renaissance of early 20th century America. Scannell's essay is especially helpful to class and subject teachers seeking ways to revive their teaching of renaissance as a carrier of the impulse of renewal and rebirth beyond the historical period originally indicated in Steiner's curriculum. The essay is also helpful in its insightful reflections on the reasons for teaching renaissance and on the tension between tradition and progress in the Waldorf movement, which are the focus of the current issue.

Alison Davis, of the Sacramento Waldorf School in California, pushes further the question of renewal and innovation by calling for extending such aims beyond the incorporation of new content and into the exploration of new teaching methodologies. To this end, Davis

offers a detailed description of her research, preparation, and enactment of a revised 12th grade main lesson in World Literature. Her methodological innovation goes beyond swapping a traditional, canonical text with a more current, marginalized one, by moving from *reading* literature to *listening* to it, and from *writing about* literature to the students' own *oral storytelling* – all in the service of the experience of deep, transformative listening. The details of this experiment and the concepts and goals that motivate it are laid out in Alison Davis' "Decolonizing a World Literature Course in the Service of Deep Listening." The "decolonization" in the title is defined by Davis as the "updating, auditing, or designing Waldorf curriculum—especially ... through the lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice," calling for a critical examination of the various impacts on culture and society that European occupation has had on its former colonies. Such work digs deep by unearthing what has been covered up by European influence and moves sideways in spreading recovered traditions to other cultures.

Harlan Gilbert, a seasoned teacher and writer at the Green Meadow Waldorf School, explores the diversification of a Humanities high school course that otherwise could have nestled itself comfortably at the heart of mainstream Western culture, science, and thought: Philosophy. Gilbert offers his 12th grade students, and our readers, an exploration in self-knowledge and moral awareness, which is guided by the Hellenistic philosophical tradition (namely, Aristotle) but expands to include and explore philosophical, reflective, and moral traditions from China and the Zulu People of southern Africa. Again, we encounter here an essay that offers both a course plan that could be adopted and adapted by other teachers alongside a contextualized reflection on the issue of why we are teaching what we teach.

We move from the upper grades to earlier childhood with the next two articles in this issue, both focused on the telling of fairy tales. Holly Koteen-Soulé, coming with decades of experience in teaching early childhood classes and training early childhood teachers, dives back into a core practice of Waldorf education in the early years and grades in order to answer the question: What is the role of fairy tales in our formative pedagogical endeavors?

Peter Lawton, a longtime class teacher at the City of Lakes Waldorf School in Minnesota, shares with us

here a generous portion of his forthcoming book, *The Pedagogy of Wonder: An Artistic and Critical Approach to Telling Fairy Tales to Young Children*. Lawton, who also holds a doctorate in education, takes the long view in analyzing and explaining the various aspects of “fairy tale pedagogy,” in the context of Waldorf education as well as in relation to mainstream theories of education and human development. A refreshing aspect of this methodical exploration appears in the author’s detailed description of his own inner work in both preparatory and performative elements of his pedagogy. Lawton seems to be joining the conversation set up earlier in this issue, the one exploring the relationship between content and methodology, by seeing the two intertwined into one, as suggested in his phrasing, “the pedagogy sometimes *is* the curriculum!”

We turn next to an exploration of curriculum innovation or “deviations” coming from Europe. Ruhi Tyson, an experienced Waldorf teacher and a scholar of teacher education based in Stockholm, Sweden, offers a specific take on deviations from “the standard Steiner/Waldorf curriculum” by focusing further on two case studies of experiments taking place in two German Waldorf schools. One, the veteran Hibernia School (established in the 1950s), in Germany’s North Rhine-Westphalia, has integrated vocational education into the “standard” Steiner curriculum, specifically guiding its students from the seventh grade onwards in crafts such as carpentry, tailoring, tool making, electrics, as well as childcare. The second case, taking place at the *Freie Waldorfschule Ulm, Römerstrasse*, describes how the original component of social service in the community extended to an ongoing project, initiated in 1992, wherein high school students participate in building construction and other services at a village in Romania. Through repeated visits to the village, the German Waldorf students practice both crafts and social engagement that has yielded, alongside the pedagogical benefits to the students, “an anthroposophical clinic, herbal garden for medicinal herbs, a small medicine making facility, a youth center, staff accommodation, a large clinic park with a swimming pool and chapel, as well as a renovation of a kindergarten and a retirement home.”

Tyson’s article is very thorough and academically dense, and some readers might want to jump ahead to the two case studies, described above, to learn more about their offering of deviations from standard curriculum. The article concludes with a helpful contribution to our general focus on pedagogical innovation: “Steiner education has the ongoing potential to be a significant source of curriculum innovation that can enrich society at large (to the extent that there is a shared interest in *Bildung*). However, unless there is more of a systematic cooperation between teacher training institutions,

researchers, and individual schools interested in actively enacting such innovations, the potential for this will remain largely untapped.”

Veteran Waldorf teacher and teacher of teachers, Michael Holdrege, has recently published a rich book on teaching human biology: *From Mechanism to Organism: Enlivening the Study of Human Biology* (Waldorf Publication, 2022). We include here a short excerpt from Holdrege’s book, in which he steps back to view the larger picture by contrasting the prevailing mechanistic, materialistic view of biology with one that sees the greater, living whole. In doing so, Holdrege calls on the reflections of Douglas Sloan, co-founder of the *Research Institute for Waldorf Education* and the first editor of the *Research Bulletin*.

You will be able to go straight to the source of Holdrege’s philosophical inspiration, as we are happy to pay tribute to Douglas Sloan, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, by reprinting some of his reflective writing on knowing the world truly through knowing ourselves. The conclusion to the second article included here, “Science and the Humanities,” should give you a taste of what this lifelong supporter of Waldorf education has to offer:

I can only come to know qualities in the world—the world of nature, the world of others, the world of the spiritual—to the extent that I can bring those qualities to birth in myself. For example, the non-sensory qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, and many others, can be truly known by me as realities in the world *only if* I can come to experience them as realities in myself. And, it also works in the other direction: Opening myself to the qualities in the world can nurture and enable them to take root within myself.

Sloan’s essays are introduced by a warm tribute, written by Patrice Maynard, offering a synoptic glance of Douglas’ storied life and career.

Tucked in between these sets of reflections you will find an informative opinion piece by Douglas Gerwin, responding to continuously grim reports on the numerical decline of the teaching professions in the United States. Gerwin’s analysis, guided by Steiner’s view of the threefold society, concludes that the failures of mainstream educational practices in the United States are a result of the dominance of economic values and objectives, inappropriately influencing the field of education.

We wish all our readers a restful summer and we continue to invite teachers of all grades and subjects to share with us their explorations and innovations of Waldorf education.