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Renewal

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION



The Gifted Child / Foundations of Literacy / Promoting Good Vision / Vouchers and Diversity / Addictive Behavior

Waldorf Alumni Forum

Julie Le Gal Brodeur

Toronto Waldorf School, Class of 1990

Julie Le Gal Brodeur grew up in Toronto in a French-Canadian theater family. She began attending Toronto Waldorf School when the kindergarten was in a church basement. She graduated in 1990, having spent part of grade ten at the Freie Waldorfschule am Bodensee in Überlingen, Germany, and grade eleven at Michael Hall in Forest Row, England. Julie is an actor, artist, director, teacher, and photographer. She and her husband, Peter, have two young daughters. Julie has created and maintains a website called <ConsciousParentingGuide.com> which, in welcoming visitors, describes itself as “a practical, quick-reference guide for those seeking a conscious approach to pregnancy, birth, and early childhood parenting, inspired by Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf Education.”

I have a very vivid memory of walking alone along the Elbe River outside of Hamburg, Germany, at age eighteen. I was deliberating my future, having decided not to return home that day until I had made a decision. Images of international development and Africa flowed through my mind, then, my love for the awesome mysteries and exactitude of human biology inspired by a teacher at Michael Hall in England. I decided to go about making the decision systematically, enumerating all the things I loved doing and being around, and deduced from all this that, almost against my will, the clear answer was— theater.

The journey after that took me to university in Ottawa, Canada, for a couple of years, where I also began to act professionally. A clear hunger for a meaningful approach to acting brought me to New York to study the Michael Chekhov work and Rudolf Steiner’s speech formation. This then led me through many years of traveling, producing, and performing with wonderful colleagues in the United States, Germany, and Canada. A sharp life turn then took me to Australia, then to Vancouver and Toronto where I started working with the camera, both behind it in photography and as an actor on the screen.

How can we know how our past has determined our life, who we are, and the decisions we make? What comes from our time here, on earth, and what arises from somewhere else, deep inside? How can we know what we would be had our path been different?

Looking back at my experience of Waldorf school, I have feelings from the early years in kindergarten, an intense joy of discovery, wonder and reverence, vague forms and sensations of crowns and songs and circles, stories, and very strong moods of attentiveness and listening. The memories of everyone being together and working



Julie Le Gal Brodeur with daughters, Marianne (left) and Véronica

together for one common goal even today awakens joy and a sense of rightness and trust.

In school, we studied the history of civilizations, traced and drew the geography of the earth and its animals, observed and noted in physics, botany, and human biology, calculated and solved problems in math, moved through eurythmy, breathed the art of listening in singing, and lived the hunger to perfect something in orchestra. We built, knitted, wove, worked wood, sculpted clay, dug in the earth. We painted and learned to know color and

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A Waldorf teacher-in-training



Napkin art from a seventh-grade main lesson



Fourth graders in Milwaukee



Monadnock Waldorf High School students on “Odyssey Expedition”



On location in 2007 in the Republic of Georgia for the filming of The Breeder

form. We spoke poetry and wrote it and learned it by heart, performed and created plays. Later we discussed and wrestled with problems of religion, philosophy, history, and physics. The world was to be known about and no stone was to be left unturned.

Then, I was so very eager to leave school, to find out for myself, to explore, to test my own strength and skills. There was a sense of the world being very wide and open. I felt a deep eagerness and trust while facing a delicious panorama. And now, almost twenty-three years later, I am filled with profound gratitude when I look back at my schooling, for two main reasons.

Firstly, learning about the world through an artistic and practical exploration has been an indisputable contribution to my professional life and to my knowledge of the human being. I have a real language to work with in music, movement, and speech; an understanding of story and composition; and an ability to apply a design sense to an array of handwork and crafts. But all these experiences translate also more subtly into life. It seems that the core experiences of my Waldorf years lie not only in practical applications, but also in quite other realms.

Here, my second reason—my teachers—comes in, where the curriculum fades and the individuality of each teacher radiates. My feelings for teachers may have ranged from antipathy or terror to admiration,

but in most cases, irrespective of the outer relationship, I felt loved and cared for in a profound way. Each of my teachers was in some way a striving, growing human being who related to me as another growing human being. Yes, there were faults, but in retrospect, the gifts and presence they brought far surpass in importance any human foibles. It is this predominating goodness of intention that today more than ever fills me with awe and appreciation.

I sense now that these early relationships in my life may have become a guiding influence in important life moments and situations that require especially potent decision making. Often, a little voice inside will say, “What are all the elements involved? What’s the bigger picture? How can everyone be served in the outcome? Is there a better way to do this? What is the best thing for the future of the world?” (Yes, I know this last one seems outrageously naïve, but there you have it.) What is intriguing to me is that this little voice doesn’t really always seem to serve my own little interests. It seems to be virtuous somehow, like a good angel sitting on my shoulder, and I sometimes have intense discussions with it.

That little voice has given me the courage and insight to do things I wouldn’t have, to put effort into things that seem less important from the outside, and it has led me to make decisions that make life uncomfortable. But never have I regretted following it.

This inner voice has led me through many projects, to many places in the world. When I became a mother, it led me to create a resource website called <ConsciousParentingGuide.com> for parents looking for an approach based on Steiner’s view of the child. This is an ongoing work, like parenting. Now, it is nudging me toward making a documentary film about stress in modern childhood, its effects and consequences, and what we can do to nurture our future generations.



“Flying Tulips,” a photo by Julie Le Gal Brodeur

I am always ready to hear what impulses come from this little voice, be it from my Waldorf schooling or from another part of myself. One never knows where it will lead! ☺

From the Editor

Everything Changes

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, the publisher of this magazine, is an umbrella organization of Waldorf schools in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. About ten years ago, the Association was reorganized so that three executive leaders would share the increasingly complex tasks of managing the organization and promoting and protecting Waldorf Education on this continent. Three leadership positions were created—leader of administration, leader of outreach and development, and leader of programs and activities.

Since then, the role of leader of programs and activities was filled in succession by Kathy Brunetta, Connie Stokes, and most recently by Michael Soulé. Michael, who was especially active in supporting the schools in Mexico, stepped back in 2010. No replacement was chosen. Both Frances Kane, as leader of administration, and Patrice Maynard, as leader for outreach and development, have served until now. This spring, however, both Frances and Patrice will be leaving the Association.

As leader of administration, Frances has been in charge of the finances of the Association, membership, and the protection of the integrity of Waldorf Education through application of the service mark rights. Articulate and poised and having a deep love of Waldorf Education (she is a Waldorf alumna), Frances has discharged her responsibilities with integrity, dedication, and attention to detail.

As leader of outreach and development, Patrice has represented Waldorf Education to the broader world. She often attended conferences and meetings in Washington and elsewhere, making the case for independent education in general and Waldorf Education in particular. She helped create a consistent approach and style with which Waldorf Education and Waldorf schools appeared in the public eye. Patrice has been an effective fund-raiser, one of her fund-raising initiatives being the annual Waldorf golf tournament. The Waldorf service weekends at the schools in New Orleans, on the Oglala Lakota Reservation in North Dakota, and in Detroit were also largely due to Patrice's energy and vision.

In addition, Patrice has supervised and shepherded this magazine, as well as AWSNA Publications. Patrice has been an invaluable friend, advisor, and champion. She served on *Renewal's* editorial advisory board. Her judgments on submitted articles were invariably enlivened by insight, a deep love and understanding of Waldorf Education, and a puckish, ironic Irish humor. I will miss working with her very much.

To both Frances and Patrice, all blessings on the next stages of your journeys!

To the three new leaders of the Association, best wishes! ☺



Early, early education, angels, and joy

As editor, I very seldom commission an article. Instead, I wait and trust that the right articles will come unbidden—through the agency of angels assigned to literary matters, no doubt—in the contemporary version of an article tossed through an office transom: a Word document attached to an unexpected email.

And they do come, often in interesting tandems. Two articles in this issue (one by Susan Johnson and one by Ingun Schneider) deal with the role that very early life experiences—including the birth experience—can play in the healthy development of the child. Another theme in Dr. Johnson's article is the importance of relaxation and joy in the learning process. Claire Gavin develops this same theme in her article on teaching writing skills to children in grades three through six.

Thank you, angels.

Ronald E. Koetzsch is a member of the faculty and Dean of Students at Rudolf Steiner College in California.

Reflections from the Association's Minneapolis Office

BY FRANCES KANE

In 2004, when I took up the work of one of the three executives of the Association—leader of administration—I felt excited and terribly unprepared. The privilege was, and still is, moving and humbling. I wondered then how I could ever do the work so

that each school and institute, filled with dedicated teachers, administrators, and students, would be well served. How could I help realize, with current relevancy, the inspired insights given to Waldorf educators by Rudolf Steiner almost a century ago?

I was fortunate to work with

other leaders, in particular Patrice Maynard, who understood that the focus and the goals are not about the Executive Team or other leaders in the Association. In a world where many influences conspire to undermine healthy childhood, Waldorf

teachers, parents, and school communities seek to educate young people with loving care. The work of the Association is about keeping the space clear for Waldorf Education to thrive and also to help the wider world recognize the gifts this education offers our children. The work of the Association is carried out by every person in each school and every teacher training institute. The impact of a single lesson in a classroom on the whole of the Association is real and profound and exciting. We have tried to ensure that the Association, through all that it does, helps reflect this good work out to the world. At the same time, we have tried to protect—in a caring, not confining way—Waldorf Education on behalf of the children of today and of the future.

Looking back now, as I work on wrapping things up neatly for the next leader of administration, I still feel the same excitement for the work as in the first days, and great love for this education and every person who tends it with care. I am grateful for the privilege, for the experience, and for all the incredible people who have made my work possible: my Executive Team colleagues, the Leadership Council, the Board of Trustees, and all the Association coworkers. I am grateful too for the many good questions, insights, and supportive comments in the thousands of communications that have come to our office and to me while I have been in this role. It has been a pleasure to interact with so many of you. ☉



Frances Kane with her husband, Kevin, and “friends”

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From the Association

Another Miracle Witnessed

BY PATRICE MAYNARD

On a recent visit to a Waldorf school, I observed a very well-taught seventh-grade woodworking class. The seventh graders were quick on their intellectual feet and wonderfully articulate—with thanks to their parents and class teacher for that! The woodworking class, requiring manual dexterity, patience, and a measure of focus and quiet, provided a perfect balance for these verbal, witty young people.



Patrice Maynard

After the class, the teacher confessed to some nervousness about the session—almost inevitable when an observing adult is in the room. We reviewed the points of success, elaborating on how well-taught the class, how determined, respectful, and attentive the students, and how intuitive the teacher's self-reflective questions of concern.

One point of discussion was the principle that there's something wrong if seventh graders don't make one nervous. The growth and the changes these budding adolescents are going through make everyone thrilled and uneasy!

I did my best to reassure the very adept teacher, skilled beyond the norm in all things pertaining to wood and in how to cooperate with that material to create beautiful things of practical value. Besides, this teacher is savvy and insightful about building skill in young ones, understanding as deeply as he does how much woodworking benefits the soul, the will, and the world.

We identified several moments when the students, not using words, communicated to the teacher their goodwill and gratitude. With seventh graders, one cannot expect ebullience and direct, explicit expressions of appreciation.

The next morning, the teacher came in with a poem in his hands, written by a seventh grader and delivered moments before the teacher found me. He was openly excited by the gift. It read:

There was a woodworker stupendous
With woodworking projects tremendous.
In a room full of sawdust,
Woodworking he taught us,
And kept most of our blood in our veins.
He stuffed full of knowledge our brains,
So that we don't end up as remains.
We love you, dear Heinz,
We think you're quite nice,
And soon we will see you again!!!

This charming little verse touched on many of the points in my talk with the teacher on the previous day. When our eyes met, the teacher's and mine, I asked with a smile, "Can you understand with this how carefully they are listening beyond the words?" He smiled in assent.

Finding the student-poet, I asked, "May I put this in *Renewal* magazine?" and the quintessential seventh-grade answer came, "Yes, but *please* just don't use my name." So be it!

This is my last "From the Association" column as your leader for outreach and development. It recounts one of innumerable miracles this position has allowed me to witness. Waldorf Education is a miracle. Each of our schools is a miracle, and each hardworking graduate of our excellent teacher education institutes is, as well. I am deeply grateful for the privilege of serving the North American Waldorf community. Your work and commitment to Waldorf Education forge a path for it to carry on into the future for many children to come.

Thank you. o



In seventh grade, most Waldorf students learn to use a mallet and chisel in woodworking class.

Our Hands Belong to Levity

Fostering Manual Dexterity in Infants and Children

BY INGUN SCHNEIDER, MA

An infant is being carried by her mother in a front-pack. The infant is awake and her little arms hang downwards, hands pulled down by gravity. Another infant, in a baby buggy being hurriedly pushed by her mother on a busy sidewalk, is lying peacefully on her back. The infant is barely visible under the protective hood. The infant's hands are raised above her head, and she is moving them gently as she gazes intently at them. Seemingly unaffected by her mother's haste, she gives the impression of being at peace and thoroughly enjoying getting to know her hands.

Part of my work as a Waldorf educational support teacher is assessing school-age children. Sometimes I work with an entire class as part of a class screening and sometimes with individual children who

are having difficulties in school. The way many of the students grasp a pencil is tense and/or awkward. When I ask them to do various fine motor activities, I notice difficulties with finger differentiation. Several or all of the fingers work as a unit rather than as separate fingers, which would be more efficient and less tiring. This finding may be surprising, since students in a Waldorf school do many activities that involve the hands, from playing the flute or recorder to drawing, knitting, and sewing. However, if one looks at how these children engage their hands in these activities, one notices a lot of tension or, in contrast, a looseness or near-floppiness. When the

children draw figures of people, they often leave out the hands as if they aren't quite sure that the hands live at the end of the arms.

Having studied the development of hands for many years, as a physical therapist, interested parent, and teacher, I have developed a theory about the reasons many children (and adults) today have difficulties performing fine motor tasks, including writing by hand. When they write, their hands are unnecessarily tense; they are awkward in the use of tools; and they lose interest in handcrafts, saying that they are not good at them.

My theory has several components. First of all, in order for hand coordination to



In this jubilating three-year-old, the extended arm and hand and the tip-toe stance depict the lightness of being.



When an infant is in a frontpack, the arms hang down and the infant can neither see nor use his hands.



An infant lying on her back in a baby carriage can see her hands and use them to hold and explore objects.

develop fully, structural alignment in the neck and / or shoulder area is necessary. This alignment is required because the nerves that innervate the hands leave and enter the spinal column at the neck and then go through the shoulders and down the arms.

Problems in this area of the body can begin at birth. Sometimes a child's neck and / or shoulder area (including the collarbone) has been quite compressed during the birth process. This compression is especially common if the newborn had broad shoulders or if forceps or vacuum extraction was used to help the baby out of the birth canal.

Also, if the newborn or young infant is carried in an upright position for long periods, there is a possibility of disturbing the alignment of the neck and shoulder girdle. Even if parents and caregivers support the infant's head while carrying him in an upright, vertical position, the infant has to contribute effort from immature musculature toward maintaining the vertical head position.



A child holding a pencil with a tense and tiring grip

In contrast, when the infant is lying flat on her back or cradled on her side in the parent's arms, the neck muscles are not strained before they are ready. The infant can begin to turn her head from side to side, lift her head up to look at somebody, or turn toward the breast to nurse. These movements help the neck muscles to mature and strengthen gradually.

By the time the infant has figured out, by nine or ten

months, how to sit up from a lying-down position on his own, the neck is strong enough to carry the head upright and the infant is able to engage all muscle groups in a balanced way. Then it is time for parents to carry him upright in a front- or backpack or seat him in a high chair for eating.

The important point is that today we often put our infants into the upright position before they are ready. Even if the frontpack or backpack has support for the head, this is usually not sufficient. If the birth process hasn't compromised the neck and shoulder girdle too much, a few minutes in the upright position won't hurt, but it is better to err on the side of caution.

Putting an infant in the upright situation before the neck and shoulder musculature is mature compromises the development of the hands in another way. The hands usually dangle down or perhaps, with a slightly older infant, the hands grab part of the pack and hold on to it. In either case, when an infant is carried or is even propped in an upright position, her hands do not easily find each other and cannot touch or hold each other. Also, when a child is in a front- or backpack, she cannot easily see her hands and cannot visually guide their movements. This interaction of eye and hand is an important part of the development of eye-hand coordination, which in turn is the basis for many future tasks, writing by hand among them.



A child writing with a fountain pen, holding it in a relaxed, efficient manner

Again, in contrast, when the young baby is lying on his back on a floor or other flat surface, the support received by the spine (including the neck) allows him to lift up his arms so the hands are right above the face. There is little pulling down by gravity, since the shoulder joint—the fulcrum on which the arms and hands move—is right below the hands. The hands can play with each other or with the beams of sunlight coming through a window for a long time without the arms tiring. If the baby is propped up even only thirty or forty-five degrees, the hands are now much further from the fulcrum and the weight of the arms is greatly increased. The levity of the hands and the ease with which they can play with each other—present in the flat-on-the-back position—are lost.

During the first year of life, the infant moves from lying on her stomach, to raising her upper body, to crawling like a lizard, to creeping on hands and knees, to standing upright, and finally to walking. In this development, the hands play an important role. The hands support the initial lifting of the upper body from the prone position. When the child creeps, the hands use a similar gesture to the feet in walking. They swing outward a tiny bit, then forward in the direction of the creeping. The hands' task is to connect with gravity so that the upper body can be supported enough to allow for locomotion.



A first grader's drawing of a person without hands may indicate her lack of connection to her own hands.

About three months later, the baby has figured out not only how to pull himself up into standing, but also how to balance on the much smaller surface of the two feet and still manage to move forward in the direction he wants to go. Now the hands are truly freed from gravity and can begin to take on their birthright: freely creating, giving, and receiving gifts of human kindness.

This process leading to standing and walking is important for the proper development of the hands. When the hands are used to support the upper body's weight, they experience pressure on the palms. The steady pressure experienced over and over again against the

palms as the infant creeps or crawls around the room integrates and mitigates the palmar reflex. The palmar reflex causes the infant, when pressure is applied to the palm, to clench the hand and to grab and hold tightly to whatever has applied the pressure. If the infant retains even a small measure of this reflex, she will be unable to grasp and let go of objects in a coordinated way. The later coordinated use of the hand, as in holding and writing with

a pencil, will be negatively affected. Many school-age children have vestiges of this reflex, which results in unnecessary tension in writing by hand and a dislike of the activity.

The positions into which we place our infants can thus support or delay the development of the hands. We have our precious hands for giving and receiving, for lifting into levity far above our heads, for communicating via writing and gesture, for making useful and / or beautiful things that we and others can use and enjoy, for

playing instruments, for meeting our own needs, and for supporting others in their need.

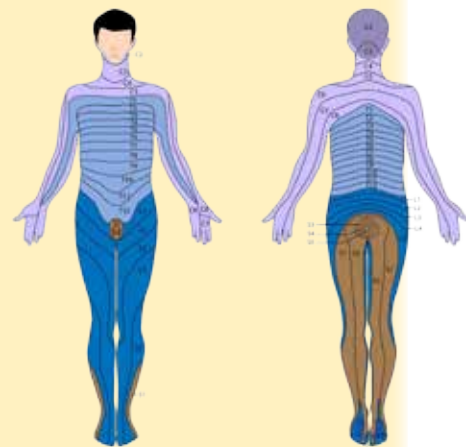
Practical Measures for Improving Manual Coordination

If a parent has a child who has not fully developed his fine motor coordination, I suggest several steps that address each of the issues raised in the article.

A first step is to have the child evaluated and, if necessary, treated by an osteopath or other health practitioner who uses craniosacral therapy. This therapy is gentle and noninvasive, but can invite correction of subtle structural misalignments of the head, neck, and shoulders.

Next, I teach the parents how to do a pressure massage of the child's hands and fingers. It is helpful to begin at the shoulders and work down the arms to the hands and fingers. The pressure applied is rhythmical, moving gradually from light to firm and back to light. The parent's touch gives the child an external tactile experience but also a new, internal, proprioceptive experience of the arms and hands. If done regularly, such pressure massage will result in improved fine motor coordination.

Then I encourage parents to introduce activities that put weight onto the child's hands. These also bring new proprioceptive experiences and integrate vestiges of the palmar reflex. Walking on all fours like a crab, leaning forward with hands on the floor and kicking the legs up like a donkey, and swinging between two desks while the hands carry the body's weight can all be effective. Having a school-age child sit on his hands (palms down) on a firm chair and push the body up—a seated push-up—is another fun way to get weight onto the hands. For all ages, kneading dough is fun as well as rewarding, while the baking bread spreads its aroma through the house.



The nerves that innervate the arms and hands exit the spinal cord in the cervical (neck) area.



The miracle of the human hand manifests, in its structure, the Golden Mean, that proportion present also in growing plants and the spiral galaxies, which demonstrates the harmony of Creation.

Another interesting activity that brings a new experience of the hand is the finger-tug-o-war. The child links his index fingers (“pointers”) together in front of the body, with elbows out to the sides, and pulls strongly in opposite directions for a few seconds, then moves on to the other fingers. The book *The Extra Lesson* describes other helpful hand exercises, including the “hand-expansion-contraction” and the “wool winding” exercise.

I also give the child an imagination or mental picture of the physiologically correct grasp of the pencil. To older students I explain that the thumb and the index finger have more area than the other fingers

in the sensory and motor centers of the brain. Thus it is easier to write using these two digits as the main manipulators, with the middle finger supporting them from under the pencil and the last two fingers involved in supporting the hand on the writing surface.

I might also explain that the human hand, like the human foot, has two arches—longitudinal and transverse—and that these arches are unique to the human being. One of the hand arches is seen when the hand is flexed and the fingers move toward the heel of the hand. This arch tends to be well developed. The other arch goes from between the middle and ring fingers to the middle of the wrist. It is activated when the pinky and the ring finger steady the hand while the thumb, pointer, and middle fingers manipulate the pencil, chopsticks, paintbrush, or other tool that requires this kind of fine motor movement. ☉



Proper development of the hands can lead to the ease and dexterity evident in this Waldorf second grader.



Activities such as kneading dough can help the development of manual awareness and dexterity.

Suggested Reading

Audrey McAllen, *The Extra Lesson* (Fair Oaks, CA: Rudolf Steiner College Press, 2013).

Audrey McAllen, *Teaching Children Handwriting* (Fair Oaks, CA: Rudolf Steiner College Press, 2002).

Ingun Schneider, “Supporting the Development of the Human Hand,” in *The Developing Child: The First Seven Years*, Gateways Series Three, ed. Susan Howard (Amherst, MA: WECAN Publications, 2004).

Frank Wilson, *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999).



INGUN SCHNEIDER was born in Sweden and has a master’s degree from Stockholm University. She studied *Extra Lesson*—Waldorf-based educational support—from Audrey McAllen, its originator, and edited several of McAllen’s books.

Ingun is a licensed physical therapist, and her background in physical therapy, Waldorf pedagogy, and childbirth education give her special insights into healthy child development and practical ways to support this in the home and in the classroom. She coordinates the three-year, part-time Remedial Education Program at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California.

Seeing and Learning

Identifying and Ameliorating Early Vision Problems

BY SUSAN R. JOHNSON, MD

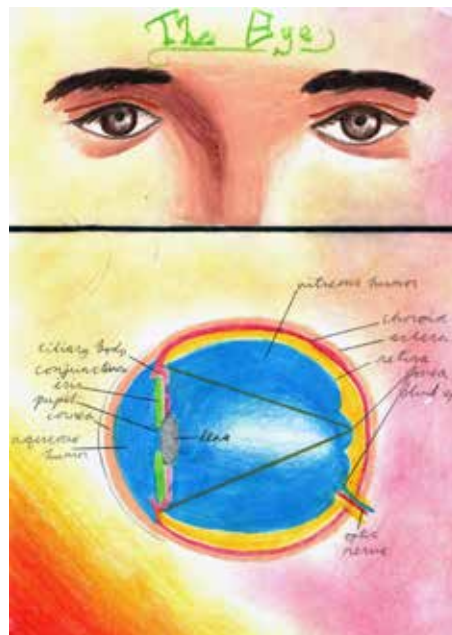
Visual health is an essential factor in children's healthy development, in their learning to read and write, and in their overall success in school. Unfortunately, certain factors in our modern lifestyle hinder the development of healthy eyes, and, as a result, many children suffer from unequal vision and problems in depth perception, tracking, and convergence. Fortunately, there are things that parents, teachers, and physicians can do to foster visual health and to remediate problems that have developed.

Visual tracking is the ability of the eyes to follow an object that is moving side to side or up and down. It allows our eyes to accurately trace or track the lines and curves that make up letters and numbers. Convergence allows us to keep an object in focus, such as a ball, that is traveling from faraway to near. Both tracking and convergence are essential in a child's ability to read and write and ability to easily copy numbers and letters drawn on the blackboard.

When children come to my office, one of the first things I check is whether they can clearly see pictures and/or letters, with each eye separately, at a distance of twenty feet. This tests visual acuity and also tells me if both eyes are equally strong. Both eyes, seeing with equal acuity, are necessary for proper visual tracking and convergence. Eyes that are tracking or converging asymmetrically will create images that are distorted and/or doubled. Equal vision is also necessary for depth perception. If you cover one eye when you look across the room at an object and then uncover that same eye, you will have an improved sense of the distance between that object and other surrounding objects in the room.

This visual acuity test can also show if children are in fact having difficulties tracking. Older children with

tracking problems will have more difficulty accurately identifying letters on an eye chart than they have identifying pictures. As the letters become smaller on the eye chart, the letter **F** will often appear as an **R**. This distortion occurs because any instability in children's eye movements, such as "jiggling" of their eyes during tracking, will alter the letters they see. This alteration does not happen when children look at a picture chart, since any movement or jerking of their eyes moves the entire picture so that the picture is not distorted. Also, if children are having difficulty tracking with one or both of their eyes, they may turn their head sideways when looking at the eye chart, using their peripheral vision rather than central vision.



Children who are six years of age or older are said to track well with their eyes if they can easily follow an object, like the tip of a finger, for sixty to ninety seconds without needing to turn

their head. The eye movements should be sustained, smooth, and symmetrical. I usually draw a figure 8 with my fingertip in the air about twelve inches in front of the child's eyes. I draw this figure 8 horizontally (lying on its side) with the intersection of the figure 8 occurring in front of the child's nose so that the child's eyes move from one side to the other. I carefully observe the child's eye movements as the child's eyes follow my moving finger. If the child's head has to move side to side while following my finger or if the child's eyes show jerking movements, excessive blinking, or have to refocus every few seconds, then I know that the child has problems with visual tracking.

In convergence, children need to be able to smoothly and symmetrically move their eyes toward their nose. I have children follow the tip of my finger from a point in the air, twelve inches from their

nose, to a point in the air that is close to the tip of their nose. This moving of the eyes medially, toward the nose, as children shift their gaze from a faraway place to a closer place, is essential for children to be able to easily copy numbers or letters from a blackboard onto a piece of paper. If the eyes don't move or converge symmetrically, then the letters or numbers the children are copying will either thicken or will split into two, resulting in a type of double vision. This phenomenon is what makes copying letters and numbers from a blackboard very frustrating for some children.

Children need to be able to track and converge well with both of their eyes, since tracking and converging are crucial skills for reading. Children who can't track or converge properly will often lose their place while reading, skip words, and tire easily. It requires a tremendous effort from these children to follow a line of letters (i.e., words) on a page or to copy letters and numbers from the blackboard. Sometimes these children will need to move their head from side to side while reading, because their eyes have difficulty tracking. This movement in turn can cause them to become dizzy and tire easily when trying to read or do written work.

A newborn infant has very poor distance vision. The infant's vision will gradually strengthen throughout



An eye chart tests visual acuity but also can reveal problems with tracking. If the letters appear indistinct, the child's eye movements may be unstable.

the toddler years and into early childhood. From my experience, by the age of seven, children usually have an excellent visual acuity of 20/20, 20/25, or 20/30, equally in both eyes. If there is a difference in vision between the two eyes, then a cranial compression may be a factor. This compression often occurs over the area where the cranial nerves controlling eye tracking movements enter the brainstem. Cranial compressions can result when excessive force is applied to the soft cranium during a difficult birth, such as one involving prolonged labor, fast delivery, the use of Pitocin (a drug that induces labor) after the water has broken, vacuum suction delivery, and sometimes a C-section delivery. Cranial compressions can also be



An infant's ability to move forward while its stomach is on the floor is an indication of a healthy condition of the cervical spine.

caused after significant trauma to the head or neck, such as from a fall or a blow. This is less likely as the child ages, since the skull becomes much harder after birth.

There are other indications of a cranial compression in infants and toddlers. These include: hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity to touch; a stiff neck or torticollis at birth; asymmetry in the position of the shoulder blades, hip bones, and foot arches when comparing the right to the left sides of the body; and tightness of the back neck muscles and sometimes the muscles along the spine of infants and toddlers. This tightness can restrict passive movements of the head, interfering with the ability of the very young child to creep flat on his belly and to lie flat on his stomach. Problems with the vestibular system (sense of balance)—such as the inability, beginning around four years of age, to start hopping on one foot or balancing on one leg—can also be an indication of cranial compression.

A gentle way of relieving cranial compression is a form of treatment called biodynamic cranial therapy, practiced by certain highly trained osteopathic physicians. It is an effective, noninvasive, and nonmanipulative approach. The treatments can help a child to deeply relax her autonomic nervous system. This relaxation allows the release of any residual compressions, particularly over the parts of the brain known as the cerebellum and underlying



Squinting and/or turning the head to one side to see with peripheral vision is a sign of vision problems.



Being able to stand on one leg indicates a healthy vestibular (balance) system and the absence of cranial compression.

in vision, tracking, and convergence while the cranial compression is resolving. Children four years of age and older who have a cranial compression often



Games like ping-pong, tennis, and badminton can help to develop tracking and convergence skills and also improve eye-hand coordination.

that move their eyes, side to side, forward and backward, and up or down, are rarely used when children are watching television or playing computer and video games. And because television and computer screens are relatively small, the children's

brainstem, located at the back of the head near the upper part of the neck. There is much information about biodynamic cranial therapy on the Internet, and osteopathic physicians trained in the technique are listed on the website <www.JamesJealous.com>

Consultation with a pediatric ophthalmologist or developmental optometrist is also helpful for documenting the improvements in vision, tracking, and convergence while the cranial compression is resolving. Children four years of age and older who have a cranial compression often cannot wink in one or both eyes. The winking, along with tracking, convergence, and even acuity, can be restored by biodynamic cranial osteopathy treatments.

Many aspects of our current lifestyle also can lead to vision problems. Watching television and videos and playing games on handheld digital devices and computers are all very damaging to the eyes. When children look at flat, two-dimensional screens, their eye muscles hold their eyes in a fixed or frozen position. The three pairs of eye muscles

eyes remain in the fixed position while staring at the screen, even though the objects that appear on the screen are moving.

There is concern that preschool-age children can actually show a distortion in the growth of the globes of their eyes from watching too much television or spending too much time in front of the computer screen. This is because the young child's eyeballs are still growing, and, instead of the eyeballs growing symmetrically in all directions, they grow asymmetrically because of the lack of movement of the eyes. There is also concern that older children and teenagers are losing their distance vision because they are spending so much uninterrupted time staring at flat, two-dimensional computer screens and not exercising their eye muscles by moving their eyes in three-dimensional space.

Several resources exist for helping children improve visual tracking and convergence as well as for strengthening their vestibular-balance pathways. One resource is the therapeutic branch of eurythmy, the movement art that is part of the Waldorf curriculum. A physician practicing anthroposophically oriented medicine or a trained therapeutic eurythmist can suggest gestures and movement exercises for strengthening eye tracking and convergence. The so-called Extra Lesson work, a general remedial approach that developed out of Waldorf Education, includes movement and painting exercises that can help with visual problems.

Also, some developmental optometrists no longer just recommend generalized eye exercises. Instead, they determine which of the six eye muscles are weak in a particular child. They then have the child work with sensory-integration occupational therapists to strengthen the weak eye muscles that correspond to particular spatial plane(s)—e.g., forward/backward, up/down, or left/right.

Vision activities to do at home to strengthen eye



Time spent focused on a two-dimensional computer screen weakens a child's eye muscles and lessens the child's ability to track objects moving in real, three-dimensional space.

tracking, eye convergence, and eye-hand coordination include playing catch with small “soft” balls or beanbags. The smaller the ball, the more the eyes need to track and converge to keep the ball

Relaxation and enjoyment are helpful to avoid activating the stress portion of their autonomic nervous system. If children are stressed, then their brain cannot function or develop well.

It is important that children are relaxed and having fun during these visual/movement activities. When there is stress, the brain cannot function or develop well.

in focus. For younger children, I recommend that a parent toss a balloon in the air and then all present keep tapping the balloon up in the air to keep it from touching the ground. Playing blow soccer

(an exercise from the HANDLE Institute), where children try to blow a soft, one-inch-wide ball off the end of a wooden table, also strengthens both their tracking and converging skills. Even sucking thick liquids through a straw strengthens the muscles that converge the eyes.



Activities such as sewing, knitting, and beading can have a therapeutic effect on convergence, tracking, and eye-hand coordination problems.

For older children, there are additional games like ping-pong, badminton, or tennis—preferably the noncompetitive version in which the score is not kept. Also, learning how to juggle is excellent for developing eye-hand coordination. If done on a balance board or a unicycle, juggling can become even

more challenging and more beneficial. All activities involving eye-hand coordination, such as drawing, painting, and coloring, as well as doing pencil and paper games, especially mazes, will strengthen visual tracking. Handwork such as beading, sewing, or knitting also strengthens eye tracking and convergence. Of course, these eye-hand movement activities need to be done in three-dimensional space and not on a flat, two-dimensional computer screen!

It is important that children stay relaxed and have fun while doing these visual/movement activities.

If children’s foundational neurological pathways are not yet fully developed for the reading, comprehending, and spelling of words and for the writing of letters and numbers, and we push them to read or write too early, then nonverbal learning challenges, like dyslexia, as well as attention and behavioral problems, will result. Children will spend too much time “thinking” when trying to identify the numbers or letters they are seeing. They will be overwhelmed when trying to make sense of letters while reading and writing and frustrated when trying to write numbers during math. Children will experience so much stress that they will dislike school, dislike their teacher, and dislike learning!

We want children to love learning for their whole life. We want children to love and respect their teachers and to be enthusiastic about going to school. For when there is joy in learning instead of fear, the children remain in the present moment, their autonomic nervous system is deeply relaxed, and their mind is fully open and receptive to experiencing the wonders of this world. ☺



SUSAN R. JOHNSON is a pediatrician who has a private practice in Colfax, California, and travels to many Waldorf schools to assess children. What she shares in the above article about visual tracking and eye convergence was not

taught to her during medical school, pediatric residency, or her three-year fellowship in behavioral and developmental pediatrics. It was her studies of the Extra Lesson at Rudolf Steiner College, meetings with therapeutic eurythmists and developmental optometrists, and her own clinical experience that helped her develop her insights into children’s visual health and into effective ways to examine children’s eyes. Her website is <youandyourchildshealth.org>

“We Love Waldorf! But What About Late Reading?”

Waldorf Education’s Early Foundations for Literacy

BY HELEN LUBIN

There is understandable concern on the part of parents new to Waldorf Education as well as in the wider community about what is regarded as “late” reading. As one university professor and parent put it: “We’ve been very interested in having our boys in Waldorf—but the late reading! We’re *already* a little old-fashioned.” In a culture in which literacy is regarded as a prime and prized pillar, parents can hardly be expected simply to accept that their children may read significantly later than their peers in other schools.

If we broaden our perspective from reading *per se* to the richly layered landscape of literacy as a whole, we see that Waldorf Education begins *particularly early* to develop the underpinnings of literacy. Waldorf students do read later—but not because they couldn’t learn to read earlier! Reading is introduced once other capacities have been well developed. This foundation becomes the foothold for lifelong literacy and learning.

A rich environment of—and engagement with—the spoken word is a signature of Waldorf Education. This presence of living language infusing the

education in many different ways is an essential contributor to physiological, emotional, cognitive, academic, social, and spiritual development.

The following perspectives will briefly address this foundation. While not elaborating on the complex processes involved in the acquisition of reading and writing themselves, they may serve as an inroad to understanding how the optimal unfolding of these processes is anchored in earlier capacities.

The early childhood years are clearly the years of *movement*. The young child befriends and identifies with the world through participating in what the world *does*: treading along with the dwarves, hammering with the shoemaker, cooking with the cooks, dancing with the princess. The components of speaking that support the participatory movements—the qualities of the phonemes (speech sounds) and the metric rhythms, which are part of how language *moves*—nourish the ear, rather than the mind. Were we to focus only on the content, we would have the information but not the *experience* via the sense of hearing and via movement that allows the young child to *identify with the world* by taking part.

Specific facets of the child’s movement in connection with speaking build corresponding speech capacities. The activity of the feet, an essential feature of many of these early exercises, is connected with *articulation*. Mastering clear footwork engenders a feeling of being inwardly more articulate and differentiated, and an outcome of this is that one also speaks more articulately. (Much can be learned by observing, in everyday situations, the correlation between the gait and the speech of children and adults.) The arms, by contrast, can be experienced as an extension of the middle, heart-lung region, i.e., of the rhythmic system. Relevant arm movements accompanying recitation connect the young child to the *breath stream*, cultivating an *inner connection* to what the spoken verse is about.

Speech in the environment of the young child is one of the most prominent and formative sense



In circle games in the kindergarten, the movement—here, tapping on the floor—is usually accompanied by the children speaking a rhythmic verse.

impressions. As Dr. Jane Healy reminds us in her book *Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think and What We Can Do About It*, referring to the research of Priscilla Vail: "Most learning disabilities are related to underlying language problems, yet increasing numbers of youngsters are permitted to be 'linguistically malnourished'..."

[p. 102]. The aforementioned aspects of speech and language activity cultivate and nourish the child's development in these early years.

In both listening and speaking, the child's auditory perception is sensitized to a wide range of differentiations. There are the denser, earthier consonants: stop-plosives such as in *boot*, *dig*, *bread*, *tub*, and *cup*; nasals such as *m* and *n* in *crumb* and *nut*. There is the warmer, diffuse quality of fricatives such as in *splash*, *puff*, and *hearth*, and of affricates such as in *chirp* and *change*. There is the fluid continuity of glides as in *wave* and *yellow*, and a water-like quality in *spill* or *fill*. There is the airiness in *hair*, *breeze*, and *prairie*.

Through daily recitation and speech exercises, children build a resource of auditory experience. In well-spoken verses and exercises, they practice rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and morphemic components (*morpheme*: the smallest unit that carries meaning, such as *-ing* in *walking*, *-ful* in *helpful*, and *-ly* in *sweetly*), and exercise mental representation and working memory. The children acquire resources for phonological awareness—the perception and understanding that words are made up of speech sounds and their combinations. Phonological awareness is the basis for the ability to manipulate the phonological structure in one's language and to go from the whole to the parts, bringing awareness to the word level, syllable level, and phoneme level. (*Phoneme*: a speech sound, represented by a letter or combination of letters, such as *d* in *day* and *sh* in *wish*). Phonological awareness is integral to the foundation for writing, reading, and spelling and makes possible such tasks as sound blending, word family generalization, and morpheme recognition.



Often the early childhood teacher will tell a story using hand puppets or marionettes.

Thus the child first builds an experiential foundation by *living with* and *identifying with* these qualities before identifying them in a more externalized way in the encoding and decoding processes of writing and reading, respectively. As one experienced Waldorf parent has put it: "Anyone who hears their kindergarten child talking in the bathtub after she has had a weeklong fairy tale knows the child is getting literacy."

As the child develops further, connecting with the world, now not only through the outer, participatory movement of the limbs but also through coming more to himself, the child is now able to listen to a story for a longer time, *moving inwardly through its pictures*. In *A is for ox*, Barry Sanders reminds us of the enormous cultural pitfall involved in "the obliteration of stories and storytelling (*ob-littera* = 'the erasure of letters') ..." [p. 241]. The strong narrative component of Waldorf Education contributes to the child's *experience* of living language to which the written word refers. Capacities developed through assimilating the increasing complexity of the narrative journey from fairy tales through fables, legends, Nordic and Greek mythology, and on into history build resources for the emergence and blossoming of literacy.

The teacher's "tools" for an artistic speech practice in the classroom are initially developed in Waldorf teacher education programs and then cultivated through professional development.

They become a resource for creating a speech environment in which children can develop differentiated auditory perception, articulation, fluency, phrasing, harmonious breathing, a rich vocabulary, and the capacity to create inner pictures through which the world resounds within the soul. Through this, both speaker and listener can breathe, experience, and understand.

The purposeful relationship of movement and speaking that characterizes speech activities in the early childhood and early grades curriculum is also a core



After hearing a story told by the teacher, the children will often in their free play reenact the story and use newly learned words and phrases. Here, perhaps, a king and queen.



Eurythmy, in which the children actually “move” the words of a verse, poem, or story, begins in kindergarten and continues through high school.

contributor to the spatial orientation required for writing and reading. A child writing a letter of the alphabet must have developed an awareness of straight/curved, right/left, and up/down. Other curriculum components such as knitting, flute and recorder playing, indoor and outdoor movement of various kinds, and form drawing also cultivate motor development and orientation in space—all of primary importance as literacy unfolds. In addition, by the time a child begins to write and read, the finely focused activities of the eurythmy curriculum—a leaven for

the entire Waldorf curriculum from early childhood through high school—have already been building the child’s experience of language.

Artistic modalities of processing content such as drawing, painting, as well as retelling stories, engage children in practicing, digesting, and contextualizing their learning. Hence, writing, reading, and related skills—rather than taxing children with memorizing rules—engage experiential resources that have been built through bonding with living language.

The student who has grown into literacy through such experiences of language is able to attend not only visually to “text” but to the world to which it refers. Dr. Candace Goldsworthy’s book *Developmental Reading Disabilities*, based on extensive research and clinical experience, includes the observation that “[a]ttention deficit hyperactivity disorder has been implicated as a contributing factor” in developmental dyslexia (also known as specific reading disability), “and, in many cases, co-occurs with it” [p. 104]. The rich language environment in Waldorf Education involves, besides speaking and listening skills, a third element: the capacity to attend, to pay attention. This is one of our most human capacities, and leads to a fullness, rather than a deficit of attention—much needed for reading and for life.

In the later grades, the Waldorf curriculum aims to develop *movement in thinking*. This is a third stage, building on the young child’s participatory move-

ment through the limbs, and the subsequent *inner movement* in pictures, described above. Through this movement in thinking, the young person experiences—beyond the reflective quality of thoughts—that through mobilizing one’s thinking one can come to original horizons and new seeing. Not determined by what already exists, this kind of thinking makes it possible to bring about something entirely new. The poet Friedrich Schiller takes us to this horizon when, in *Die Huldigung der Künste* (*Tribute to the Arts*), he has “Poetry” say, “My immeasurable realm is that of thought / And my winged instrument is the word.” At this stage, daily speech practice—besides being an elaboration of earlier work with articulation, fluency, healthy breathing, and social attentiveness—now also involves what Dr. Healy describes as “celebrat[ing] the sounds of literate thought.”

The challenge of thinking creatively is upstream of issues affecting civilization on a larger scale. Barry Sanders characterizes what he calls the post-literate age as one threatened by “the spiritual degradation of America’s youth” [p. 75]. And: “America’s growing problem with literacy announces a radical fissure, a shifting of the very bedrock of culture” [p. 234]. Here is a call to a task that is at the heart of education: “The greatest gift we can give, not only to each young generation, but to teachers, is to reinvigorate the classroom by filling it once again with human voices” [p. 232].

Language brings us to ourselves. Having an inner life is something we owe very much to language, which allows the world to re-sound in the soul and allows the soul to hear itself, to take counsel with itself. Once the child has gone through the transition from oneness with the surroundings to sensing his own entity as distinct from the world, the abstract processes of writing and reading can take off more fully.

Abstract here means abstracted from the immediacy of the surrounding world. If children come into



Form drawing, a subject unique to Waldorf schools, helps children with spatial orientation, the sense of left and right and up and down, crucial to learning to write.

the abstract nature of reading and writing before having acquired the foundations on which reading and writing must draw and to which they refer; the process is insufficiently buoyed by living language. The child's interest can—understandably—run aground. A foundation of engagement with the spoken



The rich language environment in Waldorf Education develops the capacity to attend, to pay attention.

Resources

Candace Goldsworthy, *Developmental Reading Disabilities: A Language-Based Treatment Approach*, 2nd ed. (Clifton Park, NY: Thomson Delmar Learning, 2003).

Jane Healy, *Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Don't Think and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

Barry Sanders, *A is for ox* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

word gives the child a stable, experiential launchpad from which further processes of literacy can arise.

This is literacy that derives from life, and these are the children who delight in reading, who take off into new vistas and learning adventures, and who experience reading as interesting and relevant. Through lifelong literacy the individual continues to come to himself and to grow into the world. ☺



Speech artist/educator HELEN LUBIN has taught at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California, for over twenty-one years and continues to develop Speech and Drama in Waldorf Schools in North America (now

in its nineteenth year), an initiative dedicated to cultivating the speech component integral to Waldorf Education. This project involves school visits of one to several weeks annually to North American Waldorf schools, providing professional development for teachers, work with classes and individual students, and lectures and workshops for parents. Helen also works with children and adults in private practice and is a freelance editor and translator.

Book Review

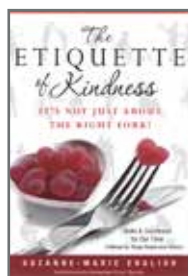
The Etiquette of Kindness It's Not Just About the Right Fork

BY SUZANNE-MARIE ENGLISH

ILLUSTRATED BY ALEXANDER ORION SPARKS

Etiquette—the word seems antiquated, referring to obscure niceties of the Victorian era. Dare one eat soup with the grapefruit spoon? However, in this lively, engaging book, intended primarily for young people age eleven and older, Suzanne-Marie English demonstrates that etiquette is something contemporary, practical, and very important. Two additional subtitles are “Skills and Courtesies in Our Time” and “A Manual for Young People and Others.”

Etiquette is the way we treat other human beings in our mundane daily encounters—meeting a person for the first time, responding to a gift or favor, greeting a colleague at the start of the day. Etiquette can be defined as “morality in small things” and, like morality writ large, it is founded on the principles



of honesty, compassion, kindness, consideration, and generosity.

Suzanne-Marie English has been a Waldorf parent, a student at Rudolf Steiner College, and a member of the Board of Trustees of the

Cedar Springs Waldorf School. About fifteen years ago, she started Etiquette of Kindness classes at that school. Since then, she has taught etiquette to hundreds of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders in schools in Northern California. In 2012 she published *The Etiquette of Kindness*, and already over 230 schools are implementing the program, with this book as a guide. The book's artist-illustrator is an alumnus of the Sacramento Waldorf School.

Written in an informal style accessible to young people, the book offers practical advice on how to act in situations that people have always faced and some that are unique to our present digital age. For example:

continued on page 37

The Gifted Child in the Waldorf School

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI, MA

The following was posted recently in an online community forum sponsored by *Mothering* magazine:

Has anyone with a gifted child sought Waldorf education? My daughter was just accepted into a new Waldorf charter school in our area, so I'm left deciding if this is a good fit for her or not. For any of you that have, what were your experiences?

My concern is that as a kindergartner, she's been doing 4th–6th grade math all year and is reading at the same level. The rest of her curriculum has been 2nd–4th grade. I'm concerned that she'll stagnate in a Waldorf setting academically, BUT I see a huge plus in getting her to explore her creative side more as well. I'm just unsure if it's the right type of program for her and would love to get input from anyone who has been through it.



While the sight of a very young child reading a book is cute, early reading does not necessarily translate into later academic success.

This question regarding Waldorf Education and gifted children raises certain questions and reveals anxieties shared by a good number of prospective and current Waldorf parents. It does not have a simple yes or no answer. Looking at how Waldorf Education views and, in its own way, meets the needs of the gifted child will perhaps answer the questions and reassure anxious parents.

Children who are highly gifted academically learn more quickly, deeply, and broadly than other children. Typically, they learn to read and/or do math at an early age and throughout their school years function at a level usual for much older children. For example, gifted children may learn to read at age four or five and by the time they are

eight be reading like—and have the vocabulary of—the average twelve-year-old. Usually they have high reasoning ability and an excellent memory, and are very creative. They are quick learners and can master new material without it being presented a second time. They are very curious and tend to have many diverse interests.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), the archetypal “gifted child,” began performing in public at the age of six.

Gifted children can be perfectionists who have to get their work just right in order to be content with it. They are frequently gifted in some areas, but clearly not in others. For example, a young math whiz may be a poor speller and, conversely, a child who reads and writes at an advanced level may have difficulty with math. Some have difficulty relating to their peers and may prefer being with older children or adults, though they may have difficulty with authority figures. Many are oversensitive to both internal and external stimuli, and this can cause them to avoid overstimulating and crowded environments or to withdraw from others.

Because of this mixture of distinctive strengths and weaknesses, gifted children are sometimes categorized as special-needs children. And, in fact, having them in a school setting with other children can be challenging. Both public and independent schools of every kind struggle with this problem today.

At its founding, Waldorf Education was intended for a general population. Most of the students at the first school in Stuttgart in 1919 were children of factory workers. The rest were children of intellectuals and professionals who were attracted to Rudolf Steiner's worldview and ideas about education. Early in the school's development, a program for children with problems in learning and/or in behavior was begun. There were “pull-out” classes taught

by Dr. Karl Schubert, one of the school's teachers. Schubert (who is credited with having originated the Waldorf tradition of the Winter or Advent Spiral ceremony) came to specialize in helping these children.

Thus, working with children with learning disabilities and emotional challenges has been part of Waldorf Education for a long time. Because perhaps one-third of children have special educational needs, dealing with these students has been and is a key concern in Waldorf schools. Today, "Extra Lesson" teachers are specialists in remedial education in the Waldorf movement. They work with the methods of Dr. Schubert and of other, later Waldorf educators such as Audrey McAllen (1920–2010). Many Waldorf schools also use specialists from the local public school districts or professionals in private practice to help students with learning difficulties. The work in this area is continuing to be refined and improved throughout the Waldorf movement.

While gifted children can be considered special-needs children, the ways of dealing with children with remedial needs do not necessarily apply to them. Meeting the needs of the precocious child is a separate and important challenge for Waldorf schools. Some persons, both within and outside the movement, have questioned the ability of Waldorf Education to adequately meet this challenge. To consider this question more deeply, a look at a controversial aspect of Waldorf schools—reading in the early elementary grades—will be helpful.

Early Reading

The United States (and to some extent, Canada) has something of an obsession with the idea that the earlier children begin academic work, the faster they will develop academically and the better able they will be as adults to compete in the global economic system. (This notion has likewise infiltrated the realm of children's sports—soccer teams for four-year-olds!—but that is a distinct topic for another time.) The Bush era "No Child Left Behind" legislation took the idea that starting academics early leads to improved outcomes on the national level. That assumption is also a foundation of the Obama administration's current agenda for education, expressed in the phrase "Race to the Top."

The only evidence that supports this notion comes from studies of children raised in deprived circumstances and educated in inner-city schools.

And even for these students there are questions about how long the gains are sustained. A large 2012 study by the Department of Health and Human Services found that the big gains in vocabulary and social development that had been found largely faded by the time pupils reached the third grade. Besides, there is little or no evidence that early academics improves short- or long-term academic performance among middle-class children coming from more advantaged home and school environments. Nevertheless, the obsession with early reading has inevitably given many parents the idea that only when children begin to read are they really beginning to "learn"—only then are they beginning the road to a successful life.

Waldorf educators have consistently maintained that there is no advantage—and there are very likely disadvantages—with early academics, that early childhood education

should focus on the development of other capacities and skills, and that academic proficiency will develop in time. The educational system in Finland famously supports this position. Academic work is only begun there when the children enter first grade at age seven, yet year after year Finnish students rank number one in the world on standardized tests.

A certain number of children are what is termed "natural readers." Around age five, they observe adults and older children reading and, perhaps with a few helpful cues, they spontaneously begin to pick up reading without any formal instruction. Because Waldorf educators do not want to encourage reading at this time, they typically leave it as an activity that parents may choose to do at home with the child. Occasionally an overly zealous class teacher may take a stronger line. This attitude may make the



Besides all this, although Finnish schools do not push premature academics, their students rank first in the world on standardized tests.

parent feel blamed for “forcing” reading on the child or, worse, make the child feel guilty for the interest in reading. In general, however, the ideal is that reading is not an activity that is brought into the general class environment in the early years.

[Please see the article on literacy on page 14 for a detailed account of how Waldorf early childhood education prepares children for reading.]

According to the Waldorf understanding of child development, the early childhood years are for building the basis for long-term mental and emotional development. Noncognitive, nonacademic skills and capacities need to be fostered. These include social skills—knowing how to successfully interact with one’s peers and with adults. Learning social skills

The focus of these (Waldorf) schools is not primarily on the cognitive development ... which is reflected in lower scores on the cognitive tests. ... However, when parents find a broad development of their children with a positive attitude towards learning of main importance, a Waldorf school seems to be the right choice. All indicators with respect to a positive attitude to learning (academic self-image, motivation to learn, and the development of learning strategies) are in favor of Waldorf schools.

In her summary, Dr. Steenbergen writes:

The overall conclusion ... is that mainstream schools are schools where actual learning takes place, whereas Waldorf schools are where students

Persistence, self-control, curiosity, love of learning, and optimism are better predictors of success in life than academic achievement.

is especially important for the highly gifted child who may tend to isolate himself and hence in later childhood can be prone to depression. Eye-hand coordination, coordinated movement of the limbs and the whole body, an appreciation of the beauty and power of the spoken word, and a capacity to form living imaginations or mental pictures are also developed in the Waldorf preschool and early grades. A parent who values only cognitive development or intellectual achievement may not understand or appreciate these other sorts of learning.

In public schools, the very bright child is often allowed to skip to a higher grade. This is not usually done in Waldorf schools. Waldorf educators look at the various areas of development of the child. The child who is ahead academically may have social or behavioral challenges, be unbalanced physically or immature emotionally, and, if put in a class with older children, may have social or emotional difficulties. Even in academics, the development of the gifted child may be uneven. The gifted child may have success in some subjects but not in others.

A study published in 2009 by Dr. Hilde Steenbergen of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, examines the differences between Waldorf and traditional, mainstream high school education in the Netherlands. Dr. Steenbergen compared Waldorf and mainstream secondary students and reported:

learn to learn and are motivated to ongoing learning. ... Students in Waldorf schools are equipped with skills and attitudes needed for an ongoing development in society, whereas students in mainstream schools lose their openness to learning to some degree.

Dr. Steenbergen’s concluding observation is that Waldorf schools have goals that are quite different from the goals of mainstream schools and that they are very successful in realizing those goals.

While Waldorf Education’s concern with noncognitive skills puts it out of the current mainstream, the idea that noncognitive faculties are key to preparing children for life is not as radical as it once was. In his book *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough explains that the “cognitive hypothesis” that has become so universally accepted is a relatively new invention. The hypothesis holds that success depends primarily on cognitive skills and that the best way to develop these skills is through beginning as early as possible. Tough attributes the contemporary rise of this idea to a 1994 report of the Carnegie Corporation called “Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of our Youngest Children.” The report warned of the decreasing cognitive development of children and called for an emphasis on early academics. The reports and the studies that followed in its wake had a powerful effect on public policy.

However, in the past several years a growing circle of economists, educators, psychologists, and neuroscientists have produced evidence calling



Waldorf high schools offer a consistently challenging academic curriculum that prepares students well for college.

into question the assumptions behind the cognitive hypothesis. The consensus is growing that success in children is better predicted by the development of certain noncognitive qualities and skills. These include persistence, self-control, curiosity, love of learning, zest, conscientiousness, grit, and optimism. David Levin, an educational researcher active in the charter school movement, has suggested that measuring a child's CPA (character point average) might better predict future success than GPA. These are the very personality and character traits that Waldorf Education, in its broader emphasis on developing the whole child, is effective at developing.

Waldorf schools offer a rigorous academic training and comprehensive curriculum. In the middle school and high school years, the children are as challenged academically as they are in a mainstream public school. The academic success of Waldorf graduates in college and beyond bespeaks this fact. While the gifted child may not get the intensive, accelerated "hothouse" academics and rigorous preparation for standardized tests, he will certainly get a superb education in the typical Waldorf school. Besides, he will be enriched by all the aspects of Waldorf Education listed in the sidebar and will be helped to become a well-rounded human being able to find meaning and direction in his life. ☺

What Waldorf Offers the Gifted

At a conference in 2009 of the National Association for the Gifted, researcher Cheryl M. Ackerman of the University of Delaware presented a poster listing aspects of Waldorf Education that serve the needs of the gifted. What follows is a slightly elaborated version of that list:

- Waldorf Education aims at a balanced development of the whole child—head, heart, and hands—not a one-sided cognitive development.
- Each child's individuality is recognized and addressed by the teachers.
- Waldorf offers many opportunities for creativity and development of the imagination.
- Arts and handwork are integrated into the entire curriculum.
- Children are taught to become autonomous and self-reliant.
- Waldorf Education is a social education, helping students learn how to relate to others with interest, empathy, and responsibility.
- The unique curriculum and pedagogy foster the health of the child.
- Students hear many stories containing profound truths about humanity and human life to put in their "backpack" for later in life.
- The two-hour block for main lessons develops concentration for a long time on one theme.
- Elementary students can establish a deep, meaningful connection with their main lesson teacher.
- In high school, students are asked to consider "big" questions and to think deeply.



THOMAS POPLAWSKI, Renewal's staff writer, is a trained eurythmist, a psychotherapist, and a former Waldorf parent. His two sons attended the Hartsbrook School in Hadley, Massachusetts, where Thomas's wife, Valerie, is a kindergarten teacher.

The Last Person Alive to Have Met Rudolf Steiner

Margaret Wannamaker was born March 18, 1913, in Auburn, Alabama. When she was eleven years old, Margaret was sent to a summer camp in Vermont, where the main activities included theater (mostly Shakespeare) and swimming in the nearby Connecticut River. The director of the camp was Katherine Jewel Everts, a Shakespeare scholar and also an anthroposophist. When Margaret's mother came at the end of the session, Everts sensed a kindred spirit, and gave Mrs. Wannamaker a book by Rudolf Steiner. That seed fell on fertile soil, and Margaret's mother became an anthroposophist. Her efforts to introduce her husband to spiritual science were at first not encouraging. Mr. Wannamaker is said to have once—out of frustration, no doubt—hurled a copy of *Occult Science* across the room. In time, he too embraced Anthroposophy, translated a number of Rudolf Steiner's works into English, and later (1928) was a key figure in the founding of the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City.



Margaret in Europe, ca. 1932

In 1924, Margaret and her mother sailed for Europe. They first went to Torquay, where Dr. Steiner was giving a lecture course later published as *Initiate Consciousness*. At least once, Margaret wandered into the lecture tent and heard Dr. Steiner speak. (Dr. Steiner spoke for twenty minutes in German and then George Adams rendered what had been said into English.)

Mrs. Wannamaker and Margaret had one private meeting with Dr. Steiner. To Margaret he gave a prayer to say at bedtime and to her mother several meditations. The two continued on to Dornach, Switzerland, the center for Steiner's teachings. Mrs. Wannamaker received medical treatment at the Wegman Clinic. Margaret was tutored in her schoolwork and also took classes in eurythmy and a variety of crafts, as well as lessons in violin. Margaret loved eurythmy and at the weekly performances would sit in the front row with the other children, waiting for Dr. Steiner to arrive so the performance could begin.

Mother and daughter then went to Stuttgart, where Margaret entered the seventh grade in the Waldorf school. She continued there through high school, graduating in 1930, and experienced some of the noted pioneer Waldorf educators, including Karl Schubert, Herbert Hahn, and Eugen Kolisko. Among her classmates were Feri Porsche, son of the auto maker, Oktavia von Moltke, granddaughter of the chief of staff of the German army, as well as many children from poor, working-class families.

After graduation, Margaret remained in Europe and continued her musical career. In Dornach, in 1935, she met John Barnetson, whom she later married. They lived a number of years in New York, where her widowed father also resided and where their two daughters spent their early years. The Barnetson family then spent some years in New Orleans before finding their way to Los Angeles. After her children were grown, Margaret undertook Waldorf teacher education and became a kindergarten teacher at Highland Hall Waldorf School.

This year, around the time of her hundredth birthday, Margaret received an official letter from Virginia Sease, member of the Executive Council (*Vorstand*) of the General Anthroposophical Society in Dornach. It informed Margaret that she is believed to be the last person alive who met Rudolf Steiner personally.

After her graduation from the Stuttgart school, Margaret and her mother went to live in Vienna, where she studied with the accomplished violinist Karl von Baltz. Recently, it has been learned that a girl whom Margaret knew in Vienna, and who also studied with von Baltz, is about to reach her one-hundredth birthday. A telephone conversation between the two centenarians will take place on that day.



Margaret Wannamaker Barnetson at her 100th birthday party in Los Angeles

—R. E. K.

The Arts in Waldorf Education

An Essential, Not a Luxury, for Healthy Development

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI, MA

With the economic downturn of recent years and the resulting reductions to public school budgets, the arts have been among the first casualties. While parents and students may rally to save sports programs—another common target for cutting—the arts, seen more as an extra and something perhaps frivolous, are relegated to the “nice if only we could afford it” category.



Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) was active in many arts, here sculpture in wood.

The situation in Waldorf schools is quite different. In the Waldorf curriculum there is more artistic work, especially on the elementary school level, than in any other approach to education. In Waldorf schools the arts play a central and essential role. In a budget crunch they are likely to be the very last thing to be cut rather than the first. Toward the end of his life, Rudolf Steiner, more convinced than ever of the key role of the arts in education, commented that if he were recreat-

ing Waldorf Education, he would put even more art into the curriculum.

The gradual elimination of arts from mainstream education has been going on for a while. The Bush era “No Child Left Behind” legislation led many public schools to increase class time for reading and math at the expense of other subjects, especially the arts. Ironically, this went against what researchers had been finding when they did comparative studies of children who had a lot of art in school and children who had little or none. In a report published in 2000, an arts advocacy group called Americans for the Arts identified numerous beneficial effects of artistic activity. According to research, the arts:

- stimulate and develop imagination and critical thinking, as well as refine cognitive and creative skills;

- develop enhanced perception and a sense of craftsmanship and quality in task performance;
- teach life skills such as articulating a goal, problem solving, and decision making, working as a team, and accepting responsibility for completing a task from start to finish;
- build confidence and self-discipline;
- nurture important values such as respect for alternative viewpoints and appreciation of different cultures and traditions.

More recent research into the artistic process and its effects has increased this list of benefits. Artistic activity engages the entire brain, “lighting up” both its right and left hemispheres and all the major neural centers and stimulating all the brain’s learning centers.

It can be argued further that the arts are essential in helping children develop into well-rounded persons who have developed their full potential as human beings. Psychologist Howard Gardner is the creator of the theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner points out that the linguistic and logical/mathematical intelligences, strongly cultivated in academic work, are only two of the various types of human intelligence. The arts call upon and develop those two types of intelligence but also the other, equally crucial, ways of knowing and learning—musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.

The writing and the recitation of poetry and artistic prose nurture the linguistic intelligence. Learning a musical instrument and playing music directly improve mathematical abilities, as much scientific research has established. Instrumental work and singing



The Nine Muses, spiritual beings, each representing one of the arts, were believed by the ancient Greeks to be the source of artistic inspiration.



From kindergarten through grade twelve, Waldorf students do water-color painting...

obviously nurture the musical intelligence. Modeling with clay, doing sculpture, and engaging in movement arts such as eurythmy—especially in a group—develop spatial intelligence. Eurythmy and dance also foster the bodily kinesthetic intelligence. Working with others in a dramatic production or musical performance enhances interpersonal intelligence. And having our artistic creations and activities as mirrors of our soul states and our abilities nurtures intrapersonal intelligence—our objective, accurate self-knowledge.

The arts and handcrafts can even be understood as therapeutic in nature. For each child there are activities for which he is innately talented and in which he can easily excel. There are also activities in which talents and capacities are undeveloped, weak, or even absent. The arts offer opportunity to develop skills that do not come easily. This may involve a struggle and a painful exercise of will. But the end result will be an enhanced range of capacities and new possibilities for meeting the world's challenges. The impatient, fidgety child who finds onerous the seemingly endless sanding of his carved wooden spoon will be a different child when he holds the finished product in his hand.



...are involved in theater (as here in a first-grade production of the Native American tale, "The Story of Jumping Mouse")...

Rudolf Steiner had a yet loftier vision of the mission of the arts within the schools. The ancient Greeks understood the nine angelic figures whom they called the Muses to be the inspirers of the various arts. Steiner similarly pointed to a supersensible wellspring for creativity and the arts. He felt that the arts served as a bridge between the material, visible world and the nonmaterial, invisible spiritual worlds. These spirit realms are the source of both imagination and our ethics and morals. Through practicing the arts, the individual becomes sensitized to these higher values of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness and learns how to bring them into everyday life. The oft-mentioned spiritual element in Waldorf Education is not the inappropriate teaching of a particular esoteric worldview to children. Rather, it is helping children

to become artists, to develop an ethical, ecological, and aesthetic sensibility.

The Waldorf Arts Curriculum

For every grade in the Waldorf school, there is a rich curriculum for the fine arts and for the practical arts or handcrafts. Many a parent, on becoming aware of the arts offerings and sensing that she has missed something important in her own education, has exclaimed or, at least, thought, "I wish I were in school again so that I could do all of those arts and crafts myself."

Although there is some painting, craftwork, and artistic movement in the Waldorf kindergarten, the formal teaching of the arts begins in the first grade. Often, on the opening day of that grade, the class teacher goes to the chalkboard and draws first a straight line and then a curved line. The eurythmy teacher may echo this gesture by having the children move in a form with straight lines and then curved lines. Introducing the children to these archetypal gestures will lead them into learning how to form the letters of the alphabet but also to the metaphorical exploring of the difference between the direct and the indirect path. Meaning in the arts is always many-layered.



...play a musical instrument (as these cellists in a strings class)...

The first grader is introduced to painting beginning with the building blocks of color.

Using the primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—the child learns how the colors interact with each other in exercises with watercolors on wet paper, a technique that de-emphasizes forms with hard borders. Some parents wonder when the child will be allowed free artistic expression, but, for now, that is mostly relegated to what they do at home. Waldorf painting classes follow a progression of lessons attuned to the developmental stages of the child. Sculpture finds its expression in the forming of warmed beeswax into figures, often of the animals in some of the stories the children are learning in main lesson. There is some drawing of figures, animal and human, but many teachers prefer that the children use wide

wax crayons to create pictures in which the color remains more important than the fixed line.

In kindergarten, children are introduced to simple finger knitting, but in first grade they begin the real thing. After making their own wooden needles, which includes sanding and waxing, the children come to the exciting day when they can begin making something that is both beautiful and useful, often a scarf. Handwork is very popular and is often the child's favorite subject.



... and do eurythmy.

The performing arts all find their place in first grade as well. The children learn to move to poetry and to music in their weekly eurythmy lessons. Singing takes place throughout the day, often beginning with the class teacher singing the roll call of names. The children are taught in group lessons on a musical instrument, usually the C-flute or recorder, though in some schools on the children's lyre. Finally, class plays are a tradition in every year of schooling as an exercise in which everyone is involved. In first grade, the theme is often a fairy tale that they have heard in their main lesson.

It should be mentioned that, especially in the early grades, many of the arts and crafts are taught primarily by the class teacher. The education of the Waldorf class teacher includes training in many arts and crafts, among them drawing, painting, singing, music, speech formation, drama, modeling—in beeswax and clay—knitting, sewing, and woodwork. In this, it is quite different from the training students in mainstream schools of education receive. The aspiring Waldorf teachers learn to make beautiful black-board drawings and to create an artistic



Here, Waldorf teachers-in-training draw portraits in pastels. They also learn many other arts.

decor for the classroom. Through work in artistic speech formation, they become conscious of the importance for the children not only of what they,

as teachers, speak but also of how they speak it. In integrating these skills, the teacher becomes an artist in each discipline, as well as in the art of education.



A fifth grader's geometric drawing based on the five-pointed star

Waldorf students further develop themselves in each of the arts throughout the twelve years of the curriculum. Architecture makes its appearance in the study block on shelters and building in the fourth grade and is deepened when the high school students study "History through Architecture." Choral and individual singing becomes increasingly refined through the years as children learn to sing in parts and to sight-read. Painting and drawing evolve until many children can create credible artistic works in high school. Another unique Waldorf artistic activity is form drawing, which is used in the borders of many of the main lesson books that the children make in order to show their work. Handwork moves from knitting to crocheting and cross-stitch to sewing, first by hand and later with a sewing machine. The children learn to sculpt in clay and to carve wood, and later blacksmithing and metalwork enter the curriculum.

Every Waldorf student thus becomes something of a "Renaissance child." In addition to learning the three R's, the child is able to draw and to paint, to move gracefully and to sing beautifully, to sculpt a form and to sew a pair of pajama pants! This is an education of body, soul, and spirit that is not always so easy to measure with standardized testing but is instead meant to stand the testing of life. As the child moves through the years, he or she develops into a more balanced human being through encounters with the trials that each art poses.



Portrait in clay by a Waldorf high school student

In the end, the ideal of the human being, expressed by Shakespeare's Hamlet, can, to a modest degree, be realized:

What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! ☉

From the Imagination to the Page

Helping Children Develop a Love for Writing

BY CLAIRE GAVIN, MEd

“Ms. Gavin, may I read my story aloud to the class?” a sweet fourth-grade boy asks, his eyes widening hopefully.

“Quite likely, Max. Let me see what you have so far.” He holds up a full page of writing. Many of the words are misspelled and some of the writing impossible to make out. However, for Max this is quite an accomplishment. Just three weeks earlier, all he had been able to write in ten minutes was his name and a few words, at most.

“Max, as soon as we’re done with free writing, you can be the first to share.” He beams, clearly excited to share the fruits of his burgeoning writing ability.

It is the Friday before spring break, last period of the day, and the fourth graders are engaged in a free writing exercise. The only guidelines are to use the writing tools introduced in the past weeks and to avoid media references and bathroom humor. When I started working with these students as the language arts teacher a few months earlier, they had been quite challenging. At first, many had resisted the idea of an entire class period devoted to writing. Today, however, all twenty-eight students present are working diligently, some in pairs or trios, heads

bent together as they confer over their writing notebooks, others working alone at different rates of production.

A few minutes later, I ask who would like to share. Max’s hand is the first in the air, along with eight of his classmates. I give them each a number, then Max stands up to read.

He clears his throat and carefully begins, “Joe had a rough day. He stud up on da wall an . . .”

In the fall of 2012, I finished my master’s degree research project for Antioch University on the subject of teaching writing to grades three to six. I wanted to discover how Waldorf educators can bring comprehensive, developmentally appropriate writing instruction to students. In my research, I sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the stages of language development, and how do spelling, writing, and reading fit into this progression?
- How can we utilize an understanding of this development to help our students acquire writing skills?
- What writing tools should we bring to our students and when?
- What kind of classroom social organization will promote the development of writing skills?

Around that time, although my research concerned grades three to six, I was asked to teach grades two through five. So, in December 2012, I began working with students in those grades at Cedarwood Waldorf School in Portland, Oregon. I met with each class three times a week. The work with the second



A third grader reads his poem based on a group of rhyming words.



The author checks in with two children during “rhyme time,” helping them find more challenging rhymes.

grade focused on developing a love of words and language through speech and spelling games rather than writing.

The first week of class, I gave the students in the third, fourth, and fifth grades ten minutes to free-write. I wanted to see where they were and what would come out. For many, this turned out to be extremely stressful; they got stuck on how to spell certain words, or simply stated, “I don’t know how to write” or “I’m not a good writer.” Many of them tried to talk out of turn to hide their distress at being asked to do something they didn’t feel capable of and caused others to fall out of sorts or become upset.

I decided that in the first month my goals would be modest: to get them used to me as a language arts teacher, to give them spelling practice that was developmentally relevant, provide them opportunities to work together on a task and experience success, and help them write without self-criticism and judgment.

I began my work with each class by conducting spelling assessments. I had found in my research that all students follow the same path of spelling development, and this progression mirrors the development of the English language. In *Words Their Way*, Donald Bear and colleagues demonstrate that spelling has three layers:

1. *alphabetic*, as used in Anglo-Saxon English. Each sound is made by one letter; words are made of short vowels and hard consonants
2. *pattern*, brought by the Norman invasion of 1066. French influence brings in soft consonant sounds, vowel and consonant blends, digraphs (vowel sounds made from multiple letters, such as *-igh*), and inflected endings (*-ed*, *-es*, *-ing*)
3. *meaning*, necessary for the new, complex vocabulary of the Renaissance. Each part of a word—prefix, suffix, etc.—can be traced to a Latin, Greek, French, German, or Norse origin.[☆]

Students, regardless of their rate of progress, go through these same phases of spelling. Many of what we see as spelling mistakes are in fact recapitulations of this historic progression, and students are in this way spelling “correctly” for their current phase. Spelling assessment can indicate which phase a student is currently in and what sort of lessons need to be offered to stimulate progress. Most second graders are spelling alphabetically, and third and fourth graders are typically between alphabetic and pattern. By the fifth and sixth grades, most are approaching or are in the meaning phase, which is appropriate since

they will be studying the Renaissance in the seventh grade.

After assessing and finding what phases the students were moving through, I brought worksheets and games pertinent to the average level of the class. We concentrated on one aspect of spelling at a time, including long and short vowels, consonant blends, and digraphs. Often I gave the students a group of letters to see how many words they could make out of them. These exercises were introduced to the whole class, then time was given for independent or partner work.

Students who flew through the worksheets and games helped students who were challenged. Those who were slower worked in pairs and sought out those who could help them. At the end of the session, students came together for review and expansion on their work.



During a session of “word sort”—grouping words according to their long or short vowels—some students work alone, some in pairs, and one (the young man at the far end of the room) seems to be working on his upper body strength.

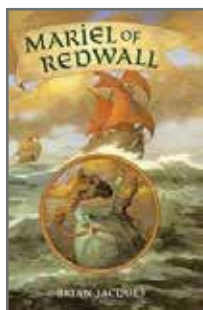
I used a spelling program that each week has a list of fifteen words and four pages of word exercises with the words.

In the first week, one third grader asked if he could write a story using the words in his completed spelling packet. Thus, writing came into the classroom in a natural way. After a few weeks of this work, class in all the grades became about wordplay with different parts of speech, such as using exciting or boring verbs, and writing.

An infant listens to the words of those around him for months before speaking, playing with sounds and putting sounds into words. In the same way, a student must be able to hear a word or concept before she can speak it and must be able to speak it before she can write it. In grades two through five, training the ear to hear sounds within words and to recognize good writing is very important. For this reason, I read mentor texts—excerpts from

published authors with whom the students are familiar—aloud to the students to show strong use of a writing tool before showing that tool on paper. Showing them that an author they admire uses these same tools is also a great inspiration. Two of the writers I used this year were Astrid Lindgren, author of *Ronia, The Robber's Daughter*, and Brian Jacques, author of *Mariel of Redwall*.

I introduced various writing tools to the different classes, trying to bring tools relevant to the children's stage of development. For example, third-grade students experience a new loneliness and introspection during the nine-year change. To help them look beyond their immediate surroundings, the “zoom-out” tool describes a) something the character is doing and b) something happening outside of the character. In the zoology main lesson block, fourth graders are asked to describe different animals. For them, similes (*like/as*)—comparing one animal to other animals or objects—can be a valuable tool. The fifth-grade students struggled to add interest to their dialogue, so we looked at how comics and graphic novels, such as *Calvin & Hobbes* and *Tin Tin*, utilize dialogue to tell a story. The visual element of the speech bubble also greatly aided the students' understanding of why we use quotation marks in standard prose form. I found that the greatest progress is made when I plant a seed by introducing a creative tool, then give ample time for the students



Similes in the Fourth Grade

On page 6 of *Mariel of Redwall*, author Brian Jacques writes:

“The pitifully tiny figure of a mousemaid was hurled about *like a chip of bark in the eastward rush of roaring seas.*”

The fourth-grade students wrote their own versions of the last part of this sentence:

- ... like a pease of dust in a vacume cleaner!
 - ... like a ping pong ball being played with by giants
 - ... like a small bird in a hurricane
- And, most poignantly,
- ... like a tisú getting flushed down the toydlit [sic]

to play around with this tool, both in conversation and on paper.

The Space of the Imagination

Ideas and images are within and around us all the time, created within our own beings and also existing in the etheric space around each of us. As these images do not reside simply in our brains, we need to move through the surrounding space to stir up the images and to see what truly needs to be said.

A child's imagination is much larger and more mobile than the child's physical body—it can go anywhere! On my first day with the fifth grade, I asked the students if they like to read. Every student raised a hand, one boy raising both.

“Why do you like to read?”

“You can go places you've never been.”

“I see new things.”

“When you read, you get to be in the author's imagination.”

“It's FUN!!”

“So authors can show you places and things you would otherwise not see,” I summarized, “and the stories they tell come from their imaginations. Getting to read these stories and see the images the author shares with you, that's what makes reading exciting. Is that right?”

The discussion that followed confirmed that the imagination creates images out of words and that the images people create from the same words can be quite different. We then got into a discussion about the size of the imagination and how it extends far beyond the physical brain or self. If I tell a story of a distant land to the children, the words are created in my imagination from images I can see there. Words come from my lips, cross the classroom, and enter their ears. When the students receive the words, they each make images of this distant land as well. In this way, our imaginations together fill the whole classroom, yet can also take us each far away from the classroom, far beyond the confines of Cedarwood Waldorf School.

We looked at the word *imagination* and found the word *image* in it. One girl then found that the other part of imagination is *nation*. From this, we realized that: *image* + *nation* = the place where images are made!

The Plane of the Page

The task after accessing the images is sharing them, putting a visual/spatial experience into words. Translating images created in the soul into writing on a page can be challenging. All children possess a vast resource of stored imagery, some of it coming out of their own experience, some from other realms. With this trove they can create settings, characters, character development, and stories that are original and imagined. But the images must be drawn out, honed, clarified, and more concretely formed in order to be put on the page. The images must go through a change of phase, as molecules of vapor come together to form water, in order to be shared. One cannot put a cloud in a glass nearly as easily as water can be poured from one vessel to another. While a cloud may block the sun for a time, a river can change entire landscapes.

How can we help children access these images most fully? Through *play*. We need to give them space to find their images, to revel in and enjoy them, and decide where they will go next. We need to provide tools for writing, but these must be given in a way that does not stifle this exploration; rather, they should be presented in image-driven and creative ways that inspire young writers.

Between the nine-year and twelve-year changes, the students are experiencing their world through social, creative experiences that ignite their feeling life. Above all, I want to help my students develop a love for words and writing. I want them to have fun with writing, not be bogged down by worries that something isn't spelled correctly or that a sentence sounds silly. If they feel stuck, I give them tools to "unlock the block." These include methods for "showing" rather than "telling," adding richness to description, and engaging the audience.

As recent research shows, when a person is experiencing joy, dopamine floods the brain and every doorway for learning is opened. Almost a century ago, Rudolf Steiner emphasized that children will learn best when they are fully and positively engaged in the feeling realm. Writing cannot be a dry or rote curriculum. It must be enlivened, enlivening, and come from a place of love and joy for the students and for the subject material.

Max, with whom we started this article, is part of a class with a wide range of spelling, writing, and reading abilities. Max has a noticeable speech impediment, and this greatly affects his spelling. He would



With obvious enjoyment, three third graders read aloud their poem, which turned out to be quite silly.

happily chat with other students, but rarely wrote anything. However, on this Friday when he was so ready to read aloud to the class, he had written an entire page. What had inspired such progress?

The Tuesday before, Winston, a precocious boy and able writer, had seen Max struggling and asked me if he could help him. The boys worked hard together, clearly playing with words both spoken and written. Through this collaboration and play, both boys wrote more than either had before.

"Joe got in his new car and drove away," Max finishes reading, standing in front of the class. Winston is the first to applaud, and the rest of the class quickly follows suit. Max smiles, bows to the room, and hands his paper to me. "Here, Ms. Gavin, you might want to read dis again."

☆ Donald R. Bear, Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, and Francine Johnston, *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2008).



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Running to Starbucks

A Seventh-Grade Tale of “Wish, Wonder, and Surprise”

BY ISABELLE TABACOT



I punch in the code and swing open the school's gate onto the bike trail that is part of the American River Parkway. A cohort of sullen, grumbling seventh graders shuffles past. It's 9:00 AM on a chilly day in late November and the list of their grievances is long: first day back from Thanksgiving break ... boring Advent assembly ... freezing cold ... and now *she* is making us run two miles, to the footbridge and back ... this is SO unfair!

Somewhere, in the last year or two, we have emerged into a new landscape: lofty vistas, ominous valleys. As a class teacher, I fancy myself, now and then, as Dante lost in his shadowed forest. Where am I? Where are we? Should I echo *Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate*? “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here!” So melodramatic! And yet, at unexpected twists and turns of a lesson, we reach moments of keen, elegant insight, in which the children's fresh cognitive powers and depth of feeling leave me in awe. Like weather at sea, their moods shift and change, storming only to blow over into mild, gentle skies.

If I am Dante, if we are all Dante (teacher and students)—having crossed together over a mighty threshold—then the seventh-grade Waldorf curriculum, in its wisdom, is Virgil, come to walk us safely through these woods. In particular, nestled among academic subjects such as the Renaissance,

inorganic chemistry, and pre-algebra, glows a small but powerful beacon: “Wish, Wonder, and Surprise,” a study block where soul moods are brought into the limelight, where the children are offered, through literature and creative writing exercises, paths to tread and opportunities to celebrate and strengthen their growing inner life—to give it form and to give it wings.

Scheduled during the weeks of Advent, the block approaches as a hoped-for turning point in the year, like the season, a kindling of light and lightness of being in these teenagers, newly fallen into gravity.



Dante, lost in the dark forest, just before the surprises begin for him

While the class makes its way through the fall, I work on my plans for “Wish, Wonder, and Surprise.” Above all, I keep pondering: What surprise should I open with? I am indebted to my former colleague Janet Langley for the insight of beginning the block with “Surprise.” Good or bad, small or big, surprises have the potential to break defenses and crack open facades. No matter how carefully guarded

we may be, surprises soften us, lift us, leading us to wonder and to awe.

That being said, I confess that I fell short of surprising my first seventh-grade class. A humbling reminder lies in the fact that, while I do recall being pleased overall with the block, I cannot remember what I did! This is a blessing, really, since it removes any temptation I might have to recycle ideas and pushes me instead to pay attention, here and now, to this particular group of young people.

I ask the question: With what surprise shall I start the block? The answer is hard to hear in the roar of a busy classroom! For a long while it eludes me. We pass from chemistry to the Age of Exploration to physiology. Cool mornings soften the edge of Sacramento's exhausting heats. Rain falls at last. Each morning, right after morning verse, we run, training under Amy Alessandri (our movement teacher) for a five-kilometer race in early November. I run with the children and mull over potential surprises as we lap around the track. Nothing stands out—no clowns or jokes for this group; I'd like to avoid food; and I have already dressed up as Marie Antoinette's lady-in-waiting for a guest lecture in the eighth grade earlier in the fall. What will I do? One thing at least is clear: I do not want the children to be passive recipients, but rather to become actors in their own surprise.



The blue-flower-in-the-hair pace group heads purposefully for the footbridge over Sacramento's American River.

Our pace and stamina improve. Amy takes us down trails in the American River Parkway. One day, a child observes: "You know, if we ran a little farther past the bridge, we could get to Starbucks at Gold River." With its large terrace under mature oaks,

this Starbucks is popular with both students and faculty. The class picks up the idea, dismisses it ("It's *main lesson*, people!") and, as I listen to the banter, the answer to the question of surprise takes shape at last: Yes! Let's run to Starbucks for main lesson!

Half the fun of a surprise (if not most) is in the planning. Leery of leaving a revealing trail, paper, electronic, or otherwise, I seek out each family and verbally explain my plans. The parents respond



A "napkin-art" memento of the Starbucks main-lesson experience.

enthusiastically and offer help. We manage to pass and to collect signed field trip forms without a single child becoming aware of the plan. Starbucks is called and agrees to provide twenty-six hot chocolates at the given time. Return rides are arranged. I nag the children to keep their running shoes at school, despite the 5K race being over. Throughout Thanksgiving break, I check the weather obsessively. Will it pour on the day of the run? If so, what should I do? Like a middle-school student, my feelings oscillate between excitement and worry.

The day dawns clear. The seventh grade enters the classroom in a perfect mood: Monday-morning-morose. Obviously there has been no dreaded leak of this surprise. After assembly, I announce that we will run to the footbridge. A chorus of gripes greets my words. Unmoved, Amy, Pollyanna (parent and marathon runner), and I herd the class to the gate, split the children into three pacing groups, and take off.

It's a good thing that running has been our morning routine since the year began. Despite complaints,

habits take over and hold us. We veer left onto the dirt path, parallel to the bike trail. The children's pace is strong, and I begin to hear laughter as they tear down the path. With a few days of recent rain, the scenery has turned from drab, tired grays to bright greens. The wind is raw on our faces, but the



Unaware that history is being made directly behind him—a Waldorf main lesson in a coffee shop!—the gentleman inside blithely continues to watch funny cat videos.

sunshine is exhilarating. “This feels good,” observes one child at the one-mile mark. “Yeah, better than sitting at a desk doing math,” agrees another. Soon, my group scampers down the last little hill to the footbridge, where lead runners mill around, leaning over railings. The river is low; a pungent smell wafts up from shores and shallows full of dead salmon.

At once, Pollyanna and I give the signal to start running again, straight across the bridge. “What?! You said we were running to the footbridge! Did you mean the red bridge? How long is this run? Where are we going?” We sprint under the Sunrise Bridge, then wheel right onto a gravel path along a creek—new running territory for the class. On the left, we pass a rafting company, reach a chain-link fence, and face the manicured lawns and smooth paths of Gold River, the roar of traffic on Sunrise Boulevard suddenly filling our ears.

“Are we running to Starbucks?” somebody whispers at last. I nod ... and the words fly down the line! “Hey, guys! We’re running to Starbucks!” A few students jog closer to me: “Is it true? Really? What are we going to do at Starbucks?” “Main lesson!” I answer simply. And I can’t resist teasing: “Should we turn back?”

The pace accelerates. The children thunder down the path, we grown-ups barely keeping up. It’s all we can do to keep the lead and middle groups contained at the traffic light. They dart across the road and the parking lot and emerge panting, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, on the terrace at Starbucks. To their surprise, parents are there to greet them. Each child is handed a hot chocolate, a napkin, and a pen. Settling at tables and in deck chairs, they sip their hot chocolate and read the instructions I have prepared for them. They are to write something, anything they wish, on the paper napkin. I call it “napkin literature” in honor of all the great novels and poems begun as an idea on a coffeehouse napkin. The children gamely take up the challenge.

*To Starbucks,
Through the muck
And the cold
And the heavy smell of old
Dead fish,
We went,
And arrived tired and energy spent.
It was worth it
To get
This hot chocolate*

writes Brenna. A table away, Jun gets metaphysical:

*Nothing is: indescribable.
Nothing is: emptiness in my heart.
Nothing is: everywhere.
Nothing is: what’s in my cup.
Nothing is: the leaves in the trees.
Nothing is:
You decide ...*

And Tess stresses syllables for her haiku, wondering aloud if *glorious* counts as a two- or three-syllable word:

*The grass blades waver,
Starbucks is so glorious
It was a long run.*

Meanwhile, Amy and the slower-pace group have taken a wrong turn and gotten temporarily lost. I head back to Sunrise and watch them pick their way across a damp field toward the traffic light. Amy and I are engulfed in hugs as this group, too, grasps its destination, breaks into song, and races the last few yards to cheers and applause.

In the following days, the children and I process our run to Starbucks in spontaneous conversations—a

measure of the success of this surprise. “I knew we were going to Starbucks when we crossed the footbridge,” says one. I tell them: “One of your parents handed me a signed form in full view. I was so afraid one of you had seen it and would ask questions!” “You mean the school knew we would be doing this?” And, incredulously: “I can’t believe my mom can keep a secret!” The seventh graders seem amazed and pleased that so many grown-ups colluded to make this surprise happen—from lower-school office, faculty, and parents, to the Starbucks barristas who prepared twenty-six hot chocolates right on time for their arrival.

The feeling of community stays with me as the class and I settle into rigorous work. Over the next three weeks, I share with them an eclectic range of literature: Italo Calvino and Julio Cortazar, Thoreau and Emerson, Kathleen Norris and Verlyn Klinkenborg, Rachel Carson and Neil Armstrong, Galileo and Leonardo da Vinci, Lewis Carroll and Arthur Rimbaud, Elizabeth Bishop and Carl Sandburg, John Adams and Martin Luther King, Jr.—a fellowship of writers, thinkers, scientists, and poets. We span centuries, styles, disciplines, and cultures. The class takes it in stride and writes with energy and inspiration.

On the last day of the block, as we prepare to go off into winter break, I receive many notes of appreciation about “Wish, Wonder, and Surprise.” They range from Emma’s

I loved this block so much! It was my favorite we’ve ever done in my whole seven years of grade school!



Although all that jogging can lead to a bad hair day, the students enjoy their hot chocolates and the opportunity to reflect.



Sacramento Waldorf School seventh-grade class in repose

to Roman’s

I have learned so much about myself. There was this side of me that I never even knew existed. I am very happy that we had this block.

I am heartened by and grateful for the children’s enthusiasm and growth.

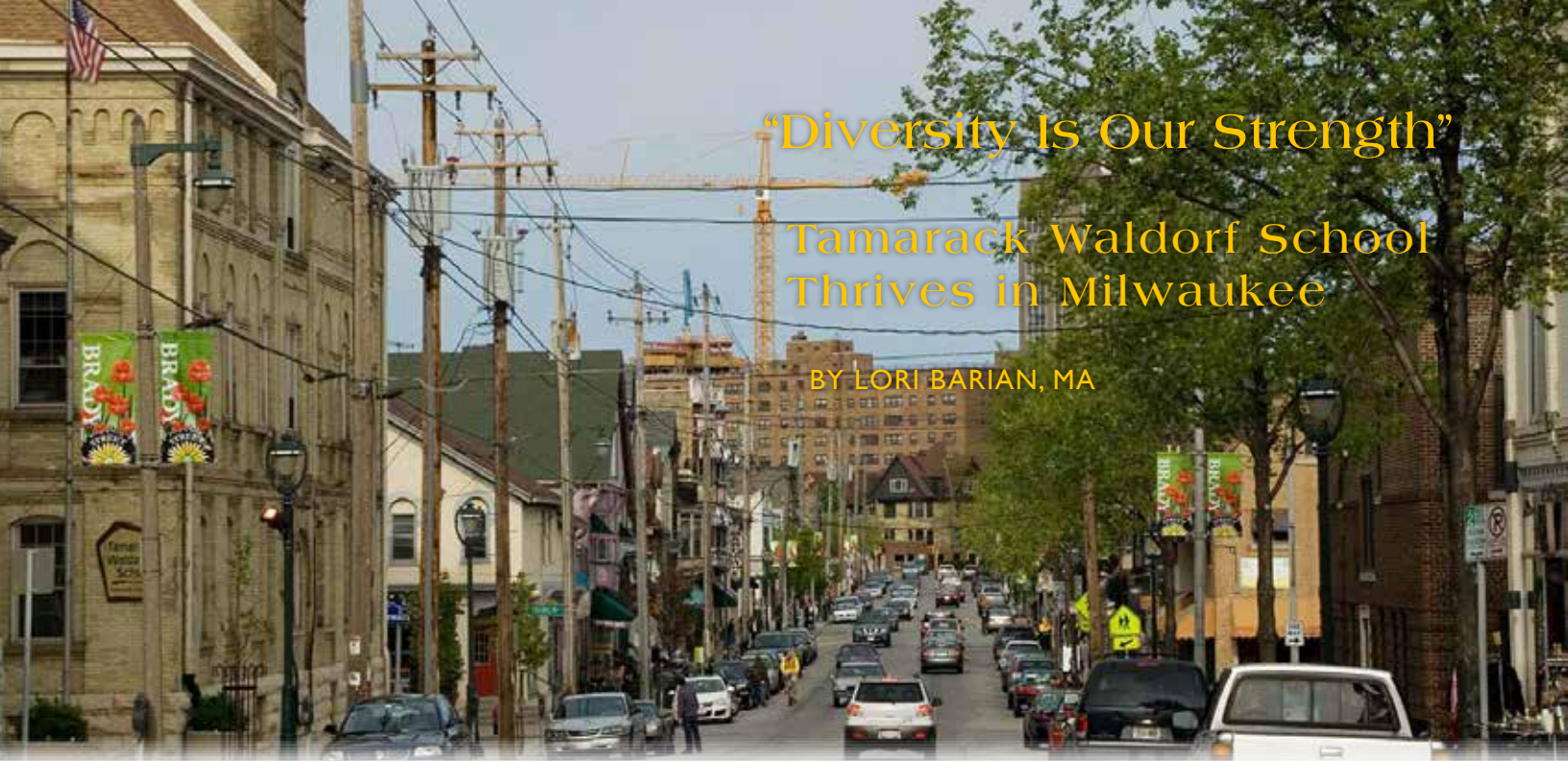
The run to Starbucks set the stage. It was the “right” surprise because the class’s activities and interests suggested the idea. And as exciting as it was to spend part of main lesson at Starbucks, the children nevertheless had to engage their will and run nearly three miles for it! It would not have been the same had we been *driven* to Starbucks. In turn, their enjoyment led them to higher surprises. Language, they discovered over the course of the block, can be a wondrous revelation; and beyond language, Tess perfectly expressed my wish for the class, the implicit and ultimate miracle:

You asked us to write in particular ways, but you allowed our imagination to wander and bring its own surprises to our mind.

Dante, I am sure, would agree! ☺



ISABELLE TABACOT has been a class teacher for nearly two decades and currently is at the Sacramento Waldorf School. She also serves on the faculty of Rudolf Steiner College. Isabelle is a passionate student of history and also enjoys eighteenth-century literature, contemporary art, and running to Starbucks whenever she gets a chance.



"Diversity Is Our Strength"

Tamarack Waldorf School Thrives in Milwaukee

BY LORI BARIAN, MA

Brady Street in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, just north of the city's downtown, overflows with eclectic shops and ethnic eateries. The surrounding neighborhood is culturally and economically diverse, with well-to-do professionals and their families living in close proximity to working-class families and even the indigent. The residents celebrate their nonhomogeneity and the color and vitality it brings to the area. Yard signs throughout the neighborhood proclaim "Diversity is our strength."

The Tamarack Waldorf School is located right on Brady Street in a former Catholic school building.



The current home (since 2002) of Tamarack Waldorf School, built in 1882

Founded seventeen years ago, Tamarack is a thriving, independent, accredited school that reflects the diversity and dynamism of the neighborhood and the city. The student population is about 18% African-American, 4.5% Hispanic, 18% mixed race, 1% Asian, and 58% Caucasian. The students come from various religious backgrounds, including Hindu,

Buddhist, Sufi, Jewish, and Christian. A number of the children have same-sex parents. Some students live in the immediate neighborhood but most come from greater Milwaukee, including the affluent suburbs.



At the annual Brady Street Festival in late July, Tamarack has a booth selling lemonade to raise funds and also to promote the school.

The students come as well from different economic situations. More than half the families would qualify for either free or reduced-price lunch in a public school. Nineteen percent of the families are able to pay the full yearly tuition. The others receive one of several kinds of financial assistance. Like the surrounding neighborhood, Tamarack Waldorf School is proud of its diversity. The graphic for its logo includes the words: "A Diverse Community Since 1996."

Every Waldorf school aspires to reflect the diversity of its immediate and its larger community. Rudolf Steiner expressed the hope that every child, regardless of particular economic (or other) circumstances, would have access to a Waldorf education. Yet the hard, financial realities of non-endowed independent schools make achieving this ideal a difficult challenge.

The Tamarack Waldorf School has achieved its happy situation thanks largely to a government program that was begun in 1990—the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. It is the longest-standing tuition voucher program in the United States. Under this program, parents whose income falls within the state-mandated guidelines receive funding from the State of Wisconsin for their children’s tuition. To be eligible for tuition vouchers, families need to be residents of Milwaukee and have an income that is not more than 300% of the federal poverty level. (Up until last year, the allowed income was 200% of the poverty level). This means that currently the adjusted gross income of a family of four may not exceed \$69,801 annually to be eligible for a voucher.

Families that qualify receive a voucher for \$6442, which they can use for tuition and fees at any school in the city that is part of the Choice Program. There are about 120 schools in Milwaukee, covering kindergarten through grade twelve, participating in the program, some for 100% of their student population and some for 2%. Each school can choose the number of “seats” it will reserve for the Choice Program. Seventy-four percent of the students attending Tamarack use vouchers from the Choice Program. An additional 7% receive tuition assistance or tuition remission from the school.



Second graders playing pentatonic flutes

There is another factor that has made the economic diversity of the school possible. Tuition and fees in most independent Waldorf schools in the United States range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year (still low compared to most other private schools). But Tamarack has kept its private-pay



A woodwinds class with sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, which meets twice a week

tuition and fees low—\$7800 a year—and is not able to charge Choice students the difference between the voucher amount and the tuition.

This fact in turn necessitates a tight budget. “The tight budget means we make hard choices,” says Tim Hunter, a founding parent and former school treasurer. “We have had to be very fiscally responsible.” While frugal, Tamarack offers the usual distinctive features of the Waldorf curriculum—handwork, crafts, woodwork, eurythmy, ballroom dance, circus, instrumental music in grades four through eight, foreign language, gardening, and festivals—as well as the full Waldorf curriculum of academic subjects. And while urban, the school is within walking distance of Milwaukee’s Lake Michigan shoreline, the Milwaukee River and its wooded parkway, and a neighborhood park and playground two blocks away where it holds recesses and maintains school gardens.

The approach seems to have worked. Despite the economic recession of the last years, which has negatively affected many independent Waldorf schools, Tamarack has the highest enrollment in its history. There are currently 243 children in pre-kindergarten through grade eight. And many of the children, like those of Vanessa Parker, are there only because of the Choice Program. Vanessa fell in love with Tamarack Waldorf School during a visit to the Winter Fair. She recalls:

From the moment I walked in, despite the hustle and bustle of the Fair, I felt soothed and inspired by the environment. The faces that greeted me were smiling, open, bright, and genuinely welcoming. It warmed me to think that this could be a place where my daughter spent a great deal of her youth. I wanted my children to have an education that

was focused on fully developing the whole child, where art and music were daily staples and not an afterthought. Because of Tamarack's participation in the Choice Program, this was a possibility for my family.



Two of Tamarack's twenty-four fifth graders at work on their main lesson books

The diverse nature of the school is much appreciated by parents. Beret Isaacson, a teacher and parent, says: "It's the most diverse community I've ever been a part of. . . . We have an inclusive attitude without trying, because it is so normal to see all kinds of people here."

The first Waldorf school, founded in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919, was meant largely for the children of factory workers. Tamarack parent and volunteer Kate Knuth observes:

Tamarack mirrors that initial impulse. It is truly accessible to all, both practical and artistic, creative and studious, with students from all walks of life. . . . There is something in letting the voucher system mingle with the "private-pay" world that contributes greatly to Tamarack's very special energy.



Students on a farm field trip gaze with interest at an unidentified agricultural phenomenon.

Amy Marks, a class teacher with two children in the school, is grateful that her own daughters are having a socially diverse experience that will help

them to get along with others. "I hope they will be peacemakers and bridge-builders," she says.

The school's diversity can create difficulties. Not all the families necessarily accept all of the usual Waldorf attitudes and standards about media use, bedtimes, nutrition, and other issues. These lifestyle differences created challenges for Beret Isaacson's two sons, but to her the relationships gained have been worth it. She recalls:

The little things fall away, and there you are, face to face, with another human being, and you get to meet them and learn about them. It is one of the most beautiful things I have ever experienced.

Also, the government funding does come with strings attached. Roughly one half-time salaried position is spent on the paperwork for participation in the voucher program. The school must file (against deadlines) regular reports with the government, and the number of these mandated reports has increased. The school's formalized multistep application process is performed in tandem with the Choice application process. The school is not allowed to turn away any voucher student who can prove eligibility, but it does advise parents to choose a school that will best meet their child's needs.



A handwork assistant teacher helps a first grader with her knitting project.

Choice Program regulations have increased in recent years. All class and specialty teachers are now required to have a bachelor's degree. Parents of children in the kindergarten for four-year-olds must be provided with 87.5 hours of parent education offered exclusively for those parents. In addition, the school is required to administer standardized tests to students in grades three through eight. Tamarack, however, works with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and parents can opt out of testing by completing a form. Currently, most families do opt out of having their children tested until the seventh or eighth grade.



At nearby McKinley Beach, eighth graders on a walk with their class test the waters of Lake Michigan.

Another key to the school's success is the faculty and staff, most of whom have been at the school for many years. Kate Knuth observes that "each one of the faculty and staff have committed in both spirit and deed to truly meeting, accepting, working with, and loving every single child who comes toward them—regardless of race, income, background, and media influence." They strive to make the curriculum relevant and reflective of various cultures and to work with the school community to make the school festivals universal. They endeavor to convey to the parents that their perspective, background, and religion are as respected and as important as anyone else's and that their child is expected to succeed and is respected as much as anyone else.

Like Waldorf schools everywhere, Tamarack is helping young people enter the world with vibrant life forces and a deep relationship to the world and to learning. Tamarack's graduates have the added benefit of a truly multicultural experience where each student's particular identity has been acknowledged and honored.

"I am very glad that I had such a diverse group of classmates," says Zalen Isaacson, now a freshman in high school. "It broadened and matured my views on different cultures and societies, and I had a lot of cool friends that I don't think I would have been friends with otherwise." ☺



LORI BARIAN has an MA in English and a certificate in Waldorf Education from the Arcturus teacher education institute in Chicago. She has also had training in early childhood education with LifeWays North America. Since 1988 Lori's

professional work has been primarily in nonprofit administration and development—much of it related to Waldorf Education and to LifeWays. She currently is director of administration for Great Lakes Waldorf Institute in Milwaukee. Lori's two children attended Tamarack Waldorf School from kindergarten through eighth grade.

Book Review, continued from page 17

- On meeting someone for the first time, shake his or her hand firmly, look the person in the eye, and say something like "I'm glad to meet you," plus the person's name. Don't call them "Dude!"
- On receiving a gift or substantial favor, write a note of thanks and appreciation, not just an email. And it's never too late to say "Thank you!"
- When greeting someone, always say that person's name. People love to hear their name spoken.
- While having a face-to-face or telephone conversation with another person, don't text or surf the web.

English also offers sound advice on how to give and to receive criticism, how to deal with conflict situations, how to respond to bullying, and how to apologize when one "messes up." She also shares with young people how to present themselves well, advising occasion-appropriate dress, speech not laced with vulgarity or with unnecessary "you knows" and "likes," and punctuality.

While one of the book's subtitles is "It's Not Just About the Right Fork!" English does cover the do's and don'ts of formal occasions. She describes how, as a host, to create proper table settings and how, as a guest, to navigate through a maze of forks, plates, and napkins.

Etiquette makes other people feel that they are valued, respected, and supported. Breaches of etiquette can make others feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or even humiliated. Etiquette can give a young person self-confidence and help in dealing with the situations that life brings. Lack of etiquette can cause insecurity, awkwardness, and the loss of social and other opportunities.

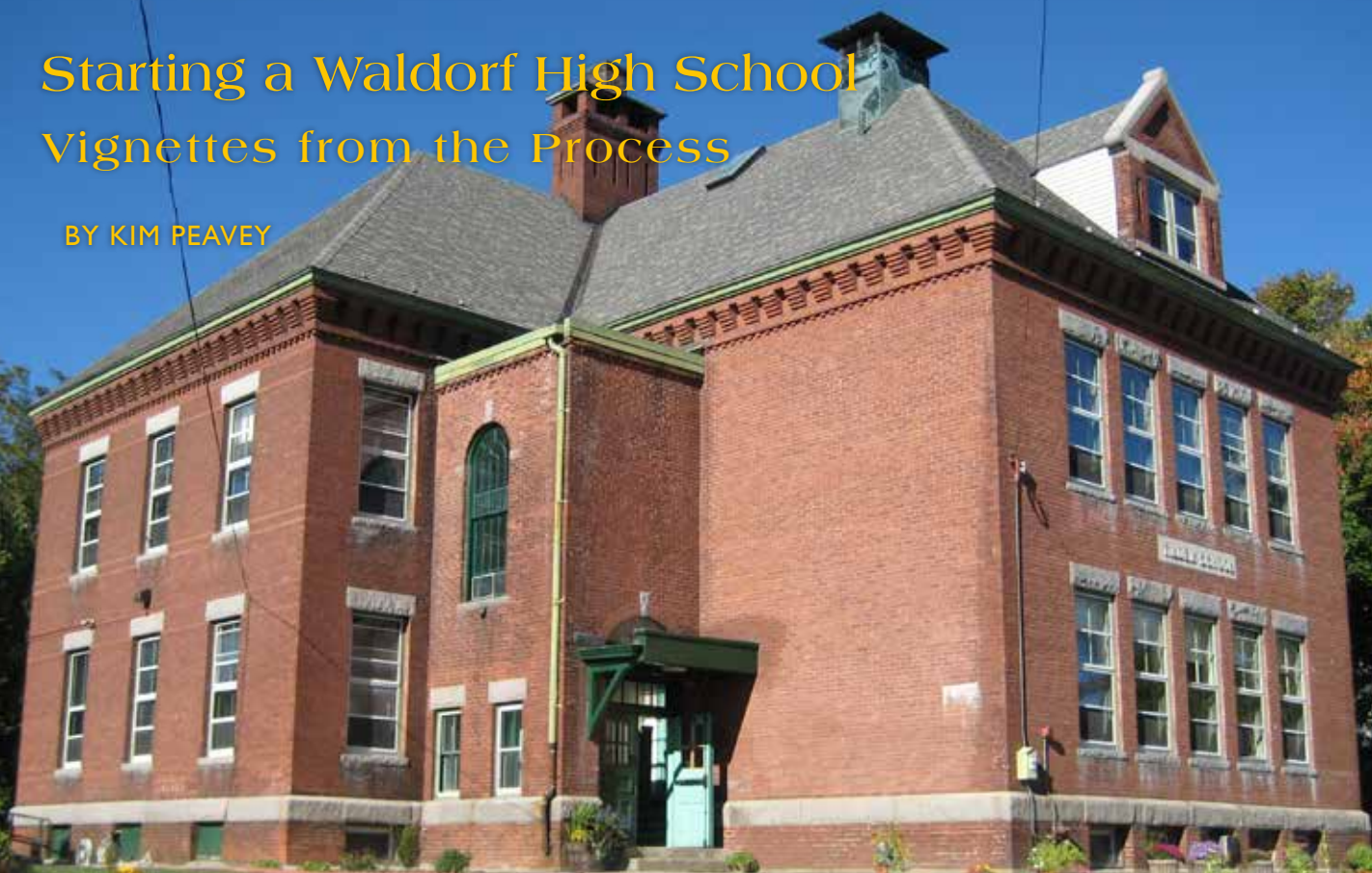
The Etiquette of Kindness is an invaluable resource for helping young people (and adults) learn about and practice an essential life skill.

Suzanne-Marie English can be contacted at:
<suzanne-marie@etiquetteofkindness.com>

Starting a Waldorf High School

Vignettes from the Process

BY KIM PEAVEY



There are currently 144 independent Waldorf schools in North America, of which thirty-nine have a high school. The process of founding a high school begins by adding a ninth grade, with the intention of adding a grade each of the following three years. It is an expensive project in terms of time, money, and commitment.

In August 2010, Monadnock Waldorf School in Keene, New Hampshire, after thirty-three years as an elementary school, founded a high school. The new school was built upon the work of a dedicated group of school parents who had opened a parent-run independent high school initiative the year before with just seven ninth graders and one lone Waldorf teacher. Here, Kim Peavey, parent of a fifth grader at the school, gives a personal chronicle of the creation of the high school, focusing on the several elements necessary in the process: a building (the physical reality needed for the incarnation of the school), parents committed to Waldorf Education (and reassurance for those with doubts), a qualified, dedicated faculty, willing students, and, of course, money.

—R.E.K.

The Building

Officially, the high school building is not ready for the public eye. It is a noble, old (1892), brick, public school edifice but has been hard-used for decades by a Head Start program.

The yard is not a yard, but a patch of tar with a chain-link fence around it. *Ooof*, I think. The entryway is drafty, and painted an appalling shade of turquoise, painful to behold. *Ooof*. The bathrooms feature cracked, diminutive toilets, peeling paint, grubby handprints. *Ooof*. The office space is jammed with four overflowing desks, where faculty and staff supposedly are beginning their work. *Ooof*. The hallway

is piled with trash, rotted wood, stained rugs, junk pulled from the walls, the floors, I don't know where all. *Ooof*. It is not an encouraging sight.

Then I walk into the one completed classroom. *Ohhhh*. I breathe out. It is a classroom cathedral, light streaming in from high, gleaming windows onto beautiful lazured walls, wooden tables, minerals of all hues in a corner cabinet. *Ohhhh*, I think: *This is the vision. This is the reality. This is the place where learning, illumination, meaning shine. This is the place.*

The Panel

There are four Waldorf alumni on the panel: the philosophy professor/Tibetan scholar; the pink-haired indie rocker with the off-the-grid house she built herself; the half-home-schooled, half-Waldorf-schooled, wholesome, bright, first-year college student; and the gothic, all-in-black, jaded, literary university student. They are each funny, capable, smart, poised.

The four sit before an audience of students and parents at the Monadnock Waldorf School, some committed to the idea of a high school, some thinking it over. The panelists have just met, but they are clearly

himself with his own insights. Perhaps what most influenced him was the way math was presented in his Waldorf high school—not as an exercise in rote memorization, but as a glimpse into the deeper beautiful patterns and meaningful connections of the world. High school math = meaningful life. Now that is an impressive equation.

I want to go to the indie rocker's next concert and hear her sing about her friends—her lifelong friends from Waldorf school, still connected because they all learned in school that they are connected. After many years of togetherness with a small group of

The goth alumna said: “What I learned from Waldorf was that I could create something ... something beautiful, something meaningful.”

enjoying each other's company as they reminisce about their Waldorf days in various schools, telling what they liked, what they didn't like, how sometimes they felt like the odd one out in the rest of the world, and how they would do it all over again.

I want to go take classes with the philosophy professor, who talks about Plato and Descartes and mathematics. He is particularly enthusiastic when he talks about math and looks as if he is surprising

people, whom she had to figure out how to get along with, no matter how she felt about them, she gained a valuable perspective on the world: that whether we like it or not, we're all in it together.

I want to take the wholesome student home for my permanent babysitter. I want her to spell out the letters of my child's name with eurythmy gestures as she has done for people she's met at college, people who never heard of Waldorf. I love her visceral, kind, light way of introducing people to what is foreign; her willingness to take risks as an exchange student in a faraway country in her first year of college; her openness to where she is, right now, in this roomful of strangers, in this life.

I'm not sure what I want to do with the goth. She is funny and sharp, has a biting humor, and presents herself as “oh-she-who-was-miserable-in-her-Waldorf-school.” She hated it, and yet she makes the most moving statement of the evening:

But you know—sometimes when I feel overwhelmed and stressed, I get out my watercolors and paint. Because what I learned in Waldorf school was that I could create something ... something beautiful, something meaningful. And not everybody knows that about themselves.



An English class in a renovated, beautified classroom. In addition to a rigorous academic program, the students get the practical, hands-on elements of the Waldorf high school curriculum, including ... (please see photos on the following pages)

The Fund-raising Appeal

The letter is almost impenetrable: front and back of one page, barely any margins, in a font so tiny one



... blacksmithing ...

wonders what Lilliputian people this is meant for. It is a letter so dense with meetings and visions and deadlines and surveys and analyses and focus groups and years of work and longing that I reel from it.

“What’s it all about?” asks my spouse.

I look up, gasping. “I think ... I think they want money to start up the new high school. You read it.”

My spouse steps backward, away from the letter. “Oh, no, no, no, I believe you.”

It is the Lilliputians against the Giant: Fund-raising.

The Parents

He is one of our favorite fellow parents: thoughtful, smart, kind, calm, interested in all manner of things. Today he looks as if he’s going to implode, anxiety emanating from him in waves.

“What’s going on?” I ask. “Are you all right?” He clutches a batch of papers under one jittery arm, as we wait for a parent meeting at the elementary school to begin.

“I’m going to talk to the parents about supporting the high school,” he says, through clenched teeth.

“Ohhh,” I sympathize. I hate speaking in public too.

“Wow,” I add, “You’re brave.” And I mean it. I am so impressed by his resolve, his belief in his cause, his willingness to take this risk and ask for support, that I go home and write the following for the school newsletter:



... small engine maintenance and repair...

The Money Comes, The Money Goes

You’ve received several long, impassioned letters about the Waldorf High School and its attributes, goals, and financial needs.

This is a short, ridiculous, outright plea: the High School must get \$50,000 in pledges by December 31st to reach a crucial milestone.

Our personal budget is so tight that we can see holes in our winter boots and in our woolen socks too! Still we are pledging \$100 a year for the next three years to the High School, and trusting that the money will materialize. Foolish? Perhaps. But here’s why we did it:

1. Many, many people that we love and respect in this community have put staggering amounts of time, energy, and personal resources toward the High School. We want to support those people and the incredible initiative they’ve undertaken.

2. My daughter is in the fifth grade at Monadnock Waldorf School, and we are continually amazed by the depth and integrity of her education here. Fifth grade seems a long way from high school; imagining your own child or children ready for high school may also be a stretch for you. But when that time comes, having the option of a Waldorf High School is something we don’t want to lose.



... weaving ...

The response to this plea is lovely, and unexpected. People hug me in the school halls; people report that they were inspired to make a pledge; people send us wool socks in the mail.

The Faculty

I knew him first as father of three small children: a little harried, a little wild-eyed, textbook in one hand, diaper in the other. He has come as an experienced teacher, having taught at an established Waldorf high school in New York State. Now, observing him trying to fill two demanding, adventuresome roles—a teacher at a start-up school as well as a parent—I wonder how it will all resolve. Is it possible—is it

worth it, even—to launch a school, with all its daunting demands on the teachers and their families, on the students and their families?

But then I happen to see this teacher talking to one of his teenage students. Actually, I hear him listening to a teenage student. The teacher is listening deeply, he is paying full attention, he is caring about this teenager as a person, as the person she is and as the person she will be. I am struck by it, excited by it. When I imagine my own child as a teenager, I think, *This is the kind of person I want her to be with, learn from, be inspired by.*

I feel that even more strongly when I see the teacher again at the eighth-grade graduation, representing the high school, representing the teenager, really, and reciting a Stanley Kunitz poem (“The Layers”):

I have walked through many lives,
some of them my own
and I am not who I was,
though some principle of being abides,
from which I struggle not to stray
... Though I lack the art to decipher it,
no doubt the next chapter
in my book of transformation
is already written. I am not done with my changes”

And I think—Yes. Yes. *Oh, yes. It is worth it.*

The Students

It is a small group, seven intrepid, inaugural high school class pioneers. They’re here at our farm, for three days, to see people passionately engaged in their chosen work. And we two farmers, my spouse and I, do exude passion about biodynamic agriculture, compost, seeds, soil, draft horses, and the greenhouse. The students especially like the heated greenhouse, because it is March, after all, in New Hampshire, and it has been raining all three days of their visit, during the horse manure shoveling, the rock picking, the pasture clearing,



...and organic gardening.



The lead class of the Monadnock Waldorf High School on a field trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in fall, 2010. The group includes the seven original students, plus three students who joined the class that year.

On the third morning, as the rain turns into snow, we begin our final project: digging a drainage trench along the compost yard, in preparation for laying drainage tile. The dirt is no ordinary dirt, but packed clay, and the students are armed with picks and shovels. I lift my head to glance down the line: seven wet, weary, miserable teenagers, digging a ditch.

I restrain a giggle. I cannot restrain myself from the next remark: “Eurythmy never looked so good, huh?”

They all look up at me. I am smiling broadly. To their credit, not one of them mutters a curse in my direction, and one of the seven even summons a wan smile. And, yet more heartening, none of them gives up on the ditch. They all keep digging and digging.

Oh, you Waldorf teenagers, I think, you good diggers. You’re going to be all right. You’re going to be just fine. You’re going to usher in the next age for us just the way it ought to be.

The students in this pioneering class will graduate from the high school of the Monadnock Waldorf School in June 2013. ☺



KIM PEAVEY writes and farms in Westmoreland, New Hampshire, where she lives with her spouse, Frank Hunter, her daughter, Gwen, and two teams of draft horses, all of whom help grow organic produce for a CSA garden, as well as help provide a conducive atmosphere for both writing and reflection.

Book Review

Addictive Behaviour in Children and Young Adults: The Struggle for Freedom

BY RAOUL GOLDBERG, MD

REVIEWED BY MEG SPENCER GORMAN, MA

This book is important for anyone who has dealt with addiction, has family or friends involved in addictive behaviors, or who is a professional in fields dealing with addiction. Using his lifetime of successful experience as a medical doctor and therapist and also drawing on illuminating case studies, Dr. Goldberg approaches addiction as a process arising out of unsatisfied primary needs and the search for substitute gratification. Addiction develops when the gratification becomes too powerful to resist and a person loses the ability to decide what is good for him- or herself. To some degree, each human being is caught up in an aspect of the addictive process. As Dr. Goldberg puts it:

We lay out a lifelong struggle between wanting to gratify our lower soul nature and controlling this with our higher human resources.... This is the *main game* of human evolution, and it is within this life *spectrum of dependency* that addictive behavior needs to be understood.



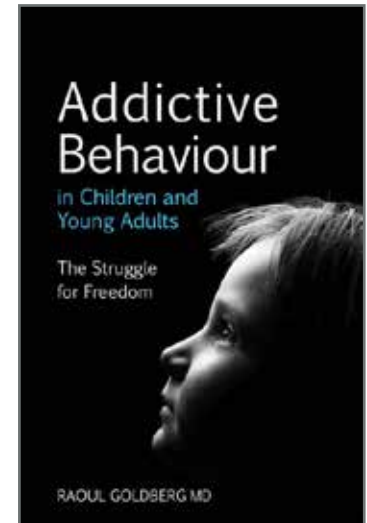
Computer addiction—including to the Internet, video games, and social media—is now generally considered to be a true form of addiction. Boys and young men are particularly vulnerable.

The tendency to addiction often begins in early childhood. In the early years, the absence of a loving and supportive environment, of worthy role models, or of meaningful activity can create a predisposition to later addictive behavior. Extreme parental neglect, abuse,

family violence, parental overindulgence, or divorce can render a child especially vulnerable. The emotional and psychological pain resulting from these experiences is suppressed but manifests in an abiding inner discomfort. At some point, the individual seeks and finds a source of gratification that eases the pain/discomfort temporarily. With repeated use, he becomes dependent on and addicted to it.

The therapist, counselor, or other person wishing to help must first identify the unmet need that is the source of the addiction. To perceive this underlying cause, we must become excellent observers; we must “awaken to the deep experience” of the other. This means observing an object, in this case the growing human being, as carefully and as consciously as possible.

In a process Goldberg characterizes as *enter, exit, and behold*, we work with an addicted individual by using conscious imitation so that we can slip into the skin of the other to feel how the individual perceives the world. Then we move away from this experience and observe the afterimage of it as best we can. This helps bring deep insight to the situation. It is important not to see a young person as helpless and ourselves as the solution. “This violates the enshrined principle to respect and trust the child’s inner resources,” because a “child, in his unborn nature, carries the innate guidance for his own life journey.” In this process, the aspiring support person comes to an understanding of the individual’s “deeper needs and vulnerable nature.”



Once an understanding partnership with the addictive person has been achieved, and the client can welcome rehabilitation, then a contract can be made and a multidimensional team of professionals put in place to support the individual. This group includes “parents, teachers, community members, health practitioners, and therapists.” Once an appropriate detoxification program is in place, therapeutic interventions are determined based on the needs of the client. The healing program may incorporate everything from art and music therapies to gardening, from animal care and hippotherapy (guided, therapeutic horseback riding) to kung fu and eurythmy.

However, it is crucial that we begin with ourselves and resolve our own issues relating to addiction. Just as Rudolf Steiner writes in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* that one must take serious steps in one’s moral life in the pursuit of spiritual knowledge, Dr. Goldberg insists that managing addiction begins with the ethical principles of the team surrounding the human being who has addictive issues. This demands a commitment to living an examined life.

Dr. Goldberg explains, in accessible language, many of the concepts on which Waldorf Education is based: the threefold human being of body, soul, and spirit; the “I” or Ego as the true, higher, spiritual self of the human being; the three seven-year developmental cycles of the child up to age twenty-one; the four temperaments; the seven character types; and the various physical constitutions. In addition, he gives practical advice on appropriate ways of working with different types of individuals.

Using current, mainstream, scientific research in the field, Dr. Goldberg explores a wide range of addictions, including caffeine, alcohol, marijuana, LSD, and heroin. An excellent chapter addresses addiction in relation to media and screen time and is a must-read for all parents. He also discusses addictions to violence—against others and against oneself—and the biological self-destructiveness of autoimmune illnesses. Calling on his long experience as a physician practicing anthroposophically extended medicine, he prescribes ways to treat these various pathological tendencies.

Toward the end of the book, Dr. Goldberg describes what he calls the “battle for the human soul” and the forces that are working against individual freedom and that are the impediments to free will. For example, using many case studies, he demonstrates how too much electronic media, early sexualization, and manipulative marketing are among



Hippotherapy or equine therapy, involving the riding of horses and taking care of them, is now used widely in the treatment of addiction, particularly for young people.

the challenges. Young people today are, in a certain way, seduced by our culture to lose the sense of their true selves. It is up to us elders, as carriers of a certain experience and wisdom, to help them let go of “the dependency that belongs to the past” and to enable them to find the “freedom that strives toward the future.”

This book is rich in insight and good, sound common sense to help us support the next generation with compassion and effective intervention. In the opinion of this reviewer, a longtime high school teacher, the book should be read by anyone working with young people today, especially parents, teachers, and therapists. Dr. Goldberg concludes with a challenge to take up the task of helping our young people find their essential selves. As he puts it, “It is up to us to make sure that this [self-discovery] happens.”

SteinerBooks, New York, 2012 • 272 pages • \$24.95

MEG GORMAN has been a Waldorf high school teacher for the past twenty-eight years in Waldorf schools on both the East and the West Coasts of America. She has also been active educating teachers at several Waldorf teacher training institutes and has lectured internationally. Meg has published many articles on Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education, including the little book, *Confessions of a Waldorf Parent*. A published poet, she holds a master’s degree from Georgetown University in Washington DC. Her three children are all Waldorf “lifers.”

Book Review

The Great Peacemaker *The Story of the Founding of* *Democracy in America*

BY NANCY JEWEL POER

Nancy Jewel Poer, a native Californian, is a lifelong anthroposophist. She is also a Waldorf early childhood educator, founder of Cedar Springs Waldorf School, a founder of Rudolf Steiner College, a longtime teacher at the College, a social and environmental activist (recently, to protest the commercial development of genetically modified salmon, she appeared in front of the California State Capitol dressed as a salmon!), a pioneer in the movement for conscious dying and for the conscious care of the dead, an artist, author, filmmaker, and rancher. Throughout her life, Nancy has worked tirelessly to manifest Spirit in the world.



Nancy Jewel Poer

One of Nancy's abiding interests is the spiritual mission of America, and she has taught a course on that theme at Rudolf Steiner College for almost forty years to several thousand Waldorf teachers-to-be. In *The Great Peacemaker*, Nancy retells a story, at least 800 years old, which is crucial to the understanding of America's spiritual mission.

The Great Peacemaker is based on the life of a historical figure. Deganawidah is born to a virgin mother and is shunned by his own family and his (Huron) tribe. As a young man, he goes into the wilderness, fasts and prays, and receives from the Great Spirit of the Universe his life mission. It is a time of war, famine, and suffering, and his mission is to carry the message of peace, justice, compassion, and cooperation to all the tribes.



The Peacemaker then travels the land, bringing to the tribes the enlightened, transformed consciousness—the “New Mind”—and the ideals of human rights, peace, and justice. He meets Hiawatha, who had been driven to

cannibalism when his life and family were destroyed by the power of evil, the Ahri-manic Sorcerer, Tadodaho. With a ritual of compassion and redemption (the Ceremony of Condolence, still practiced by the Iroquois today) Deganawidah heals Hiawatha. Together with the Mother of Nations, they face and transform the Evil One, who must then serve the good for all the people.



Deganawidah teaching the message of peace, justice, and compassion

Deganawidah's courageous work led to the founding of the Iroquois Confederacy, a remarkable union of sovereign nations that covered much of what is now the northeastern United States and in which peace was the “law.” In the tribes belonging to the confederacy, women had power to select and depose the chiefs. The duty of the chiefs was to put the welfare of the people above all else and to weigh the consequences of tribal decisions for seven generations. The chiefs were charged never to forget The Great Spirit as the source of their right to govern. The confederacy was an inspiration to the founding fathers of the United States of America.

The book includes a stage-play version of the story of the Great Peacemaker written by Nancy Poer. The stage play was first performed in 2012 by the eighth-grade class of the Cedar Springs Waldorf School in Placerville, California.

The book and the play are suitable for students in the eighth grade and in high school. *The Great Peacemaker* will deepen their appreciation and understanding of Native American culture and its effect on the mission and ideals of the United States of America.

—R. E. K.

Self-published, 2013 • 47 pages • \$18.95
Available from the author at <nancyjewelpoer.com>