

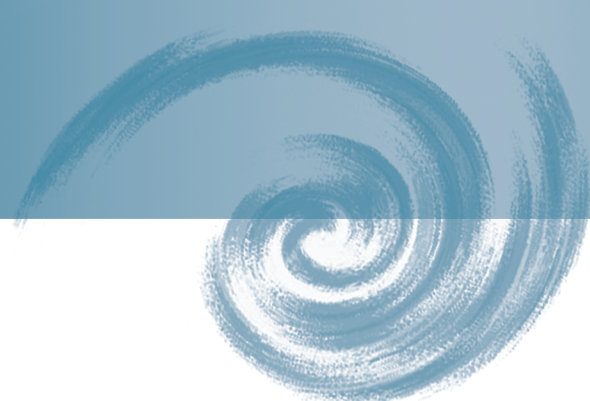


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Editor's Introduction

Ilan Safit

Even as world affairs all around us seem to bear the symptoms of global decline, we, at the *Research Bulletin*, want to believe that we are, in fact, entering a time of renewal. Having overcome the crisis of COVID-19 in our schools, we are emboldened by the sense that when the needs of the hour are met by resolute, intentional action, a road to the future unfolds – informed by the old while set up to meet the new. What new avenues await a spirited, inspired education with over 100 years of experience?

The current issue of the *Bulletin* aims to pick up on this question by zooming in on suggestions for new directions in Waldorf education and revisiting old practices.

We start out with a voice coming from a pioneer of Waldorf education in Israel. Gilad Goldschmidt is a founding teacher of Israel's first Waldorf school, *Harduf*, established in the north of the country in 1989, and has since been followed by close to 30 other Waldorf schools throughout the country. Writing from his experience as a Waldorf educator, but also as professor of alternative education who teaches in several academic institutions, Goldschmidt raises the question of the future of Waldorf education. In order to meet the students where they are, including their specific culture and historical moment, Goldschmidt calls for a combination of esoteric work that focuses on the inner being of the individual child and active research into existing pedagogical practices with an aim at improvement and innovation. A third element offered by the author is entitled "Waldorf for Every Child" – an initiative of sharing Waldorf practices with mainstream and other schools that are open to adopting selective pedagogical elements from Waldorf education without becoming Waldorf schools as such. According to Goldschmidt, this exportation of certain Waldorf practices has been happening in Israel for a while now.

An indefatigable force of Waldorf research, proliferation, and innovation in Europe, Martyn Rawson, is teaming up here with Kath Bransby, a former teacher in Britain's mainstream education who is now the Education Coordinator at the *Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship* of UK and Ireland; the two are taking a closer look at the so-called "Waldorf Curriculum." The authors claim that there is no such thing – neither the original curriculum taught at the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, nor any one of its subsequent iterations codified in Waldorf research books as *The Waldorf*

Curriculum should be seen as such. Instead, Bransby and Rawson prefer to speak of Waldorf *curricula*, in the plural, drawing inspiration from the same well but branching out to adapt to cultures and demographics in which Waldorf schools operate worldwide. (If you spotted a mixing of metaphors in the previous sentence, it is intended to draw attention to the authors' own suggestion to replace the metaphor for the spread of Waldorf curricula from that of the many branches coming out of a single trunk to that of a rhizome with its network of underground roots.) The article further suggests new ways of looking at the Waldorf curricula and laying out strategies for renewal.

Another source for reviewing and renewing the work done in Waldorf schools is set up by the ongoing, multipart surveying of Waldorf communities that has been conducted by the Research Institute for Waldorf Education in several stages and across several decades. The latest installment in this work, a survey of parents of past and current Waldorf students, is sampled here with "The Community Speaks," penned by David Sloan in collaboration with Connie Stokes, Andrew Starzynski, and Douglas Gerwin, offering a chapter from the book-length report that will be published later in this school year.

In soliciting thoughts for renewal, we keep on going back to the source, to Rudolf Steiner's guidance to the first Waldorf school, whose own guiding heart, Steiner made clear, should be the faculty members gathered together as the College of Teachers. The seasoned Waldorf teacher, Roberto Trostli, went back to the source to reconstruct once more the concept of the College. "Rudolf Steiner broadly sketched out the intentions and tasks of the College," Trostli wrote in his 2017 book, *Thy Will Be Done: The Task of the College of Teachers in Waldorf Schools*, "but he left it to us to make this form our own." We are glad to be able to reprint here two chapters of this important book – one reviewing Steiner's address to the first Waldorf faculty and mining it for the original concept of the College, another describing making this form "our own" by describing the work of the College of Teachers in practice. We encourage Waldorf communities still grappling with models of self-administration to closely review the study offered in these two chapters and in Trostli's book, which is available from Waldorf Publications.

"If you are teaching today, you are teaching children who have experienced trauma," writes Megan Sullivan, who teaches Social Emotional Learning and Health at the Sacramento Waldorf School. Writing in a style that reflects the urgency of her topic and her attunement to the emotional cadences of her students, Sullivan presents here stories and models of Social Emotional Learning and of Emotional Literacy. Having started out as a class teacher in a small Steiner school in Australia, Megan discovered after a few years that her students had a real need for guidance in their social interactions and emotional self-knowledge. Counter to orthodox opinion, Megan realized, the sensitivities and sensibilities of Waldorf education were not fully sufficient to support this need in a world that is moving away from the repression of the emotional inner life. She was excited to discover Social Emotional Learning (SEL), developed in the United States by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Emerging in the mid-1990s, this work followed theoretical investigations and practical experimentations growing from late 1960s progressive pedagogy that aimed to support the "whole child." The story of innovation and renewal offered in Megan Sullivan's article tells about stepping out of Waldorf education in order to bring back a model for Social Emotional Learning developed in the program she co-founded in the Sacramento Waldorf School fourteen years ago. Megan shares here a host of strategies aiming to allow middle and high school students to identify, acknowledge, and communicate their feelings—an arising necessary condition for adolescents struggling to navigate the sea of troubles of their age and our times.

The final two contributions to the current issue are offered as a continuation of last year's double-issue of the *Research Bulletin*, which was devoted to Waldorf initiatives in supporting students facing learning, cognitive, and emotional challenges – a theme we see as central to any attempt at Waldorf renewal.

Jennifer Militzer-Kopperl—whose article "The Remedial Staircase" appeared with an unfortunate printing error in the previous issue, but is now available error-free at www.waldorflibrary.org/journals/22-research-bulletin—offers here strategies for remedial work with students who fall behind their grade level in reading. Rather than teaching the whole class by grade, Militzer-Kopperl instructs, teaching should be differentiated by the phase of reading development that students are detected to be in. A full manual is included in this article.

Meron Barak, a medical doctor and psychotherapist with expertise in anthroposophic medicine and attention deficit disorders, is redrawing in the final article the anthroposophic approach to treating children with

ADD and ADHD. The key to a successful treatment, to be enacted in collaboration between teachers, medical therapists, and parents, Dr. Barak reminds us, lies in "seeing that the child is a spiritual being who is attempting to express itself through a physical body." From this core anthroposophic and Waldorf principle flows an attentiveness to the needs and struggles of the child suffering from attention deficits. The article moves systematically from symptom description, to analysis, to treatment methods, and concludes with a case study that demonstrates the anthroposophic approach in action. The selection offered here is adapted from the author's book, *Restless Children: Coping with Attention Deficit and Anxiety Disorders from an Anthroposophic Point of View*, which should become available in English translation in early 2023.

We conclude the issue with reports from Waldorf Publications, the Research Institute for Waldorf Education, and the Online Waldorf Library. As is our custom in the Fall/Winter issue, we are including a full index of all articles previously published in the *Research Bulletin*, and which are now available online at www.waldorflibrary.org/journals/22-research-bulletin.

Submissions

Submissions to the Research Bulletin should be made as Word document attachments sent to theresearchbulletin@gmail.com. You are welcome to suggest topics and themes for specific articles by writing to the editor at the same email address.

What Should Waldorf Education Look Like Today?

By Gilad Goldschmidt

What are the present and future challenges of Waldorf schools and how should we face them?

I would like to start by saying that everything in this article represents only my own view, my understanding, and my thoughts. It is not the ultimate truth, nor does it represent what Steiner had said. Instead, these are my thoughts, resulting from my own work in Waldorf education.

In 1906, 116 years ago, Steiner began to lecture on the topic of education (this was later published as "The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science").¹ A hundred and three years ago, in the year 1919, the first Waldorf school was founded in Stuttgart. Steiner, who was the founder and director of, and consultant to the first school, passed away in 1925. This means that the last time Steiner had said something about Waldorf education was 97 years ago.

Since its inauguration more than a hundred years ago, the Waldorf educational movement has been growing and thriving, first in Europe, then the U.S., and, in recent years, almost everywhere and in every culture on the globe.

We have every reason to be proud. Today, the Waldorf movement is considered the largest alternative form of education in the world, considering the number of students who are currently enrolled in this alternative to mainstream education. We have many kindergartens and schools all over the world, we have a profound philosophic background and well-established fieldwork. We know what to do and we also know how to do it. And we have a long and powerful tradition.

However, we also have all the reasons to be worried. Why? Precisely because of all that I mention above! Because we have a deep, profound spiritual background or philosophy, because we have a tradition, because we know what to do and why and how to do it...

Let me explain:

There is a very delicate balance between form and life force, between tradition, know-how, and new impulses, between what we are accustomed to doing and what we ought to do. Now, in my opinion, we have been lacking balance for many years. Our educational

practice tends heavily to the side of tradition, existing know-how, and form. This raises enormous questions.

I would like to explain what I mean by the term *Life*: I use the word "life" to denote the fountain from which an impulse is flowing, the creative stream underlying what we do. In educational terms, I use it to refer to the intention directed toward the child itself, with his or her unique needs and development; to the act of a meeting taking place between child and educator, between children and other children; and, finally, I use "life" to describe the place that has created all the forms we are familiar with, those we usually call "Waldorf education."

By the term *Form*, I mean the external design of pedagogical practices, which Steiner himself and many other Waldorf educators, through the generations, have shaped out of the creative impulse. These are the 'things Waldorf teachers do', the habits, rituals, and other activities inside and outside the classroom that make up the work of Waldorf pedagogy. Main Lessons, the Main Lesson Book, the recitation of the Morning Verse are all examples of Waldorf forms, but so are the structure of the school day and week, the methods of instructions, and so on.

Steiner himself was aware of the relationship between *life* and *form* and of the challenge of keeping the living and creative impulse alive. He developed and created multiple elements, which makes it difficult for Waldorf school educators to view the educational process as a mere form, a technical element. One example of this is the cancelling of the use of formal textbooks, so that every teacher is forced to prepare his or her Main Lessons and the subject matter on their own. Another example is a curriculum that provides the general principles on every subject of study, yet refrains from going into the finer details, and so on.

My concern is that Waldorf schools, in many places, tend to become a tradition, a series of answers without questions, a series of habits, an "educational cookbook," that they turn into "this is the right way to do it," that is, into some specific frozen shapes of external symbols: wooden furnishings, pastel colors, Main Lessons, large notebooks... These are educational techniques – wise, beautiful, aesthetic, humanistic, yet still mere techniques, mere forms.

¹ See: Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996).

We, as a Waldorf movement, have a profound and strong tradition. This tradition is based on knowledge, on wisdom, on spiritual insight; but, once more, those insights, wisdom, and knowledge were given a hundred years ago. Since then, humanity has gone through tremendous changes: We breathe different air, we eat different foods, we live on a different earth, and we are using completely different technology. We do not have the same children in our kindergarten and schools, we do not have the same parents, and, above all, we do not have the same teachers.

We are facing enormous questions or challenges, which must have their answers here and now. Such challenges, to name but a few, include the following:

- How do we give answers to the deep needs of children nowadays? Or to the needs of parents? Moreover, how do we answer the needs of new teachers?
- Do we truly have a pedagogy that is appropriate for our time? Do we truly touch the raw nerve of our time? As a Waldorf education movement, have we adjusted to the enormous changes of the late 20th and early 21st centuries?
- How do we form an education that is truly geared toward the challenges of our present time and work on finding the right ways and forms that will provide real answers to these challenges?
- What is our answer to the new screen technologies?
- What are we doing with so many children who are unable to learn in a group with so many other students?
- What are we doing in our schools with the enormous question of the ecological crisis?

I recently spoke with a class 12 student who had spent a year in a Waldorf school in Australia, as part of a student-exchange program. The student's main impression of the Waldorf school in Australia was that it was "exactly the same as ours." For instance, she noticed that "in class 3 they study the exact same Main Lessons we studied in class 3, almost ten years ago." Even the teaching methodologies seemed "familiar" and reminded her of "doing the same things that we used to do." Well, the Waldorf school in Australia and the Waldorf school in Israel teach the same subject blocks, using the same teaching methods in class 3, even after a time lapse of ten years! It is fabulous, one might say, that Waldorf

schools look the same, even if they are located on the opposite sides of the globe, in a different culture, using a different language, practiced by different nations, and in different decades. Still, this student felt uneasy about this experience; in her own words: "It does not make sense that everything is the same, Australia is so different from Israel..."

The name "free school" (this is how Waldorf schools are called in Germany and Holland) not only designates freedom from the State and its bureaucratic mechanisms but also, no less, a school where the educational experience itself is based on freedom. Where there is freedom, there is a chance to have life. This life is the heart of every meaningful educational process.

We can also look at this particular question from a different angle:

What will be left of Waldorf schools if we removed all the well-known external marks, namely, the school building would be an industrial square one, the walls would not be painted in lovely pastel colors, there would be no wooden chairs and desks, there would be no large Main Lesson books on unlined pages, the students would have to write using lead pencils from their first day of school in class 1, art class would not include painting in water colors, there would be no teaching of Main Lesson blocks, and the Morning Verse would not be recited. Can a Waldorf school still function under these conditions?

What makes a Waldorf school a Waldorf school? What is the internal flow that keeps the educational spirit functioning without any external signs and tokens? How can we have access to the internal fountain, to the essence of Waldorf education, and create directly from it?

Naturally, we tend to lean on what we recognize as Waldorf practices based on what has been done before us by veteran Waldorf teachers, and on the few examples given by Steiner himself. I am still looking for a brave teacher who will not teach "The Octopus" in class four! We lean on

the school's tradition, and in the process, we face the danger of losing the deep intention underlying all of these traditions and of what by now are ready-made forms.

A living form is created from the present moment. It is always connected to a unique living encounter between people. In education, we can define it as an encounter between an educator and a child or group of children in a specific moment and place. Every teacher

We aim to identify the present and future challenges of Waldorf schools and seek to understand how we should face them.

is familiar with the creative process of education, in which I, as teacher, endeavour to connect, on the one hand, to the deep being of the children I work with, and, on the other hand, to the depths of the material I want to convey to them, while, through a mysterious process deep within me, in which sleep at night plays an essential role, I suddenly receive an intuition of what I should do and how I should do it. A form of learning process has been created. We are learning a grammatical role in a way that emerges in the exchange between me as a teacher and the unique needs of the children in the classroom. A week from now, or in working with a different group of children this form of the learning process might not be appropriate, so I will need to create another form. If I use the same form it won't be alive, it will become a tradition.

In my opinion, this is one of the most important questions of Waldorf education: whether we live the pulse and spirit of our time, bringing forth living forces and inspiration to the children we work with, or will we continue to adopt past forms that once were right and appropriate, even though they were created in a different time and place and for other children.

So, what should we do? How can we touch the living stream of life? How can we connect ourselves to the very source of the educational moment? In other words, how can we meet children in kindergarten, in the classroom, during play, and at home, with all our heart, and do with them whatever it is that is right and fitting for them alone?

I do not know if I have answers to these big questions, but I think I can outline a path along which such answers could be found. I envision this path as involving the following three dimensions:

- Esoteric work
- Research of our daily practice (Action research)
- Waldorf for every child

Esoteric Work

How do I create and shape my daily encounter with my students? How do I attain the kind of teaching that is driven by whatever it is that is going on within *them*? In other words, how do I create a deep, meaningful

encounter with the children that were sent to be educated by me?

The key to a true encounter with a child or a group of children, the key to life in the moment, to knowing what to do out of what is going on right now, out of the children themselves, the key to all these is our internal

My concern is that Waldorf Schools, in many places, tend to become a tradition, a series of answers without questions, a series of habits, an "educational cookbook."

ability to hear the inner dimension of the world around us, the inner dimension of the people I meet, and also to hear myself. I call it meditation. A "life of the soul in thought, which gradually widens into a life in spiritual being" "Spiritual life within the thoughts which spread out to become life inside a spiritual

entity"—this is how Steiner characterizes meditation in his basic book on internal development.² A detailed description of the meditative path in the spirit of anthroposophy will go beyond the scope of this article, but in my view, it is a necessary foundation for what I am seeking.

In this regard, a meditative life for the educator is profound. Having studied a certain issue once in teachers training, or having worked on this issue occasionally in a teachers meeting is great; however, I seriously doubt that this is enough. In order to fulfil our spiritual mission, a daily effort is required, a methodology is needed, and, above all, cooperation between teachers is necessary.

For many years, this question has been alive within me: How can we nourish, cultivate meditation work, a meditative culture in our schools? For many years now, I have been working on this issue with young students in various training centers and with school faculties. I have come to realize that we must establish group work. Supportive group work forms an essential part in many spiritual streams. In our particular spiritual stream, this quality is not sufficiently developed (unfortunately, the reasons for this are too extensive to be described in detail here).

We are living at very lonely times. In principle, we are lonely. Many young people want to meditate, they know it is important for them and for their work, but they fail again and again and give up. Another observation I made is that in our schools, many teachers practice meditation along *other* spiritual paths. It is not surprising, since the anthroposophical path is too difficult and lonely.

² Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment* (translated by George Metaxa) (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1947), p. 30.

What we need is a support group. Already in teachers trainings, and much more so in our kindergartens and schools, we need to establish groups of educators who have the will to help each other, to support each other, and to create a meditative culture together. This is perhaps the most important mission of the faculty meeting nowadays!

Researching Our Work

If we want to live here and now, to meet the reality of our children, our parents, and our colleagues, if we want to sense the pulse of the time, then we must study and explore our daily doings, our teaching methods, our curriculum, and all that our School Being includes. The foundation to this research is the meditative effort, on the one hand, and the knowledge about education that has been given by Steiner, on the other hand.

The forms that we use—teachings methods; curriculum; day, week and year planning; the role of the class teacher; etc.—must be examined and investigated, so that we can adapt them to fit the conditions of our times. And I mean *all* our forms. On different occasions, Steiner said that Waldorf education is the right kind of education for the period of the consciousness soul, that is, for many centuries to come. I am convinced that the spiritual foundation of Waldorf education is appropriate for the children who are born in our present time and into the future. The external forms, however – the methods that flow out of this spiritual source – these must change with the times, they must be flexible, and this is something on which we must constantly work!

Again, it is almost impossible to practice such renewing research alone, especially for younger teachers. On this issue, again, we must use the power of the group. Faculty can take this research as a shared challenge, as a communal mission, and work together on different questions of our daily work. Whenever I was part of such inquiry work, it has been my experience that it was always profoundly life-bringing and strengthening to everyone involved.

I would like to give some examples from our work in Waldorf schools around Israel. All these examples are from work that I did with groups of teachers in the framework of faculty meetings.

- *The question of the daily rhythm.* We tried to look at this question from the child's perspective: What

does a child go through during a school day? What is best for her at her specific age? What would be the appropriate rhythm between lesson and recess for each age? What will constitute a healthy rhythm for the children? How many lessons are appropriate to each age in one day? Does a 7-year-old child need the rhythm of lesson – recess – lesson – recess?

In one school, for instance, the faculty reached the conclusion that in the first three years of school, in classes 1, 2, and 3, we have to establish what they called 'a continuous day' or a flowing daily rhythm, without breaks. The class teacher feels the children's need or mood and navigates the daily routine accordingly. Hence, English or Arabic, painting or handcraft lessons can be longer or shorter and can start before or after the originally designated time.

- *The question of choice.* Is it in accordance with children's development and inner needs, that from class 1 to class 12 they must learn only what their teachers think they should learn? Should we perhaps involve the students, starting at a certain age, in their own curricular determinations? I see this as an area that needs careful studying and a question that we must explore extensively. In one school, we came to the conclusion that from class 6 onwards, the students should experience choice in some subjects, for their own benefit and development.

- *Preparing meals and eating together.* This was an issue that the faculty at a certain school wanted to study. The teachers thought that it is very important for children nowadays to know how to make their own food and to create a culture of communal meals. As a result, this school now has a kind of makeshift kitchen, and students from all classes work together to prepare the meal during the Main Lesson period, and then each class eats together as a group.

- *Designing the beginning of the school day.* How should we start our day? What should the students and the teachers do at the beginning of each day? What will be the most appropriate opening for the students? What would bring them healing forces? Would that be walking around the school area for half an hour? play in the school playground? work in all sorts of crafts? This, too, is an issue of great importance.

To conclude, there are endless issues in our daily Waldorf activities and routines that merit further research. The main thing is that we, as teachers, begin a culture of asking questions, of inquiry, that we are in continuous research and that we pursue this research together with our colleagues.

Waldorf for Every Child

I am convinced that we won't be able to fulfil our mission if we remain within our very narrow boundaries. Almost all over the world, Waldorf education works among rich, wealthy, and well-educated communities. However, the Waldorf impulse, the Waldorf qualities, aim to influence every child, not only those who attend Waldorf schools! We must look at ways in which we can expand beyond our current communities, beyond Waldorf schools, and approach every child and examine the question: How we can become an impulse that truly changes the education systems, the life of every child? How do we transform ourselves into cultural reformers that influence mainstream education, a stream of education that is truly meaningful?

How do we do it?

The traditional Waldorf school cannot accomplish this. We need, of course, Waldorf schools that represent a deep and original Waldorf impulse. Steiner called such a school a *Musterschule*, which can be translated, perhaps, as "exemplary school." Hence, we should keep on nourishing and developing the Waldorf school as we know it, for those who want it, who can afford it, and who appreciate what the Waldorf approach can give their children.

In addition – and I see it as a separate stream of education – we should create a new impulse that steps out of the traditional Waldorf school and is introduced to other school systems, a new stream of what I call "Waldorf for every child." To this end, we can take the more external components of the Waldorf school and work with them, transforming them in such a way that we could bring them to every school, every community, and every place. This means working as Waldorf ambassadors that are ready to offer some of their goods to other schools.

We are already doing this in Israel. We are working with schools that reach out to us, whether through the principal or other administrators or even through interested parents, asking about ways to implement elements of Waldorf education in their own school's practices. The requests come from both secular and religious Jewish

schools as well as from Arab schools and communities. We work with the school teachers, seeing first how they understand "Waldorf," what is it they really want, and then share our practices while working with the needs and expectations of the school teachers and parents. In this way, every interested school could have its own unique "Waldorf" suite.

Here are some examples of such elements of Waldorf education that are brought to non-Waldorf schools:

- The artistic impulse of Waldorf pedagogy – artistic activity during every school day for every child
- Emphasis on the human connection, on the element of human encounter in the school – the educator meets the student every morning and at the end of each school day
- Emphasis on movement for the children's healthy development
- The significance of handiwork – implementing various types of work, with a variety of materials, during the school day; cultivating the school garden; taking care of animals
- The method of block lessons
- Assessment of each child individually, without comparison to other students
- Starting from a young age, fostering a deep and meaningful connection to nature through nature walks, field days, camping, outdoor activities, observations and studies of nature, etc.

Such essential elements from the Waldorf world can be offered to and introduced in non-Waldorf schools, so that every child in the world can have them and benefit from them.

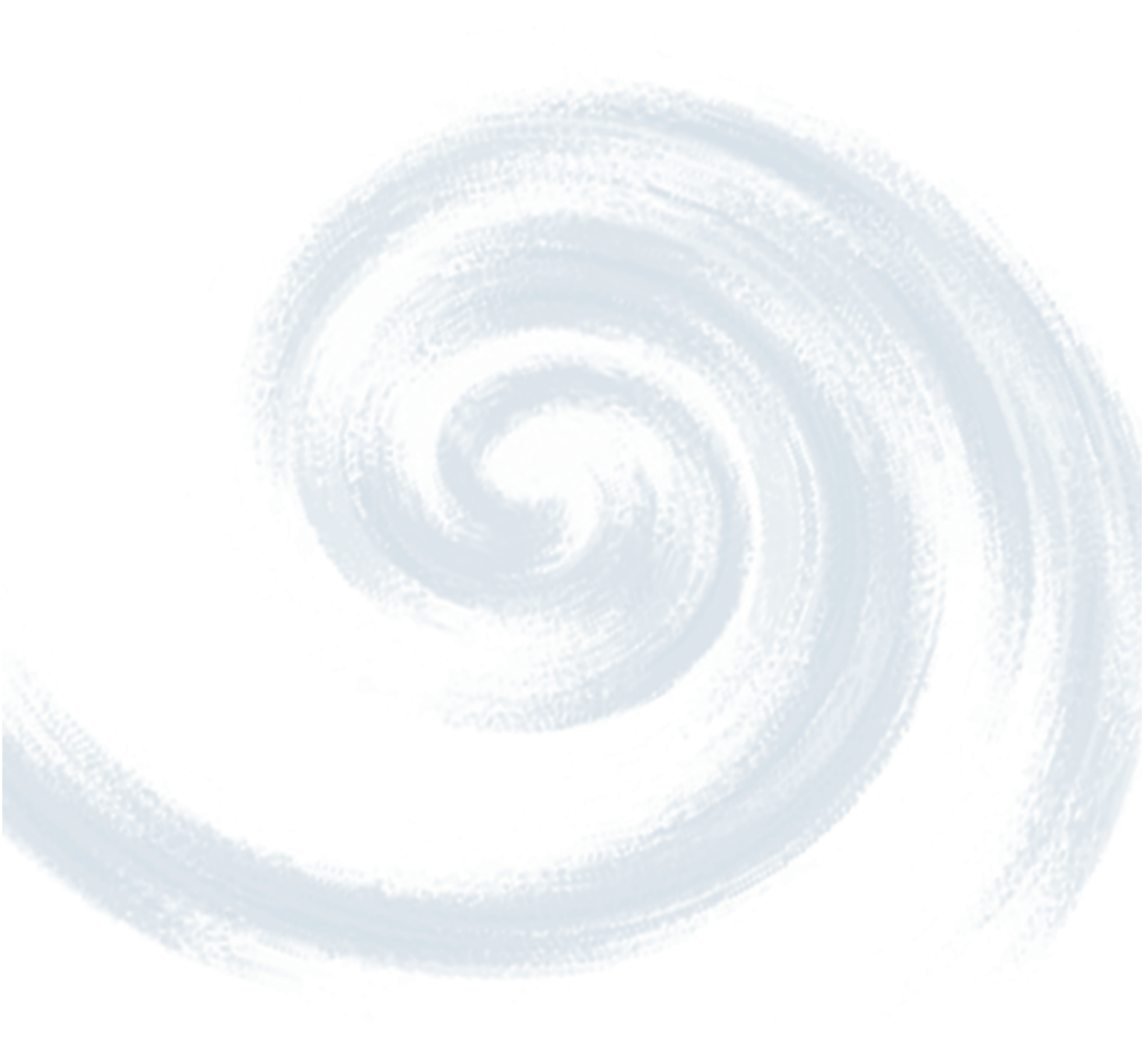
We have a treasure in our schools, and many parents, educators, and people who work in educational fields appreciate this treasure. It is our mission to give this treasure to the world and to help as many children as we can to benefit from its many life-giving qualities.

In short, if we want to be relevant to our present times, to the cultures we are living in, to the children that are coming to us, and even to ourselves – then we must make an effort in the three dimensions of

- Esoteric work
- Research of our daily practice (Action research)
- Waldorf for every child

In order to fulfil our spiritual mission, a daily effort is required, a methodology is needed, and above all, cooperation between the teachers is necessary.

Gilad Goldschmidt is a founding teacher of the first Waldorf school in Israel (established in 1989). He studied anthroposophy, philosophy, and education in Switzerland and received a Doctorate in Education from Haifa University, Israel, where he wrote his dissertation on Waldorf graduates. He is author, in Hebrew, of several books on Waldorf education and is also the author of children books. Dr. Goldschmidt teaches alternative education at several academic institutions in Israel and is the Co-Chair of the Association for Waldorf Education in Israel.



Rethinking Waldorf Curricula

An Ongoing Process

Kath Bransby and Martyn Rawson

Introduction

Can one re-imagine and alter a work of art? Can we fill in the gaps in Shakespeare's plots, tidy up Rembrandt's Night Watch and make the Disciples at Leonardo's Last Supper more culturally representative? Can a work of art be upgraded, updated, even de-colonised? If, as some believe, the Waldorf curriculum is the unique work of genius, perhaps even a gift from the spiritual world, then it could not be modified in any substantial way without a loss of its numinous power. Our view is that what is referred to as 'the Waldorf curriculum' is an ongoing, iterative, rhizomic and emergent process (see Boland and Rawson, 2022). We also hold that it does not merit a definite article: *the* Waldorf curriculum does not exist, only Waldorf curricula, in the plural, all of which are historically and culturally situated. If curricula are works of art, they are performative and collective, which is not to say that they are not artistic, nor that they do not contain a universal core.

We argue that the first Waldorf curriculum published in 1925 and translated into many languages over many decades was *not* the ideal curriculum Steiner spoke of; instead, it represented what was actually taught in the Stuttgart Waldorf School from 1919 to 1925 and therefore culturally situated and contingent to the given circumstances. Likewise, the recent translation (*Tapestry of a Waldorf Curriculum* published in 2020) of the German Richter curriculum (2016 version) is also not *the* Waldorf Curriculum, but *a* Waldorf curriculum. Not only is it already out of date (which is why a curriculum commission is already revising the 2019 version), but out of culture. In the introduction to the most widely internationally-used, translated version of the curriculum, the Rawson & Richter (2000, 2014), the editors clearly state that the document is specific to the UK, that it would need revising after five years, and that it should be culturally adapted at any other country in which it is used. To our knowledge, this has been only partly done. What actually circulates in many countries are hybrids.

The Waldorf movement to date has not really worked out internationally what the nature and status of its curriculum is, pulled between fidelity to its origins myth and the need to offer an education that is relevant to the culture of the students in their specific social environment. Since the 1990s, there has been increasing need for national Waldorf federations to defend the

education from statutory standardized state curricula with prescribed learning outcomes and a requirement to show that their curriculum is meaningful, valid, and equivalent. Some countries, such as the UK, Norway, and Australia have successfully gained state recognition for their versions of Waldorf curriculum, others continuously need to show the authorities what the curriculum used in their schools is. But here the pressure has mainly come from without.

Why Change?

There are, we believe, many pressing reasons why we need to rethink curriculum within the Waldorf movement. The core aims of the education are to enable healthy learning and equip school leavers with the abilities they need to contribute to the society they are part of, and, today we might add, to be world citizens capable of autonomous and ethical judgements. Since the inception of Waldorf education, societal change has been more radical than at any other time in human history – globalization, digitalization, new antagonistic geopolitical power structures, climate change, war in Europe... We are faced with rapid, major socio-economic transformations in a multi-polar world, few of which make the world a better or safer place to live in.

What this means for children and young people today is that both the present and the future are highly uncertain: terror, endless crises and risk become the norm; they fear the loss of financial security, many feel marginalized (both minorities and majorities), and they are presented with ever fewer figures of meaningful authority. Neither the political nor justice systems seem to function in the way they were intended to. The media seem to be a branch of the entertainment industry, and social media are a jungle. Even science can be manipulated to serve whatever interests dominate. If we were teenagers today, what would we rebel against and what would we conform to? It is not even clear who the good guys are.

As Bob Dylan sings, "If it keeps on raining, the levee's gonna break, Some people still sleepin', some people are wide awake" (2006, "The Levee's Gonna Break," *Modern Times*). Being awake in the right place at the right time is clearly an ability we urgently need today, which perhaps explains why 'woke culture' is so

demonized by the reactionaries who want their dream of entitlement and privilege to go on forever. The world we call society is crumbling not only due to forces from without – what we tend to identify as *the others* – but also from forces within – the oppressed *others* within one's own society. One aspect of collapsing structures, however, is that it opens up new opportunities for spiritual and social awakening and growth.

One (minor) manifestation of this process of awakening are voices within the Waldorf movement asking questions about the cultural assumptions underlying current Waldorf curricula. There is also a growing awareness that the originally Eurocentric (or, within Europe, German-centric) curriculum needs to be significantly adapted to take into account geographical locations and cultural histories outside Middle Europe. This has led to calls to recontextualize and even decolonize the curriculum by incorporating non-European cultures and histories, indigenous voices, the history of the oppressed, and the full scope of postcolonialism. In addition, we are called upon to take account of new gender consciousness and to reflect contemporary values regarding family life, work, and equal opportunities. Some (perhaps still few) Waldorf teachers feel that the versions of Waldorf curriculum in use have not adequately addressed these issues. At the same time, they fear de-stabilizing the whole education by questioning the integrity of the curriculum, and the risk appears greater the more one holds on to the notion of an ideal curriculum at the heart of the origins myth – not least at a time when everything else we had faith in is losing its authority.

There is another issue, which in itself is controversial within the Waldorf movement. This is the extent to which Waldorf wishes to or needs to open up to the wider educational discourse. Some voices say Waldorf already has the best possible system, so let the others catch up with us. Others, and we would align with these, say Waldorf can learn much from other educational approaches, just as we have ideas and practices that could contribute to the overall educational discourse. Not everyone wants to share what we have, believing that Waldorf is a hermetically sealed package of (best) practices that cannot be modified and can only be applied on an all-or-nothing basis. Firstly, this is an elitist view that paints us into a corner; secondly, this view is entirely illusory. Even if Waldorf education continuously renewed itself from within its own resources, which it doesn't very effectively, it would still

If curricula are works of art, they are performative and collective, which is not to say that they are not artistic, nor that they do not contain a universal core.

be impossible to ignore what is happening in the world. Not even the Amish are that isolated. Waldorf communities are open, people join them all the time with other experiences, and these flow into the ongoing development, whether this is intended or not. We can imagine that they shed these experiences and adopt the Waldorf worldview, but they don't and shouldn't. Not all of Steiner's insights came from within himself. He read books, spoke to people, adopted ideas (and sometimes dropped them again), took on board new information and continually adjusted his perspectives and approach. Contemporary Waldorf should too.

We believe that we have a duty to contribute to the overall educational discourse *and* it is also a good way of protecting what we have, because then people take us seriously. We think it is good for Waldorf quality if our qualifications are accredited and recognized. We believe we can make a difference. In Europe, we have seen that ideas from Waldorf education can make significant contributions to public education, notably in the fields of emergency education, media pedagogy (we are major players in this field with a grant of half a million Euros from the

European Commission to disseminate our ideas outside of Waldorf and our work on digital technologies in school was quoted 16 times in a recent United Nations Report), in the field of early years, and in blended learning. Martyn represents Waldorf Education in the European Commission's Working Group on the future of education and works with UNICEF on education for wellbeing. He is there because these organizations take Waldorf seriously (now that we speak a language they understand).

Finally, it is obvious that we cannot keep adding new content (e.g. new science, history, literature, technologies, materials, sources of energy) to the already full curriculum. This prompts the question, what to leave out? Which tried and tested classic Main Lessons should we scrap? Therefore, we need an approach to curriculum development that makes change possible but doesn't lose the essence of Waldorf education.

Searching for a Model for International Curriculum Development

Over the years, a number of attempts have been made to define key features of Waldorf schools, of Waldorf education and teacher education, and to establish

general criteria for the international development of curriculum, but we believe these have been hampered by some conceptual problems. One of these problems is the historical development of the Waldorf movement and the role that the curriculum has played in it, including the question of what is canonical and what needs to be adapted and changed. Another issue is the question of translation in the broadest sense (from one language to another, from one culture to another, from one time and place to another, especially when common words like curriculum, education, teaching, or pedagogy actually have different meanings in different cultures, see Boland & Rawson, 2022).

Caroline von Heydebrand, who published the first curriculum in 1925, was very clear in her brief introduction, that teaching is based on the following processes:

- A pedagogical anthropology based on spiritual science, on the basis of which teaching methods and didactics – the art of teaching – should be built.
- On the basis of the ideal nature of the developing human being, a curriculum would be developed containing all the things that students should learn in each year.
- Steiner gave some examples, but teachers should develop the curriculum based on the above principles and their own insights.
- The ideal curriculum must trace the changing image of the nascent human nature at its various ages, but “like every ideal, it faces and must fit in with the full reality of life” (von Heydebrand, 1925, page 1).

Over the years leading up to the 1990s, this first curriculum (along with Stockmeyer's collection of curriculum notes from Steiner's lectures and his work with teachers in Stuttgart) was expanded and translated into various languages. It is not possible here to show this process in detail (see Rawson, 2021a), but the original curriculum presentation was often literally translated, with more or less adaptation to meet local cultural needs (other languages, histories, literatures, geographies, etc.).

Following lengthy consultations, a German version of the curriculum was published in manuscript form (Richter, 1995), though this met with a lot of criticism by teachers who felt that any published curriculum was a limit to teacher autonomy. An English translation was circulated in the US. This book has been revised and republished a number of times, most recently in 2019, and a new version is currently being worked on. In 1997, in the UK, a comparison between the UK Waldorf curriculum and the National Curriculum was published (Mephram & Rawson, 1997). In 2000, a curriculum was published in English (Rawson & Richter, 2000, revised

by Avison in 2014), which blended the work done by Richter with the new UK Waldorf curriculum. This book included a section on early years, a description of Waldorf education, and topics such as school governance, student assessment and even guidelines for learning outcomes in maths, English, and the first foreign language. This book was written so that non-Waldorf educationalists could relate to it. It was subsequently translated into many languages and became the most widely used curriculum internationally. With the exception of the German curricula, all subsequent curricula have built on this work (e.g. Australian Steiner Curriculum). Recently, an English translation of the 2016 edition of the German Richter curriculum was published (*Tapestry of a Waldorf Curriculum*, 2020).



Figure 1. Some Waldorf curricula (ranging from 40 to 800 pages)

Metaphors for Curriculum Dissemination and Development

How can we best describe the dissemination of Waldorf curricula? We have chosen a botanical metaphor to describe this process. One can think of the Waldorf curriculum as a tree with a strong trunk and deep roots that has many branches. The fruits of this tree are collected by educational ‘botanists’ and planted in educational ‘botanical gardens’ in their own countries. There, the various seeds grow into essentially the same tree, depending on soil and climate conditions and state of care. In botany, imported species are known as *exotics* and are distinguished from *native* plants. This image

represents a model Waldorf education, its practices and curriculum, transported to other countries where they generally thrive, but predominantly as exotics (and they are often even valued for being *German* exotics). The exotic model may initially be the preferred method for the (always well-intentioned) 'missionary' process.

The alternative image for the spread of Waldorf education is that of a rhizome spreading from an "underground" or invisible network, from which new shoots emerge wherever conditions are suitable for growth. Local growth is thus 'native'.



Figure 2. A comparison of tree-like and rhizome-like metaphors for the spread of Waldorf education and curricula.

The rhizome model has the advantage that teachers in Taiwan, if they want to adapt the Waldorf curriculum, do not have to cultivate the Central European exotic 'plant' and graft onto it some local equivalent content, such as Chinese alternatives for the Old Testament or Norse mythology. Similarly, they are not restricted to methods of introducing the letters of the alphabet through picture stories (not least because the Chinese language has neither an alphabet nor a phonetic link between symbol and sound). Rather, these educators "grow" their curriculum locally, but on the basis of the common rhizomic network of ideas from which Waldorf practice can emerge.

The main difference between these two models of dissemination is that in the rhizomic version all the different plants have the same status and validity. They are not the fruits of a single, central, original tree, but grow from a common source. Thus, a rhizomic Waldorf curriculum in Taiwan would have the same status as Heydebrand's; it would describe what is taught in the Ci Xin School based on the Waldorf model of human development. One could even go further and suggest that "international bees" could fly from the Asian, European, South or North American or African flowers of curriculum trees and cross-pollinate each other, producing perhaps stronger, healthier hybrids. OK, that is perhaps stretching the metaphor too far! However, the metaphor can work as a heuristic to asking the

question: To what extent is our curriculum exotic and to what extent is it native and rhizomic? The spectrum along the continuum between exotic and native is probably wide.

Ideal Curriculum

According to Steiner,

We have to approach the curriculum quite differently. We need to be able to develop our curriculum ourselves at any moment, by learning to read from the children what they need, depending on their age. Tomorrow we will compare the ideal curriculum with the one currently used in Central European state schools. We will be prepared for this if we have really internalized what we need to know in order to understand the curriculum.

(Steiner, 2019, p. 311)

Steiner argues that teachers must engage with what comes to the children from their social environment. He hoped that Waldorf education would contribute to social change by making an impact in the educational environment, which is unlikely if Waldorf schools remain private, niche schools. In the meantime, the ideal curriculum must be adapted according to the age of the students, local cultural expectations, and the given situation.

The characteristic *ideal* is usually interpreted in the sense of perfect, complete, accomplished, exemplary, or as a timeless generalization. In effect, anything less than ideal is a poor or unfortunate compromise. And this may be how Steiner understood the term, since he clearly looked towards a time when all curricula would reflect the development of the whole human being as mainstream education recognizes the value of this. However, the term 'ideal curriculum' can also be understood in terms of Max Weber's¹ notion of an *Idealtypus* or 'ideal type'. An ideal type is an idea that integrates a number of aspects that are considered important (by the social scientist) to provide a point of reference for understanding real social phenomena. In the human and social sciences, the function of an ideal type is to provide a heuristic model that contains as much as possible of observed reality, selected for a particular purpose or perspective, and which serves as orientation for measuring social reality. Steiner's notion of a threefold social commonwealth is an ideal type for structuring social organisms; it doesn't describe actual social structures, but rather offers a series of functional

1. Max Weber (1864-1920) was a contemporary of Steiner and pioneer of modern sociology; like Steiner, he was politically active with a program for social renewal in 1918-19.

or generative principles as orientation for the respective social domains. An ideal type curriculum therefore offers a central coherent idea and a set of generative principles derived from it, which can be applied to develop and assess curriculum practice. What are the key elements in this ideal type?

A Method School

Steiner often referred to the Waldorf school as a 'method school'; for example, when he said during his lectures in Oxford in 1922:

[T]he Waldorf school principle is not a principle that wants to make a school with a particular worldview, but a method school. What is to be achieved by a method based on knowledge of the human being is that of turning children into physically healthy and strong, mentally free, and spiritually clear human beings.

(GA 305, p.157 trans. MR)

As Angelika Wiehl (2015) has shown, the term 'method school' here means that the way of teaching (*hodos* in ancient Greek means 'way', and *methodos* the way for striving towards something), as the pathway to achieving the intended outcomes, is derived from the anthroposophical understanding of the developing human being. As Martyn (Rawson, 2021b) has shown, we can derive a set of generative principles from this pedagogical anthropology and apply them in developing (and reviewing) pedagogical practice (or *methodos*). Therefore, a Waldorf school is one that bases its methods of teaching and learning on an understanding of the nature of the developing human being (taking the spiritual dimension into account), and it does this in a given sociocultural context. A school with a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) would have a specific system that shapes all aspects of the education. Waldorf doesn't have a system with a set of standardized practices; its 'medium' – the developing human being – is the method.

A New Way of Thinking about Curriculum

We concluded that in order to meet the various demands on curriculum (e.g. to provide a foundation for all Waldorf curricula everywhere, to adapt curriculum to changing circumstances, to have rhizomic rather than centralized dissemination, etc.), we must return to the core question of what curriculum is and what its functions are. The function of curriculum is to provide learning opportunities for students to engage with their

developmental tasks (see below). Curriculum is therefore a pedagogical practice.

We then built on Bo Dahlin's (2017) definition of curriculum: curriculum is anything that pedagogically influences children and young people's learning. This includes the content, the teaching methods, when and where something is taught and who teaches it, and also the school climate. Curriculum therefore offers a series of structured learning opportunities and experiences that stimulate learning in certain directions and thus supports development. Each successful stage of learning and development opens up new possibilities for learning, and so learning drives development (an idea also expressed by the American philosopher and education reformer, John Dewey, 1938).

Steiner's pedagogical anthropology forms the basis, but this has been supplemented in recent years by new insights, for example, into the nature and functions of the senses, salutogenic theory, phenomenological science, symptomatology in the humanities, foreign language learning, media pedagogy, arts and crafting, pedagogical evaluation, inclusion and learning support, action research, teacher training, and the introduction of Waldorf theory into academic discourse.

A number of generative principles (e.g., learning is a rhythmical process, teaching must be artistic, experience must come before concept) can be derived from Waldorf pedagogical anthropology (Rawson, 2021). These principles can be applied to generate practice, such as the class-teacher role, the steps in the learning process, Main Lesson blocks, and curriculum.

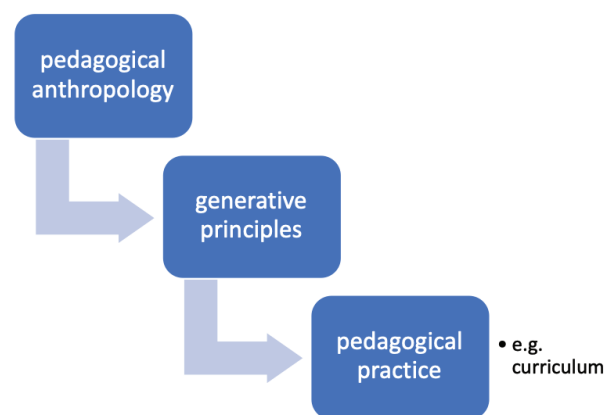


Figure 3. The relationship between pedagogical anthropology and curriculum

We can participate in established pedagogical practice and assimilate it, and we can develop pedagogical intuition (or tact), which enables us to respond in the moment. When we reflect on this, it can also change

the practice of our teaching community. As Martyn (2012, 2022) has argued, Waldorf teachers can develop dispositions to pedagogical intuition when they study, internalize and embody the ideas of anthroposophical pedagogical anthropology as habits of mind that direct the gaze towards subtle pedagogical processes and towards understanding children. Thus doing pedagogical practice can lead to an ongoing development of practice and enhance teachers' capabilities.

Developmental Tasks

Curriculum relates to the development of the child and young person – but how? The term *developmental tasks* is very useful here. It refers to the developing person's engagement with internal, physical, and mental dispositions and the external challenges of the social and ecological environment at the various stages of the life course, a process that drives an ongoing course of becoming individual and socially capable. Hurrelmann and Bauer (2018) call this process the productive processing of reality (i.e. the person produces her reality in processing this dialectic between internal and individualistic elements, on the one end, and external and environmental ones, on the other). The Waldorf perspective on this (in particular as developed by Peter Loebell, 2012) has added a third dimension to this dialectic, namely the biographical intentions and dispositions of the person that belong to their spiritual self, thus creating a trialectic dynamic.

Thus the developmental tasks the students have to engage with have three sources that we take into account in planning curriculum:

Sources of the developmental tasks

Individual biographical needs, potential and interests

Local cultural and social expectations regarding what should be learned by when

Ideal-typical sequence of developmental themes regarding the changing relationships of the developing individual to her body, to others and to the world.

Figure 4. The three primary sources of developmental tasks

As Steiner outlined in the First Teachers' Course (Steiner, 2020), human beings undergo common developmental processes throughout their life course (here we are concerned with childhood and youth), involving

ongoing interactions between the self as spiritual core, the growing body, and the emerging soul. These manifest in changing the relationships of the person to her body, to other people, and to the world, particularly at key phases of transition.

However, as Remo Largo (2019), the great Swiss pediatrician (and friend of Waldorf education) points out, human development is highly individual. Wide variation is the norm. As Gertrude Reif Hughes (2012) puts it, "All human beings are 'I-beings'. Our uniqueness is what we have in common. Paradoxically, the reality processes by which we individuate are universal ones" (248). Furthermore, we also know that even the biological processes of maturation do not follow a fixed, universal timetable but can vary and are influenced by external factors such as stress, trauma, diet, social and cultural expectations. Puberty, for example, now occurs several years earlier than in 1919 when the curriculum

was first created. Therefore, we cannot meaningfully characterize child and youth development in fine-grained, year by year steps that all children and young people take at the same time, nor can we say that the traditional curriculum matches this development. The matter is more complex and more interesting.

What makes Waldorf education distinctive is that it lays down developmental pathways that children and young people are invited to follow together with their peers (i.e. the heterogeneous Waldorf class). By following these paths, they encounter a sequence of developmental challenges that provide them with learning and developmental opportunities that are deemed to foster healthy (salutogenic) development. This sequence is framed in terms of developmental themes that relate the person to her body, to other people and to the world in particular ways at particular times. It is important to stress that whilst these themes and their sequence are considered to be generally valid across all cultures, the exact age at which they are met can vary. We know from emergency education (Rutishauser and Stolz, 2018) that trauma can delay or set development back but that under the right conditions, children can catch up relatively quickly. In other words, we can slow down or accelerate the sequence.

The ideal curriculum that Steiner spoke about can be understood in this sense. The developmental sequence of themes at the macro level (see graphic below) is a model we can pedagogically orientate ourselves to. However, this layer of curriculum is not characterised

by content. What we teach belongs to the meso layer and responds to the local requirements, as does the methodology. An example of this is the introduction of literacy. Steiner felt that the conventional methods of learning to write and read weaken the child's health creating forces, and that it would be healthier for literacy to be emergent when the children were ready, which would likely be for some children several years later than the age of six. However, he knew that neither the education authorities nor the parents would accept this, so he suggested that the teaching of literacy should be artistic because this would minimize (but not eliminate) the harmful effects (Steiner 1995, see lecture from 26.9.1921).

The topics, content, materials and methods chosen, relate on one hand to the ideal-typical sequence of developmental themes of the macro curriculum, but also take into account the (meso-level) requirements for literacy and numeracy and also issues relating to diversity, social justice and multiculturalism, which are so important today. How the teacher modifies this to meet the needs and interests of individual pupils, for example by differentiating the assignments, requires skilled artistry at the micro level of curriculum. Reading and interpreting the individual child's or young person's biographical *mythos* (Goschel, 2012) in case studies is part of this process. In Aristotle's terms, the *mythos* is the narrative of the drama, the underlying story of the destiny in focus.

This understanding of the curriculum enables us to identify three layers:

The layered curriculum

Macro layer: sequence of developmental themes, structured for each class and developmental phase.

Meso layer: content that provides opportunities to experience the developmental themes, and sets of knowledge and skills required at this age in response to local, national expectations.

Micro layer: individual teaching plans in response to specific learning needs of the group and individual biographic needs and intentions.



Figure 5: The layered curriculum, which could also be shown as nested

An Example

Let us look at an example of how curriculum both addresses the macro level developmental themes and responds to current, local issues and educational

responsibilities. In grade three, the developmental themes at the macro level include the emergence of a new relationship of the self to the community (sometimes known as the Rubicon crisis), how the community regulates its social relationships, and how the community culturally relates to its natural geographical environment. A traditional curriculum response is to explore house building, the range of crafts involved, and farming. At this age we are dealing with these activities in a historical, pre-industrial and (for 9-10-year-olds) comprehensible form. At the same time, we want to emphasize ecological and intercultural aspects, which perhaps the traditional curriculum has not addressed, and we want to enable the children to have authentic experience of work.

If our school is located on the Eastern Seaboard of the United States, for example, we could compare early settler farming with indigenous Native American approaches, in ways that do not assume a Eurocentric sense of progress as discovering, cultivating, and “civilizing” the wilderness.

Farming involves an intensive relationship to nature. Indeed, the term ‘farming’ makes a number of assumptions that the term ‘cultivating’ doesn’t. The colonists farmed the land; they used methods brought from Europe, involving ploughing and initially using imported barley and peas, before adopting native corn and beans. On the other hand, the natives cultivated domesticated crops such as squashes, maize, beans, and a wide variety of wild plants. Whilst the colonists grew field crops and soon specialized in plantation cash crops like tobacco, rice, and later cotton that involved intensive labor (through indentured servants and, from 1619 on, African slaves), the natives used the famous ‘three sisters’ approach, in which the beans enriched the soil with nutrients (nitrogen), the squash kept down the weeds, and the corn provided support and wind shelter for the beans. Both communities supplemented their livelihoods with hunting and gathering, though the natives were far more knowledgeable about their environment and how to use its resources. These two communities had quite different relationships to their environment and to spirituality. (This would also be a good opportunity to explore the origins of Thanksgiving.)

The social structures, leadership, laws, and belief systems (simplified for grade three students) were also quite different. The colonists brought their English social hierarchy and notions of ownership, the natives were more structured along democratic lines with

councils and confederations and with important roles for women. The cultural encounters can be mediated through the stories of John Smith, Pocahontas, and John Rolfe. Both groups had slaves, but in most native communities, slaves were generally war captives who could be integrated into the tribe through marriage or gain recognition and social status through their individual qualities. In both groups, housebuilding was a communal activity, using local materials, which the colonists supplemented with imported materials and tools. The Iroquois longhouses (the tribal name *Haudenosaunee* means 'people of longhouses') are famous constructions, as are the smaller wigwams, though they share similar materials and building techniques. Colonist houses adapted English models (or models from other colonial countries) to the local materials – primarily wood and stone (sometimes brick) with rectangular plans and pitched roofs and chimneys and leaded glass windows.

The macro level curriculum maps out the developmental themes of grade three, for which the term 'Rubicon' is shorthand. The pedagogical response to these developmental tasks at the meso level curriculum is to provide opportunities for learning in the field of housebuilding and farming in the context of small-scale traditional communities and locating these activities in a simplified historical rather than archetypal or mythical context. Quite apart from the opportunities for hands-on experience of teamwork, whilst integrating literacy, numeracy, nature studies, and art, this approach also addresses the meso curriculum challenge of providing a multi-cultural perspective. The Rubicon as a developmental task today includes our ecological relationship to the natural world as well as issues of cultural or racial² identity, not least if you are a Black, Hispanic, Asian or Muslim child in a predominantly white class.

Looking at natives and colonists (in however simplified ways) is a way of starting the story of cultural relationships. The stories from the Old Testament are important because they form an important background to American culture; but so, too, are the origins stories and legends of the Native Americans. Integrating these themes into a curriculum

seems a fitting background for the developmental tasks of the Rubicon.

Finally, these developmental themes, dealt with in grade three terms, build on earlier experiences and provide a basis for further development of the themes of identity, belonging, community, society, religion, ecology, nutrition, and technology throughout the spiral curriculum. One need only think of the grade 10 main lessons that look at the origins of human societies, our relationship to the earth, livelihood, dwelling, perception, intercultural exchange and mobility, and linguistics.

A Structure for Renewal

This layered curriculum structure provides opportunities for addressing the problem of adding new content (e.g., digitalization, 21st century history, recent literature, media pedagogy, de-colonization, wellbeing, gender issues, etc.). We cannot simply keep adding to an already full curriculum. We have to set new priorities. By using the macro level developmental themes for orientation and—once we have consensus on their formulation—we can make choices by asking, in effect: What questions do the developmental tasks pose and how can these be answered in the fields of media, interculturalism, gender etc.? In other words, we can ask: At what age do we think young people's identities are shaped by digital and social media and when can they structure their relationships using media?

When do questions of gender need to be addressed indirectly (e.g., in story form) and when directly? If we think it is important to know about early cultures, which ones are most relevant to our own current cultural challenges? If certain periods of history are important, such as the Middle Ages, why do we restrict this to Europe, when, during the same period of history, Asia was the center of the world – and isn't understanding Asia more important today? Then, we have crucial themes such as the origins

and forms of racism that have not been given much space in Waldorf curricula, so far. At which points along the curriculum pathway do we need to land this theme in all its complexity? After all, it appears in history, language studies (e.g., 'enslaved people' rather than 'slaves,' 'pre-Columbian America' rather than 'The New World,' 'conquest' rather than 'discovery'), economics, law and rights, and so on—or does Waldorf sit out the debates on critical race theory?

The alternative image for the spread of Waldorf education is that of a rhizome spreading from an "underground" or invisible network, from which new shoots emerge wherever conditions are suitable for growth.

² To our contemporary European linguistic and cultural sensitivities the term race has no place in our vocabulary, though racism and racial discrimination do. However, we recognize that in the US context, the term has a wider, more complex range of meanings.

Of course, choosing material and weaving it into a coherent narrative is always an artistic task requiring knowledgeable skilled artistry. Teachers have to understand and make judgements about what they need to do, rather than copy lesson plans from 'master teachers' (though this is perhaps a necessary step for novices). Therefore, curriculum is not a given, but a set of tasks. This requires a culture of educational reflection and research, and not all schools are in a position to do this on their own. Therefore, expertise needs to be developed, shared, and disseminated in ways that don't become fixed or dogmatic.

In the UK, we—the present authors—have developed a curriculum process (Bransby & Rawson, 2020) and a digital tool to apply it, based on the layered curriculum model, designed to assist teachers to plan and review lessons. This process is being trialled in several countries at present. This work will be available soon in published form, titled *The Art of Teaching and Learning*. The same authors have also produced a UK version of this new curriculum approach, which can be used for comparison in other countries.

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The Community Speaks

What Waldorf Schools Can Learn from Their Parents

David Sloan

In collaboration with Connie Stokes, Andrew Starzynski, and Douglas Gerwin

This article is part of book-length report based on an extensive Waldorf parents' survey. The full report, a *Research Institute for Waldorf Education* project, will be published later in this school year and will be made available to Waldorf schools throughout North America, as well as to the general public. The report will include the following:

- Parents' assessment of school programs, including the arts, academics, and "values" education
- Questions of governance and school leadership
- Parents' views on schools' handling of diversity
- The "social gap": How do Waldorf students "fit in" beyond the school?
- Waldorf education's impact on home life
- The issue of tuition
- A decade hence: What should Waldorf schools preserve or change?
- A Summary of selected interviews with parents from several North American Waldorf Schools

History and Methodology

Long before the advent of COVID-19, the desire to give parents a legitimate platform to voice their views about their children's Waldorf education was the driving force behind the survey that served as the basis for this report, the latest in a series of surveys conducted by the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE) over the past two decades. Beginning in 2005, under the guidance of then co-directors David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin, the Institute launched a three-phase study that tracked several hundred North American Waldorf school graduates in their post-high school years, first analyzing their college studies, then appraising the quality of their professional and personal lives.

The results of *Phase I* were limited in scope, focusing mostly on the range of colleges and universities, as well as fields of study, to which Waldorf graduates gravitated. A more extensive *Phase II* study, which included a survey of German Waldorf graduates, culminated in the creation of a statistical profile of a "typical" North American Waldorf graduate. *Phase III* provided further interpretation of the prior survey results, pointedly adding concerns some graduates expressed about

certain shortcomings they experienced during their Waldorf education.

A decade later, RIWE invited North American Waldorf high schools to take part in the most extensive, continental survey to date, with a target group of Waldorf alumni who had graduated between 1990 and 2017. A singular feature of this study was the invaluable collaboration between the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). This partnership enabled RIWE to compare—for the first time ever—responses from Waldorf alumni with graduates from other independent schools. The outcome of this significant research was assiduously compiled in a recent book co-authored by Ilan Safit, Ph.D., and Douglas Gerwin, Ph.D., aided by Connie Stokes, M.S., and Andrew Starzynski, M.S., entitled *Into the World: How Waldorf Graduates Fare after High School* (Waldorf Publications, 2020).

A final prologue to the current report occurred after the initial outbreak of the COVID pandemic in 2020. In the fall of that year, once again RIWE sent a survey out, but this time, instead of addressing alumni, we invited parents of current Waldorf school students to share their perspectives about the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on family life, as well as about the way Waldorf schools adapted to the challenges created by the pandemic. The results of that survey were summarized in an article by David Sloan in the Spring/Summer 2021 issue of the *Research Bulletin* entitled "Parental Perspectives: Waldorf Families on Schooling during the Pandemic."

The present report offers an in-depth look at RIWE's most recent efforts to provide as complete a portrait as possible of parents' views about their children's Waldorf experience. The survey was sent in January of 2022 to participating Waldorf schools across the United States and Canada, inviting current parents of elementary and high school students enrolled in grades 1-12 to respond to the approximately 50 questions. (We should note that we didn't survey individuals who had left their Waldorf community, mostly due to the difficulty in contacting such parents.) The survey covered a broad range of topics, including:

- what initially drew families to Waldorf education

- parental assessments of various school programs
- what aspects of the education they wanted to see changed (or preserved) ten years hence
- how parents viewed schools' efforts to address questions of inclusion, diversity, equity and access.
- to what extent parents felt the impact of Waldorf education on home life
- further consideration of schools' responses to the COVID pandemic

The survey elicited over 1200 responses from parents representing 39 Waldorf school communities across North America. The average response time was just over 25 minutes, and seven in ten participants who started the survey fully completed it. While the majority of questions provided the basis for purely statistical analysis, a number of questions also invited parents to write clarifying narrative responses. To supplement these statistical and narrative results of the survey, we also conducted a limited number of follow-up, face-to-face and virtual interviews with a cross-section of parents from various geographical regions. So beyond simply providing schools and respondents with raw data, the intent of this report is to share a comprehensive, in-depth examination of those sometimes wildly divergent parental perspectives of their children's (and their own) Waldorf experiences.

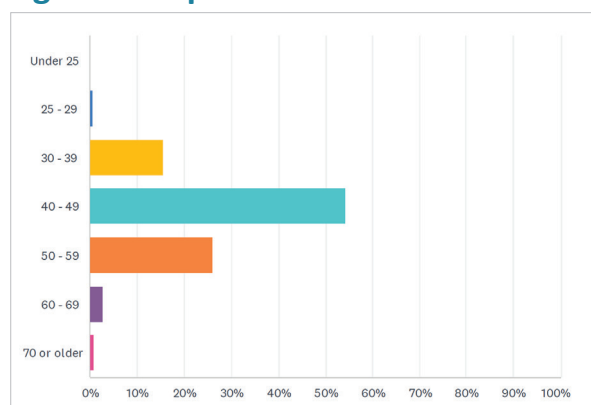
Who Are These Parents? A Group "Portrait"

Because of Waldorf schools' century-old ethos of offering holistic, experiential education, it was tempting in the past to brand Waldorf parents as counter-cultural, "granola-crunching," Birkenstock-wearing ex-hippies. Indeed, the rapid expansion of Waldorf schools in the last third of the twentieth century was no doubt fueled, in part, by families looking for progressive alternatives to mainstream education. However, as with all independent academic institutions, Waldorf schools are tuition-based (the notable exception being an increasing number of state-funded public Waldorf schools and "Waldorf-inspired" charter initiatives). As the cost of private education has risen sharply in the past few decades, a competing, but also partially misleading stereotype has arisen, portraying Waldorf parents as privileged, affluent, and elitist. While these stereotypes may have contained a "granola" of truth at some point, our survey was more interested in gathering data that painted a "portrait" free of any prejudicial labels.

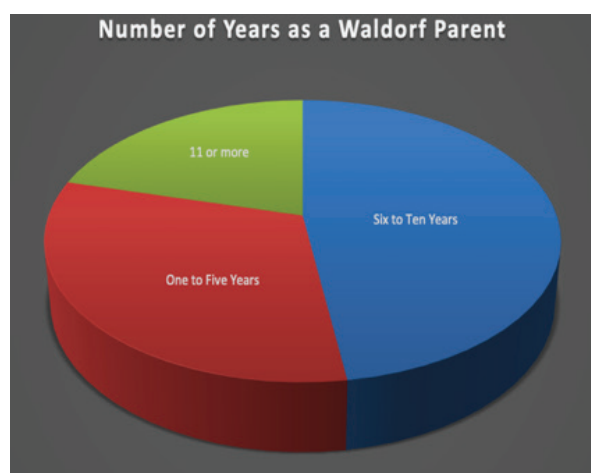
Not surprisingly, we found that the ages of the vast majority of respondents fell into one of three primary child-rearing stages. 16% identified as being between

30-39, just more than half between 40-49, and another quarter between 50-59, with a tiny percentage (just over 1%) reporting their relationships to their children as non-parental, i.e., either grandparents or legal guardians.

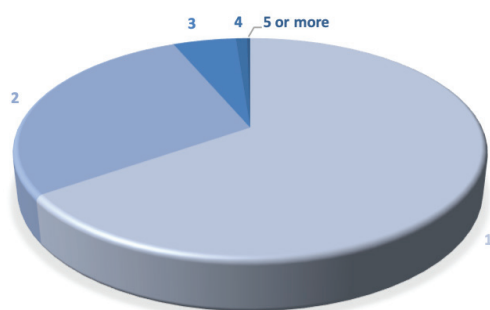
Ages of Respondents



Given the 30-year-plus span of respondents' ages, it was also predictable to find among parents a broad and proportionately distributed range of years that they had been affiliated with their particular Waldorf school. Nearly half had been members of their school community for between one and five years; another third had kept their children in the school for between six and ten years; the remaining 20% had committed to long-term association with Waldorf education, from 11 to more than 15 years. Nearly two thirds of the respondents had only one child attending the school, and another 28% had two children enrolled.

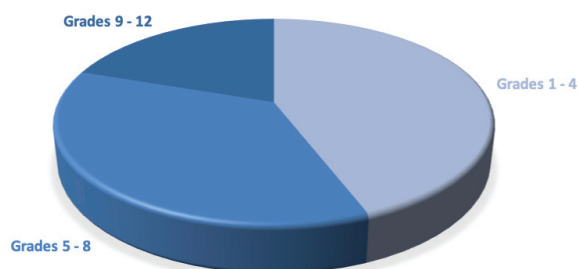


NUMBER OF CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN A WALDORF SCHOOL



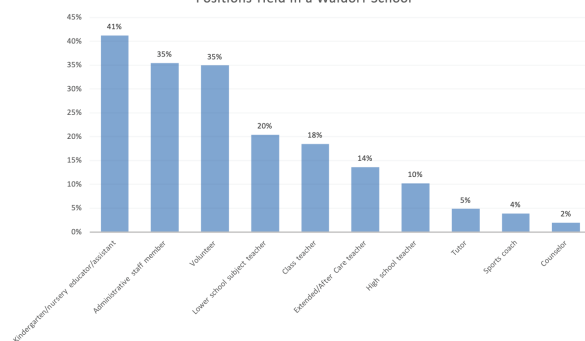
Because seven in ten respondents were under the age of 50, it stands to reason that the majority of respondents would have younger children. Just under half of respondents (45%) stated their oldest was in Grades 1–4 while another third had their oldest in Grades 5–8, leaving about 20% of respondents with a child in high school. It should be noted that the question only asked about current children, so respondents could have children who already graduated.

HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED BY OLDEST CHILD CURRENTLY ATTENDING



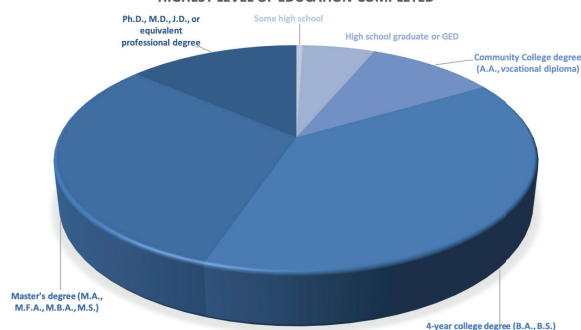
Over 20% of the survey participants answered yes to the question, “Have you ever worked at a Waldorf school?” Their involvement in school life extended well beyond parenting. They engaged in a variety of roles, fairly equally divided between assisting with nursery/ kindergarten/aftercare responsibilities and teaching in one capacity or another, either in the elementary or high school branches. Over a third of those who acknowledged working in their schools held administrative staff positions, and another third signed on as volunteers, helping in a variety of roles, such as building playhouses, serving as Board members, or cleaning the school after hours. Nearly one in ten parents employed by their schools worked as tutors or athletic coaches.

Positions Held in a Waldorf School



The survey addressed several other key demographic indicators, including highest level of education completed by parents and annual household income. The former question revealed a clear pattern; a large majority of Waldorf parents who responded to the survey were highly educated. Well over a third of the respondents were graduates of four-year colleges, and nearly another third had earned master’s degrees. Furthermore, another 13% had attained either Ph.D., M.D., J.D. or equivalent professional degrees. Thus, over five in six respondents to the survey had at least a four-year college degree.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED

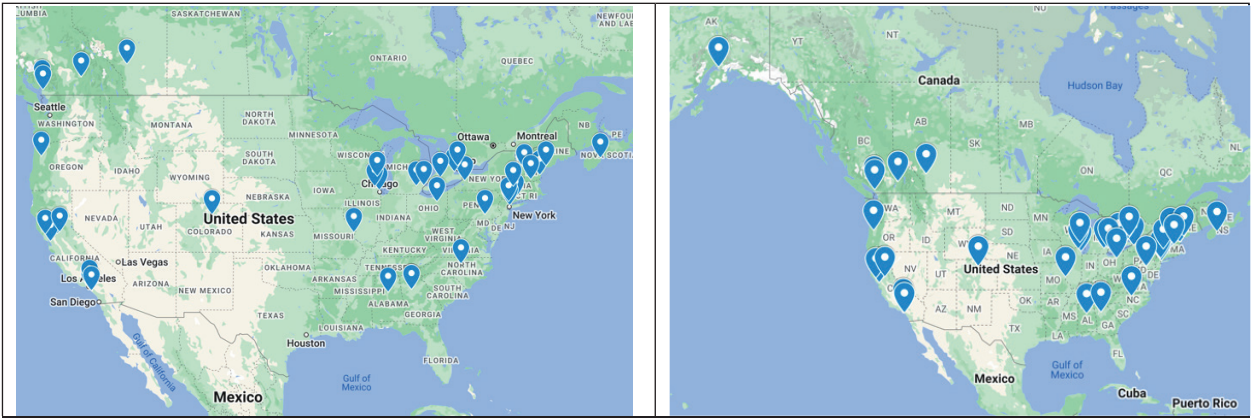


Such a highly educated clientele may account for the nearly 80% of respondents who reported having some prior knowledge of the connection between their school and the basic principles of Waldorf education as espoused by founder Rudolf Steiner.

As for parents’ financial situations, Waldorf families appeared to possess greater ability to pay school tuition than the general population. While a third of respondents stated that their annual household income was less than \$100,000, twice as many American families in the general population fell into that same category in 2020 (Source: *IbisWorld, Statista, according to polycyadvice.net*). Slightly smaller discrepancies between Waldorf household earnings and the American public at large occurred at the next two income levels; 38% of Waldorf families reported incomes in the

\$100,000-\$200,000 range, but only a quarter of the general population qualified for that tier in 2019. At the upper end of the scale, about 10% of American families earned over \$200,000, while for the respondents of this survey, 28% claimed to have annual income over \$200,000.

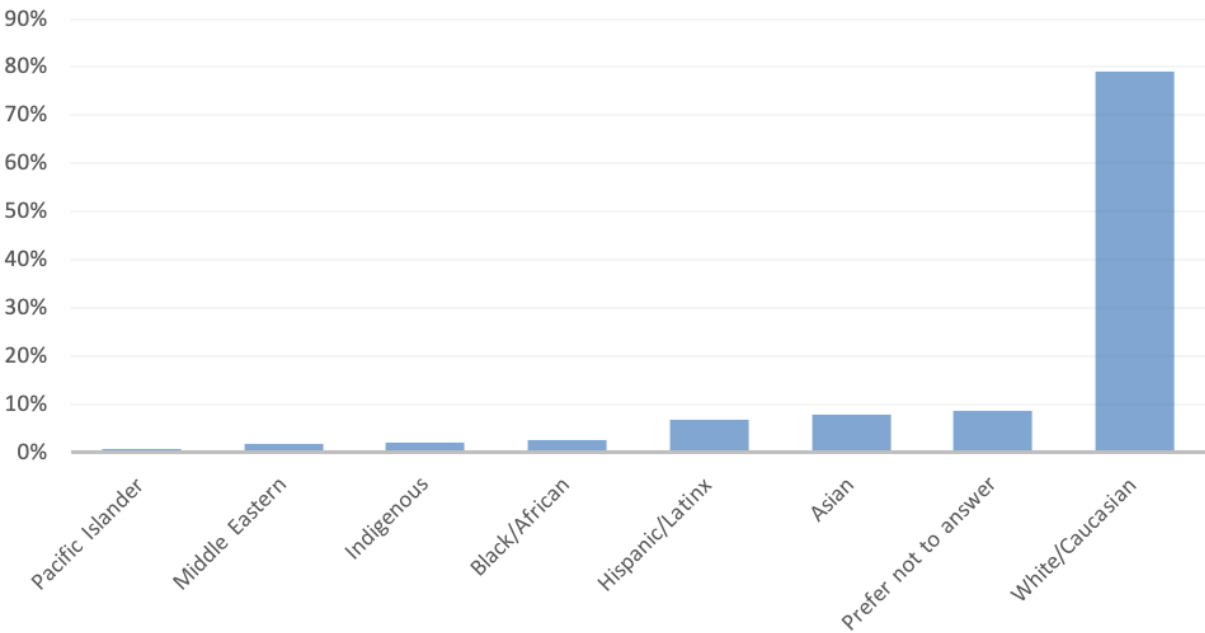
It should be noted that Waldorf Schools are often found in affluent areas, and thus comparing incomes of Waldorf parents to that of the general population does not tell the whole tale. The schools with the greatest number of respondents to this survey can be seen in the following maps (with and without Alaska):



Two other questions in the “profile” section of the survey elicited strong adverse reactions in some quarters to even being asked about ethnic background and gender. The former question revealed that an overwhelming majority – 80% – of respondents identified as Caucasian, nearly 8% as Asian, 7% as Hispanic, upwards of 3% as Black/African and 2% as indigenous. However,

about one in 11 parents preferred not to answer the question at all, and several others pointedly expressed their displeasure in writing. One retorted, “Racist question. I’m a human being. Like you.” Another replied, “You want inclusion. How about just one selection: HUMAN BEING. World problem solved!”

Which of the following best describes you?



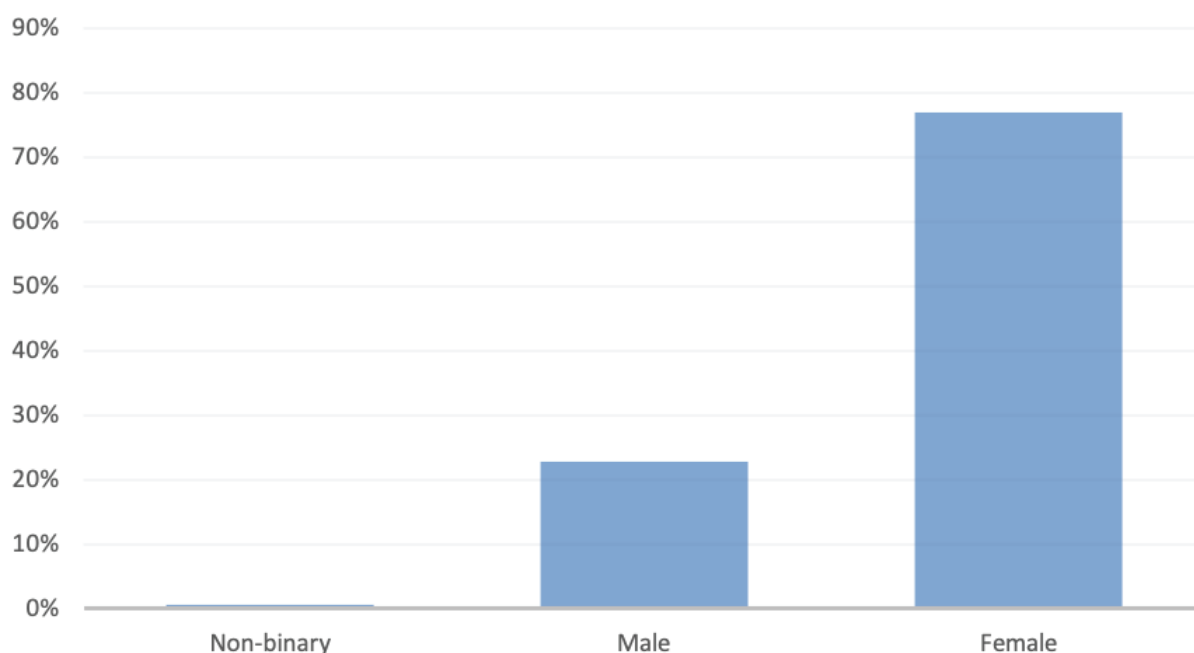
The other question—inquiring about gender identification—drew sharp rebukes from a small but indignant handful of respondents. Reacting to the addition of “non-binary” as one of the choices, one person stated, “B.S. question. What the . . . is non-binary? What utter crap.” Another explained,

The concept of gender fluidity ... falls under the umbrella of “woke-ism” Waldorf schools are well-advised to stay away from. You do not solve the

limitations and experience of being “boxed in” by a category by creating more categories. That is not the path. Telling teenagers during the most confusing time of their lives that they can solve inner tension by changing their exterior is not only not helpful; it’s immoral.

Only a tiny percentage of those surveyed chose to identify as non-binary (.57%), while just over 3/4 of the respondents selected the “female” option.

How do you identify?



To summarize: A substantial majority of the respondents were in their 30s and 40s, and identified as Caucasian, although 20% identified as people of color. Three times as many women as men took the survey. Many of the parents had attended college, and nearly half had advanced degrees. Most families had one or two children enrolled in their Waldorf school, and the parents had usually been associated with the school for up to a decade. Some had become more involved in the life of the school beyond parenting. One in five had taken on some work—volunteer or paid—within the school. At every income level, Waldorf families reported greater annual earnings as the general populace.

One other telling measure of this group’s involvement in their children’s Waldorf education was the exceedingly high number of respondents (95%) who reported attending at least some school-sponsored parent evenings during the course of the year. While surveys such as this one can afford parents an “anonymous” option

for sharing their views about Waldorf education, parent evenings at individual schools can provide a much more direct forum for parents to ask questions and express concerns, as well as their appreciation, and for faculty members to respond accordingly.

Warming to Waldorf

What Draws Parents to the Schools?

One of the key questions that parents often hear when they first contact admissions offices across the continent is: How did you hear about Waldorf? So often the answer can be traced to some word-of-mouth connection. In the survey, 2/3 of the respondents attributed their initial interest to conversations with friends, or else prior exposure to the education, either directly as alumni themselves, or indirectly through family members who worked in or attended Waldorf schools. One person wrote that “I went to Waldorf school, and it was important to me that my children attend too.” Another

29% claimed to have researched Waldorf education via the internet. One of these respondents wrote: "I did my own research and fell in love with Steiner's teachings."

While only a tiny percentage of parents heard or read about Waldorf through radio, print or other media sources (2%), a slightly larger number cited their family's geographical proximity to the local Waldorf school as a motivating factor. Still others discovered Waldorf education in more incidental ways: through biodynamic gardening, parenting books, farmers' markets. One parent even declared that a bumper sticker piqued her interest. Finally, several respondents ascribed their introduction to Waldorf education to referrals from therapists. As one parent explained:

Our adoption psychologist suggested we consider the Waldorf model as she believed it would be ideal for our child's attachment and trauma issues, both because it's a fundamentally nurturing environment where children have a lot of respect and freedom, and because of the way teachers move with children through the years.

Once parents made the decision to visit the school for a first encounter, we were interested in gathering initial impressions. The overwhelming parental reaction was positive, with many respondents moved to commend the physical setting of the campus. One parent related, "I was drawn to the natural beauty of the school and the surrounding areas. I felt peaceful and as if there was space and time to absorb the beauty." Others extolled the integration of outdoor and indoor spaces. "I liked the stained glass and homey atmosphere of the classroom and the way that trees and nature were visible through the windows, which let in plenty of natural light. We were drawn to the nature- and art-based curriculum."

Parents were nearly unanimous in their enthusiasm for the décor and ambience of the classrooms. Repeatedly they described the spaces as "magical," "welcoming," and "inviting." One wrote, "In love! The vintage napkins and birch branches of the nursery captured my imagination. It was like walking into another, imaginary world where children are seen and valued and the past is honored."

Many respondents noticed how the complementary environs of the younger children's classrooms and outdoor spaces seemed to encourage lively and harmonious activities. "It left a lasting impression of soft pastel, colorful walls, the welcoming smell of fresh

bread baking, delightful, seasonal displays of felt animals, and the sounds of recorders, jump roping and harmonic singing wafting through the halls." One parent pinpointed the prevailing mood they found as one of "joy... The children weren't screaming and running around like crazy, except in the play yard. It was wonderful!" Yet another respondent expressed their take-away of the visit in more personal terms: "I loved it instantly, everything from the wooded nature campus to the natural light and materials found in the classroom. I wished I had attended a Waldorf school."

A number of parents shared this parent's wistfulness about their own missed educational opportunities as children. Some were nearly overcome with emotion when they first visited their future school.

It was like I came home. It was breathtaking. It felt so inspiring.... I literally cried watching the children in a math class and the way they were learning in an environment of art and beauty. I felt it a loss that I had never had the opportunity to have that experience as a child.

A significant number of parents described similar experiences during their visits, where their own feelings and almost visceral responses may well have influenced their decision to enroll their children in a Waldorf setting. "I was happy and felt a sweetness in my heart seeing the Waldorf aesthetic." Another stated emphatically:

It felt that THIS is what education is supposed to be like. I knew that the mainstream way was not right. I could FEEL it. I knew that honoring the young child, their play and creativity was right. I knew that making school academic at a young age was wrong.

Yet another respondent wrote, "When I first walked into Waldorf and took the tour, I found myself in tears because I had found a home for my child and my family."

The above comment summed up two of the most appealing features that apparently affected parents deeply when first visiting a Waldorf school—"feeling like home" on the one hand, and "community" on the other. When we asked respondents to think of three adjectives that characterized Waldorf education, several of the most popular words evoked this "homey" feeling, among them: "nurturing," "warm," and "loving." The idea of "community" was another top ten choice, which found its way into several narrative comments.

Two other questions in the "profile" section of the survey elicited strong adverse reactions in some quarters to even being asked about ethnic background and gender.

We have raised many children and have experienced all manner of scholastic environments. The vibe was different. In most schools, you sense an authoritarian barrier of sorts between teachers and parents. At Waldorf you get the sense we're in this together for the best interests of the individual child.

For other respondents, what surprised them was what they *didn't* find in Waldorf classrooms. "This is the kind of school I wish I could have attended. I was impressed with the emphasis on the internalization of concepts via handwork, painting, movement, etc. And I loved that the rooms weren't crowded with noisy messages on the wall like rules, posters, directions, inspiring quotes, etc."

For parents coming from public schools, the contrast with the Waldorf "aesthetic" was especially stark. "I was amazed at the calm atmosphere—no visual clutter. It felt like a home environment." Yet another parent expressed an even more extreme feeling: "It appears to be a children's utopia. I cried with relief when I dropped off my daughter as we felt like we were refugees from public school."

Not all interested parents came from public school systems. One parent stated that the Waldorf school tour

reminded me of my own childhood when we followed a Classical education model.... I appreciated the lack of technology and the natural materials. Our girls had begun to experience tremendous stress and anxiety in their high performing, high pressure, language immersion school and the space felt peaceful and beautiful to them.

Although most of the respondents described their visits to early childhood or early grades programs, some parents recounted persuasive interactions with older students. One parent was impressed by "eighth graders that looked you in the eye and engaged with you." Another respondent related that the older students were "very impressive; they seemed well-grounded and articulate." Summing up a perception shared by several other parents, one wrote, "I encountered high schoolers outside for the first time, and after spending a few afternoons with them, I thought about how I would want my own children to grow up to be in the world in the same way."

It should be mentioned that not all parents' first impressions of their Waldorf school were favorable. One was "worried it was a little insular, as the school

was so small." Several other respondents commented that they had to overcome a sense that the school felt "Euro-centric; not enough diversity to reflect the changing culture of our society." This view was echoed by another parent, who wrote, "I thought it was a bit of a throwback and somewhat out of step with the current needs of students." Several respondents also shared the perception that the school was "cozy but [had a] hippie feel." One went so far as to describe the school as "cult-like; made me nervous."

Yet we need to note that all respondents who took the time to answer the survey questions ultimately joined

a Waldorf community. So even those with some misgivings after their initial visits must have experienced enough countervailing features to offset their concerns.

Aside from the few critical comments quoted above, the vast majority of parents who sent their child(ren) to a Waldorf school could trace their decisions to their

own positive experiences during those initial visits. Of the nearly one thousand respondents who answered the question, "What made you decide to put your child(ren) in a Waldorf school?" many of their reasons related directly to the age of their child(ren). Parents of younger children repeatedly extolled the sheltering, nurturing environment of the nursery/kindergarten and early grades programs. "They had a safe, in-person option where our daughter could spend most of her day outside, her artistic skills would be fostered, and she'd be in an atmosphere of play-based learning."

A considerable number of parents echoed this strong intention to have their children spend as much time as possible in the outdoors, communing with nature. "It was the relaxed, outdoorsy place I was searching for... The reason I decided to send my daughter there was the setting and the fact they weren't afraid to let the kids explore the stream and climb the hills." Many other respondents reiterated the appeal of "the outdoor focus and learning in accordance with the natural world."

Another related rationale, often cited by parents as a crucial determining factor in choosing Waldorf education, was their school's policy regarding technology. For decades, Waldorf schools have been cautious about employing electronic devices in the classroom, preferring what might today be termed "old-fashioned" pedagogical methods: teaching cursive writing rather than keyboarding in the early grades, using chalkboard drawings rather than screen images to accompany

Three times as many women as men took the survey. Many of the parents had attended college, and nearly half had advanced degrees.

storytelling, encouraging older students to engage in spirited discussions and to practice critical inquiry without the intervention of computers.

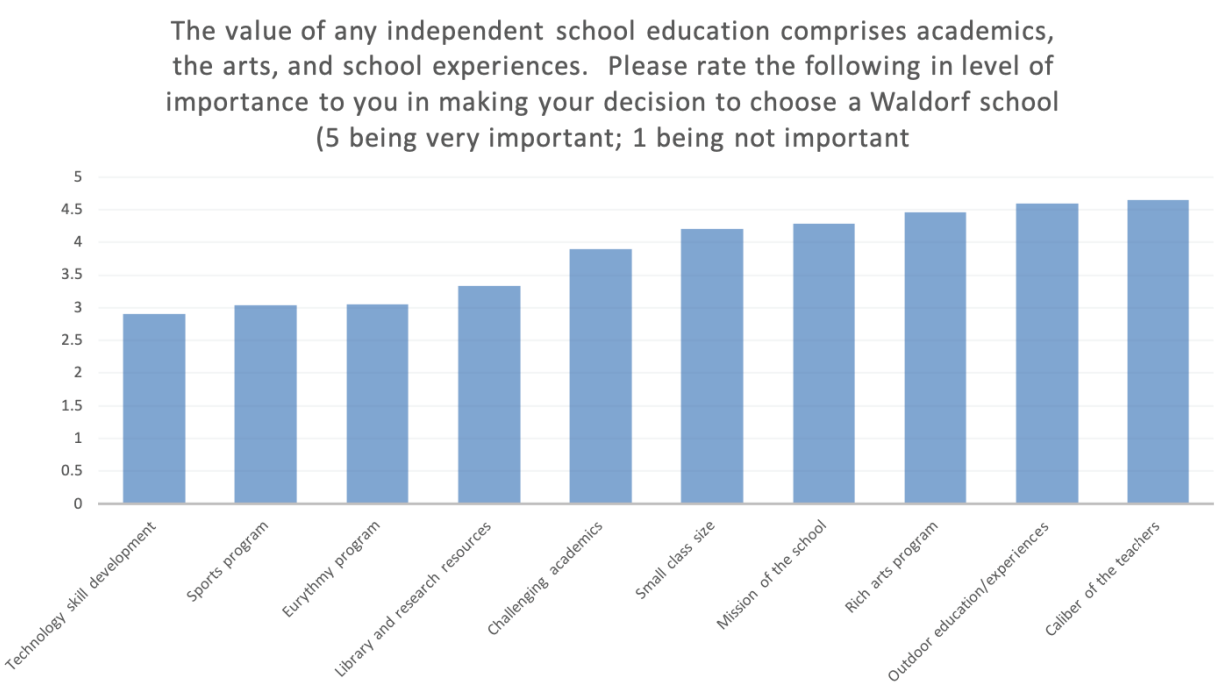
Since most other educational systems now rely heavily on electronic media, Waldorf parents repeatedly lauded their schools for limiting their children’s screen exposure. “Waldorf is no/low media and recognizes that young children need nature, activity and hands-on work, not screen time.” One respondent contrasted Waldorf classrooms with “the noise and superficiality prevailing in mainstream schools; children pitted against each other and treated like miniature adults... the over-saturation with media and technology.” Another saw the schools’ media policies as integral to some of the defining values of Waldorf education. “Waldorf keeps tech at bay. I agree with its emphasis on play, learning in time, being outdoors, attention to each child, following the seasons, tradition in song and dance and craft.”

In general, parents seemed to associate the prevalence of computers in schools with added stress, over-emphasis on academics (particularly in the early grades), and an unhealthy acceleration of childhood. They chose

Waldorf education because they recognized “the commitment to working with a child at the appropriate stage and cultivating a long-term view of education, not rushing the development.” Another respondent explained that they

wanted an environment for our children to spend as much time outside and in nature as possible. We wanted their school environment to foster an appreciation for the seasons, and to move at a slow enough pace to absorb each day, week, and month and all that time encompasses.

This viewpoint was reinforced by parent responses to another question asking them to rank the most important factors in “making your decision to choose a Waldorf school (5 being very important, 1 being not important at all).” Of ten possible considerations—including challenging academics and rich arts and sports programs—technological skill development earned the lowest rating (2.9 out of 5 weighted average), while the caliber of teacher (4.64), outdoor education/experiences (4.59) arts curriculum (4.46) and the “mission of the school” (4.29) all drew the highest ratings.



One parent summed up sentiments of many respondents by connecting several related factors in opting for a Waldorf school:

Lack of technology in the early years; sense of peace and calm; rhythm to the day/week/year. Kids seemed calm and happy and creative . . . Lots of outdoor time in any weather. No rote memorization, no boring worksheets. Holistic education.

This last point about “holistic education” was another widely shared reason that many parents chose to send their child(ren) to a Waldorf school and a clear acknowledgment of Waldorf schools’ most widely promulgated mission. Nearly a century before the phrase “Head, Heart, and Hands,” or some variant of it, became a slogan adopted by a number of mainstream schools, Rudolf Steiner had emphasized a fundamental threefold approach to child development, educating the feeling and the will in equal measure to the thinking. A respondent wrote: “The focus on the whole child in a Waldorf school is what keeps us coming back.” Another respondent expressed a similar, but more expansive view:

I decided to put my son in a Waldorf school because the approach to child development and learning was holistic and follows my values as a parent. I love that there are foundational skills taught in a unique way, which is the focus in early childhood instead of traditional academics. I wanted a place where my child felt inspired to learn, not pressured to learn.

This parental emphasis on a child’s positive relationship to learning was widely shared by other respondents. “The examples of children who came from Waldorf education showed such kindness and critical thinking. They were not bored at school, and genuinely loved learning.” Another applauded this aspect of Waldorf “education that spoke to children’s hearts, not just their minds; that encouraged thoughtfulness and care, that prized beauty and creativity, art and music, movement and delight as necessary elements of learning.” Yet another parent touted the transformation their child had experienced since shifting educational settings.

We started in a public school, which seemed lovely. The Waldorf school was my first choice, but the distance and cost were perceived barriers. But when my child came home after weeks of crying that he hated learning, we went to Waldorf. Within a

week he said the world was so beautiful . . . I went on to study child development . . . and learned he was not neurologically ready for the demands of the [public] curriculum. He has thrived in Waldorf and its multimodal, multi-sensory approach that has retained his sense of wonder and passion for learning.

Others discovered Waldorf education in more incidental ways: through biodynamic gardening, parenting books, farmers’ markets. One parent even declared that a bumper sticker piqued her interest.

Since their inception over a century ago, Waldorf schools have promoted an experiential and balanced program, with art, crafts, music, and movement classes integral to the academic curriculum. Parents appreciated not only the hands-on aspect of the arts and crafts, but also the concomitant fostering of imaginative capacities associated with such activities. “I’ve seen children change, becoming less creative over the years... I wanted my children to keep the spark of creativity

as long as possible.” Another respondent reflected the viewpoint of many parents: “I wanted my children to have an educational experience that incorporated arts and music throughout the curriculum and gave them confidence to be creative and innovative in their lives.” Parents of children with artistic sensibilities seemed particularly drawn to Waldorf education:

Our child was always quiet, introverted, sensitive and creative; we wanted to help cultivate her passions and confidence and not have her close up. We visited our Waldorf school and didn’t want to leave—so engaging and peaceful and colorful. We loved their thoughtful and artistic/musical approach and hands-on activities. As a former public school teacher, I was impressed.

In addition to the most prominent, aforementioned reasons for choosing Waldorf, parents repeatedly listed these grounds for their decision:

- the sheltering gesture of the early childhood years
- emphasis on outdoor activities and appreciation of nature
- low- or no-technology policies
- slower, age-appropriate pace of learning
- holistic approach integrating arts, crafts, music, and movement
- the fostering of imagination and creative capacities

Parents cited several other significant determining factors for choosing Waldorf schools. They included the following:

- **Smaller class size** than mainstream institutions.
- **Emphasis on movement:** “I wanted my child to be able to move and to learn without having to sit in a class all day with creative pent-up energy”
- **Caring, devoted teachers:** “We wanted a place that addressed the children as individuals and that honored childhood.”
“One of the biggest pieces was the respect the teachers showed to the children; not just love or enjoyment of them, but true respect and belief in them and their abilities.”
- **Health-promoting lifestyle:** One parent candidly admitted, “Honestly, it was the food! I was mortified at the idea of sending my son into a school setting where the children were being fed Kool-Aid and animal crackers for snack.”

Two final inducements attracting parents to Waldorf schools deserve mention; both had to do with less expressly academic, or even artistic, considerations. The first focused on the “character building” element of the education, and the second affirmed the “spiritual” basis of Waldorf education.

Implicit in the “head, heart, hands” catchphrase that Waldorf schools promote as central to their mission is the idea that soul qualities are as important to cultivate as intellectual capacities. As early as the nursery-kindergarten the children are learning the values of sharing when they play, of patience when they must wait for the bread that they have helped to knead to bake in the oven, of goodness and kindness when they experience archetypal puppet shows such as *Queen Bee*. Indeed, storytelling becomes a primary vehicle for the “schooling of the soul,” from the fairy tales, fables, Bible stories and Norse myths related in the elementary school to the more adult “fairy tales” that high school students study.

The values embedded in these epics and contemporary stories students read can have a character-shaping influence. The self-restraint that Odysseus must develop in the face of his many trials, the authenticity that Hamlet is desperate to realize in the face of pervasive treachery, the transformation Malcolm X experiences as his world-view becomes more inclusive and accepting toward the end of his life—these qualities can all work deeply into young people’s souls.

Parents responding to the survey repeatedly recognized this essential character-building feature of Waldorf education:

- “We wanted our child to have a moral education with strong social ties and less media influences.”
- “This method of learning helps children become compassionate human beings.”
- “It’s important to me that my child develop not just academically/intellectually, but as a human being in society. Soft skills required for the future workforce include emotional intelligence, collaboration, exceptional communication skills.”
- We want children who learn to be kind above all else. We want well-rounded children who can think critically, have love and empathy, and who learn a variety of real world, practical skills (e.g. gardening, handwork, music, languages, love and respect of nature, baking cooking, etc.) We also want children who love to learn.
- “I heard about an ethics study that found that people who scored the highest in ethical decision-making all attended a Waldorf school.”

The second, more esoteric reason drawing parents to Waldorf schools underscored the spiritual underpinnings of the education. Several years ago, leaders of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) identified and adopted seven core principles that “articulate the most important values that inform the policies and practices of Waldorf schools in North America.” The very first of these principles states: “*The image of the human being as a spiritual being informs every aspect of the school.*”

Numerous respondents alluded to this foundational tenet in their surveys. One wrote: “The spiritual aspect of Waldorf is aligned with our family’s spirituality in a way I have not found in other schools.” A former Montessori teacher wrote, “I learned about the Steiner way and knew it had to be the choice, as it has so much basis in spiritual/inner development for the child, and that is a huge priority for us.”

Perhaps the comment summarizing the various rationales for sending children to Waldorf school should go to a self-identified college professor who wrote:

I am increasingly horrified by the anxiety and generally poor preparation of my students for life,

“The consumerism, media, over-stimulated culture of other children and parents drove me away from other schools, while the enlightened, meditative approach to learning, with such love and joy, drew me to Waldorf education.”

to say nothing of their stance toward learning, education, and community. Waldorf students (and teachers and parents) are impressive; they are engaging and creative, thoughtful and kind. The consumerism, media, over-stimulated culture of other children and parents drove me away from other schools, while the enlightened, meditative approach to learning, with such love and joy, drew me to Waldorf education.

Ultimately, parents who chose to send their children to Waldorf schools appeared to support Waldorf teachers' mission to take up with the utmost earnestness Steiner's vision of "lifelong" education. While respondents appreciated the preparation their children received to meet life's near-term endeavors, parents also honored the vision of those strivings extending far beyond college and the workplace. They expected their children to learn the requisite academic skills as necessary building blocks for future education. However, Waldorf parents also looked to the schools to deepen and refine their child's or children's character, in the hope that such guidance might give meaning and direction to their entire lives, strengthening the inner resources essential for coping with the frustration, disappointment, and challenges that life inevitably presents.

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The Task of the College of Teachers¹

Roberto Trostli

The College of Teachers

The teachers' republic that Rudolf Steiner envisioned was to find its expression through The Waldorf School. At the center of The Waldorf School was a new form and a new way of working: the College of Teachers.² Rudolf Steiner broadly sketched out the intentions and tasks of the College, but he left it to us to make this form our own. If we study the remarks that Rudolf Steiner made to the participants of the foundation course that he gave before The Waldorf School opened, we can find clues about his intentions for the College, but these clues are open to interpretation.

Rudolf Steiner gave two addresses at the beginning of The Waldorf School. The first was given on the evening of August 20, 1919, prior to the course he was to give to the teachers of the first Waldorf school; the second was given the following morning. These addresses deal with similar topics but from very different points of view. The first, which I have called *The Opening Address*, deals primarily with *exoteric* matters; the second, which I have named *The College Founding*, deals mostly with *esoteric* matters. I believe that through these two addresses, Rudolf Steiner expressed his fundamental intention for the College of Teachers: to be a group that works in both the exoteric and esoteric realms and strives to bridge the worlds of matter and spirit.³

In both of these addresses, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the goals of education, the context in which this new form of education was coming into being, the tasks of the teachers, and how they would work together. *The Opening Address* approaches these topics from a realistic, pragmatic, even functional point of view; *The College Founding* approaches them from a spiritual perspective. When we examine the two addresses side by side, we can find many correspondences and ways in which they complement each other. It is almost as if the first address poses earthly questions and the second offers spiritual answers. How can teachers work in full

responsibility? By working with our Angels, who give us strength. How can we work together in a teachers' republic? By working with the Archangels, who give us courage. How can the spirit of unity be developed? By working with the Archai, who grace us with the light of wisdom.

These addresses were given to a group of people who were to become the first Waldorf teachers. In *The College Founding*, Rudolf Steiner initiated them into a new way of working together with one another and with the spiritual beings in whose service and in whose name each of them would work. The work of the original teachers lives on. All of us follow in their footsteps: Their tasks are our tasks, and we can view our work in light of what Rudolf Steiner shared with them.

Goals of the College of Teachers

In *The Opening Address* Rudolf Steiner presented the original College of Teachers with three goals:

1. to achieve a renewal of modern spiritual life;
2. to reform and revolutionize the educational system;
3. to accomplish a great cultural deed.

In *The College Founding* he also presented three goals:

1. to view their task as a moral spiritual task;
2. to recognize the importance of their work;
3. to be conscious that this school fulfills something special.

These goals are just as apt today as they were in 1919. We are still trying to renew education, and in order to achieve this, we need to recognize how special the Waldorf school is and to consider the importance of our work. When a Waldorf school creates its own version of the goals that Rudolf Steiner identified, it helps the Waldorf movement accomplish great cultural deeds. How we go about identifying and achieving these goals depends on the time and place in which we live and work. It is up to the College in every school to try to read the signs of the times and the needs of its community. It is up to each College to perceive what the present times need and to determine how their school can

1 Editor's Note: The article presented here is reprinted from chapters 3 and 7 of Roberto Trostli, *Thy Will Be Done: The Task of the College of Teachers in Waldorf Schools* (Chatham, NY: Waldorf Publication, 2017). We are grateful to the author and to Waldorf Publications for their permission to reprint these chapters.

2 "College of Teachers" is the English phrase for the German term *Lehrerkollegium*. Throughout this book the terms "College" and "College of Teachers" will be used interchangeably.

3 The full texts of Steiner's *Opening Address* and *College Founding* can be found at the end of this article.

strive to meet those needs. If we work toward these goals, we will fulfill Rudolf Steiner's intention for The Waldorf School: to bring about a renewal of modern spiritual life.

Our Work with Anthroposophy

In *The Opening Address* Rudolf Steiner spoke about the relationship of anthroposophy to The Waldorf School. He told the teachers that The Waldorf School would be living proof of the effectiveness of the anthroposophical orientation toward life. It would accomplish this by being a unified school that only considers how to teach in the way demanded by the human being. In *The College Founding* Rudolf Steiner revealed how anthroposophy can be brought to earth: by creating a connection between our activity and the activity of spiritual beings.

Strengthening the anthroposophical foundations of Waldorf education remains as important today as it was when The Waldorf School was first founded. The College must serve as the fount of inspiration for the processes by which teachers can learn how to "transform what is gained through anthroposophy into truly practical instruction." It can support these processes through study, research, artistic and contemplative activity, and through a way of working that brings out the best in each colleague.

Rudolf Steiner described the founding of The Waldorf School in the loftiest terms: as a ceremony within the Cosmic Order. I think that the founding of every Waldorf school since 1919 also has cosmic significance. When a child is born, we celebrate the birth of a soul-spiritual being that has chosen to enter the earthly realm. So, too, can we celebrate the founding of a Waldorf school because it strives to bring the soul-spiritual into the realm of human life. This spirit of celebration should permeate the founding of the College, because it is a moment when a school awakens to its destiny and its purpose. This spirit of celebration can extend to every College meeting because, during each of our meetings, we have the opportunity to experience ourselves as working within the Cosmic Order to midwife the birth of spirit into matter.

The Context in which We Work

In *The Opening Address* Rudolf Steiner described the difficult social and educational context in which The Waldorf School was being founded:

The state imposes terrible learning goals and terrible standards, the worst imaginable, but people

will imagine them to be the best. Today's policies and political activity treat people like pawns. More than ever before, attempts will be made to use people like cogs in a wheel. People will be handled like puppets on strings, and everyone will think that this reflects the greatest progress imaginable. Things like institutions of learning will be created incompetently and with the greatest arrogance.⁴

Much of this description still holds true today. Although most Waldorf schools may technically be free from "terrible learning goals and terrible standards," these goals and standard permeate our culture. They establish expectations among the parents and the community and often become the standard against which Waldorf teachers are measured and by which they judge themselves. Standardized educational materials and the behavioral methods that are almost universally applied in other schools find their ways into our schools, too.

As Waldorf teachers, we need to inform ourselves about and understand the prevailing view of the human being. We must be careful, however, not to allow that view to erode our recognition that the child is a spiritual being who has come to earth to do what it is not possible to do in the spiritual world. The College is the place where this view of the human being is broadened and deepened. The College strives to serve as the source of strength and inspiration for teachers who are trying to "teach in the way demanded by the human being." By keeping the school's focus on the becoming human being, the College remains true to its intention.

In *The College Founding* Rudolf Steiner said, "We wish to see each other as human beings brought together by karma, who will bring about, not something common, but something that, for those doing this work, will include the feeling of a festive Cosmic moment." Many of us who work together in a College most likely have a common destiny, and our current relationships are affected by our past lifetimes.

Remembering this can help us raise our eyes above the challenges we face in our work together. Devoting ourselves to our work together and to our work with spiritual beings can help us bring our best selves to bear on our common tasks.

The Compromises We Have to Make

Rudolf Steiner told the original teachers in *The Opening Address* that they would have to make compromises.

Rudolf Steiner broadly sketched out the intentions and tasks of the College, but he left it to us to make this form our own.

⁴ Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 1996), pp. 29–30.

They would have to know their ideals and have the flexibility to conform to what lies far from those ideals. This remains true for us today as well. Every Waldorf school exists in a context—a community, a state, a country, modern society—and it must adapt to that context through positive, creative, realistic means. It behooves us to emulate Rudolf Steiner’s calm, objective attitude toward this challenge. Rather than bemoaning our situation, Waldorf teachers and Waldorf schools must embrace the opportunities and challenges of our time. We must love the age in which we and our students have incarnated because it presents us with exactly what we came to earth to meet.

The College should be the place in the school where a sense of contemporaneity is cultivated, where teachers are helped to become true citizens of the time and place into which they have incarnated. The challenges posed to us by the parents, our communities, and our culture provide us with the opportunities to develop the flexibility and strength that we need to create a truly modern art of education. If the College can stay true to its vision while adapting to its challenges, it will serve as a model that students will emulate in their adult lives.

The strength to make compromises comes from knowing who we are and what we have come to earth to do. Among the main tasks of the College of Teachers are to foster a school’s sense of identity and individuality and to recognize its mission in the context of its community and the times in which we live. Waldorf education has a lofty mission: to bring about a renewal of culture. Each school has the opportunity to bring this mission into reality in the place and time in which it exists.

The qualities we need to develop

In *The Opening Address* and at the end of the preparatory course, Rudolf Steiner described the qualities and attitudes that Waldorf teachers should cultivate. Imagination, courage for the truth, responsibility of soul, initiative, interest in the world, integrity, and freshness of soul—these are the seven “virtues” that Waldorf teachers strive to practice in and out of the classroom in the service of their students. They practice these virtues in the College in service to each other and to the school. They are helped to do so by the Angels, Archangels, and Archai, who grant them the strength, the courage, and the light of wisdom to do their work. By creating a true *philadelphia*, a city of brotherly love in their meetings, members of the College further the work of The Good Spirit of Our Time and of The Spirit of The Waldorf School.

The tasks of the College of Teachers were identified at the founding of the original College of The Waldorf School. These tasks remain relevant for every College in every school today and in the future. During the two weeks of the preparatory course, Rudolf Steiner helped the teachers to recognize and embrace these tasks. In our Colleges throughout the years, we have the honor of continuing to work on them.

Finding the Balance

A College of Teachers has earthly tasks and spiritual tasks, and every College must strive to find the proper balance between them. This balance will change as a school matures and as its circumstances change, and it can even change during the course of a school year. At every meeting, the College must find

the balance between its earthly focus—administration, personnel, facilities, finances, etc.—and its spiritual focus—anthroposophy, child development, and pedagogy. Whether a College focuses more on earthly or on spiritual matters depends on the needs of the school. What is most important is

that earthly matters be informed from the point of view of the spirit and that spiritual matters be informed by down-to-earth practicality. By working in this way, the College will fulfill its mandate: to find a living relationship between matter and spirit.

The word “balance” comes from the Latin name for scale. It is derived from the words *bi* and *lanx*, which mean “two dishes or trays.” The trays of a scale hold what is to be weighed. Unequal weights cause the dishes to move vertically, with the heavier dish ending up lower than the lighter. Equal weights result in the trays reaching the horizontal, the balance point.

We can look at *The Opening Address* and *The College Founding* as resting on the two pans of a scale. In one pan lie our earthly tasks; in the other, our cosmic tasks. These two sides of the scale complement and balance each other. A scale also has a bar that links the trays. This connecting bar pivots around a central fulcrum, mediating the polarity of the trays. When the trays are “in balance,” the opposites are held in dynamic equilibrium. To achieve balance we need polarity, but we also need something that mediates the polarity. What mediates the polarities we encounter: matter and spirit, individual and group, past and future? What strikes a dynamic equilibrium between these opposite but complementary realms? Our work with one another. Aided by our spiritual helpers and by Michael, The Good Spirit of Our Time, we can strike the necessary balance.

It is up to the College in every school to try to read the signs of the times and the needs of its community.

In the constellation Libra, the goddess Astraea holds the scales of justice. Here on earth the College of Teachers holds the scales of the school. But as members of the College, we need to do more than hold the scale; we need to *be* the balance in the school, we need to transform the noun *balance* into the verb *to balance* and find a dynamic equilibrium in all that we do as individuals and as a group.

Working as a College

The ideas and ideals that have been presented in the previous chapters are based on my understanding and interpretation of Rudolf Steiner's work. Those that will be presented in [what follows] are my own. During the past decades, my colleagues and I have realized only some of these ideals, but they continue to serve as beacons for our earnest, heartfelt striving.

A Whole School

A Waldorf school is an organism that has a physical body, an etheric body, an astral body, and an ego. Just like our physical body that expresses what we are made of, a school's physical body is expressed by its grounds, facilities, and location—what and where it is. Just like our etheric body that expresses itself in our life processes and our thoughts and memories, a school's etheric body is expressed by its program and by the life of the school—its rhythms, traditions, and memories. Just like our astral body that expresses itself through our perceptions, sensations, and emotions, a school's astral body is expressed by the school's staff and community—their character, personality, and soul. And just like our ego which expresses itself through our individuality and by everything we do in our lives, a school's ego is expressed by the school's unique identity—its biography and its purpose, its reason for being.

Our ego enables us to take a stand in the world and to act on our convictions; the ego of the school seeks to realize its mission.

Just as each of us came to earth to do what we could not do in the spiritual world, the ego of a school incarnates in order to bring a spiritual impulse into reality. The College of Teachers in a Waldorf school embodies and expresses its ego. It has the duty to try to nurture and support the other bodies of the school. When a school is ailing, it is the College's responsibility to read the symptoms, try to diagnose the causes, and determine what the school needs in order for health to be

restored. As the school's ego, the College needs to try to perceive the destiny of the school and to consider the karma the school creates.

The Physical, Etheric, and Astral Bodies of a Waldorf School

A school's facilities express its physical body, and the care of those facilities expresses how a school identifies with its body. A dirty or unkempt school shows that the ego of the school is not taking care of its body. A school in disrepair shows that the ego of the school is not tending to its health. Ideally, a Waldorf school lives in a physical body that allows it to express itself fully, but many schools do not have the financial resources to build or purchase their own buildings. When a school has to rent or renovate its buildings, it needs to make extra efforts to penetrate those buildings with its individuality, to make that inherited body its own.

A school's program expresses its etheric body, its life forces. All Waldorf schools share a common philosophical foundation, basic curriculum and methodology, but each school needs to adapt and individualize its program in terms of the needs of its community. Periodically the College needs to assess whether its program is meeting those needs and to consider what changes may be necessary. In Waldorf schools that have financial or staffing limitations, the program needs to be limited to fit within the school's circumstances. This requires the ego of the school to compromise, prioritize, and make hard choices.

Just like the process by which our true self is forged on the anvil of hardship, the limitations and necessities a school must face awaken its resourcefulness and creativity, helping it to express itself more fully.

A school's community—students, parents, and staff—expresses its astral body. When entering a Waldorf school, we can immediately sense something about its character and personality. We perceive aspects of this personality through our relationships and interactions with the people, activities, and events at the school. How people in a school work together largely determines whether the school will prosper. If a school is to thrive, the College has to toil unceasingly to foster healthy relationships among the faculty and staff and between the school and the parent community. This is easier said than done, but it is a vital task.

Nowadays many parents are worried about their children's welfare and anxious about their future. This often expresses itself as doubt in the faculty—in their

Strengthening the anthroposophical foundations of Waldorf education remains as important today as it was when The Waldorf School was first founded.

background and training, skill, or professionalism. In the face of such doubts, a College needs to remember that it is more important who the teacher is than what the teacher knows. This does not mean that just anyone can teach anything, but the important qualities of a teacher do not arise from a teacher's past—from her background and training; rather, they come from her future—her striving to work on herself so that she can accomplish what she came to earth to do. Life presents us with the challenges we need. Although we don't always feel equal to these challenges, we often find that we have what it takes to meet them.

Experience has its benefits, but what is most important in teaching is our urge to learn, our enthusiasm. Although experience gives us the sense that we know what we're doing, that is not the most important aspect of teaching: *Not* knowing is a powerful force in our process of becoming. Teaching is more like improvising than like performing a rehearsed piece. The new, not the old; the unexpected, not the predictable; the response to the moment, not the reflexive reaction—these are what strengthen the soul connections with our students. It is heartening to remember what Rudolf Steiner said to Herbert Hahn about Hahn's lack of experience when, as a young man, he was given the responsibility to advocate for and represent the Threefold Social Movement: "Yes, but you may also be sure that the spiritual world accepts enthusiasm as a substitute for maturity."⁵

The Ego of a Waldorf School

The College of Teachers expresses the school's ego. Just as our individual egos penetrate our astral bodies, the ego of the school needs to penetrate the school's astral body by establishing and maintaining harmonious relationships with the students, parents, staff, trustees, and the broader community.

The College needs to maintain a healthy relationship with the Faculty and staff who are not on the College. It needs to be aware that those who are not on the College may view it with distrust or suspicion, or they may feel disenfranchised and unsupportive because the College is an exclusive group that makes so many important decisions. When these kinds of feelings arise, it is hard for the College to do its work.

During each of our meetings, we have the opportunity to experience ourselves as working within the Cosmic Order to midwife the birth of spirit into matter.

A College needs to work proactively to prevent or mitigate such feelings. It needs to send the message that College membership is a matter of service, not status or power, and that everyone who is interested should explore joining and participating in the College's work. The College has to bridge whatever gaps arise as a function of having its own meetings and tasks. In practical terms, this means that the College should post its weekly agenda so that everyone can keep track of what the College is working on. College updates and decisions need to be shared at the faculty meeting so that everyone stays

informed. When the College reports, time should be allocated for explaining or for answering questions about its decisions so that those who were not part of the decision-making process can better understand the issues and outcomes. Although such measures may not fully dispel the sense of exclusivity or "otherness," such striving will not go unnoticed.

The College also needs to have a well-defined and healthy relationship to the administrative branch of the school. In many schools, the administrative branch is quite distinct, but this was not always the case. During the early decades of Waldorf education in North America, many of the more experienced teachers had administrative responsibilities. This arose partially out of funding constraints but also out of the interpretation of Rudolf Steiner's remarks regarding self-administration.

In recent decades, as schools have become larger, the internal and external pressures have increased, and administrative functions have grown more complex and time-consuming. Even if they are qualified, teachers rarely have enough time to deal with administrative tasks in the timely manner required. As a result, school administration—enrollment, marketing and development, personnel, finances, and facilities management—has become more professionalized, and schools have sought to hire administrators with experience or who have taken a specialized training for working in anthroposophical institutions.

Although it is becoming rarer nowadays for teachers to take on any major administrative duties, one thing has not changed: the need for all decisions in a Waldorf school to be made with respect to the education of the children. Because teachers work most intimately with the students, because they experience the results of all decisions most directly, they are best equipped to keep the education central to any deliberations. And this, I

5 Herbert Hahn. "How The Waldorf School Arose from the Threefold Social Movement" in *A Man Before Others: Rudolf Steiner Remembered* (Forest Row, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1993), p. 69.

think, is the College's role with respect to the administration: to ensure that an educational perspective permeates all the non-educational aspects of the school.

In order to achieve this goal, I think that College members should be involved—to the appropriate degree—in all areas of administrative work in a school. This involvement may take the form of actual performance of or assistance with administrative functions; or the College's involvement may be mostly representational. Representation in administration works in two directions: *toward* the College and *from* the College. A College member needs to be involved in administrative functions to the degree that she should be able properly to represent whatever is happening in administration to the rest of the College. The College member also needs to be able to represent the College's perspective to the person or people responsible for the administrative function. This ensures that administrative functions will remain in the College's consciousness and that the College's perspectives will be taken into account in the performance of administrative tasks.

This representational relationship puts a special responsibility on the College and its members. The College needs to take the time to consider and to develop a perspective on the non-pedagogical areas of the school so that the College's view can be represented by the College member who is involved in that area. Whenever that representative is engaged in administrative work, she needs to remember that she is speaking not for herself but for the College. The College needs to make sure that it is not second-guessing those working in administration; rather, it is providing perspectives that administrators may not have. This relationship also makes demands of administrators. They need to take the College perspective into account and determine whether and how it can find expression. If administrators truly work with the College rather than just keeping the College informed, the joint perspectives will fructify and strengthen the administrative work in the school.

Finally, the College needs to nurture a strong relationship with the Board of Trustees or Directors. It is important that both the Board and the College understand and respect their respective roles in the school. While the College has primary responsibility for the school's educational functions—its program and staffing—the Board has legal and fiduciary responsibility for the school. This means that the Board is accountable to the state in which the school is incorporated. This is a weighty responsibility, and it needs to be recognized

and respected, for Board members are legally responsible for upholding the school's bylaws and for making sure that the school operates according to all relevant laws and regulations.

The College works with the Board in two major ways: by having representatives on the Board and by participating in Board committees. A Board benefits from having College representatives who can serve as a conduit between the two groups. It is important that there be more than one representative because it allows both the Board and the College to work more objectively. I think that more than two representatives is unnecessary, however, and may tip the balance in a Board. The Board needs to be a counterbalance to the College in a school, and it cannot do so if it has too many College representatives.

The perspectives of the Board and College should create a dynamic balance between the spiritual and the earthly. The College strives to bring a spiritual perspective to earthly matters, but it could easily ignore the realities that it faces. The Board works to bring an earthly perspective to the spiritual aspects of the school—especially the program and staffing—but it could easily approach these from an overly materialistic viewpoint. Both groups need to recognize their inherent one-sidedness and value each other's ability to balance that one-sidedness so that the school can stay poised between the realms of matter and spirit.

By keeping the school's focus on the becoming human being, the College remains true to its intention.

I think that every committee of the Board should include a College member who can make sure that the committee's work is represented in the College and that the College's perspective is represented in the committee. The College member can help the committee keep in mind the importance of the education of the children and can help the College work in ways that are most supportive of the committee.

Ideally, neither the Board nor the College needs to be the primary executor of tasks within a school, but they both need to provide the vision, the direction, and the oversight to get tasks done. In my experience, this works best if individuals and committees receive and execute mandates from the Board or the College, leaving the larger groups to focus on the big picture.

A person who joins the College of Teachers takes on a special role: College Ambassador. As an ambassador, the person is responsible to represent the College in all of his or her relationships with other individuals and groups in the school and beyond. This representation involves speaking for the College and listening for

the College. If College members are able to bring what they hear and experience back to the College, then the College will remain well-informed. If College members speak clearly on behalf of the College, then the College stands less chance of being misperceived and misunderstood. In a larger sense, College members are also ambassadors to and from the spiritual world. They have the opportunity to perceive and give voice to spiritual impulses so that the College can be more effective in bringing spiritual impulses into earthly form.

Working with Mandates in the College of Teachers

The College of Teachers is mostly a deliberative body. It strives to address matters from a spiritual as well as a material perspective, and its value is primarily in its wisdom rather than its capacity to act. There are certainly times when the College as a whole must act, but usually the will of the College will be executed by College members who have been given mandates. The word “mandate” comes from the Latin verb *mandare* which comes from *manus* (hand) and *dare* (to give). A mandate literally means that a matter is put into someone’s hands. This has a deeper meaning than at first glance. When something is put into someone’s hands, the impulses of the head and heart are carried over into the will. According to Rudolf Steiner, our hands are the part of us that makes us most human, because our hands are free to create, to work, to help others. Therefore, when something is “handed over,” it is with the implication that the person to whom it is handed should humanize the task and do her best to make it serve the ends for which it was intended.

I think that mandates should have the gesture expressed by Michelangelo in his painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel of God creating Adam. In that fresco, God, surrounded by the heavenly host, reaches out His hand toward Adam’s hand. Their two hands do not touch but are in intimate relationship to one another. Just like this painting, which shows a spiritual impulse passing from God to man, we should receive the impulse of a mandate as gently and divinely as Adam received the breath of life from his Creator. When we receive this impulse, we are then empowered to exercise our godly selves by doing good deeds.

Rudolf Steiner began *The College Founding* by referring to the relationship that teachers need to have with “the spiritual powers in whose service and in whose name each one of us must work.” These terms—“in whose service” and “in whose name”—each of us must work to characterize the essence of a mandate. A mandate is the bestowal of trust to someone who fully recognizes and honors the relationship that this trust affirms. One needs to be worthy of receiving a mandate, and

one needs to perform the mandate with a sense of service. Each school will determine how best to work with mandates, but there are four principles that I believe hold true in all situations. These principles are freedom, responsibility, trust, and reflection.

A mandate should be given in a spirit of *freedom* to the person or group best suited to execute it. Ideally, a person should not volunteer for a mandate; rather, having indicated a willingness to serve, the person should be recognized by his or her peers as the one to whom the mandate should be given. When we execute a mandate, we face a paradox: We must act as individuals but we are embodying and expressing the impulse of a group. This is why nurturing the group’s identity and consciousness are so important to the College. Each member of the College needs to speak and listen with a collective voice and ear so that he or she can truly represent the group.

With freedom comes *responsibility*. The person who receives the mandate is responsible for carrying out the mandate to the best of her ability. She is responsible for executing the will of the group to the best of her understanding. She is responsible for keeping the group informed about the mandate to the degree that the group has requested. The group also has responsibility: It needs to make the terms of the mandate clear so that the mandated individual knows exactly what is expected of her, and it needs to give the individual the necessary background for executing the mandate. If the mandate holder is to execute the will of the group, she needs to know where the group stands on the matters at hand.

A mandate is an expression of *trust*. The mandate holder has been chosen because he has been deemed suitable to execute the will of the group. By giving a mandate, the group affirms its trust in the individual’s judgment and capacities. If the group has done its work, the mandate holder will have a full picture of where the group stands on the issue. Once the mandate holder sets about performing the task, the group needs to trust him to do it without any more involvement unless the mandate holder asks for input or help. Involvement or interference by the group undermines the trust that has been expressed in the mandate holder, and it undermines the trust that the mandate holder has in the group. Though it is difficult not to meddle, the group needs to recognize that it cannot and should not be involved in the execution of its many mandates, for involvement would prevent it from performing more important duties.

Mandates require *reflection*. The mandate should stipulate when the group will review the tasks that have

been mandated. Depending on the task, these reflections could happen part-way through its execution and at its completion. Reviews need to be handled in such a way that the group recognizes what went well and expresses what could go better in similar circumstances in the future. A good review focuses on the deeds and not the doer. It should be objective enough that everyone can learn what needs to be learned. If reviews deteriorate into critiques of the mandate holders, people will be much less willing to take up mandates for the group in the future.

Working with mandates requires a degree of maturity in an institution. It is a form that demands much from the group giving the mandate and from the individual receiving it. A new College will need to develop a mandating process slowly and carefully; an older College may need periodically to review and renew its processes to make sure that they are truly serving the school.

Destiny and Karmic Relationships

As the ego of the school, the College of Teachers is responsible for working with the destiny of the school and for the karma that it creates. What is the difference between destiny and karma? I think of *destiny* as the life we weave with the threads that stretch back to our past lives—the karma we created as it expresses itself in the present. I think of *karma* as the life we will weave with the threads that reach into our future—the destiny we will bring to our next lifetime.

Our destiny gives us the possibility of fulfilling the karma and realizing the intentions that we formed after our previous life. Our karma determines what we will need to confront in our next life as a result of what we have done during our current life journey. Destiny is not immutable, because in the course of our lives we encounter new people, circumstances, and events. What arises out of our destined and new encounters forms the basis for our karma for lifetimes to come. Recognizing that our lives are a mixture of effects of the past and causes of the future gives us a valuable perspective on the present.

As colleagues we are linked by our past karma—our destiny—and through our current relationships and work together, we create future karma. This perspective needs to inform how a College hires, evaluates, and makes decisions about retaining or dismissing employees. Because such functions are fraught with karmic consequences, it is imperative that a College be

If a school is to thrive, the College has to toil unceasingly to foster healthy relationships among the faculty and staff and between the school and the parent community.

scrupulously professional in executing these functions. While the procedural or functional aspects of personnel processes and decisions are relatively straightforward, what about the spiritual aspects? I will confine myself to a few general principles, for these are matters that each school needs to work out for itself. When hiring, evaluating, or making decisions about a colleague, the College needs to determine whether the person truly belongs at the school. This was expressed by Rudolf Steiner in the meeting of July 30, 1920, when he said, “The Faculty should consist of those who originally were part of the school and those who came later but who we wish had participated in the course last year.”

The kind of discernment that allows a College to make such determinations requires that its members work from their egos and their higher selves, not their sympathies and antipathies. One way to take a higher view is to consider the colleague in terms of the criteria for College membership. While College membership may not be everyone’s destiny, the criteria for membership identify the qualities necessary to work effectively in a Waldorf school. The College can therefore consider whether the person has or is developing the competence and qualities to be confirmed in her work. Has she committed, or is she likely to commit, to the school for the foreseeable future? Does the person have the integrity and capacity to uphold the College’s processes? And, most importantly, what is the person’s relationship to anthroposophy? Has she given any indication—or has she already found—that this is her life’s path? While many other questions may need to be answered, posing such fundamental questions will help a College to make decisions that have karmic implications.

Colleagues are not the only ones who are linked by past karma and common destiny: Students and parents and members of the school community are also likely to have karmic relationships with us and with each other. Such relationships can bring great blessings but can also be the source of difficulties. Because accepting a family into the school has karmic implications, the College of Teachers needs to be especially conscious of who joins and who leaves—or is forced to leave—the school.

Children and parents who present challenges are often the ones who have the strongest connections to the school. While they may have come to the school to fulfill their destiny, it may not be possible to do so. This can be extremely difficult for a family to accept: They

have come to their destined place, yet the opportunity to fulfill their destiny is being thwarted. In these situations, parents often feel betrayed because the very people with whom they have come to work out their destiny refuse to do so. In these cases, we should remember that destiny does not compel us; it provides us with opportunities. As free human beings we can decide whether to seize these opportunities or to leave them for another time or another lifetime.

When severing bonds with children or families who have a deep relationship to the school, we must make sure to show how much we respect and honor their destiny impulses, even if we cannot fulfill them. Turning a blind eye or a deaf ear to someone who is seeking to be seen and heard can be experienced as a karmic repudiation. We have an obligation to see and listen as fully and compassionately as we can, but we must still act in accordance with our most important responsibility, which is to the school.

When it makes life-changing decisions, the College creates karma for the future. This means that after death, each of the members of a College of Teachers will encounter and experience the effects of the decisions and deeds done by the College. Each person will extract different lessons from these experiences, and these lessons will help to shape the person's intentions and resolves for the next lifetime. We therefore need to take our responsibilities as members of the College with the utmost seriousness, for everything we do has repercussions that extend beyond this lifetime.

Whenever we have to make difficult karmic decisions, the College is well served by seeking the help of spiritual beings. Our Angels, the Archangels, the Being of the School, The Good Spirit of the Time, and perhaps even The Lord of Karma himself, are all ready to help us. We can also turn to the members of the school community who have died, for they are eager to stay connected with the school. This connection not only helps us; it is a gift to the souls of the dead, for when we allow them to help us in our work, we may be providing them with the opportunity to fulfill aspects of their destiny that may have remained unfulfilled on earth.

As we know, the path of our lives is difficult, full of pitfalls and stumbling blocks, but we are not alone on this path. This fact is illustrated by a prose poem by Mary Stevenson called "Footprints in the Sand":

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only.

This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord, "You promised me, Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life, there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?"

The Lord replied, "The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you."

This story affirms that we are never alone; we are carried by spiritual beings through the hardest parts of our lives. Our spiritual companions are there when we need them the most. This is a true picture, one that affirms how we can count on the spiritual world when we are in need. But this picture is missing something: the many other footsteps left by all of our human companions—those who travel with us, those who raise their hands to bear us, those who open their hearts to console us, who never leave our side. No matter how alone we may feel in the darkest moments of our journey, we are not alone; we never walk alone.

Roberto Trostli has been active in Waldorf education since 1981 as a class teacher, high school teacher, adult educator, author, and lecturer. He received his BA from Columbia University and his MA from the University of Cambridge, England. After working as a violinmaker, Roberto taught for ten years at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City, the school he also attended as a child. Later, he moved to Hadley, Massachusetts, where he worked for eighteen years, first as a class teacher of grades 1 to 8, and then as the founder and director of the Hartsbrook High School. In 2009, Roberto resumed class teaching at the Richmond Waldorf School, in Virginia. He was co-director of Sunbridge Institute and served on the Board of Directors of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education. Roberto was a member of the Pedagogical Section Council for ten years and helped restructure the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). His written works include numerous articles and plays; he edited *Teaching Language Arts in the Waldorf School* (2004) and *Creating a Circle of Collaborative Spiritual Leadership* (2014).

Rudolf Steiner

The Opening Address

Given on the eve of the Teachers' Seminar, Stuttgart August 20, 1919

This evening I wish to make some preliminary remarks. To achieve a renewal of modern spiritual life, The Waldorf School must be a true cultural deed. We must reckon with change in everything; the ultimate foundation of the whole social movement is in the spiritual realm and the question of education is one of the burning spiritual questions of modern times. We must take advantage of the possibilities presented by The Waldorf School to reform and revolutionize the educational system. The success of this cultural deed is in your hands. Thus, you have much responsibility in working to create an example. So much depends upon the success of this deed. The Waldorf School will be living proof of the effectiveness of the anthroposophical orientation toward life. It will be a unified school in the sense that it only considers how to teach in the way demanded by the human being, by the totality of the human essence. We must put everything at the service of achieving this goal.

However, it is necessary that we make compromises, because we are not yet so far developed that we can accomplish a truly free deed. The state imposes terrible learning goals and terrible standards, the worst imaginable, but people will imagine them to be the best. Today's policies and political activity treat people like pawns. More than ever before, attempts will be made to use people like cogs in a wheel. People will be handled like puppets on a string, and everyone will think that this reflects the greatest progress imaginable. Things like institutions of learning will be created incompetently and with the greatest arrogance. We have a foretaste of this in the design of the Russian Bolshevik schools, which are graves for everything that represents true teaching.

We have a difficult struggle ahead of us, but, nevertheless, we must do this cultural deed. We must bring two contradictory forces into harmony. On the one hand, we must know what our ideals are, and, on the other hand, we must have the flexibility to conform to what lies far from our ideals. It will be difficult for each of you to find how to bring these two forces into harmony. This will be possible to achieve only when each of you enters into this work with your full strength. Everyone must use his or her full strength from the very beginning.

Therefore, we will organize the school not bureaucratically, but collegially, and will administer it in a republican way. In a true teachers' republic we will not have the comfort of receiving directions from the Board of Education. Rather, we must bring to our work what gives each of us the possibility and the full responsibility for what we have to do. Each one of us must be completely responsible. We can create a replacement for the supervision of the School Board as we form this preparatory course and, through the work, receive what unifies the school. We can achieve that sense of unity through this course if we work with all diligence. The course will be held as a continuing discussion of general pedagogical questions, as a discussion of the special methods concerning the most important areas of instruction, and as a seminar to practice teaching. We will practice teaching and critique it through discourse.

We will take up the more theoretical aspects in the morning and the seminar in the afternoon on each day. We will begin at 9:00am with general pedagogy, then undertake instruction concerning special methods at 11:30, and in the afternoon do seminar exercises from 3:00 until 6:00.

We must be completely conscious that we have to accomplish a great cultural deed in every sense of the word. Here, in The Waldorf School, we do not wish to create a parochial school. The Waldorf School will not propagate a particular point of view by filling the children with anthroposophical dogma. We do not wish to teach anthroposophical dogma; anthroposophy is not the content of the instruction. What we want is a practical utilization of anthroposophy. We want to transform what we can gain through anthroposophy into truly practical instruction.

The anthroposophical content of instruction is much less important than the practical utilization of what we can create out of anthroposophy, generally in pedagogy and particularly in the special methods; in other words, how we can bring anthroposophy into teaching practice.

Representatives of the confessions will give religious instruction. We will use anthroposophy only in the method of instruction. Therefore, we will divide the children among the religion teachers according to their confession. This is another part of the compromise. Through justifiable compromises we can accelerate our cultural deed.

We must be conscious of the great tasks before us. We dare not be simply educators; we must be people of culture in the highest sense of the word. We must have a living interest in everything happening today; otherwise we will be bad teachers for this school. We dare not have enthusiasm only for our special tasks. We can be good teachers only when we have a living interest in everything happening in the world. Through that interest in the world, we must obtain the enthusiasm that we need for the school and for our tasks. Flexibility of spirit and devotion to our tasks are necessary. Only from that can we draw out what can be achieved today when we devote our interest to the great needs and tasks of the times, both of which are unimaginably large.

The College Founding

Given at the beginning of the Preparatory Course, Stuttgart August 21, 1919

We can accomplish our work only if we do not see it as simply a matter of intellect or feeling, but, in the highest sense, as a moral spiritual task. Therefore, you will understand why, as we begin this work today, we first reflect on the connection we wish to create from the very beginning between our activity and the spiritual worlds. With such a task, we must be conscious that we do not work only in the physical plane of living human beings. In the last centuries, this way of viewing work has increasingly gained such acceptance that it is virtually the only way people see it. This understanding of tasks has made teaching what it is now and what the work before us should improve. Thus, we wish to begin our preparation by first reflecting upon how we connect with the spiritual powers in whose service and in whose name each one of us must work. I ask you to understand these introductory words as a kind of prayer to those powers who stand behind us with Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition as we take up this task.

Teaching Social Emotional Learning in a Waldorf School

Megan Sullivan

I have been immersed in Waldorf education since 1993. My career has developed from Class Teaching to specializing in Social Emotional Learning, which I have been teaching as a standalone class in a Waldorf middle school and high school for fourteen years. Social Emotional Learning has become, in recent years, a term that is used frequently. As a term it is new; it started being used in the United States about the same time I started teaching. It took a while to catch on, but now it is well settled. It is not random that Social Emotional Learning has entered education at this time. Students have changed since I started teaching. The world has changed since I started teaching. Social Emotional Learning was developed as a resource to support and address these changes. In this article, I will define Social Emotional Learning and outline the capacities that it aims to develop in students. I will also address its place in Waldorf education and why I believe it is important for our young people growing up today, especially now. Finally, I will suggest how all teachers can incorporate components of Social Emotional Learning in their classrooms.

Social Emotional Learning Defined

Social Emotional Learning, which I will henceforth refer to by its acronym SEL, is defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a national leader in SEL, as

an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.¹

CASEL's core competency framework for SEL includes: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness, and relationship skills.

In essence, SEL addresses the dynamics of both knowing yourself and of creating a healthy community. The self-knowledge component of an SEL framework refers to identity, meaning, values, agency, and emotional literacy. It is about learning to understand what is yours,

what belongs to someone else, and what is pressing in from society. It is learning to understand what you feel and, hopefully, *why* you feel that. And then, in understanding one's feelings, learning to respond deliberately rather than react. It is about developing self-knowledge so that your relationship with yourself and with others can be healthy. The component of creating healthy community cultivates practices of belonging, connecting, and turning towards others with interest and care. It is where love lives, but not in some sentimental way that denies the truth of uncomfortable emotions. The social component of SEL can build capacities for cultural humility and cultural responsiveness and develop skills to engage in courageous conversations.

Why SEL Now

Waldorf veterans might argue that the Waldorf curriculum by itself develops self-knowledge and meaningful social connections and that SEL is redundant, at best, or harmful, at worst. Indeed, one big motif of my early work in sex education and SEL in Waldorf schools in America was the resistance to this work. The message was: 'Don't talk about it! Don't wake them up to something they are not ready for! It is too astral. The curriculum is the antidote.' These were all things I heard in response to my teaching of sex education. In the early days of SEL, as it was picking up steam in education, I experienced dismissiveness with a hint of superiority that can sometimes run amok in Waldorf education. It went more or less like this: 'Students in a Waldorf school do not need Social Emotional Learning because it is in everything we do, and the Waldorf curriculum addresses all needs.' I don't hear this anymore. Now there is an appreciation for how SEL can support the development of young people, with a special focus on the complexities of growing up in these times.

Social Emotional Learning as a subject area is a response to a need. I think, many generations ago, in Steiner's Europe, educators did not need to explicitly teach SEL. I think SEL permeated culture differently. I think the teaching was modeled differently. And I think that the previous generations were constitutionally different. I believe that different cultures, during different times and in various places, have taught Social and Emotional Learning in their own ways and held it in the center of their culture. Right now, in 2022, in the not so United States of America, SEL is well-positioned to help

1 <https://casel.org/about-us/>

our students process their experiences and meet the challenges we are all facing today.

Here is a review of some of the challenges that I have been observing: The world seems faster than I can keep up with. It often feels chaotic. I am easily overwhelmed by all that I desire to pay attention to, care about, and fight for. Across the world, we are experiencing first-hand the impact of the environmental crisis. We are only now beginning to emerge from a global pandemic. Politically, socially, and morally we are reckoning with the impact and trauma of the many ways people have been and continue to be oppressed here in the United States.

Compounding the stress and uncertainty of the past few years has been a layering of ongoing stressors and traumas.

Dena Simmons, a leader in the intersection of SEL and equity, wrote at the end of the previous school year, “It goes without saying that 2022 has been fraught with frustration, anxiety, and heartbreak. Although the school year may be over, the pain around us still lingers. In this year alone, we experienced numerous instances of gun violence, racial injustice, and the stripping away of our rights and liberties. We are not made for this prolonged collective grief.”² In naming these experiences as causes of collective grief, Simmons allows us to pause and sit with an acknowledgment that life has been hard and that we have been and continue to be impacted by events we experience in the world. Our children have been impacted and continue to be impacted. In addition to their own grief and uncertainty, they are also impacted by witnessing the adults in their lives struggle. We are seeing the toll of this. Mental health crises are on the rise in children and teens.³ Never before did I encounter as many parents reach out to me for mental health referrals for their children as in the past year. Consider how you have been experiencing the past two years. Think about how many children you know who are struggling with depression and/or anxiety. Waldorf schools are not exempt from the complexities and intensities that we have been experiencing.

My work in SEL is built on a conviction that it is supportive to talk with young people about what they are experiencing. A glimpse into my biography below illustrates

not only my own personal connection to the importance of learning to talk about what young people are experiencing but also the dawning of SEL as a subject area in education.

The Personal Path

I started teaching twenty-eight years ago. Back then, Social Emotional Learning was not a term in use or a subject area. My first job was at a small Steiner school on the north coast of New South Wales, Australia. As a class teacher, I quickly gravitated to all things social and emotional, without knowing that Social Emotional Learning would receive its name in the years to come. Pastoral care from my Catholic school days and the learning area in Australian schools, called ‘Personal Development, Health, and Physical Education’, were the closest I had to describing the

thing that, as a budding class teacher, made me stay up at night reading and researching. It was the place in my teaching where I quickened. It was what I could not stop thinking about. In 1997, I taught sex education for the first time to my 7th grade class. Now, from the vantage point of mid-life, I can recognize this as the beginning of my life’s work. Sitting with those thirteen-year-olds decades ago, I was bowled over by both how much they needed the information and by the realization that no one had spoken to me about any of this when I was their age.

I am Pākehā, a white New Zealander of British descent. When I was eight years old, I moved from New Zealand to Australia, from one English colonized land to another. While the lands of New Zealand and Australia could not be more different, the white culture has the same origin. The ethos of the British stiff upper lip permeated my upbringing. Not talking about things—emotions, that is—was the air I breathed, both in my family culture and the white culture at large. “Have a cup of tea” was the only acknowledgment allowed when things were hard. Toxic positivity simmered in all figures of speech that sought to neutralize struggle and pain, the foremost examples being “she’ll be right” and “it happens in all families”—empty platitudes that seek to sweep that thing that is happening under the carpet as quickly as possible. And god forbid if the pain is psychological or emotional! In my home, there was serious psychological distress that was sometimes treated with medication and sometimes with alcohol. It was there, and it was felt by all for years, and it was never, ever

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2 Dena Simmons, LiberatED Newsletter, July 2022. <https://mailchi.mp/liberatedsel/july-2022-newsletter-14138913?e=1122933a64>

3 American Psychological Association. “Children’s Mental Health is in Crisis.” 2022. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/01/special-childrens-mental-health>

talked about. The statement, “You teach what you need to learn,” could not be more true for me. What became my vocation of teaching Social Emotional Learning was a response to my biography, to my culture, and to my generational trauma.

How Emotional Literacy Supports Content in a Classroom

Before I share ways in which we can all support our young folks in developing Social Emotional Learning capacities, aimed at meeting those complexities and intensities mentioned above, I want to illustrate how my health curriculum has shifted from being primarily focused on delivering content to being primarily focused on SEL capacity development, with the essential content woven in. In my high school classes, Health and Wellness is the content of my teaching; this means focusing on subjects like habits, stress, sex education, and drug and alcohol education. SEL is the capacity-building part of my work with students. To understand what I mean by ‘content’ and ‘capacity building’, let me tell you about my evolution in teaching sex education.

As earlier stated, I first taught sex education in 1997. I am an advocate for comprehensive sex education. If we can’t talk with our young people about sex now, they will have a hard time talking about sex when they get older. In the past decade, and more urgently in the past five years, the dialogue around consent has broadened. Consent, as something to be taught, has found its footing and became more clear as it progressed through the “no means no” phase to its current distilled definition represented by the following language, which I display on a poster in my classroom:

Consent is *permission* that is: *verbal, sober, conscious, willingly given, enthusiastic, continuous, and revocable. Consent is absolutely mandatory.*

This is the content area of what I might be talking with students about. But, the fact that this definition is taught and students can recite it does not mean they have the skills to make this ideal of consent into a reality or to make a sexual experience a good experience.

Christine Emba’s book, *Rethinking Sex: A Provocation*, sincerely addresses why consent alone does not necessarily make a sexual experience a good experience. Emba asks how do we move past the “laser focus of

consent”⁴ and start to consider what makes sex a fulfilling experience for the people involved. She is asking where the aim is *beyond* consent, where it is to see the humanity and beauty in the person one is with and to “will the good of the other.”⁵ With this provocation in mind, let’s consider sex for a moment.

Sex is complex. We have sex for many reasons, and it can lead to different kinds of experience. It can leave a person with painful trauma, and it can be a bridge to another human being. It can be the worst, and it can be the best. Peggy J. Kleinplatz and A. Dana Ménard, in their book, *Magnificent Sex: Lessons from Extraordinary Lovers*, share from their research that “Optimal sexual experiences involve being totally absorbed and immersed in the moment, an intense connection, being erotically intimate with another person, communicating empathetically, taking risks, surrendering to another, being authentic and accepting the very real possibility of transcendence and transformation.”⁶ With this as a possibility, and with the idea of broadening the

conversation about consent, let’s look at sex education again. The content stream of comprehensive sex education addresses the issues of bodies, consent, contraception, STIs, and healthy and unhealthy relationships. Young people need this information. They especially need this information in a post-Roe world. At the same time, I have come to learn that this is not enough. In my upper high school classes, I have had students asking how they might know what they

really want, how they might establish healthy boundaries for themselves and with a partner, and how best to deal with sexual coercion. This is where SEL and the capacity-building component of this work supports students.

The SEL component of sex education develops skills of emotional literacy and communication. The current gold standard for teaching consent in sexual relationships is that consent is verbal and enthusiastic. This means that individuals know that they want to be there with their partner, they know what they want and what they don’t want, and they can talk about it with their

Sitting with those thirteen-year-olds decades ago, I was bowled over by both how much they needed the information and by the realization that no one had spoken to me about any of this when I was their age.

4 Christine Emba, *Rethinking Sex: A Provocation* (New York: Sentinel, 2022), xiii.

5 *Rethinking Sex*, 161.

6 Peggy J. Kleinplatz and A. Dana Ménard, *Magnificent Sex: Lessons from Extraordinary Lovers* (New York & London: Routledge, 2020), 184.

partner. This takes emotional literacy. To recognize what their body is telling them, to decipher any feelings and sensations they might be having, and to be able to talk about bodies, about touch, about pleasure, and about being comfortable and uncomfortable takes emotional literacy and maturity. Sex education without an emotional literacy component does not give young people the capacities they need to determine and express their boundaries and negotiate the complexities of relationships. Individuals have to know *how* they are feeling and *what* they are feeling. They have to have practiced talking about how they feel to be able to enthusiastically offer verbal consent. My experience teaching sex education with and without an SEL framework has taught me that we have to explicitly teach emotional literacy and not just assume young people will develop the skills needed for self-knowledge and relationships. In addition, just as reading literacy develops over time and becomes more sophisticated, so does emotional literacy. Emotional literacy is important in all areas of human life, from inner lived experience and self-knowledge to the outer lived experience of engaging meaningfully with the world and with others. It is something that develops throughout childhood and adolescence, and we can all take a part in supporting its development.

What SEL Looks Like in My Classroom

I start every class with what I call “Our Quiet Time.” This is a combination of mindfulness techniques, grounding techniques, and body practices that regulate the nervous system. A regulated nervous system means students are not stuck in a stress response; they are working towards a state of being centered, engaged, and calm. When students have ways to regulate themselves, they are better able to learn and participate in the classroom. “Our quiet time” is a reflective, centering time where students are developing capacities for noticing their inner world and learning techniques to regulate themselves. We practice many different techniques, and it is the students’ task to determine which of these supports them to feel regulated and which do not work for them. They keep an ongoing list in *The Journal*, a book I provide for their reflections during SEL class. I highly recommend the book, *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative*

Sex education without an emotional literacy component does not give young people the capacities they need to determine and express their boundaries and negotiate the complexities of relationships.

Healing, by David A. Treleaven.⁷ This book can guide teachers in recognizing trauma symptoms and offers techniques that will mitigate the discomfort and pain that can arise when students who have experienced trauma are asked to close their eyes and come to quiet. Before I understood how trauma can present in a classroom, I would become irritated at students who could not settle and who were “disrupting” my class. A trauma sensitive mindfulness approach allows all students to listen to their bodies and find their own ways to experience safety in the classroom. A trauma sensitive mindfulness approach gives permission to students to notice

what is happening inside themselves and take care of themselves; it teaches them that they have agency to do what is right for them. What a vital skill!

In my SEL classes, I explicitly teach emotional literacy, and I build capacities for noticing, naming, and then regulating emotions over many sessions throughout the years that I have with my students. We build feeling lists together. We talk about what different emotions feel like in the body. The students learn to identify sensations that they experience with different feelings. I use an emotional literacy framework for thinking about feelings by asking: What am I feeling? Where am I feeling it in my body? What sensations am I feeling? How strong is the feeling? What is the feeling telling me? What do I need? And just like in any other subject, I use many teacher tricks to help students engage with the material. Some days it might be reflective journaling, sometimes I pass out feeling cards and the students discuss feelings drawn from the set with a partner. Sometimes we play feelings charades. Sometimes we do a sharing circle on a time they felt worried or grateful. All the time the students are building their vocabulary, strengthening their capacity to identify sensations in the body, and developing skills to regulate themselves. In this capacity-building, which is woven throughout my classes, there is an added bonus of normalizing feelings. Students often express obvious relief when they realize they were not the only ones experiencing a certain feeling.

Every class I teach has a component of inner reflection for developing self-knowledge, and it includes social building for fostering a healthy class community. The inner reflection can be as simple as journaling after “Our

⁷ David A. Treleaven, *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018).

Quiet Time,” with the journal prompt asking: “How was that activity for you? Did it make you feel comfortable or uncomfortable in your body? How do you know?” The social building also happens consciously in every class. We do a lot of partner work, group work, and circle work, on which I will elaborate in the section on Social Building in the Classroom.

With these foundational SEL components in place, aimed at developing self-knowledge and providing multiple and varied ways for community building, I then bring age appropriate topics to each class depending on specific arising needs. Topics that are built upon over the years include identity, media literacy, social media use, friendships, bullying, personal goals and values, mental health, healthy relationships, sex education, drug and alcohol education, and transitions such as entering and eventually leaving high school. These topics are supported with the SEL capacities that are being reinforced alongside them. We are always noticing and naming feelings, learning to listen, to communicate, and hopefully to connect.

We Can All Teach Emotional Literacy

Teaching emotional literacy can happen in any class; you don’t have to have a standalone SEL course to teach it. First, as with everything child related, we, teachers, need to start with ourselves and consider what we are modeling. How many emotions can you identify when you are experiencing them? Are boys and men allowed the same range of emotions or are emotions policed? Are you comfortable expressing varying emotions? How do you demonstrate self-regulation to young people around you? Where is your growth area in emotional literacy? What do you want to explore more?⁸

With an emotional literacy audit under way, we can begin to consider how we talk about and teach emotional literacy to our young people. When you spend time with a child or teen, you are given many opportunities to help them notice and name their feelings. Emotions are messengers. They are giving us information about our relation to our environment: what we are experiencing, whether we are safe or unsafe, and whether our needs are being met or not. They give us information. So, when a child or teen is having a big feeling that we can observe in their

behavior, we can acknowledge it with them: “I see that you are frustrated, let’s work out why.” Or: “Can I help you find a word that matches how you are feeling?” Or: “Where are you feeling that in your body?”

Teachers can build emotional learning into so many moments in a classroom. After having your class settle and find quiet, you can ask the students to think about a few feelings they have experienced during their day or week. If a teacher conducts class meetings, emotional learning can be a feature in check-ins or in partner work, wherein students share when they feel joy, stress, or gratitude. Writing assignments and journal prompts can serve as a reflective way to consider feelings. Feelings Charades can be a fun game. And all teachers can acknowledge feelings before tests or presentations, as well as teach self-regulation resources to settle the nervous system for students who are especially anxious about certain tasks. Teachers can further help students build a vocabulary of emotions; help students learn to recognize where the feelings live in their bodies through sensations; teach students resources for regulation; and normalize feelings. Adolescents are often overwhelmed in their feelings. Don’t leave them to work it out by themselves!

One advantage of building emotional literacy into a regular day in the classroom is that you have a shared vocabulary and framework for when big things happen and for which students need our help understanding or processing. I teach in middle school and high school;

A trauma sensitive mindfulness approach gives permission to students to notice what is happening inside themselves and take care of themselves; it teaches them that they have agency to do what is right for them.

living in these times provides plenty of opportunities to acknowledge the hard and confusing parts of life. In class, we have talked about and shared grief over the death of community members. We have shared our shock and fear with school shootings. We have discussed how the pandemic is impacting us. And every time an immediate event or very present topic that is pressing in from the outside world is held with the students in the classroom,

there is relief. Young people need an adult ego presence to help them process what they are experiencing in the world; otherwise, we leave them to do it by themselves. As a child, I have been in the latter position, and it is scary and confusing. Being willing to talk with students about hard topics, even if you are not really sure how to, helps them build the skills to talk

⁸ You can find more resources for emotional literacy on my website: <https://www.megansullivan.net/resources>

about hard topics; they will be needing these skills as they make their way through life.

Social Building in a Classroom

One of the first groups I had in the early days of teaching SEL as a stand-alone class was a 12th grade class. I assumed that because many of these students have been together for years, they would know each other really well. They did not. To be more precise, some knew a few classmates very well, while there were some classmates they had hardly ever spoken with. During our closing circle, when the students shared something they were taking away from our time together, the most common response was that they enjoyed getting to know classmates better. I was not expecting this; that realization still informs a lot of the social building work that makes up my classes. Just as we often assume that children will develop emotional literacy passively, we also assume that children will develop social skills just by being social. Some will, others will not. Many of us, children included, struggle socially; in effect, we could end up feeling lonely and isolated.

Conscious SEL supports meaningful connections and promotes social skills. Consciously making meaningful connections a goal for an activity in the classroom, rather than assuming kids have social skills to navigate their social worlds, is an important support. The fundamental human need to belong and connect is at the root of thriving as well as of hurting. This need shows up in all literature on psychological health as well as in literature on addiction. It is a central aspect of this beautiful life. And there are so many ways we can all help our young people connect with each other. What if, as well as teaching content material, schools also made it a goal to help students connect meaningfully and made time for this in the classrooms? Building a healthy social environment belongs in every class.

Here are some things every teacher can do for social building in the classroom:

First, do your own audit: What are your social values? What do respect, dignity, and belonging look like to you? What do you allow and what do you not allow? Who do you notice? How are you working with inclusion, equity, and justice? How culturally literate are you? Have you considered whether your classroom is a safe place for all of your students?

Just as we often assume that children will develop emotional literacy passively, we also assume that children will develop social skills just by being social.

Explicitly teach your social values. I do this by often saying in class: “There are many different ways to be a human being.” “Everyone here deserves respect and care.” Then, as a class, we define what respect and care look like. We go through an agreement process where we build classroom social norms together that name

what we need to feel to ensure that there is respect and care in our space together. I have done this in a lot of different ways. If the class is able to, we brainstorm a list together. For classes that are more reserved, I have students write down what they need from each other and from me. Here are some responses that are common: be respectful; be patient and listen to others; no side conversations, especially when a classmate is talking; no hurtful words; encour-

age each other; don’t gossip; be open to other people; do not exclude; accept people’s opinions.

Once we build a list, we turn to discuss it. I always break apart what ‘respect’ means because it is such a big word. What does respect feel like and look like? How do you notice its presence or absence? We always talk about accepting people’s opinions, since there is a lot that needs to be unpacked with this one. We talk about the difference between debate and healthy dialogue and ways to listen and communicate. I introduce them to James Baldwin’s quote: “We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.” I also let the students know what I will not allow in my classroom and that it is my job to facilitate discussions so everyone’s belonging and dignity is held with care.

Next, we examine the list we created together and see if everyone can agree with this list. Is there anything on this list—I ask for a show of hands—that you can’t try to uphold? We talk about how we will work with our agreements, and I remind my students that they are not expected to be perfect and never make mistakes. It is my job to keep our agreements present. We will keep naming them and coming back to them to see if they are still working for us. It is important to be aware that we should initiate classroom agreements only if we are also going to do the ongoing work of calibrating them. These agreements are just like the rules we make for the appropriate time and way to ask permission to leave the class to go to the bathroom. With such agreements, we are paying attention to what is socially allowed and what is not allowed in our space. If a student interrupts another, what will you do? Will you do it consistently?

Agreements are a social naming; I always do them early in our time together. Once they are in place, the social building has a foundation you can keep coming back to.

Social building is making space for connections in class. Every teacher can do this. I partner students up a lot. A lot. And I always remind them of our agreements. I tell them that I expect that they could be partnered with anyone in the room, with a caveat that they should talk to me privately if they are experiencing a difficulty with another student that is causing them distress. I will make sure not to pair them up again until they feel ready. Behind this is a lesson: that they have agency, that they are allowed to say what is OK for them and what is not OK, and that I will listen to them. I often assign partner work at the beginning of class as a warming activity. These activities are simple and easy, consisting of safe discussion prompts taken from resources like Table Topics,⁹ or simple conversational tasks such as finding three things they have in common. I make it quick and light. Sometimes I send students on a walk with their partners, which is a wonderful transitioning or otherwise regulating activity.

When I put students into groups, I do so intentionally and teach them how to work together. Don't assume that students can work well in groups. Group work can be very frustrating and cause anxiety if it is not held consciously. Give members of each group a role. Make their first task to assign a timekeeper, a facilitator, and a note-taker. Ask them to decide on their group norms, for example: will they all take turns speaking? Look into Jigsaw Classrooms¹⁰ as a great group technique for teaching content. Sometimes students can choose their own partner or group, but mostly it is I, the teacher, who provides them with opportunities to work with and get to know people outside of their chosen friendship group. I tell them why I am doing this and I acknowledge that it is normal to feel shy or awkward. I name feelings they might have, reminding them that it is okay to have different feelings. Then I get to watch the warming-up that (mostly) happens between them, and it always makes me smile.

If you are a class teacher or high school sponsor/advisor, one of your best resources for class meetings is circle work. Get trained in how to facilitate circles. Circles are the foundation of Restorative Justice and they have their root in indigenous cultures. When you sit together

in a circle as a class, the experience is very different. Now you have a decentered classroom. The students are not all facing the front and expected to be listening to a single voice. All voices are equal in a circle. You go around, so that everyone gets to say something. This format sets up the goal of hearing from everyone. You, the teacher, become a facilitator, while the students get to hear and learn from each other. Sharing circles can be simple with a range of getting-to-know-each-other topics, such as 'What do you like to do to relax?' to more reflective topics such as 'How are you changing?' Once a class has experience with circles, these circles can become the container for serious and pressing topics.

Circles are also invaluable for parent meetings. They allow parents to get to know each other, connect to each other, find support, and normalize their joys and struggles in parenting. Again, circles allow the group to hear from all voices, which is an essential aspect of community building. Circle work is one of my most valuable SEL tools. I highly recommend getting trained in circle work. It will give you the resources you need for healthy social work with your class, colleagues, and community.

Closing Thoughts

We are living in a fast world that often feels full of crises. However, I do believe that we are also provided with support and resources to meet the times. A spiritual orientation such as anthroposophy, the work coming out of trauma literacy, the mind-body work of Somatics, and SEL are resources that can fortify us to be present and engaged in this messy and beautiful life.

Bernd Ruf, in his book, *Educating Traumatized Children: Waldorf Education in Crisis Intervention*, outlines why we must expect more trauma and why trauma literacy has become so necessary today. Ruf explains:

At the beginning of the last century, Steiner revealed that there would be evolutionary changes in the inner human organization as humanity was collectively crossing the threshold, and he described the consequence of this development. The close ties between the physical and life body would grow looser and, as a result, we would experience new soul faculties and forms of consciousness as well as higher degrees of sensitivity.¹¹

SEL is not new. It is the current language for an age-old truth – that meaningful connections are fundamental to our well-being.

9 <https://www.tabletopics.com/>

10 <https://www.jigsaw.org/>

11 Bernd Ruf, *Educating Traumatized Children: Waldorf Education in Crisis Intervention*, translated by Margot Saar (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2013), 171.

Trauma literacy and Somatics are fields that have arisen in response to our crossing the threshold and they deal with the intense challenges that this entails. The field of trauma literacy focuses on the understanding of the dynamics of trauma and how it affects psycho-spiritual health. Somatic psychology is a study of the way memory and emotion live in the body, both positively and problematically. And, of course, Waldorf education, as a healing education, can be very supportive in this time. Ruf, in unpacking trauma, states that “Waldorf education, an anthroposophically extended medicine, and anthroposophic therapies are practical tools for meeting the changing conditions in the human constitution.”¹² This claim is reinforced by trauma expert Bessel van der Kolk, who, in his foundational book on trauma, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body, in the Healing of Trauma*,¹³ outlines body-based modalities that can soothe and heal trauma. Many of these are utilized in Waldorf Education. Both Ruf and van der Kolk discuss the healing benefits of play, rhythm, music, dance, theater, games, and warm relationships in bringing relief to suffering.

If you are teaching today, you are teaching children with high degrees of the sensitivities mentioned above. If you are teaching today, you are teaching children who have experienced trauma, you are teaching children who will experience psychological distress. This is true statistically. This has also been my experience. It sure feels like we are in a transitional or threshold experience. I have been teaching for over twenty-five years and can testify that young people feel different today. There is also this: they are totally up for the challenges we are facing. They are beautifully sensitive and often flooded with big feelings like anxiety or depression. And yet, they are very much here for it. They are way ahead of me. They are inclusive in ways that I am still trying to catch up with. They are extremely quick to come to the table and show up for each other. They are naming what they won’t stand for. They are able to talk about things that I did not even know at their age. They are up for the challenges of these times—of this I have no doubt.

SEL is not new. It is the current language for an age-old truth – that meaningful connections are fundamental to our well-being. We need each other, especially when things are changing or unstable. If we are crossing the threshold, as Steiner foretold, what will aid us in this time? Social Emotional Learning, trauma literacy, all of the body-mind work that focuses on regulating the nervous system, including polyvagal theory, are all coming

at a time when we need them. The psychoeducation in these practices supports developing cultures of transition. The naming and regulating in emotional literacy allows me to respond instead of react. I learn healthy ways to stay present and be in discomfort and uncertainty. I find strength in relationships that bolster me. Leaning into the arts, into rhythm, and into the reverence embedded in Waldorf education supports the strengthening of the I. SEL also strengthens the emerging I of our students, and it centers the coming together that they yearn for and need.

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¹² *Educating Traumatized Children*, 172.

¹³ Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015).

Differentiating Reading Instruction by Phase

Jennifer Militzer-Kopperl

In the middle of reading tutoring, Nora climbed into my lap, curled into a ball, and began to sob. I held her until she had cried herself out. Then I asked her what was wrong. In a small voice she said, “The kids in my class say I’m stupid. Are they right?”

There are two ways to teach: by grade or by phase. Teaching by grade means every student in the class is taught the same pre-determined reading and spelling curriculum for that grade. Teaching by phase means teachers assess and differentiate instruction in reading and spelling based on students’ skills so all students meet benchmarks. Nora needed the latter approach, but she had received the former. Now she was enrolled in fourth grade, but her reading and spelling skills tested at a public school first grade level.

No, Nora, you are not stupid. You are at a very early phase of learning to read and spell. For three years, your school failed to provide instruction and practice at your level.

Nora’s is not an isolated case. A Waldorf school I once observed conducted reading fluency assessment in grades 3–8. One third to one half of each class qualified for remedial reading (Militzer-Kopperl 2022, 3). By way of comparison, teachers who use assessments created by educational testing groups to differentiate and inform instruction can get up to 95% of students to read and spell at grade level (Hall 2005, 3).

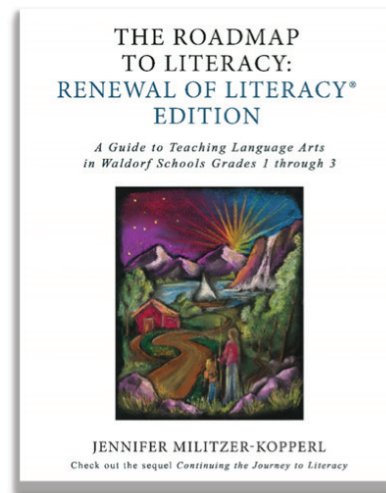
I co-wrote *The Roadmap to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 1 through 3* (Langley and Militzer-Kopperl 2018) to show teachers how to achieve that level of success in a Waldorf classroom. The central tenet is to teach reading and spelling by phase, not grade. However, post-publication the co-author of the book unilaterally decided that Waldorf teachers were not ready to differentiate instruction by phase and started offering training by grade. Then the pandemic hit. Over the last two years, the need to teach by phase has grown. Students missed a lot of school. Teachers report that they have students whose skills are all over the map, and they do not know what to do.

The answer is simple: Use the original intent of *The Roadmap to Literacy*: teach reading and spelling by phase, not grade (i.e., differentiate instruction by phase of learning to read and spell). This process will help

teachers get students caught up post pandemic and get up to 95% of future students reading and spelling at grade level. The basic process contains seven steps:

1. Acknowledge the Elephant in the Room (The Parallel Curriculum)
2. Recognize the Phases of Learning to Read and Spell (and Their Implications)
3. Assess
4. Group
5. Teach
6. Re-Assess
7. Begin a Remedial Process

The material for this article comes from *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition* (Militzer-Kopperl, forthcoming in late 2022) and an online video for the book entitled “Little Jenny’s Journey through the Phases of Learning to Read and Spell.”



The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition by Jennifer Militzer-Kopperl (forthcoming late 2022)

Step One: Acknowledge the Elephant in the Room (The Parallel Curriculum)

This article charts new directions offered to Waldorf education. The recommendations align with the

zeitgeist and with Steiner's indications; however, many of them will not receive due consideration until Waldorf educators confront the parallel curriculum. I use the term 'parallel curriculum' to refer to teaching practices that developed in Waldorf classrooms in the last 100 years that are unmoored from Steiner's original indications and intentions. The parallel curriculum is a big obstacle to charting new directions in Waldorf education.

Christof Wiechert, former head of the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum, gives pertinent advice in the 2011 article, "Rethinking the Threefold Division of the Main Lesson":

It is important that we within the Waldorf movement examine and assess how we practice Waldorf Education. If there are elements that need to be changed or eliminated, researchers from outside the movement will sooner or later identify and criticize them. ...

After over ninety years of Waldorf education, we need to examine the way it has developed in order not to damage it, but rather to renew it and reinvigorate ourselves. I have formed the conviction through the years that the source, or spring, or renewal lies in the original indications and intentions of Rudolf Steiner. If this spring begins to bubble up in us, we will become viable for the future.

The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition is designed to be a source of such renewal by including Steiner's indications alongside information about the parallel curriculum. Familiarity with Steiner's indications reveals new directions in reading and spelling.

Step Two: Recognize the Phases of Learning to Read and Spell (and Their Implications)

The Waldorf movement is grounded in the awareness that there are stages to child development and how these stages relate to learning. What is less well known is that there are phases of learning to read and spell. These phases are related to education, not to child development. Working consciously with students in different phases is the key to educating all students and teaching in freedom.

Rising first-graders are all in the same stage of human development, but as a group, they can span two to four of the five phases of learning to read and spell. Students whose parents followed Steiner's indications to the letter by not introducing any elements of reading (e.g., letters) are at the beginning of the journey to literacy,

whereas other classmates may begin school knowing the letters of the alphabet—or even how to read. It is thus necessary to recognize the phases of learning to read and spell to make sure all students get their needs met. They are as follows:

1. Emergent Phase
2. Phonemic Awareness Phase
3. Pattern Phase
4. Syllable Phase
5. Latin/Greek Phase

These five phases are presented in *The Roadmap to Literacy*. They are based on the work of Donald R. Bear and others in *Words Their Way*¹ and my work as a remedial reading instructor and teacher trainer of 23 years. These five phases provide a roadmap so teachers can guide every student on the road to learning to read and spell. The italicized vignettes included in this article are from my own childhood; they aim to illustrate the journey so teachers can consider the phases from two perspectives: a teacher's and a student's.

Phase 1: Emergent

Little Jenny's parents did not believe in pre-school literacy education, similarly to Waldorf parents and teachers who follow Steiner's indications on delaying children's introduction to reading until a later stage of their elementary school years. Jenny began school without knowing the alphabet. She was at the beginning of the Emergent Phase.

On the first day of public-school kindergarten, Jenny's teacher asked the class to play a classic phonemic awareness game: the students were invited to introduce themselves and to name one thing they liked that began with the same sound as their names. "Hi, I am Tina, and I like tigers." "Hi, I am Michael, and I like monkeys." When it was Jenny's turn, she did not hesitate: "Hi, I am Jenny, and I like cats." Her teacher corrected her, "No, it has to be something that starts with the same sound as your name. You could say, for example, that you like jumping." Jenny was puzzled. Cats were her favorite thing. As for jumping, she was indifferent to it. She felt rejected by her teacher. The experience ruined her first day of school.

The reason for the miscommunication was simple: Jenny was in the Emergent Phase. The introductory game required skills in phonemic awareness and letter knowledge that result from education that Jenny did not (yet) possess.

¹ See *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* (Pearson, 4th Edition, 2008).

As the teacher taught the alphabet, Jenny learned that letters represent sounds: Aa, /a/, apple. As a result, she began to develop awareness of individual sounds (or phonemic awareness). One day, she had an epiphany: her name starts with the letter J, which stands for the sound /j/ as in jumping. Jenny had just completed a key milestone in the Emergent Phase. The introductory game now made sense. Several months after the fact, she was ready for the first day of kindergarten.

This vignette illustrates what happens to Waldorf students who enter first grade without any prior knowledge of the elements of reading when they are presented with an activity that calls for skills above their phase. I have watched several such students respond in anger, depression, and/or despair when they could not do what their teacher was asking.

In the Emergent Phase, students are not aware of separate speech sounds, or phonemes. They are not aware that reading and writing are a code, where letters represent sounds. Instead, they process whole words as pictures. To move forward, they must realize that words are not pictograms of the objects they represent but rather a code based on letters that represent individual phonemes. The key to this development is education, specifically learning the alphabet, and the key to the alphabet is developing phonemic awareness for the first sound in words so students can make the connection between letter, phoneme, and key word (e.g., Jj, /j/, jumping).

Phase 2: Phonemic Awareness

Once Little Jenny recognized that letters represent sounds, it was easier to learn the rest of the alphabet; however, she soon encountered a new problem: spit-and-grunt phonics.

Once the alphabet was introduced, the teacher expected students to be able to decode simple CVC words, or consonant-vowel-consonant words such as 'Mat'. No matter how many times Jenny sounded out the letters, she struggled to blend the sounds into words. Jenny ended public-school kindergarten the way she began it: frustrated.

Fortunately, Jenny's first-grade teacher assessed all the students at the beginning of the year and realized that Jenny was missing key early literacy skills in phonemic awareness that accounted for her inability to decode. She assigned phonemic awareness exercises and taught kid writing. Jenny was told she could write about anything she liked, and she chose cats, rabbits,

and dinosaurs. She did not know how to spell these words, but her teacher told her to write down any letters she heard and then read her writing to a class parent who would help her correct the spelling. These two practices helped Jenny segment words into separate sounds and blend sounds back into a word. Through encoding, Jenny was developing the skills she needed for decoding.

The second phase is the Phonemic Awareness Phase. In this phase, students must develop phonemic awareness, or the awareness of individual speech sounds and the ability to manipulate them. Phonemic awareness is a special type of capacity that requires education to develop fully. Until students develop phonemic awareness, phonics instruction is ineffective.

Phase 3: Pattern

By the end of first grade, Little Jenny had completed the Phonemic Awareness Phase and was at the beginning of the Pattern Phase. She could segment a single-syllable word into its sounds and blend them back into a word. She could decode simple words. Her teacher also taught sight words, or common words that are taught as whole words because they are hard to decode.

At the end of the year, Jenny's teacher held up the sight word 'read' and announced that it could be decoded. She said, "When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking." What did that mean? Jenny quickly segmented the word into its three sounds: /r/, /ē/, /d/ and noted the two vowels that were walking together. Only one vowel was talking: the first. The phonics rule made sense.

Jenny's second-grade teacher provided further instruction in phonics. The phonics rules helped Jenny progress through the Pattern Phase, where patterns of letters represent sounds such as EA in 'read,' TCH in 'pitch,' and EIGH in 'weigh.' This required her to process larger and larger numbers of letters and to improve her symbol imagery. Jenny learned to decode and encode with these patterns of letters. Then, one day, it happened: Jenny cracked the code. She could read.

The third phase is the Pattern Phase. In this phase, students become readers. The key to helping all students crack the code is phonics, phonemic awareness, and symbol imagery. Phonics instruction shows students how to expand the 26 letters of the alphabet to cover the 40+ sounds (or phonemes) in the English language. Some students figure out the code by themselves, but

I use the term 'parallel curriculum' to refer to teaching practices that developed in Waldorf classrooms in the last 100 years and that are unmoored from Steiner's original indications.

many require direct instruction in phonics. Phonics in turn depends on phonemic awareness and symbol imagery. Students must recognize the individual phonemes (sounds) and learn to recognize the symbols (letters) that represent them.

Phase 4: Syllables

Now that Little Jenny had cracked the code, she loved to read; however, she kept pestering adults to tell her what the long words said. One day, her third-grade teacher said, "Jenny, you know how to decode these words." He then re-explained how to split a word into syllables and used his fingers to isolate each syllable. Something clicked. From then on, Jenny broke long words into syllables and read them by herself.

By fourth grade, reading instruction stopped. Jenny jumped into the study of subjects with enthusiasm. Big words such as 'photosynthesis,' 'latitude,' and 'longitude' did not phase her because she was in the middle of the Syllable Phase. However, her spelling skills lagged. Jenny did not realize that she could spell words by syllable. As a result, Jenny attempted to memorize every word by chanting, the same way she had memorized the spelling of the word 'Mississippi' on the playground in first grade: M-I-S-S / I-S-S / I-P-P / I.

Jenny soon found herself in trouble. It was very difficult to memorize 15-20 spelling words a week by chanting. She had to practice incessantly to drill the chants into memory. Spelling took the bloom off the rose. In a few months, Jenny was frustrated with school and anxious.

The Syllable Phase is the phase in which students gain the decoding and encoding skills to read and spell just about any word in the English language. In this phase, it is not uncommon for encoding skills to lag 3-5 years behind decoding skills. That is what weekly spelling words are for: to revisit the phonics rules so students can bring their encoding skills up to the level of their decoding skills and master grade-level words that do not play fair. However, students need to learn a process for spelling words by syllable. Otherwise, they can spend hours each week attempting to drill the words into memory, a process that is both unhealthy and stressful.

Phase 5: Latin/Greek

Once Jenny was in seventh grade, her English teacher started talking about the meaning behind the spelling. For example, what do the following words have in common: 'cacophony,' 'phonics,' 'microphone,' 'symphony,' and 'telephone'? Answer: They all contain the Greek

There are phases of learning to read and spell. These phases are related to education, not to child development.

root 'phon,' which means sound or voice. The spelling provides a clue to the meaning.

The final phase is the Latin/Greek Phase. In this phase, students learn that words related in meaning are also related in spelling. Students learn the Latin and

Greek elements that are embedded in English words. For example, *telephone* is distance (tele) sound (phone). They also learn to use related words to discover the meaning and spelling of words. For example, the word *disposition* sounds like it should be spelled with the letter U: *DISPUSITION*. Since the word is related to the word *dispose*, which has a long sound for the vowel O,

the word *disposition* is also spelled with the letter O.

To summarize, there are five phases of learning to read and spell. These phases are the roadmap to literacy referred to in the title *The Roadmap to Literacy*. They provide an optimal order for teaching literacy skills.

Step Three: Assess

A key aspect of teaching by phase is proper assessment. Assessment allows teachers to test key reading and spelling skills so they can determine each student's phase(s) and provide appropriate instruction to help every student master early literacy skills. It is not uncommon for a group of students in one classroom to be in two or three different phases. Furthermore, a student may be in one phase for reading but in an earlier phase for spelling.

Steiner Supports Assessment

Assessment has received a bad rap in Waldorf education because some of Steiner's indications have been taken out of context. A close reading of Steiner's indications reveals nuance: Steiner opposes final examinations for subjects but supports assessment to determine students' skills and capacities.

The misunderstanding about assessment comes from Steiner's indications about final exams. Steiner says:

Ideally we should have no examinations at all. The final exams are a compromise with the authorities. Prior to puberty, dread of examinations can become the driving impulse of the whole physiological and psychological constitution of the child. The best thing would be to get rid of all examinations. (1997, 25–26; italics added)

Steiner explains his opposition to final exams in subjects by stating the following:

It is best and most in line with the ideal of education to let the congested learning that precedes final examinations fall by the wayside—that is, drop final examinations all together. . . . *As teachers we might ask ourselves why we should test children at all because we have them in front of us and know very well what they do or do not know.* (1996b, 203; italics added)

The italicized sentences above form a key component of the parallel curriculum: the belief that Waldorf education should not include assessment.

However, when the indications are read in context, their meaning becomes clear: Steiner opposes final exams in subjects prior to high school (e.g., final exams in history) because cramming is bad. What does Steiner have to say about assessing students' skills and capacities?

The answer to that question is found in *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner Volume 2: 1922–1924*.

Steiner gives advice about assessing students in foreign languages, advice that could be extended to assessment in other subjects. Steiner says:

You need to create your tests positively and ask each child what he or she knows in order [to] find out the child's capabilities. Always try to determine what a child can do. You should not simply ask questions. Try to determine what a child can do, not what he or she cannot do. (*Faculty Meetings* 2, 625)

In other words, Waldorf teachers should test a student's skills and capacities in language arts to find out what the student is capable of in order to create their curricula.

Assessments Created by Educational Testing Groups

An optimal way to assess students' language skills and capacities is using assessments created by research-based educational testing groups such as Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE) or Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

Science has revealed the most important early literacy skills, and researchers have created short assessments with benchmarks so teachers can determine whether students are mastering these skills in a timely manner. These assessments test early literacy skills positively by determining what a student can do, just as Steiner asks.

(The tests contain instructions to stop the testing once the skill level becomes too difficult for the student.)

Both CORE and DIBELS are scripted, which makes them easy to administer: a teacher literally reads a script and records a student's responses. The bigger challenges for Waldorf teachers are determining which assessments to give in grades 1–3, modifying them for off-grade use, and then using them to inform their teaching.

All reputable assessments by educational testing groups contain benchmarks or standards that students are expected to reach in each grade. They are difficult to interpret in Waldorf grades 1–3 because the tests are normed with the assumption that students begin reading instruction in kindergarten, but Waldorf students begin in first grade.

I have adjusted the test recommendations and the standards/benchmarks for both CORE and DIBELS grades 1–3 in *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition*. They are now

suitable for Waldorf students. By grade 4, Waldorf students are expected to be caught up with their public-school peers (Steiner 2003, 126), and teachers can administer and score the tests as indicated.

Can Testing Harm Students?

Students are harmed when they cannot do the work expected of them, whether it is during an assessment or in a regular lesson. Teachers who wish to minimize harm are invited to assess, differentiate instruction, and teach by phase.

Teachers who are concerned that assessment may harm students are encouraged to read *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition* (Miltzer-Kopperl 2022, chapter 6.1, #6 and 7). It shows how to make assessment a positive experience for students and how to restore balance and health when assessment is stressful. It contains a process I developed to assess all second graders at a certain Waldorf school in basic early literacy skills using CORE assessments over a six-year period as part of the school's accreditation process.

In conclusion, a closer look at Steiner's indications reveals that Steiner wants teachers to test students' language skills and capacities. The question is how can teachers then use the information from testing to guide their teaching?

Assessment has received a bad rap in Waldorf education because some of Steiner's indications have been taken out of context.

Step Four: Group

Once teachers have assessed key skills and capacities, it is important to put students into groups so teachers can differentiate instruction.

Group by Phase

First, identify each student's phase and where the student is at in that phase: beginning, intermediate, or advanced. *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition* shows how to do so in chapter 6.2 "What Phase are Your Students In?"

Then consider the class as a whole. Is the class composed of a homogenized group of students, or are there students in two or more phases? Are the students' phases so disparate that providing instruction by grade will harm some of the students, as happened to Nora? The answers to these questions inform how to teach.

Here is a rule of thumb: If <80% of the students are at the same level or a bit higher, it is necessary to differentiate for the entire class. If >80% are at the same level or a bit higher, it is possible to teach by grade, provided a teacher does pull-out work with the ones who are behind and helps them catch up. A good time to do so is in reading groups and/or skills groups (e.g., phonemic awareness, decoding/encoding, etc.).

Steiner's Indications: The idea that Waldorf teachers should always teach the entire class as a group comes from the parallel curriculum. I would argue that Steiner prefers the opposite. He says, "We should see to it as an ideal that we could teach mathematics in one corner, French in another, astronomy and eurythmy in the others, so that the children have to pay more attention to their own work" (1998, 465). Teaching small groups of students forces students to pay more attention to their own work and not rely on the group soul to carry them. I conclude that differentiating instruction by group aligns with Steiner's indications.

Step Five: Teach

Once teachers have grouped the students, it is necessary to teach them to read and spell. Steiner's indications reveal how to teach:

Steiner's Indication for the Emergent Phase: Letter Pictures

Steiner's indication for the Emergent Phase is letter pictures. Steiner recommends letter pictures for beginning students (i.e., students in the Emergent Phase). This initial introduction for the first 8-10 letters illustrates the connection between letter and sound through a key word that begins with a letter and that is shaped like that letter, as shown in figure 1.



Figure 1 Letter Picture: The Letters Ff from a Picture of a Fish. Source: Trostli 2004, 104.

Letter pictures have a short shelf life. Once students recognize that letters represent sounds, they are ready for a more expedited introduction to the rest of the alphabet. Steiner recognizes this fact too. He says, "If we were to base our teaching only on this process of drawing evolving toward reading and writing . . . we would have to keep the children in school until they were twenty" (Trostli 2004, 76).

Note that Steiner himself brings lowercase letters in letter pictures in first grade. The stricture to teach lowercase in second grade is part of the parallel curriculum. For more information, consult *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition* chapter 3.1 #14.

Steiner's Indication for the Phonemic Awareness Phase: Kid Writing/Talking on Paper

Once students recognize that letters represent sounds, they can begin Kid Writing (i.e., Talking on Paper, or Invented Spelling). It helps them develop phonemic awareness. Steiner says:

If we proceed rationally, we will get far enough in the first grade so that the children will be able to write simple things that we say to them or that they compose themselves. If we stick to simple things, the children will also be able to read them. Of course, we don't need to aim at having the children achieve any degree of accomplishment in this first year. . . . We should get the children to the point where they no longer confront the printed word as a total unknown, so to speak, and are able to take the initiative to write some simple things. This should be our goal with regard to language instruction, if I may put it like that. (Steiner 1997, 184–185)

For indications on how to teach Kid Writing and further proof that it aligns with Steiner's indications, see chapter 3.13 "Kid Writing: The Key to Early Literacy" in *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition*.

Steiner’s Indication for the Phonemic Awareness and Pattern Phase: Syllable Cards

Steiner tells teachers to provide direct instruction in phonemic awareness and symbol imagery. He says:

As I already mentioned, training in clear listening^[2] is the basis of proper spelling. Training in proper hearing will support proper spelling. Clear hearing, if trained properly, will also train precise seeing. ^[3] The different capacities support one another. If one capacity is developed in the proper way, the others will also have to develop properly. If we accustom ourselves to exact listening, we will tend to

retain the appearance of the word as such, that is, its inner appearance. Exact listening supports exact seeing. For words that appear to have an arbitrary spelling, such as those that have silent letters that make the preceding vowel long, we can support the child’s proper spelling by having the child repeat the syllables of the word clearly and with varying emphasis. (2001, 237)

Science confirms Steiner’s indication: phonemic awareness and symbol imagery—what Steiner calls “clear listening” and “precise seeing,” respectively—are two of three sensory-cognitive functions (i.e., literacy capacities) that support reading and spelling, as shown in figure 2.



Figure 2: The Three Sensory-Cognitive Functions (Miltzer-Kopperl, forthcoming 2022, figure 1.7.1)

Phonemic awareness is the ability to discern individual sounds (phonemes) and manipulate them. Symbol imagery is the ability to visualize the correct spelling of words. Steiner does not say how to use phonemic awareness to train symbol imagery, but his favorite reading methodology contains an exercise that resembles syllable cards, a technique used today.

Steiner’s favorite reading methodology is the spelling method (1996a, 83–84). The spelling method is an old-fashioned reading methodology that dates from the 1600s–1800s. It was used to teach reading in European languages, including English and German. Figure 3 shows a hornbook, the first teaching aid students received when taught using the spelling method. Note that it contains rows of syllables that students are expected to spell before reading: “A, B, ab. E, B, eb. I, B, ib.” This process is identical to an exercise called *Syllable Cards* in the Lindamood-Bell program Seeing Stars®: Symbol Imagery. It is used to teach both

phonemic awareness and symbol imagery and is a prominent part of *The Roadmap to Literacy* program.



Figure 3: Comparison of Hornbook and Syllable Cards (Miltzer-Kopperl 2022, figure 3.5.5)

The spelling method begins with simple syllables like the ones above, suitable for the Phonemic Awareness Phase and then moves into syllables with silent letters such as *oast*, *speat*, *prake*, etc. that are suitable for the Pattern Phase. Syllable cards conclude with multi-syllabic words suitable for the Syllable Phase such as *notion*, *adventure*, and *impatience*.

2 Author’s note: i.e., phonemic awareness.
3 Author’s note: i.e., symbol imagery.

Spelling

Steiner's spelling indications are best considered by phase, as shown in table 1.

Phase	Steiner's Indications for Teaching Spelling
Phonemic Awareness Phase	Steiner emphasizes the connection between good speech and spelling for students at the beginning of school (Steiner 2000, 173). Students need to accept the correct spelling for words out of authority because "this is the way adults spell the words" (2000, 73–74). (Note: This indication applies to adult writing in Kid Writing, which is done in grades 1–2.)
Pattern Phase	Steiner advises training in listening (i.e., phonemic awareness) for students who have trouble spelling words that have a silent letter. He states that "if we accustom ourselves to exact listening, we will tend to retain the appearance of the word as such, that is, its inner appearance. Exact listening supports exact seeing" (Steiner 2001, 237). (In other words, phonemic awareness supports symbol imagery.)
Syllable Phase	Steiner recommends having students repeat back a word syllable by syllable, changing the syllable that receives the emphasis (Steiner 2001, 237).

Table 1: Steiner's Indications for Teaching Spelling Organized by Phase

Source: *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition* (Militzer-Kopperl 2022, table 3.9.4)

In conclusion, these are a few of Steiner's best practices, organized by phase. There is one final thing to note: Skills such as reading, writing, and spelling should never be put to sleep. Students need regular practice to develop language arts skills. If teachers want to get students caught up post pandemic, they need time to teach. Schedule practice classes accordingly. One academic practice class per day is advised so that students get the instruction and practice they need for both language arts and math skills all year.

Step Six: Re-Assess

It is necessary to re-assess periodically to make sure students are making expected progress. Use the same tests and benchmarks from step three.

In grades 1–3, teachers are advised to assess three times a year to make sure students are progressing in key literacy skills. By grades 4–8, teachers are advised to give a basic reading fluency test three times a year to make sure students are progressing in reading fluency. Any student who struggles to read fluently at grade level should receive additional assessment in basic early literacy skills to pinpoint any area(s) of weakness.

Step Seven: Begin a Remedial Process

If students are not meeting benchmarks/standards, it is necessary to begin a remedial process to figure out why and to provide help. For example, use chapter 6.6 "Working with Remedial Issues" in *The Roadmap to*

Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition. This process was summarized in the *Research Bulletin XXVI-2*, in the article "The Remedial Staircase" (Militzer-Kopperl 2021).

There is one point to highlight post pandemic: students may struggle with mental picturing (concept imagery). Concept imagery, or mental picturing based on language, is the third sensory-cognitive function pictured in figure 2. Steiner claims that mental picturing changes at the change of teeth (1995, 37–38). Steiner recommends that all students in first grade retell stories and that they do so with correct articulation. This indication helps them practice both phonemic awareness and concept imagery. However, he realizes that some students have difficulties with mental picturing and recommends remedial education in *Soul Economy* (2003, 312).

In the last 100 years, weaknesses in concept imagery appear to have become more prevalent. Waldorf educators have long been aware that screen technology undermines the capacity for concept imagery. Now that students have returned to the classroom post pandemic, it is good to assess this capacity informally.

Steiner recommends cold calling students as part of reviewing stories. Steiner tells teachers to call on everyone, including students who do not raise their hands or who are inattentive (Steiner 1998, 662–663). Steiner states that "you should not leave it to the children to decide when they want to say something, as those who are lazy will not speak up. You need to be careful that no one gets by without answering" (ibid., 405). Cold

calling students is an excellent informal assessment to determine if any students are struggling with this vitally important sensory-cognitive function.

For more information about teaching concept imagery and Steiner's indications, consult *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition* chapter 3.7 "Concept Imagery: The Key to Comprehension."

Conclusion

The pandemic offers teachers a compelling reason to consider new ways to teach and assess Waldorf education: the need to get students caught up in reading and spelling skills. Once learned, these new ways to teach and assess Waldorf education can be used with future classes. Over the next few years, the Waldorf movement could make the transition from teaching reading and spelling by grade to teaching reading and spelling skills by phase. This change would transform Waldorf education and bring it more in alignment with Steiner's indications.

The interim step will be difficult: researchers have found that "it takes four times as long to remediate a student with poor reading skills in 4th Grade as in late kindergarten or early 1st Grade"⁴ (Hall 2006, 11). Catching students up post pandemic will not be easy.

However, there are reasons for optimism:

- The first hurdle is cleared: *The Roadmap to Literacy* contains a comprehensive program for teaching reading and spelling skills by phase.
- The second hurdle is cleared: *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition* introduces comprehensive new research into Steiner's indications for language arts and introduces and explains the origins of the parallel curriculum.
- The pandemic provides an incentive to clear the third hurdle: the need to get students caught up post pandemic provides an impulse to switch to differentiating instruction by phase.
- This article provides a way to clear the fourth hurdle: It is an invitation to reconsider the impulse behind the claim that Waldorf teachers are not ready to make the switch from teaching by grade to differentiating instruction and teaching by phase.

I invite you to help me achieve the full promise of *The Roadmap to Literacy*: teaching in freedom while getting up to 95% of Waldorf students reading and spelling at grade level. It requires teachers who are willing to open their minds to the fact that assessment shows that Waldorf literacy education contains room for

improvement. It requires teachers who are willing to open their hearts to the pain of students like Nora, students who are ill-served by the current Waldorf practice of teaching reading skills by grade. It requires teachers who have the courage to roll up their sleeves, challenge the precepts of the parallel curriculum, and chart new directions in Waldorf education by considering the indications and intentions of its founder, Rudolf Steiner.

The time is ripe for a renewal of literacy. Crisis is opportunity. Let's make the most of the one we have been given.

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4 These school years correspond to Waldorf 1st and 2nd Grades.

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Restless Children

Treating Attention Deficit Disorders from an Anthroposophic Perspective

Meron Barak

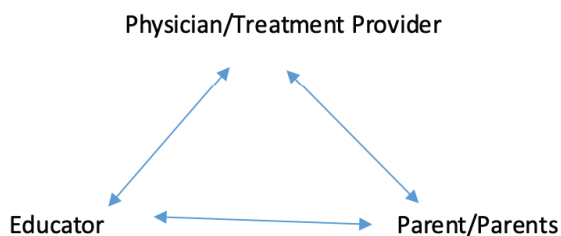
The new definition, in the latest *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5),² for attention deficit disorder as a “neurodevelopmental” disorder is meant to acknowledge the fact that the roots of ADD/ADHD are usually deep within the innate anatomical and physiological construct of a child’s nervous system. This insight greatly attests to the difficulty in reaching a definitive treatment for ADD/ADHD, which is likely the reason why none of the therapeutic approaches has fully worked so far. The estimate today is that for only one third of the children treated with a conventional approach will ADD/ADHD become significantly more moderate in adolescence. Despite this pessimistic view, it is estimated that most of the patients treated with an anthroposophic approach will see great moderation of the disorder even before adolescence, at a percentage of 40 to 50 percent of cases. This is expected to happen not by means of Ritalin or other stimulants, but by means of medicinal and artistic anthroposophic treatments, and through the application of recommended behaviors within the family and in the classroom.

There are a number of guidelines to treatment using the anthroposophic approach for ADD/ADHD; some are specific to this approach, and some are shared with other approaches:

- In the majority of cases, there is not one single medicine or treatment that is capable of treating the disorder. An effective treatment takes place in a combination of the following: the educational plane (in elementary school or kindergarten); the medical plane (medicinally and therapeutically—with arts or psychological treatment); the familial plane; and the nutritional plane. There is no set protocol for a child suffering from ADD/ADHD, and it is important that the combination and dosage of these treatments are individualized and personally fitted to the child.
- Until the child is diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, he generally receives warnings and reprimands from parents, teachers, and friends—a fact that can

cause social rejection, low self-esteem, and an acceleration in the intensity of the symptoms. The earlier the treatment starts, the more it can meaningfully “repair” the disorder, therefore, it is very important to try and diagnose a child demonstrating any kind of restlessness and treat him or her as quickly as possible.

- Because most of the children suffering from ADD/ADHD have special skills concealed within them, it is imperative that parents and educators make a concerted effort to “feel the child”; to take more interest in him than is typical; to try and identify his fields of interest, his skills and his areas of positive initiative; and to give him strong positive reinforcement when necessary.
- Communication between the parents, and between the parents and the child’s teachers and therapists is a basic and essential condition for beginning therapy and must be done on a daily basis. More than just improving the treatment’s effectiveness, with these conditions in place, the child will unconsciously feel that the adults “see” her and “feel” her, and her response to treatment will thrive accordingly. In order to do so, the following educational-medicinal treatment must be adopted:



A number of questions arise in connection with the treatment of children who suffer from ADD/ADHD:

- How can a better integration be formed between the three soul forces: thinking, feeling, and willing?
- Can one strengthen a child’s ability to create inhibitions, how?
- How can we bring about a strengthening of the ability to imitate (through which the child transforms his inherited body into his individual body)?
- How can the experience of boundaries be strengthened?

1 This article is adapted from the author’s book, *Restless Children: Coping with ADHD and Anxiety Disorders Using an Integrative and Anthroposophic Approach*, published in Hebrew in 2020. An English translation of the book will become available through Amazon on January 2023.

2 American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.).

- How can an appropriate family life be formed for these children? How can an appropriate educational and social environment be designed for them?

In order to address these questions, we will start with general recommendations meant to help all children suffering from ADD/ADHD and then move onto individual suggestions.

General Recommendations

Nutrition

Many theories were presented in the past, some of which were research-based, asserting that certain foods, such as sugar, food coloring, and preservatives, were likely factors in the appearance of ADD/ADHD. But when research indicating genetic factors emerged – such as those tied to pregnancy and other environmental factors – the nutritional factor was pushed to the sidelines. Today, the idea that nutrition can influence the progression and strength of ADD/ADHD is accepted, but the idea that it is a factor or a means of therapy is not; at most, nutrition is considered as a way to mitigate and minimize symptoms.

A healthy process of digestion entails the investment of significant life forces, because the food must undergo a fundamental breaking-down to the most basic particles before it can be absorbed by the digestive system into the blood and then reach its first destination in the liver. Coordinated activity of the digestive organs (the liver, gallbladder, pancreas, stomach, and others) and forces of will are necessary for the breakdown process. They are guided by the unconscious activities of the “I” in the metabolic system. Therefore, appropriate nutrition, the right eating habits, and an optimal functioning of the digestive system all carry great significance for a strong presence of the “I” in the metabolic system.

Evidence of low availability of neurotransmitters in the brains of children suffering from ADD/ADHD indicates a general metabolic disruption in the body, with a disorder in the availability of neurotransmitters serving as one of its expressions. Indeed, research has shown that one-third of children and adolescents suffering from obesity (a metabolic disorder) also suffer from ADD/ADHD, and that those of them who were treated for

ADD/ADHD also lost weight accordingly.³ In this context, it is important to point out that diabetes is closely tied to obesity and is likely to appear in great frequency in adults who suffered from obesity during childhood. An additional finding that strengthens the importance of cultivating the digestive system of children suffering from ADD/ADHD is that the vast majority of the main neurotransmitters involved in ADD/ADHD are created in the digestive system (like serotonin) and in the adrenal gland, located above the kidneys (dopamine and noradrenaline), and only a few of them are created in the nervous system.

Nutritional guidelines for children suffering from ADD/ADHD are very general and appropriate for most children:

1. **A relatively large breakfast**, made of quality carbohydrates (such as whole-grain flour and legumes), as well as orange and green vegetables and proteins, improves the ability to concentrate during the first hours of the morning. It is important—especially in the morning—to stay away from foods

that have any sort of sugar, other than carrots and fruits that have a relatively low amount of sugar (such as apples). The rationale for this comes from the fact that the levels of glucose in the blood are lowest in the morning. Sugar consumed in the morning is therefore immediately absorbed in the blood, without serving an actual purpose in digestion, and instantly raises the blood sugar level. This sudden increase

results in an intense reaction by the pancreas of secreting insulin in an attempt to lower the elevated sugar level. These extreme fluctuations in sugar levels are bound to negatively influence the child’s mood and the ability to concentrate during the morning hours.

2. **A set rhythm of meals during the day** —

Mealtimes that are more or less set “write” the biological rhythms of the digestive system and of sleep. So, for example, a child who becomes used to eating late at night is likely to develop sleep disorders and/or obesity, because a high absorption of food from the digestive system to the blood takes place during the night.

It is estimated that most of the patients treated with an anthroposophic approach will see great moderation of the disorder even before adolescence, at a percentage of 40 to 50 percent of cases.

3 L. D. Levy et al, “Treatment of refractory obesity in severely obese adults following management of newly diagnosed attention deficit hyperactivity disorder,” *International journal of obesity* (2005) vol. 33.3 (2009): 326-34. Retrieved from: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.

3. **Meticulousness as to the quality of food** — Our food, especially food from a plant source, contains life forces. During the digestion and breakdown of food, these life forces are released and absorbed into the life force system in the body. Therefore, organically grown food—in particular, food grown through a biodynamic process—will release a very high amount of life forces into the body, while processed food made biotechnologically will release very few life forces and actually will only provide the organism with chemical ingredients that lack life forces. This recommendation is doubly significant for children who take Ritalin, because the life forces in the metabolic system are already weakened by the medication.

4. **Abstaining from food coloring and other allergens** — In the beginning of the 1970s, Dr. Feingold asserted, on the basis of his clinical experience, that children under his care experienced an improvement in ADD/ADHD when they refrained from preservatives, food coloring and flavorings (taste and smell). Additional research was done in which the influence of four types of food colorings and sodium benzoate (preservative number E211) was tested on 277 three-year-old children. The results showed a moderation of hyperactive behavior in children suffering from ADD/ADHD after these substances were removed from their diet.

Children with ADD/ADHD have a higher occurrence of allergies to certain foods. One research tested the influence of certain food ingredients on ADD/ADHD symptoms by eliminating the following foods from some of the participating children's diets: tartrazine food coloring, peanuts, soy, chocolate, and cow's milk. Results showed an improvement in these children's behavior. It is recommended, therefore, that children with ADD/ADHD undergo allergy testing and receive treatment for the allergy itself, because even if the allergy does not directly influence the nervous system (something that has not yet been proven), the symptoms of the allergy alone—such as itching of the skin or the eyes, sneezing, chronic colds, or disruptions in the airways—can cause restlessness and exacerbate ADD/ADHD.

5. **Vitamins and fatty acids** — Research on the fatty acids Omega-3 and Omega-6 has shown that a

large portion of children suffering from ADD/ADHD has a low level of these fatty acids, while other research noted behavioral improvement in children who took Omega-3 and -6 supplements.

These fatty acids are thought to be necessary for the body, including for proper brain function and various metabolic processes. Given that the body cannot create these acids on its own, such children should take a daily supplement of Omega-3, and their diets should be augmented by food rich in Omega-3 and -6 such as walnuts; different types of seeds; avocado; fish such as salmon, tuna and mackerel; flaxseeds; flaxseed oil; and chia seeds.

Children who suffer from ADD/ADHD also have been shown to have a relatively higher incidence of Vitamin D deficiency, as well as deficiencies in iron, zinc, and magnesium (sources of vitamin D are exposure to the sun and a diet of fish, eggs, and dairy products). It is recommended that children who suffer from ADD/ADHD have blood work done to determine if there are indeed deficiencies of these four components, as remedying these deficits has shown a certain improvement in symptoms of the disorder.⁴

To sum up, it is recommended to take great care of these children's nutrition, to insist on food from a bio-dynamically or organically grown source, and to significantly reduce their sugar intake, whether from brown or white sugar. It is recommended that they eat many root vegetables,⁵ orange and green vegetables, foods with Omega-3, Omega-6, Vitamin D, iron, zinc and magnesium, and that they have a proper level of Vitamin B12 and folic acid, which constitute ingredients necessary for the operation of the nervous system.

Treatment Within The Family Framework

A child who suffers from ADD/ADHD presents his parents with extreme emotional situations, which very often constitute a significant challenge for them,

Today, the idea that nutrition can influence the progression and strength of ADD/ADHD is accepted, but the idea that it is a factor or a means of therapy is not.

4 Amelia Villagomez and Ujjwal Ramtekkar, "Iron, Magnesium, Vitamin D, and Zinc Deficiencies in Children Presenting with Symptoms of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder," *Children (Basel, Switzerland)* vol. 1,3 261-79. 29 Sep. 2014, Retrieved from: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.

5 The root part of the plant has an affinity for the nervous-sensory system and it carries within it a combination of strong, shaping forces, together with life forces. Therefore, consistent, long-term consumption of root vegetables may strengthen the life forces of the nervous-sensory system as well as the integration of the shaping forces.

especially if one of the parents suffers from the disorder as well. It is important to remember in this context that there may be many conflicts between the parents and the child, and among the rest of the family members, because of the relatively high tension in such families. Therefore, parents in a family where a child suffers from ADD/ADHD are at a higher risk of divorce. Additionally, because the average child (of elementary-school or kindergarten age) spends about half of her waking hours within the family unit, having a supportive home environment and parents who can be empathetic is of utmost importance for the child's chances to overcome his ADD/ADHD.

Below are a number of guidelines and practical ideas from therapists experienced in working with the anthroposophic approach for appropriate parental presence, which can help within the family framework:

1. Positive Reinforcement and Definition of Clear Boundaries

It is important that the parent be highly aware of the child's positive initiatives, even the smallest ones. In these sorts of situations, the parent needs to be aware of the child's need to receive specific positive reinforcement (even more than the reinforcements given to a child who does not suffer from ADD/ADHD), and that these are repeated over the course of many days and also before the child goes to sleep. Giving positive reinforcement at the proper time creates a positive "tailwind" and strengthens the child's self-image; the child is in danger of developing a low self-image to begin with because of the spontaneous tendency of many educators to scold children suffering from ADD/ADHD. On the other hand, parents must define and spell out very clearly and concisely the red lines that they do not want the child to cross.

Many of the children suffering from ADD/ADHD will demonstrate a marked difficulty in getting organized in the evening before going to bed, as well as in the morning before going to school. A practical way to improve their conduct is through drawings in which a parent, together with the child, draws the stages of the necessary activities (e.g., a drawing of the child waking up, a drawing of the child getting dressed, a drawing of the child brushing his or her teeth, etc.). These drawings are then hung on the child's bedroom door in order to direct the child during the actual morning

activities, enforcing them without emotional reactions, as much as possible.

2. The Inner Attitude of the Parent

Because many of the children diagnosed with ADD/ADHD try to express a certain uniqueness which the parents and/or educators sometimes have a hard time identifying, the main internal attitude that parents must take is the effort to *be interested in* the child as much as possible, on all levels, in order to identify and give appropriate acknowledgement of his uniqueness. Therefore, there is great importance in parents' interest in the child's physical appearance, emotional world, unique skills, fields of interest, positive initiatives, and in the ideals the child believes in. It is also important to be aware of the factors that impede such children from expressing their uniqueness. Two ways that have proven worthy in attaining these goals are:

Parental Guidance: Parents of children who suffer from ADD/ADHD are often challenged with complex family situations, which greatly raise tensions in the life of the family. Faced with the irregular behavior of their child, many parents experience feelings of anger, embarrassment, frustration, and guilt that could sometimes cause them to feel helpless. The goals of parental guidance are:

- To help parents (and through them, the child) to deal with situations in which the child displays violence, lack of confidence, difficulty in accepting authority, low self-image, or when the child experiences social rejection, etc.
- To create a more realistic image of the child for himself and his parents with the help of a professional (psychologist or psychotherapist), with an emphasis on his individual strengths and abilities.
- To help parents deal with the hard feelings that arise in these instances.

Observation and/or Meditative Work on the parents' part, in connection with the child. Examples of observational exercises and meditative blessings are described in the appendix to this book, under "Exercises and Blessings Given to Parents for their Child."

Evidence of low availability of neurotransmitters in the brains of children suffering from ADD/ADHD indicates a general metabolic disruption in the body.

It can be added in this regard that the creation of a spiritual and ceremonial environment in the family enables the child to sense the spirit that is living within her and strengthens her ability to believe in herself and in those around her. This environment can be created in the family rhythmically, through blessings before meals, a celebratory meal on the Sabbath Eve, a blessing before sleep, suitable blessings recited on the birthdays of family members, and the like. These practices could also be used to address questions that many children have about life and death (e.g., “Where was I when my older brother was born?”) or at memorials for loved ones who have passed away. It is amazing how natural it is for a child to accept spiritual images connected to questions of life and death.

3. Fewer Screens, More Handcraft

The guiding principle here is to protect the nerve-sense system, on the one hand, and to strengthen the will forces, on the other.

These days, we know without a doubt that screen exposure strengthens the symptoms of ADD/ADHD and causes many other disorders. Clear recommendations were made by the medical establishments in Europe, the United States, and Israel a number of years ago to significantly decrease screen watching for children and for adults. However, one cannot demand from children growing up in the 21st century to avoid watching screens without giving them an alternative—which can prove no less challenging.

Therefore, parents face an additional challenge in creating multiple opportunities for children to do handcrafts, which would involve a cheerful experience as well as one that awakens motivation. Such activities lessen the desire for screens and protect the nervous system, which is already overcrowded with stimuli; and, most importantly, they strengthen the child’s will forces. The rationale that such activities operate on is that through the practices of handcrafts, a deeper process of the incarnation of the “I” and the “soul body” occurs in the metabolic system, and the will forces then become stronger and receive *direction and meaning* (as opposed to the hyperactivity that constitutes a will lacking in direction and meaning). When the child invests himself in activities and

gives himself over to them in full, he is rewarded with moments of “being in the present” (in which his consciousness is not directed toward the future or the past) and with a relative calmness of his nervous system.

Practically, it is a good idea to propose activities during a child’s free time on a set, rhythmical basis, one to two times a week. Such activities could include playing a musical instrument appropriate for the constitution of the child (preferable to start in third or fourth grade); riding and taking care of horses (it is better to challenge the child to *work*, to take care of the horse and feed it, and not just ride it); boating; rock climbing; surfing; cultivating one’s own vegetable garden; after-school activities in nature; hiking and navigation; tennis; ping pong; fencing; taking care of a pet at home; or participate in an after-school workshop working with clay. Different age-appropriate handcrafts are also recommended, such as baking bread or any baking that emphasizes kneading of dough; cooking; knitting; sewing; embroidery; spinning thread; carpentry. Physical free-time activities recommended for children who suffer from ADD/ADHD are one-on-one activities. This kind of activities cut down on the background noise that exists in group play, which tend to be loud and could cause stress. It is important to take into personal consideration

which of the free-time activities above are appropriate for the child – specifically, which will awaken a motivation to continue with the activity – and then try to stay away from competitive and stressful activities as much as possible.

These activities, especially challenging sports like horseback riding, rock climbing, surfing, etc., demand effort

from the child and create an extensive integration of the child’s executive functions (which work via the frontal lobes of the brain) and the will forces (expressed via the metabolic system).

Other recommendations found to be helpful in the recruiting of the child’s will forces and motivation are setting a time each week for the child to do one of the above activities just with his or her father, and a different day just with the mother. In addition, it is recommended to encourage the child to take on appropriate responsibilities within the household (like taking out the garbage, cleaning one’s room, etc.).

Giving positive reinforcement at the proper time creates a positive “tailwind” and strengthens the child’s self-image.

4. Quality of Sleep

As previously mentioned, disruptions during a night's sleep occur in approximately 50 percent of children diagnosed with ADD/ADHD; sometimes, just improving the quality of sleep and lengthening its duration bring about a significant improvement in symptoms. Most sleep disorders stem from a breathing disorder or an emotional disorder—mostly related to anxiety-inducing situations.

Disturbances in sleep due to a breathing problem

(typically with a history of enlarged tonsils and/or adenoids and/or a chronic cold) are usually expressed in breathing through the mouth, cessations of breathing, snoring, hyperactivity during sleep, light sleep, and early awakenings during that light sleep. Besides the negative consequences of ADD/ADHD, a breathing disorder is bound to cause distortion in the development of the jaw bones, which will necessitate expensive and unpleasant orthodontic treatment. Therefore, it is important in the first stage of the evaluation to counsel parents to observe their child when sleeping, in order to confirm or reject the need of an evaluation for blocked airways. If an evaluation is needed, the parents should refer their child to his or her primary care physician or to an ENT.

Disturbances in sleep due to an emotional disorder (usually anxiety) will usually manifest in difficulties falling asleep, waking up early, nightmares, talking and screaming in one's sleep, and somnambulism.

Of course, one must consider a combination of the two factors (breathing problems and emotional problems), in order to get further clarification regarding sleep disorders with a history of anxiety. It is important to examine such symptoms in comparison with symptoms of anxiety displayed when the child is awake.

Sleep disorders can also stem from external factors, such as a bedroom temperature that is too high or too low; mosquito bites, pinworms, or parasites; noises and the like. All of these must be taken into account during the evaluation. If there is doubt as to the reason for the sleep disturbance, it is recommended that the child be tested at a sleep lab or with a home sleep test in order to explore the possibility of neurological reasons such as epileptic episodes or heart problems.

The main internal attitude that parents must take is the effort to be interested in the child as much as possible.

In the context of quality of sleep, it is important also to pay attention to the recommended sleep duration, which gradually decreases with age. It is also important to note that sometimes even an extra half hour of sleep is enough to significantly improve symptoms during the day.

Here are the *total* recommended sleep hours (from the moment of falling asleep to the moment of waking up in the morning) in accordance with different ages:

Child's Age	Recommended Daily Sleep Hours
3-5	11.5-13
6-8	10.5-11.5
9-11	10-10.5
12-14	9
15-18	8-8.5

A child experiences the falling-asleep stage as a transitioning from a condition of awareness and conscious life, in which she controls what goes on around her, to a condition of unconscious life in which she experiences a lack of control. That is why many children experience some sort of anxiety during this stage. To remedy this, it is recommended that an appropriate and calm environment be created for the falling-asleep stage, one in which the parent can dim the lights, read an age-appropriate story, and, if possible, say a blessing for the child before or after she falls asleep.

It is recommended that children who have a hard time falling asleep be referred to and treated by a doctor with experience in the field, in order to find an appropriate individual treatment for them. At the same time, recommended supports include massaging the child's body (hands, feet, chest, and abdomen) before sleep with lavender oil diluted to 10 percent concentration. If parents feel that their child is overwhelmed by daily impressions, Solum oil (extracted from peat soil and creating an enveloping protection for the skin) is recommended for a four-to-six weeks' use. Similarly, in certain situations, plant extracts such as *humulus lupulus* (hops), valerian, *Passiflora* (passion flower), and *Avena sativa* (oat) can be helpful before sleep for a period of between one and six weeks. (It is recommended to consult with a physician first.)

Support In The Classroom

A strong empathic connection between a child suffering from ADD/ADHD and his or her educator is a necessary condition for the success of supporting the child, as part of the communication described in the multi-dimensional model at the beginning of this chapter. One of the options for establishing this communication is a “correspondence notebook,” in which the teacher reports to the parents and the parents report to the teacher each day about both out-of-the-ordinary and positive incidents experienced by the child. Under such circumstances, the child will trust the teacher, and therefore cooperate better with the teacher. In order to avoid classroom reprimands, the teacher can establish ways to communicate with the child without words; for example, by agreeing on a sign that the teacher can use during class when the child is restless. The child can then go out to the yard, do a physical activity previously agreed upon (such as running a certain route or walking on a beam), and then immediately return to the classroom. If the child responds by doing what was agreed upon, it is important that he or she receive positive reinforcement from the teacher after class.

Because many children diagnosed with ADD/ADHD feel like outsiders in their classroom, it is important that teachers make sure to set up *empowering* activities for them. Giving them a specific responsibility tied to the classroom activities and space, such as assigning cleaning volunteers and/or reminding the students of the schedule, is a good example of an empowering activity. During morning circle, the child should be placed in the center of the circle (it is preferable in second and third grades to have two or three other children with the child diagnosed with attention deficits) and given the opportunity to lead rhythmic exercises with help from the teacher (depending on the age of the child), either alone or with another child, while the other children in the circle offer their encouragement. It is important that the teacher is aware of the child’s successes and give him or her appropriately emphasized positive reinforcement. It is preferable for the praise to be stronger than the praise given to the other students who do not suffer from ADD/ADHD, and sometimes the more praise the better. The teacher can also summarize for the child each week’s meaningful incidents and experiences and lay out expectations for what the child could achieve the following week.

Parents face an additional challenge in creating multiple opportunities for children to do handcrafts, which would involve a cheerful experience as well as one that awakens motivation.

Singing in at least two voices or a round are good exercises that could improve the child’s ability to concentrate and focus. Rounds or singing in two voices are usually very difficult for such children, because they have to, on the one hand, develop inhibitions toward the song they are hearing but *not* singing, and, at the same time, focus on the song that they *are* singing. Beyond the fact that the child is exercising concentration and focus, she is also experiencing being a complementary part of the class that is singing one musical piece, comprised of many voices. The essence of this exercise, which can be called “exercise in two voices,” can be applied not just to singing, but also to various movement exercises, such as rhythmic movements, Bothmer gymnastics exercises,⁶ rhythm exercises using the limbs, playing instruments, and in recitation, whether at home with a parent or at school—this has proven to be very effective.

Because children with ADD/ADHD have shown great sensitivity to the measure of interest invested in them, the level of consciousness the teacher dedicates to them during class is essential; it is important that the teacher make an effort to consciously hold in his mind the children with ADD/ADHD. In any given class, on average, there are about three or four children with ADD/ADHD and two or three children with an anxiety disorder. The teacher can choose to dedicate a certain amount of time (for the duration of a month, for example) to truly be conscious of one child, giving full attention and conscious awareness to this child, to his or her level of attention during class, and focusing the teacher’s own at-home meditative activities on this specific child.

Another important guideline is to take the complex assignments given to the class and break them down for the child with ADD/ADHD into smaller assignments—all of which make up the bigger, more complicated assignment. Complex assignments will overwhelm the child emotionally and will keep him from doing the task.

It is important that the teacher is aware of the fact that about one-third of children suffering from ADD/ADHD also suffer from learning disabilities (or also from a sensory and/or emotional regulation disorder), and, therefore, that difficulties in writing, reading, or math

⁶ Bothmer Gymnastics consists of special exercises developed in the context of Waldorf education.

could be tied to learning rather than to the child's lack of willingness to learn.

Medicinal Treatment

Medicinal treatment plays a central role in the treatment of ADD/ADHD. As mentioned previously, the most accepted and most common treatment in conventional medicine is Ritalin (methylphenidate) and other stimulant drugs of the same family. Anthroposophic medicine does not categorically reject the use of these medications, but their usage is a last therapeutic resort. The use of Ritalin and other similar drugs is recommended when the child becomes socially rejected, and/or when previous treatments have not helped, and/or when there is no treatment adherence on the part of the school or the family. In instances in which the child suffers from isolation and social rejection, it is preferable to use Ritalin for a defined amount of time, despite the fact that it is fully a symptomatic medication accompanied by side effects, since prolonged social rejection during childhood can cause irreversible emotional damage in adulthood. In these instances, one may supplement the treatment with anthroposophic cures intended to reduce the side effects of Ritalin and the harm it does to the life forces in the organism. Accordingly, the need to continue using stimulant drugs for treatment must be revisited every few months. If use of the stimulant drug leads to side effects, it is recommended to refrain from taking it on weekends and during school breaks, in order to allow the brain's metabolism to recuperate and function on its own from time to time.

Individual Recommendations

As a basis for individual recommendations, one can use the viewpoint of anthroposophic medicine to evaluate three main manifestations observed in children who suffer from ADD/ADHD. These three typical manifestations are based on the image of the three systems: the Nerve-Sense System, the Rhythmic System, and the Metabolic System.

First Type: Children with Hypersensitivity in the Nerve-Sense System

Most of these children (but certainly not all) are endowed with the constitution of a smaller head, they are thin and often pale, and their facial features and limbs seem relatively sharp. They tend to have a

Because many children diagnosed with ADD/ADHD feel like outsiders in their classroom, it is important that the educator makes sure there are *empowering* activities for them.

lower body-temperature than the norm and a relatively weak metabolic system, and their will forces tend to be weaker than normal (though they display great restlessness of the limbs). Some of them will be hypersensitive to noise, smell, or touch, and some of them will even be diagnosed with a sensory regulation disorder. Many of them will give off the impression that they are

a little older than their biological age, an impression that occasionally attests to relative weakness in their life forces. Some of these children will have a history of being born prematurely (about 20 percent of premature babies suffer from this disorder, seemingly because of an immature development of the nervous system) or of a "failure to thrive," in terms of their body-weight during their early years. A substantial number

will be diagnosed with a sanguine or melancholic temperament.

Because many of these children's body-temperature is lower than average, rhythmical massage can be beneficial to them, as it stimulates the body-temperature and the life forces. Another reason for this kind of treatment is that the skin, the receptor of the massage, is the largest sensory organ and is integral to the nerve-sense system. Because these children suffer from hypersensitivity within the nerve-sense system, a treatment such as this can "thicken" or desensitize the life forces within this system, becoming a protective shield and strengthening the barrier between their nerve-sense system and the external world. Massage oils specifically recommended for these children include hypericum (or St. John's wort), especially when the child also suffers from anxiety, or lavender in the evening and rosemary oil in the morning. If there is a history of head trauma or any kind of past injury, it is worthwhile to add arnica oil. If a skilled rhythmical massage therapist is not available, one may be able to find a nurse who has undergone training in rhythmical oiling.⁷

In many instances, craniosacral therapy has also been shown to be beneficial, as it balances the life forces and releases blockages in the system of life forces within the nervous system.

It is recommended that when a teacher approaches such a child, the teacher should do so from the periphery and not in a direct, frontal way. It is advisable to

⁷ Further reading on the rationale of the rhythmic massage treatment can be found in this book's appendix.

speak to the child in a low voice, and sometimes even in a whisper near the child's ear.

The Foremost Recommended Treatments for Children of the First Type

Music Therapy: Because the input pathway for this treatment is a sensory organ (the ear), and because some of the children suffering from ADD/ADHD are also hypersensitive to noise, or alternately may experience hearing loss (usually due to a buildup of fluid in the middle ear), music therapy is meant specifically to mitigate the hypersensitivity to noise, or, alternatively, to sharpen their sensitivity to specific sounds in cases of hearing loss. Because the anterior spatial input is processed through the sense of sight and the posterior spatial input through the sense of hearing, and because the anterior spatial input is emphasized in most cases with these children and the posterior spatial perception is "blurrier" or duller, the children can become attuned to their posterior space via therapeutic stimulation of the sense of hearing. This creates a more balanced spatial experience and even strengthens their sense of equilibrium, which is anatomically tied to the inner ear. In this kind of therapy, a song should be rehearsed in two voices or in a round, a practice that has been proven effective for children with attention disorders. Playing the cello is highly recommended for such children, as it is a string instrument with a propensity to the rhythmic system and also to the metabolic system, due to its warm sound and to its placement in relation to the body when played. One can read more about music therapy in this book's appendix.

A child's attention to his posterior space can also be strengthened by **curative eurythmy**.⁸ Rhythm exercises, practicing consonants such as L and M, as well as the series Steiner describes in his course for therapeutic education: M-N-B-P-A-U, help the child to better inhibit involuntary movement of his limbs and give meaning and direction to his limb movement.

The **curative eurythmy treatments** that have been found effective for children include one of the following homeopathic remedies: quartz, amnion, and conchae (*Calcium carbonicum*), which are meant to protect the nerve-sense system, and plant extracts such as *Cichorium* (chicory), *Carduus marianus* (milk thistle), *Taraxacum* (dandelion), among others. These treatments or a diluted version of them aim to awaken the

metabolic system and thereby enable the flow of life forces to the nerve-sense system. One can read more about the rationale of the anthroposophical medicinal treatment in this book's appendix.

Second Type: Children with Hypersensitivity in the Rhythmic System

Children categorized in the second type will be diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, with leading symptoms being impulsivity and anxiety. Hypersensitivity in the rhythmic system and emotional overload are especially prominent in these cases, in addition to the variety of symptoms of ADD/ADHD. It is especially important to perform a differential diagnosis to distinguish children who display these symptoms from children who suffer from Oppositional Defiant Disorder, who also display temperamental emotional behaviors. Many of the children with hypersensitivity in the rhythmic system are emotionally agitated, and most of them are subjected to prolonged stressful situations within their families and/or within the educational framework. Some of them have a background of having been subjected to recurring bullying or having sustained minor trauma, or having a substantial case of mental trauma. The emotional

overload, the tension and the anxiety will stand out in their behavior, and some of them will also exhibit such traits as perfectionism, competitiveness, manipulation, and jealousy in social situations. Low self-image and low self-confidence are certain to be found under the surface. Among some of these children, an arrhythmia and/or a heart

murmur may be discerned in a physical exam (most of which will be innocent murmurs, without clinical significance), or a respiratory disturbance, usually asthma. The proportion of respiratory rate (speed of breathing) to the heart rate will be lower in these children; after age ten, it should level out at a proportion of 1:4 (breath to heartbeat) and may be closer to five to six heartbeats per one breath. Therefore, it is important in the first stage of therapy that the treatment focuses on strengthening the presence of the "I" in the rhythmic system. This presence organizes the physiological and emotional processes in this system, especially at the ages of nine and ten, the years in which the sensory system of the child organizes itself with greater intensity.

Therapeutic attention to the familial and social environments is extremely important with children of this type. It is highly recommended that parents receive guidance or participate in family therapy, in order to (1) minimize tensions and competitiveness within the family framework, (2) refrain from secrets within the family and

In any given class, on average, there are about three or four children with ADD/ADHD and two or three children with an anxiety disorder.

⁸ The recommendations for curative eurythmy exercises are intended for therapists who have been trained in the field.

from cynicism, (3) encourage authenticity and transparency on the side of the parents, and (4) increase positive reinforcement toward the child. Attention to the child's relationships with his siblings is important, especially when the children are close in age. One may recommend to parents a weekly quasi-celebratory family get-together (preferably outside of the house), where activities such as a listening circle can be implemented, giving each family member the opportunity to speak about what happened to him or her during the past week, as the others listen. An additional recommendation found to be beneficial for these children is weekly rhythmic activities (preferably ones that involve motor skills or arts and crafts of any sort) in which the child enjoys spending one-on-one time with each parent once a week. There is a greater expectation of sleep disturbances with these children, so it is essential to ensure sufficiently long, quality sleep. The emphasis on a healthy family life for these children stems from the need to strengthen their trust, confidence, and sense of belonging, which are most often unstable and comprise the source of their turbulent behavior.

There also must be an authentic connection between these children and their class teacher, as this can influence and support them in their social connections with their peers.

Recommended Treatments and Activities Proven to be Effective for Children of the Second Type

Art therapy is highly advised because it immediately turns the child to the world of emotions, through which the child's own emotional world can be balanced and organized.

Curative eurythmy therapy is recommended for balancing the child's rhythmic system. This treatment is especially beneficial when there is any kind of disturbance in the heart rate or the respiratory system (such as asthma). The L-A-O-U-M sound sequence is very fitting for these children, and it is important to try and evaluate whether the source of the hypersensitivity is the heart (in which case the exercise called Gesture E should be added) or if the source is the respiratory system (in this case, Gesture U should be added).

Music therapy: Playing a musical instrument and joining a band or a choir is recommended and especially practicing singing in two voices or in a round. It is advisable for these children to learn to play a string instrument

such as a lyre, a harp, a violin or a cello, which all have an affinity toward the rhythmic system.

Involvement in groups in order to gain social skills.

Psychotherapy for adolescents.

Recommended medications are homeopathic remedies of Aurum (gold) and Ferrum sidereum (meteoric iron) and plant extracts like Hypericum and Bryophyllum, which have an affinity with the rhythmic system.

Third Type: Children with Hyperactive Metabolic Systems

The prominent characteristics of ADD/ADHD in these children are impulsivity and hyperactivity (in movement), and sometimes aggressiveness. These children are characterized by an alert metabolic system; they are full of life, in a way that can give off an impression similar to that of many horses hitched to a cart and running, but each one pulling in a different direction. Most of these children will have a choleric

temperament and a strong body temperature (though not above normal). Charisma and leadership traits will be prominent, which, if not channeled in the proper direction, are likely to be expressed as domineering and even terrorizing other children in their environment. It is important to "harness" these children and direct them to positive leadership and assignments involving taking on responsibilities in the classroom and at home with the family. These children need challenges. It is therefore recommended to encourage them to take part in an action sport, such as rock climbing, surfing, or horseback riding. Each of these activities demands that the child concentrate her planning and formative forces within her metabolic and motor system.

Recommended Treatments for Children of the Third Type

Musical instruments recommended for them are the clarinet, the trumpet, and the French horn, since, with these instruments, the musician must integrate his or her formative forces, which flow from the nervous system, with his or her strong will forces coming from the metabolic system.

Curative eurythmy is recommended in order to integrate the vowels A and U as well as the sequence M-N-B-P-A-U. In order to bring the formative forces into the movement of the limbs, this therapy should also make use of rod, rhythm, and skipping exercises, as well as movements that follow the five-pointed star pattern and an inward spiral movement with the consonant B.

Complex assignments will overwhelm the child emotionally and will keep him from doing the task.

An effective exercise recommended for this category of children is to “write” shapes with the sole of the foot.

Effective exercises for all children that cannot be classified in any of the three types:

The sequence D-F-G-K-H, which is recommended to perform while jumping; the exercise called “Iambic-A” (the iamb is a short-long rhythm), and the vowel U, with which it is recommended as an ending for almost every process in curative eurythmy.

If the child is diagnosed with only ADD and not ADHD (ADD + hyperactivity), it is recommended to practice the sequence R-L-S-I mentioned in the course for curative educative, which has been found to be extremely effective, as well as Trochee-A (the Trochee is a long-short rhythm).

Case Study: Mattan’s Story

(The italicized words indicate typical traits of ADD/ADHD.)

Mattan (name altered) was born in a spontaneous birth at 40 weeks with a healthy birth-weight; following a healthy gestation, he was the first child of parents in their thirties. Both parents were healthy, other than a diagnosis of *dyslexia and ADD* the father received in his adolescence. During an earlier pregnancy, about a year before Mattan was born, his mother suffered a spontaneous miscarriage in the 22nd week; the fetus was stillborn and was delivered vaginally. During her pregnancy with Mattan, the mother suffered from *anxieties* and sleep disturbances (the anxiety was most likely tied to miscarrying the first pregnancy). She describes her pregnancy with Mattan as characterized by *significant movements in the womb*. A week or so after Mattan’s birth, the mother was diagnosed with *postpartum depression*. The mother continued to nurse him, but it was mainly Mattan’s paternal grandmother who took care of him during his first three months of life. During these months, Mattan suffered from *infantile colic*. At the end of three months, the mother’s depression has somewhat abated and she began taking care of Mattan with help from a babysitter. She continued to nurse him until he was one year old; she then placed him in a day-care twice a week for six hours.

Mattan’s motor and language development was satisfactory, aside from his *speaking before walking*. He spoke his first words at ten months and uttered short

sentences at one year old; he began walking at fifteen months. The first three years of his life, Mattan suffered from *sleep disorders* that presented as difficulties falling asleep and waking up multiple times a night.

When Mattan was two-and-a-half-years old, his brother was born. At this point, Mattan started attending nursery and after-school care. Mattan was toilet-trained a little while before his brother was born, but a short time after the birth, he regressed and began soiling his pants (*encopresis*). During his first year in nursery, he demonstrated signs of restlessness at mealtimes; he had a *hard time imitating* the activities in the morning circle; and he would cover his ears when the teacher was singing. At age four-and-a-half, Mattan received a diagnosis of *sensory regulatory disorder*, at which point he began occupational therapy; he then began first grade at age six-and-a-half.

Throughout first grade, the teacher noticed Mattan’s *hyperactivity*, his *incessant talking*, *making sounds*, and *annoying other children* during class, as well as his *difficulty in accepting her authority*. She also recognized that Mattan was not internalizing successfully what he had learned in class, and his notebooks contained partial and chaotic renderings of the letters and numbers taught. At the same time, the teacher noted that Mattan demonstrated great knowledge and high motor skills relative to the other kids in his class, and that he was able to get other kids to follow his lead in activities such as climbing trees, building forts, and playing ball games, but also in organizing a group of children to *annoy other children*.

In the afternoons, Mattan tried every which way to *get screen time* (computer, TV, smartphone) despite his parents’ attempts to prevent that—attempts that were accompanied by multiple reprimands. It was during this time that he began to exhibit *difficulty in preparing to go to bed* in the evening and in *preparing to go to school* in the morning. For Mattan, these phases were characterized by distractedness, by annoying his brother, and by many fights with his parents.

Ever since Mattan’s grandmother had become involved in raising him, *conflicts* erupted between his grandmother and his father regarding family habits (mostly in relation to the grandmother’s child-rearing approach, which supported screen time); and the conflicts grew into prolonged arguments and caused tension between his parents. During second grade, as his behavior at home continued to deteriorate, while the tensions

Anthroposophic medicine does not categorically reject the use of these medications, but their usage is a last therapeutic resort.

between his parents worsened and his teacher reported troubling behavior in the classroom, Mattan was diagnosed with ADD/ADHD and Ritalin was recommended. The parents turned to parental guidance specializing in the “Here and Now” style (Present Moment Therapy).

During the course of the therapy, the parents realized that they were at a watershed moment, where they would either separate or make a drastic change in the family’s lifestyle. The parents chose the second option. This included: (1) improving their relationship as a couple, which had been replete with tension (and was neglected in the previous two years), (2) relaying a unified message to Mattan and his grandmother, (3) setting clear boundaries to his screen time and to his annoying his brother. The parents also made sure to provide (4) meaningful positive reinforcements, (5) fixed schedules (or rhythms) of bedtime and meals during the day and the week, (6) a nourishing breakfast every morning, (7) conditions for extended sleep time, (8) routine activities for Mattan twice a week – once with his mother (baking bread) and once with his father (rock climbing), (9) daily correspondence with Mattan’s teacher, (10) medicinal therapy (anthroposophic and homeopathic), as well as (11) treatment with rhythmical massage, alternated with (12) curative eurythmy, for a period of three months.

In a collaborative decision, Mattan’s therapists, guidance counselor, doctor, teacher, and parents resolved to maintain a focused therapeutic effort for three months, both at home and in the classroom. Within two weeks, there was significant moderation in Mattan’s impulsivity and an improvement in his ability to concentrate, even though his hyperactivity and distractedness in school continued. Mattan began to recite parts of the morning verse in class and to partially engage in imitation and singing during the morning circle; his notebooks became populated with more writing, colors, numbers, and drawings. A change could also be seen in Mattan’s social relations, and he became a charismatic personality in the class. He would lead the group in morning jogging. He meticulously took the responsibility offered to him to lead the rhythm exercises in the morning circle together with the teacher. In addition, he was charged with helping the teacher take attendance, reporting on the state of the moon the previous night, and distributing paper and crayons during drawing class. After three months, the therapeutic team

decided to end the curative eurythmy and rhythmical massage sessions, while continuing with the medicinal therapy and parental guidance until the end of the year.

At the end of second grade, it was obvious that Mattan was able to internalize a measured portion of the writing and math taught in class, that there was a partial improvement in his ability to imitate and to delay gratification, along with a significant improvement in his social standing, his mood, and his self-confidence. It was also clear that there was still plenty of room for improvement in controlling his hyperactivity and in the length of time he was able to fully concentrate. In third grade, Mattan needed to continue the anthroposophic medicinal treatment for the entire school year and went through two cycles of eurythmy therapy. His parents continued with the couples’ therapy

for a full year, which helped tremendously in strengthening and deepening the bond between them, a fact that significantly lowered the tension level at home.

Throughout third grade, it became clear that Mattan was successfully internalizing what was taught in the majority of classes. His ability to stay focused improved, though not fully, and while there was a noticeable reduction in his distractedness, his hyperactivity continued. The main improvements were seen in his social relations, in his impulsivity, and in his ability to delay gratification.

*

This case study presents the developmental process of a child developing ADD/ADHD with its known traits, in which it is clear how genetic factors (apparently from the father) and environmental factors (the anxiety of the mother during pregnancy and the damaged pattern of relating to her following the postpartum depression) came together in the development of the disorder.

In a midway review, the treatment was perceived as relatively successful. Mattan did succeed in internalizing and learning, in a satisfactory way, what was taught in class, and to integrate successfully as a charismatic figure in the class’ social fabric, with *significant* improvement in his impulsivity. At the same time, it was clear that only a *partial* improvement was made in Mattan’s distractedness and the hyperactivity. However, this was achieved without the use of stimulants.

Emphasis on a healthy family life for these children stems from the need to strengthen their trust, confidence, and sense of belonging, which are most often unstable and comprise the source of their turbulent behavior.

The relative success of the therapy must be attributed, to a great degree, to the substantial efforts of the parents and to the meaningful process in which they decided to set Mattan's wellbeing as a high priority in their daily routine. Their decision to stay together and improve their own relationship, to fill it with meaning, and, in doing so, to contribute to the cohesiveness of the family, served as a significant factor in the improvement of the condition of their son. It is safe to assume that despite the parents' coming together for Mattan's sake, he still would not have improved to such a degree without the various treatments he received—the medicinal therapy, the eurythmy therapy, the massage therapy, and the commitment of his teacher to invest in his treatment.

To summarize this chapter, it is worth repeating that the key to the success of a treatment is first and foremost in the approach of the educators and therapists, meeting the child in a position of great respect, seeing that the child is a spiritual being who is attempting to express itself through a physical body, and in attentiveness to and interest in the child's skills and his or individualized will, which the child strives to realize. Indeed, a close look at successful treatment cases reveals that they involve a significant and consistent investment in the child by the parents and the educational team. Such successful treatments also follow many of the recommendations to the family and educators mentioned here.

Final Note on Attention Deficits and the Culture of Attention Deficits

A common question among parents of children suffering from attention deficit disorder is: How could it be that the child can be so focused while he is watching screens and certainly when he is playing computer games, and yet he cannot listen or concentrate in class? The well-known answer given to this question is that children suffering from ADD/ADHD have a very hard time developing attentiveness and concentration when the assignments bore them – assignments that may not be especially challenging but that allow the majority of children in the class to maintain their focus. Therefore, if the lesson the child is in is not especially challenging, it will be experienced as boring. Neurologically, it is known that the majority of children suffering from ADD/ADHD exhibit under-stimulation in the electrical activity of the brain, and only during challenging assignments does stimulation gain momentum and peak—and only then does it allow the children to engage in effective focus.

This is why these children succeed in forming and attaining a high level of focus in challenging activities such as horseback riding, surfing, rock climbing, and computer

games, sometimes even attaining success beyond the norm of children their age. It is clear from this that these children (and this is true to a great degree also about adults suffering from ADD/ADHD) swing from extreme to extreme, from boredom that leads to hyper-distractedness accompanied by under-stimulation of the brain, to a high ability to focus accompanied by high brain stimulation.

A comprehensive observation of the culture forming in our times in the Western world discovers a macrocosmic picture displaying similar traits to the ones manifested in children suffering from ADD/ADHD. Generally speaking, and without trying to offend too many individuals, it can be said that a similar pattern can be seen in many of the adults living in the affluent West today, going from situations of boredom (such as watching television, surfing the internet, etc.) to searching for excitement and challenging endeavors—from extreme sports to increasing usage of psychoactive substances and addictions, among them the new addiction to the social network. Observations of the ADHD culture that encompasses our lives, and then of the steady increase of ADD/ADHD in children, could lead to the conclusion that one of the tasks of these “special” children manifesting ADD/ADHD is to reflect back to us the culture of attention deficit that we adults have created. The question we need to ask ourselves next is: Do we want to deal with this problem?

Translated from the Hebrew by Sara Davis

Meron Barak, MD, received his medical education in the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology. He is a family doctor, psychotherapist, and an expert in anthroposophic medicine and in attention deficit disorder. The chapter published here is excerpted from his book *Restless Children: Coping with Attention Deficit and Anxiety Disorders from an Anthroposophic Point of View*, published in Hebrew in 2020 and soon to appear in English translation.



Report from the Online Waldorf Library

Marianne Alsop
OWL Site Administrator

Since 2001, the Online Waldorf Library has helped facilitate research and answer questions on a wide variety of topics. We continue to answer specific questions about the Waldorf curriculum from Waldorf Teacher Education students from around the world as well as from teachers in Waldorf schools and homeschooling parents.

From September 1, 2021 to September 1, 2022, the OWL had over 200,000 site visitors. English-speaking countries top the list of site visits, including readers from the USA, Australia, the UK, and Canada. India, Mexico, Spain, Argentina, Chile, and China are also included in the top ten countries.

We continue to offer an ever-expanding number of eBooks, available in pdf format.

In our Journals section, we are pleased to share almost all back issues (1936-2005) of the publication, *Child and Man: A Journal for Rudolf Steiner Education*. Published originally by teachers of the New School, London, and later by The Rudolf Steiner Educational Association at the Michael Hall School in Forest Row, Sussex, Michael House in Ilkeston (England), as well as The Steiner Schools Fellowship.

Also now available in our Journals section are back issues (1949 to 2009) of the *Golden Blade*. This remarkable annual intended to bring the outlook of Anthroposophy to bear on questions and activities of interest in a way which may have lasting value, right up to the present. It was founded in 1949 by Charles Davy and Arnold Freeman, who were its first editors, and owes much to the twenty-three years of editorial guidance of Adam Bittleston.

eBooks added in English since the Fall of 2021

From WECAN Publications

- *The Child from Birth to Three in Waldorf Education and Child Care, Second English edition*
- *Understanding Child Development: Rudolf Steiner's Essential Principles for Waldorf Education*
- *Transitions in Childhood from Birth to 14 Years*
- *Tell Me Another Story*

- *Dancing as We Sing*
- *Truer Than True*
- *Let Us Form a Ring*

From Waldorf Publications:

- *Waldorf Curriculum Chart*
- *Tatatusuck's Journey to Crystal Mountain*
- *Xavier's Alphabet*
- *Like a Phoenix from the Ashes*
- *Rudolf Steiner Education – The High School*
- *Rudolf Steiner Education – The Primary School*
- *Rudolf Steiner Education – The First Seven Years of Childhood*
- *Topics in Mathematics for the Ninth Grade*

New eBooks in Spanish include:

- *Caminando con Nuestros Hijos: Los padres como compañeros y guías from WECAN Publications*
- *Alimentando la chispa: Iluminando el futuro del los alumnos de secundaria*
- *Jonathan y el Árbol*

New eBooks from Waldorf Publications translated into Mandarin Chinese include:

- *Music as a Threshold Experience*
- *Moving into the Mainstream*
- *Social Justice in the Light of Reincarnation and Karma*

New articles in Spanish and English are posted every month and can be accessed from the home page and clicking on *Artículos en Español* and *Articles*.

As always, back issues of the *Research Bulletin*, *Gateways* (Waldorf Early Childhood Association), *Pedagogical Section/Rundbrief* and a number of other international publications are available online in our *Journals* section. The Online Waldorf Library welcomes your questions, and we are happy to help you find resources for your research projects.

Visit the Online Waldorf Library at
www.waldorflibrary.org

The Research Institute for Waldorf Education and Waldorf Publications

Patrice Maynard

Director of Publications and Development

These last six months have been busy at the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE). We received a grant from the Waldorf Educational Foundation (WEF) to accomplish meta-research — a new arena of research for us. We are choosing approaches and practices in education that have been researched thoroughly over the last fifteen years or so — supporting our practices over the last 100 years in Waldorf education. Our aim is to sort through the mighty oceans of research to succinctly identify the most salient parts of the research and make it more accessible to those in our Waldorf communities. Our goal is to provide schools, teachers, and parents helpful tools to demonstrate how science has been catching up with approaches in Waldorf education, rendering the research clear and to the point, not daunting in its volume and scope. Because this meta-research is new territory for us, we have been experimenting with the best ways to proceed and are making good progress.

This new research comes on the heels of the most recent research, more standard in its approach but demanding and compelling in its results. For example, did Waldorf education change the way parents were parenting at home? Turns out that the answer is “No.” The Waldorf school echoed practices already at home and so is consonant with values already in place. Results of the research conducted with parents of Waldorf students can be read in this issue of the *Research Bulletin*. It identifies many facets of parental experiences in our Waldorf schools.

Waldorf Publications has been equally busy. We recently published two beautiful new high school resources: Michael Holdrege’s book on teaching ninth and tenth grade science, *From Mechanism to Organism*, and Van James’s book on *Teaching Art History* in a Waldorf High School. Both are beautifully illustrated, full-color books that lead high school teachers through a carefully carved, imaginative path toward a successful Main Lesson block. Even more: If ever you wanted to know how your own body works, or how the waves of history in artistic expression demonstrate human consciousness, these books are for you, teacher or not!

Jost Schieren’s edited book, *A Handbook of Waldorf Pedagogy*, was completely translated and submitted to Routledge, the internationally recognized academic publisher. With any luck, this publisher will place this

comprehensive book into university libraries in English-speaking countries. The distinguished venue in which this collection appears will enable translation of the book into many other languages. Defending Waldorf education as a scientifically-based approach to education, Dr. Schieren has used experts in psychology, anthropology, child development, and physics, to elaborate on the scientific basis of Waldorf education. He asks in his introduction to have Waldorf educators included in educational science circles, indicating thereby that the worldview held by Waldorf educators has previously excluded them, depriving educational circles from understanding the success made possible by the Waldorf approach and depriving Waldorf educators from the chance to learn from those in different educational streams.

So, 2022 has been an eventful year at RIWE. Add to this brief report the continuing work Douglas Gerwin does with the Pedagogical Section Council, the International Forum for Steiner-Waldorf Education, the Center for Anthroposophy, and AWSNA, as well as both his and Patrice Maynard’s teaching here in the USA and internationally, and there is a lot to do at all times! We are appreciative of the support we receive from our contributors that make all this possible. Thank you!

Donors to the Research Institute for Waldorf Education and Waldorf Publications

With heartfelt thanks, the Research Institute for Waldorf Education here acknowledges the generous donors who invisibly cheer the Institute's work along from their places far and wide. With their support and

the remarkable matching support from the Rudolf Steiner Charitable Trust each year, hearts are lifted and work made possible. Thank you!

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About the Research Institute for Waldorf Education

The Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE), founded in 1996 in order to deepen and enhance the quality of Waldorf education, engages in sustained dialogue with the wider educational-cultural community and supports research to serve a wide range of educators in their work with children and adolescents.

The Research Institute supports projects dealing with essential contemporary educational issues such as computers and the effects of media on children, alternatives to standardized testing, physical health and psychological well-being of students, science teaching with a phenomenological approach, the role of the arts in education, and the philosophical underpinnings of Waldorf education.

As a sponsor of colloquia and conferences, the Research Institute brings together educators, psychologists, physicians, and social scientists for discussions on current issues related to education. RIWE publishes a *Research Bulletin* twice a year and prepares educational resources, including collections of eBooks and articles (a growing

number of them newly translated into Spanish). Many of these publications are available without charge on the website of the Online Waldorf Library (OWL), a virtual library created and managed by the Research Institute: www.waldorflibrary.org.

In 2013 the Research Institute took over the publications arm of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and re-branded it as Waldorf Publications. It includes resources for teachers and administrators, readers and children's books, collections of plays and poetry, science materials and kits, science and math newsletters, inspirational essays, proceedings of colloquia, and a range of publicity materials about Waldorf education. It also carries books published by the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN) and the Pedagogical Section Council (PSC) of the School for Spiritual Science, as well as AWSNA's twice-yearly magazine *Renewal*.

Summary of Activities Supported by the Research Institute



Avalon Initiative

A think tank for questions of freedom in education
Heartsspeak.net website of stories from the classroom

Subject-Specific Colloquia

On Teaching (with published proceedings):

- Chemistry
- Computer and Information Technology
- English
- Life Sciences and Environmental Studies
- Mathematics
- Physical Sciences
- U.S. History
- World History: Symptomatology

Recent Research Projects

- Alternatives to Standardized Assessment
- Computer Technology in Waldorf Schools
- Handbook of Waldorf Pedagogy
- Human Sexuality Curriculum
- Meta Research on aspects of established Waldorf practices
- Screen Free September Initiative Worldwide
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