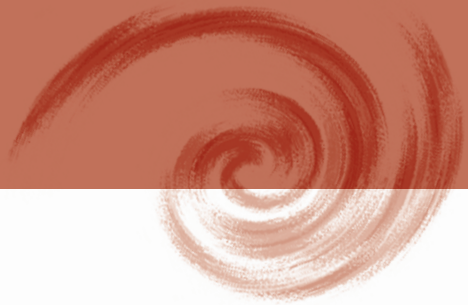




“Teaching Sensible Science” Heads West

Michael D'Aleo

In October 2007 a new cycle of the “Teaching Sensible Science” course—the first on the West Coast—began at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California. Present were 18 experienced class teachers from British Columbia, California, Colorado, Oregon, and the state of Washington. This group represents the largest enrollment to date in the program, now in its third cycle.

Many teachers attend this course expecting that there will be series of demonstrations and experiments illustrating the various phenomena covered in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. This is a central part of the course, with Lylli Anthon (from the Halton Waldorf School) and Bob Amis (from the City of Lakes Waldorf School) leading these demonstrations and discussions each afternoon. The demonstrations themselves, however, are only one part of the course. The development of accurate and appropriate concepts that arise out of the students' own thinking activity is as important as the accurate recapitulation and review of the phenomenal observations themselves. Helping teachers develop clear and accurate language to describe concepts before the teachers, in turn, help students is a critical and often overlooked activity in the sciences.

The morning sessions, led by Michael D'Aleo (from the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs), are dedicated to understanding how subtle yet rich a phenomenological approach to the world can be. As a result of this work, many of the teachers begin to experience that a sense-based approach to science not only has implications for

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a scientific understanding of the world, but that it can also be applied to the everyday experience of our own lives and those of our students. Drawing on diverse sources that include statements by Leonardo da Vinci and the Buddha, lectures by Rudolf Steiner, and the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, David Whyte, Mary Oliver, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, we begin to develop an appreciation for the living science of interactions between a human being and the world. Going beyond a basic worldview in which self, a cold detached observer, is isolated from the outer world, we find that science offers deeper connections in which the active participation of an observer in the world is not only encouraged, it becomes a requirement.

Seeking for balance, the final element of the course includes the experience of various aspects of this work in eurythmic movement led by Barbara Richardson (from the Center for Anthroscopy). The eurythmy provides not only an artistic balance to the active thinking in the morning and afternoon sessions, but also allows the participants and presenters to experience truths uncovered in conversation as actual realities of the interactive aspects of our world.

Though this West Coast offering is barely begun, there is already interest in holding a further round of the program in the Pacific Northwest during the 2008–09 school year. Those interested in deepening their understanding and classroom teaching of sense-based science should contact Michael D'Aleo or the Co-Directors of the Research Institute.