Independent or Charter?
Study of Teacher Choice: Part Two

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This is the concluding installment of a two-part article based on recent research that examined the movement of experienced Waldorf teachers between independent and charter school settings. The study sought to gain a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between the two settings from the teachers' perspective and to gather lessons we can learn from the relatively recent expansion of Waldorf education beyond the independent school context. Through a process of open-ended interviews, ten teachers with significant years in both independent and charter schools were asked to reflect on their choices of setting and their experiences. In the previous issue of the *Research Bulletin* (Volume XVIII Number 1), I offered an overview of the project's context and design and reported on five of the seven major findings: determinants of teacher choice (reasons for moving between schools); choices made as parents and their impact on teaching setting; the effect of each setting on collegial and inner work; the impact of school structure and organization; and differences in working with students and parents. In this article, two final themes are reported and all findings discussed.

MAJOR FINDINGS (continued)

Essential Differences: Tangible and Intangible

Participants were asked to characterize the essential differences, tangible or intangible, between their experience in independent and charter schools. The majority of these differences were described in the first part of this article, but two additional differences appear to be core to much of the debate around public and independent schools and merit separate consideration, namely: the impact of standardized testing and state regulations; and the question of freedom and accountability.

The topic of mandated assessment came up in almost every interview. Teachers agreed that it had a positive element; as one said, "Accountability is not a bad thing." Another believed that the demand of testing created more focus; teachers took their responsibilities for student learning more seriously knowing that tests were coming at the end of the year. For most, though, testing as it is currently constructed was a cause for discomfort. Several shuddered at the thought of second graders taking standardized tests and felt that this practice was stressful and potentially traumatic for the children. One teacher emphasized that although her charter did not adapt the curriculum in any way to accommodate testing, she had heard of this happening at other charters—the practice of "teaching to the test." Generally, the teachers believed that mandatory testing and other state regulations provide greater accountability but create a more bureaucratic and regulated environment, one in which there was less freedom because "you have to do it this way."

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Teachers felt that testing had impact on their autonomy and ability to decide what was best for their children. Questions of freedom

arose in each interview and proved to be quite complex. Most teachers reported that they had a greater measure of freedom in the classroom and with the curriculum in an independent school. Without the mandate of standardized tests, there was "more time for children to grow into who they are meant to be" with "space to trust the children as the human beings that they are and are becoming." One teacher felt that it had been harder to maintain this space and trust in the charter environment, ultimately motivating her to move to an independent school.

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Reflecting further, another teacher observed that the spiritual work the teachers do together provides a well from which the work can deepen and grow, yet felt that this was not as likely to happen in a charter setting. In an independent school this spiritual work finds expression in a rich festival life and in "the overarching aesthetic that is carried by the spiritual impulse." Several described feeling greater freedom to work out of anthroposophical principles in an independent school. Direct grounding in anthroposophy in turn gave more freedom to be creative in teaching compared to applying methods or sticking with convention. One teacher summarized a general point of view, describing the essence of the work as building and holding an anthroposophically based picture of the human being.

Several teachers talked of the etheric or energy body of schools, concluding that, overall, the independent schools had a stronger "feel," which one teacher described as a place of wisdom. It is possible, however, that we are seeing the impact of institutional biography rather than a charter/independent divide; on the whole charter schools are still young, both individually and collectively. They are in a building phase and lack the traditions, resources, and deep rhythms of older schools. Illustrating this, one teacher recalled her mixed and rather frustrating experience in a young independent school that was still rather unpredictable and chaotic in its operations. This biographical element may also be linked to a question of generations. When asked to reflect on essential elements, one teacher noted a "trend of slippage in teachers' commitment to communal leadership, inner work, et cetera. . . .There is a reluctance to give up free time—they have other commitments." This trend seems to cut across both public and independent settings—part of the ethos of the older independent schools is carried by those "who give their lives to the school," a gesture that younger colleagues seemed unwilling to make.

Finally, teachers spoke of the intangible element of intention: (1) the intention of parents who seek out and pay for independent education, are often well-informed about their choice and well-educated in child development, and understand that they will pay and work really hard in many ways to support the school; and (2) the intention of teachers who must have the desire to do this work if they are to deepen it, no matter what the setting. Pondering the impulses that start schools, one teacher said: "The desire to do this work needs to come from the teacher; it cannot be successfully imposed. . . .You need to have the freedom to work out of anthroposophy. . . .Otherwise you have methodology—which is not a bad thing, because the methodology is brilliant, but we need to be clear." All teachers agreed that this deep commitment to work out of the wellspring of anthroposophical study could be found in both settings, but that it tended to be easier to draw from that well in the independent setting.

Hopes for the Future

Towards the end of the interview, each participant was asked to reflect on the current

status of the independent/charter debate and to offer thoughts and hopes for the future of the work. There was considerable uniformity of response, whether the teacher currently worked in a charter or independent setting. According to these teachers, the charter schools are here to stay, are likely to continue to grow, and are meeting an important need. They see differences between the two, yet believe both are essential to meet the needs of children and for the further development of the work. They would like to see collaboration, respect, and mutual support. They reinforced the need for clarity of goals and purpose. Every teacher emphasized the fundamental importance of teacher training and professional development for the current and future health of education.

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Most participants identified broad, objective differences between the two types of schools. Differences were framed in terms of freedom to work openly with the spiritual impulse of anthroposophy and the absence of "the government finger in there." The latter was most apparent in state or federal requirements of standardized student assessment. Recognizing these differences, they understood the stand taken by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) for the quality and integrity of the Waldorf "brand." One observed: "AWSNA is moving in the right direction; it is important to continue being clear" on when the term "Waldorf" can be used and what it stands for. Several noted the key impact of trained and fully informed teachers; superseding a division between independent or charter school, appropriately trained teachers allow a school to deepen its mission and grow beyond "crayons, painting, and methods." As they looked to the future, they believe for the work to flourish, teachers "have to be trained in a way that allows them to see if they really want to be Waldorf teachers—[and to know] there is a spiritual component to this." From another: "[For] all kids to have a Waldorf education, so much depends on the teachers. They have to be people that want to deepen themselves and are inspired to teach in the public system, are willing to weave the spiritual fabric and do the inner work." Full disclosure at the outset is important.

The teachers emphasized that the charter movement is young and still finding its way; its story is still being written. They hope to work together to guide and support this fledgling impulse. They returned again and again to the social mission of Waldorf education: "This work is not easy, but there is need everywhere." One noted that compromises might be made in both settings, but that "ultimately, Waldorf education is such a gift to the child and human being—that is what unifies us." Another emphasized the value of the charter movement, "bringing as much Waldorf education as possible in different settings for the sake of the children. …It is for the students, I saw how much they grew and changed. It made a difference in their lives." Another summarized: "[Charters] make it possible, available, to so many more people."

The desire for brotherhood extended into a yearning for a new relationship between the two groups. One stated: "Brotherhood is essential. They have things to offer each other." Many had had first-hand experiences of negativity from colleagues: "There is a knee-jerk response to charters—I hear it all the time. I'd like to see more understanding and less defensiveness." Another suggested that negativity, or even hostility, was perpetuated by a simple lack of knowledge that could

be overcome by interest. In the words of one teacher, "Go visit your neighbor. …We have to have discussion, practice what we preach—inquiry, discussion, partnership." Another hoped for a new relationship between the Alliance and AWSNA, expressing the opinion: "We [in the independent schools] can inspire the people at the charter schools to do deeper inner work, become more interested in anthroposophy, bring more basic terminology." Most felt that the path to protecting and strengthening Waldorf education lies in closer relationships and collaboration, not in distance.

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In addition to independent schools supporting charters, many felt that the charter movement has a lot to offer the independent schools. Charters have dramatically increased the public profile of Waldorf education; in several areas there has been "an explosion of interest in Waldorf." Initially, this caused considerable anxiety and a feeling of competition and threat, but collaboration between schools has grown, with shared events, mentoring and evaluation activities between schools, and "lots of movement, like a chessboard," of friends and colleagues that has built connections between schools. Looking a little deeper, one teacher noted the "amazing contributions of the charter school work." She cited the PLANS lawsuit that clarified the status of anthroposophy for all schools—at a cost of over $750,000 to the Sacramento Unified School District. She noted that this court ruling—which dismissed the complaint that anthroposophy is a religion—provided a new level of protection to all schools and lent credibility to Waldorf education.

Other charter contributions include the start of peer-reviewed research. One participant spoke of a desire to test the validity of Waldorf in a wider forum: "Let's put it to the test, see if it is a really valid framework [in a wider setting]." One suggested that, because of the imperative of testing, a different discussion about accountability and assessment might be possible.

For these teachers, the work of both charter and independent schools is valid and important. Several noted that the freedom of the independent schools allows for a deepening of our collective work, while the spread of charters allows for a growth of acceptance and interest. As one said: "They have things to offer each other." A charter school "does not have to look like [an independent school]"—several affirmed their belief that Waldorf education "can manifest in many different forms" and that the development of charter schools is supporting innovation and experimentation: "There are different ways of implementing but they all have truth." One participant noted that all of the schools, independent and charter alike, are changing and adapting as they attempt to meet a modern age and a new generation of teachers, parents, and students. This group was united in a hope: "Let's work together in a spirit of brotherhood."

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DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This project centered on the perspectives of ten teachers who described the independent/public issue from their unique points of view. Once their stories were told, I took a step back and studied the patterns that had emerged. Five topics stood out: the tension between

freedom and access, the social mission of Waldorf education, the essentials of Waldorf education, developmental aspects of schools, and the core role of teacher training and support.

Freedom and Access

When Rudolf Steiner agreed in 1919 to develop the first Waldorf school, he stated several conditions for its operation. Two of these appear to be particularly relevant to the current debate on the role and form of Waldorf education in North America. "Steiner wholeheartedly agreed [to the development of a school] on condition that the new school should be open to all children regardless of social, economic, racial, or religious background…and that the school should be completely independent of all economic and political control. This latter condition was of crucial importance to Steiner, for he was convinced that there would be no permanent solutions for any of the pressing social problems unless the sphere of cultural and spiritual life was freed from state domination as well as from direct and indirect control by business." (Barnes, 1980, p.2) In many ways, the current debate on independent and public schools can be characterized as a tension between these two directives: freedom from political or state control opposite open access for all children.

In this country, the educational impulse named Waldorf manifested first in the form of independent schools. This afforded it a significant degree of freedom from government regulations and allowed it to become firmly established, growing quietly and largely unnoticed for over sixty-five years and developing a strong body of practice and tradition. The American school movement thus met Steiner's condition of independence from political control to a remarkable level not enjoyed by other countries. However, the study participants' stories suggest that this political freedom came at a price, represented by the economic sacrifice of its teachers and the ever-increasing cost of private-school tuition, with an accompanying "buyer's mentality" and attitudes of entitlement from its "customers," the parents and students. If we are to heed the stories of this group of teachers, economic pressures, materialistic thinking, and increasing emphasis on a return on investment have grown alongside increases in tuition, reducing freedom of operation.

The impulse of Waldorf education was able to move into the public sector largely through the advent of charter schools. These schools, public schools of choice, were intended to allow innovation in education through a reduction in regulations and to provide choice and access to different types of schools for all who seek them. Thus, it could be argued that the charter schools meet Steiner's requirement of "access to all" regardless of background far more successfully than the independent schools, whose fees stand as an insurmountable hurdle to the vast majority of this nation's children. However, as public institutions, charter schools are subject to political controls that restrict freedom of practice. Participants identified these controls as particularly evident in requirements for a type of student assessment that is incompatible with the Waldorf model of human development and that may impose restrictions on curriculum and teaching.

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These two mandates—one for freedom of access, the other for freedom from political control—stand at odds in our schools. They are confronted with the need for compromise in one or the other mandate in order to exist. Independent schools enjoy a very significant level of freedom from political control, but their

tuition-driven model creates stress and leads to its own compromises, which translate into a loss of freedom. Charter schools receive state funding, reducing (although not fully removing) economic pressures, but they must adapt their practices in order to meet government accountability requirements, which represents a different loss of freedom. By turning the current debate away from "independent and charter" to one of "freedom and access" we may be able to examine more clearly the impact of the compromises each school is asked to make and in this way seek new and creative solutions.

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The Social Mission of Waldorf Education

Teachers' stories have spoken again and again of the ideal of the social mission of Waldorf education. Emil Molt, father of the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, saw that a fundamental change in people would be needed to create permanent healing and change in society. In his view this change "could come about only through a new impulse in education." (Barnes, 1980, p.1) He turned to Steiner, who had just published his ideas of a new social order in *Towards Social Renewal*, and asked him to establish an adult education program for the workers of his factory, to be followed soon after by a school for children. From its inception, therefore, Waldorf education has cherished at its core a mission of social renewal and change. This was an important point for every participant in this study as they explored how best to serve this mission. In several cases, their answers sent them from independent schools to charters, seeking to widen the reach of Waldorf education.

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Tucked within their stories, however, lies a deeper question, one meriting serious consideration in the context of a social mission. At this time in history, who are we serving and who can we serve? Waldorf education is sometimes described as a gift for all children. Is this borne out by current reality? An examination of the statistics is disquieting. Charter schools were established as "public schools of choice." (California Charter Schools Association) They have been in existence for over twenty years, during which time the number of charter schools has increased rapidly. In California, approximately 10% of public schools are now charters, approximately twice the national percentage. Charter schools overall have tended to attract philanthropic support geared towards addressing poverty, resulting in a higher concentration of minority and poverty students. (Poverty and Race Research Action Committee) The percentage of charter students eligible for free or reduced lunches (an indicator of poverty) has increased overall. Across all charter schools, the percentage of White, African-American, and Native American/Alaskan Native students has decreased and the percentage of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students has increased. (National Center for Education Statistics)

How does the population in public charter schools inspired by Waldorf education reflect this trend? Participants described much greater economic diversity in the charters and, overall, very little difference in ethnic diversity. One charter high school was described as "a colorful place," with many students receiving free or reduced meals. However, since it opened, its demographics have changed from an original

61% Title I students to a current 50%. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is a pattern that has been seen in other charters.

During the relatively short history of public schools inspired by Waldorf education, there have been at least two attempts to establish inner city schools designed to educate severely underserved children. The first, the Milwaukee Urban School, was also the first public venture. It was established after then Superintendent of Education in Milwaukee, Robert Peterkin, asked for help in designing a school that would give an enhanced education to the neediest of children. It flourished for some time, an apparent model for this socially conscious work. Over time, however, it lost its "Waldorf" identity until finally, in 2011, the "Waldorf shingle" was removed from the building and no trace of a Waldorf influence appears to remain (reported by Ida Oberman, Fair Oaks, January 2013). A second school, Harriet Tubman, was developed in the mid-1990s in San Diego with a similar mission. Its early days were part of the story of one of this study's participants. She described its many challenges as it attempted to serve a highly Hispanic and very impoverished community. For a short time, according to this teacher, the school was able to implement a number of elements of Waldorf pedagogy. Children were excited by the new possibilities and activities available to them. However, the Waldorf impulse was not maintained. The school continued but "went in another direction," and soon thereafter no trace of its Waldorf origins remained.

There may be important lessons to be learned here. If we accept that Waldorf education has a broad social mission, we must not only address the questions of who we currently serve and who we could serve, but also that we better understand the stories of the Milwaukee Urban School and the Harriet Tubman school from the perspective of those who were directly involved in these ventures. Why did the Waldorf impulse not persevere over time? What does this tell us about our work?

What, Exactly, Is a Waldorf School?

All ten of the study participants had teaching experience in independent and charter schools. Together, they represented over twenty schools. Each one considered her- or himself to be a Waldorf teacher by training, choice, practice, and belief. However, as currently defined, five of them do not, in fact, work in schools that can call themselves "Waldorf."

Since its founding in North America in 1928, the impulse of Waldorf education has manifested in a range of settings that have included independent schools of differing sizes and grade ranges, small home-based preschools, home-schooling situations, dependent and independent public charter schools, and public schools. These enterprises have had varying degrees of freedom from political control, a range of economic struggles, differences in the breadth of their curricula, and varied physical resources. Both independent and charter schools alike may have differing percentages of trained teachers; at least one of the participants' charter schools has a history of an unwavering commitment to hiring trained teachers, a standard that many schools would envy.

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From its inception, Waldorf education has required compromises large and small. This is perhaps inevitable when a spiritual impulse is brought into physical form. Betty Staley, a long-time Waldorf teacher and interim president of Rudolf Steiner College, has noted three main compromises at the outset of the founding school in post-World War I Germany: approval of the Board of Education; recognition of teachers' credentials; and achievement of the learning goals of public school by a series

of approved benchmarks—the school could be approved only if it did not lag behind in learning goals, facilities, and teacher training, even though pupils in the elementary grades were not required to sit state exams. (Staley, 1998, xvii) It is fascinating to note, ninety-four years later, that many of the participants' comparisons centered on very similar issues: the impact of mandatory student assessment, differences in facilities and resources, and the importance of fully qualified teachers.

As we confront a time of rapid change and seemingly new demands from students and parents, many of us have taken up the question of what it means to be a Waldorf school: What is essential? One participant reported that this had been a subject of a recent College of Teachers' study in her long-established, independent school. There are guidelines from AWSNA (Shared Principles) and the Pedagogical Section Council (Core Principles), yet answers to this question are far from clear when it comes to a specific school. Is an established charter school with a fully trained, experienced faculty and regular habits of study less of a Waldorf school than a developing independent initiative with limited resources and an organization still in formation? Participants described experiences of both. In the current spectrum of Waldorf education as manifested in schools, where is the line? Who draws it, and at what cost?

Questions of Development: Age and Time

As mentioned previously, the charter movement is both relatively young and growing rapidly. One participant likened this to the image of human development that stands at the heart of Waldorf education. She suggested that schools, like individual human beings, need time and space to develop. She saw her charter school as being in a process of transformation, slowly able to implement more and more aspects of Waldorf education—not yet to the extent she would like for the students, but much further along than it had been. She noted: "It has taken five years to say that this could work, with glimpses of change, transformation happening, and a fragile implementation. …It is okay to say a school is still developing." Hans-Joachim Mattke, formerly a student and then a high school teacher at the original Waldorf school in Stuttgart, observed: "It often takes years of patient and hard work (in Germany usually 3–7 years) until an idea becomes a reality and a new school opens its doors." (1994, 6) Charter schools have been attempting to do much of this foundational work even as they operate, learning and developing over time as they respond to the demands and needs of their communities. Several participants wished for space, warmth, protection, and support from the Waldorf community while they shepherded this growth.

As another aspect of development, both Oberman (2008) and Sagarin (2011) have characterized the overall development of Waldorf education in North America as occurring in generations. Both authors identify a new generation that commenced in the early 1990s, a new phase characterized by rapid growth, greater public exposure, and movement into the sphere of public education. Greater visibility brought challenges from various quarters. Sagarin depicts the current phase as "The Social Missionaries," stating that this fourth generation "demonstrates an attempt to recover what might be called Steiner's 'social mission' for Waldorf education." (2011, p.7) This concept was central to the concerns and experience of all ten of the study participants as they made sense of their experience and their ideals. They firmly believe that we are indeed in a new phase, one that will continue to develop as Waldorf education attempts to respond to the needs of the 21st century.

The study has also raised the topic of the impact of human generations. In both independent and public settings, participants found a difference in the willingness among the younger generation of teachers to give the time traditionally expected for study, meetings, and

events. The pattern of distributed leadership that is a hallmark of self-administration—and generally the province of the independent schools—requires a high level of commitment to the school. Participants repeatedly mentioned that this has become an issue. They noted that the "director-led" format of the charter schools seemed more easily suited to the needs of this new generation. They acknowledged a downside to this form of governance—a lessening of collegial relations and, potentially, a lack of support for the inner work that is so essential to Waldorf education—but praised its clarity and the fact that it made it easier for the teacher to simply teach.

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The Essential Role of Teacher Training and Support

As one participant concluded, whether the setting is public or independent, often the most important thing is "who is standing in front of the kids." It is critical that teachers are adequately trained in a way that allows them to understand the spiritual basis of Waldorf education and to freely choose whether this is their path. The growth of charter schools presents a new set of questions to our institutions of teacher education. Do we adjust training to allow for considerations of the unique needs of the public setting? How do we work with already credentialed, experienced teachers who wish to become Waldorf educators? As the work in the public sector grows, are there possibilities of collaboration with "mainstream" teacher training institutions that would better prepare teachers and increase the interest in and profile of Waldorf education? Do we simply offer one path to Waldorf training that any individual can enter, with the choice of setting for practice left to the individual? Do we fully inform students of their options?

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One participant noted that when she undertook her training, charters were never presented as a viable option; they were "underground." If they were mentioned at all, it was only to denigrate them. Another suggested that, without providing or insisting on adequate training, we have created a moral problem. She recalled earlier years in which teachers with as little as a one-week course for preparation were often placed in charters intended to be inspired by Waldorf education. Now, she believes, training in California is much more thorough, and she has become very supportive of the work of charters. However, other participants suggested that under-preparation remains an issue.

With two exceptions, this study's group of teachers held both conventional California teaching credentials and Waldorf certification. Although the requirement for dual qualification had been demanding, several saw its value. One referred to a body of knowledge that was not always available to colleagues who had earned Waldorf certification alone: "How you teach, manage a classroom, assess, teach reading." Another, using the teaching of reading as an example, described the "Waldorf tendency to reinvent the wheel," with many teachers feeling uncertain of how to proceed. She appreciated having an approach that incorporated both a Waldorf

perspective of the developing human being and practices from modern research. She reflected that, based on this, "the public school teachers have the best of both worlds."

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FURTHER RESEARCH

How might we bring "having the best of both worlds" into a fuller reality? The teachers in this study have thought long and hard about the challenges and opportunities of both independent and charter settings and the difficulties of bringing them together. Yet their overwhelming hope is that we can find a way to do just that. The current study is far from the first to address Waldorf's growing visibility and the issues and questions that have resulted from entering the sphere of public education; many of us are struggling to understand what this means, what we need to learn, where we need to practice vigilance, and how we may grow as a result. My participants told their individual stories—inevitably a subjective process, yet providing a unique window into the issue, delivered by those "on the ground." These teachers, and many others like them, are Sagarin's "social missionaries," concerned with a "central attempt to bring Waldorf education to students who are not served by independent schools." (2011, 12) They are adamant that Waldorf is "out of the bag" of the independent school movement and that the charter schools are here to stay. The growth of membership in the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education supports their conclusion.

Their overwhelming hope is that we can find a way to bring both independent and charter schools together.

Several points may help to guide further discussion and research. They are listed for ease of reference and in hopes that dialogue and discovery will continue.

1. It is apparent that there are many "degrees" of Waldorf; because of this, a fully developed charter school may be able to offer more of what we consider to be "Waldorf education" than a struggling or young independent school. The age of a school—or of a school movement—has a significant impact on its resources.

2. It seems important that we come to agreement on the essentials of "Waldorf" and work together to protect and strengthen them, wherever they manifest. Not to do so may allow a dilution over time that could ultimately result in the loss of Waldorf education's unique gifts—the motivation for AWSNA's work to protect the "brand." Study participants believe that protection coming from a warm, interested, and collaborative relationship will be most effective.

3. Adequate preparation and support of teachers is essential in strengthening and protecting Waldorf education. This may present new demands on how we prepare our teachers. Again, we are confronted with what is essential and non-essential. Are there, or should there be, fundamental differences in preparation for the two different school settings?

4. Although charters have extended the reach of Waldorf education to a much wider group of children, to date our attempts to meet the truly underserved have met with limited success. As part of our work, and in accord with our ideals, it seems crucial that we more fully understand why.

5. Both school streams are concerned with sustainability. Charter schools, by increasing the profile of Waldorf education, have attracted wider public interest, with the potential of an increase in the number of students and those interested in becoming Waldorf teachers. Could this heightened interest have impact on the significant sustainability concerns of independent schools and ease the current cycle of rising tuitions and shrinking access?

6. Charters are creating a larger pool of children for shared activities—a trend evident

in Northern California—including combined concerts, dances, Greek and Medieval Games, and keynote speakers or workshops. In some instances, these shared activities extend to evaluation and mentoring, as experienced teachers offer reciprocal services across schools.

7. A larger spectrum of schools also creates the possibility of a new level of research, potentially addressing a deficit marked by several authors. Pappano (2011) noted: "There is currently little independent research on Waldorf outcomes." Current research findings are often limited by the historically select nature of our school populations. Growth in the public sector offers a wider range of students and the possibility for a more rigorous test of our pedagogy, as sought by at least one participant.

8. Requirements for student testing in the charter schools may force a different level of discussion of appropriate methods of assessment, accountability, and standards. Can we offer an alternative model that ensures accountability while honoring the needs of child development?

9. As the number of charters inspired by Waldorf education expands, their voice on behalf of the rights of children will grow louder. If a mood of brotherhood prevails, we can imagine joining together to be heard in the interests of all children.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I began this study out of a desire to gain a new perspective on a debate that has been active in Waldorf education for a number of years. As the Waldorf-inspired charter movement exploded in Northern California and began to ripple across the country, I heard multiple opinions on its rightness, validity, impact, and threat—or benefit—to our collective work. I witnessed heated arguments and strongly-held points of view. I watched as the existence of several independent schools became less certain. I received reports of the AWSNA leadership's attempt to protect the unique character of Waldorf education. I listened as the Alliance explored questions of what it means to be a public school inspired by Waldorf education. Having experienced the very human nature of this debate, I chose to investigate it through the perspectives of practicing teachers, using the medium of story and biography—essential tools in our pedagogy. The resulting picture has been built through the words of ten teachers, quoted directly as often as possible. I trust that their words have been as illuminating for readers as they have been for me.

It has been an interesting experience to submit this research in two separate installments over several months. This research is a snapshot in time and the gap has illustrated how mobile the charter/independent situation is. In the months since I completed the study and reported the first part of its findings, two of the ten teachers have changed schools, moving from independent to charter and further demonstrating the active, "chessboard" nature of this field. Negotiations between AWSNA and the Alliance regarding use of terms, including the name "Waldorf," have progressed in a mood of common concern and interest. The charter schools have begun to grapple with interpretation of the federally-mandated Common Core Standards and their implications for student achievement and progress.

Research addresses and, one hopes, answers questions, but in doing so, it usually manages to raise new ones. This study was no exception, as the points listed above illustrate. I concur with the participants: charter schools inspired by Waldorf education are here to stay, and there is much we can learn from their development. I hope to remain an active part of this learning process, and I extend my sincere thanks to the ten teachers who so generously and thoughtfully shared their stories.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Background (profile): general education and teacher training. Why did you become a teacher?
2. Your path to Waldorf education—how did you discover it; what was your early introduction?
3. Training in Waldorf education: what, where, and when?
4. What caused you to switch from a public to an independent school or vice versa?
5. In the following areas, what differences have you experienced between the two settings?
   a. Students
   b. School structure and support
   c. Collegial work
   d. Your personal or inner work
6. Does the workload vary between the two settings? If so, how? Are there unique stressors?
7. Did you experience any differences in how you work with the students or in your relationships with students and parents?
8. Reflecting on your own experience as a parent, did your child(ren) receive both public and independent education? Did they receive any of their education in a charter or Waldorf-inspired school? What led to your decisions about your child's education? How did these decisions influence your choice of teaching setting?
9. From your perspective, what are the essential differences between an independent Waldorf school and a Waldorf methods school?
10. Describe the "intangibles" of the two settings.
11. What would you like to see in the future of the public/independent debate?
12. Please add any additional reflections or thoughts.

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