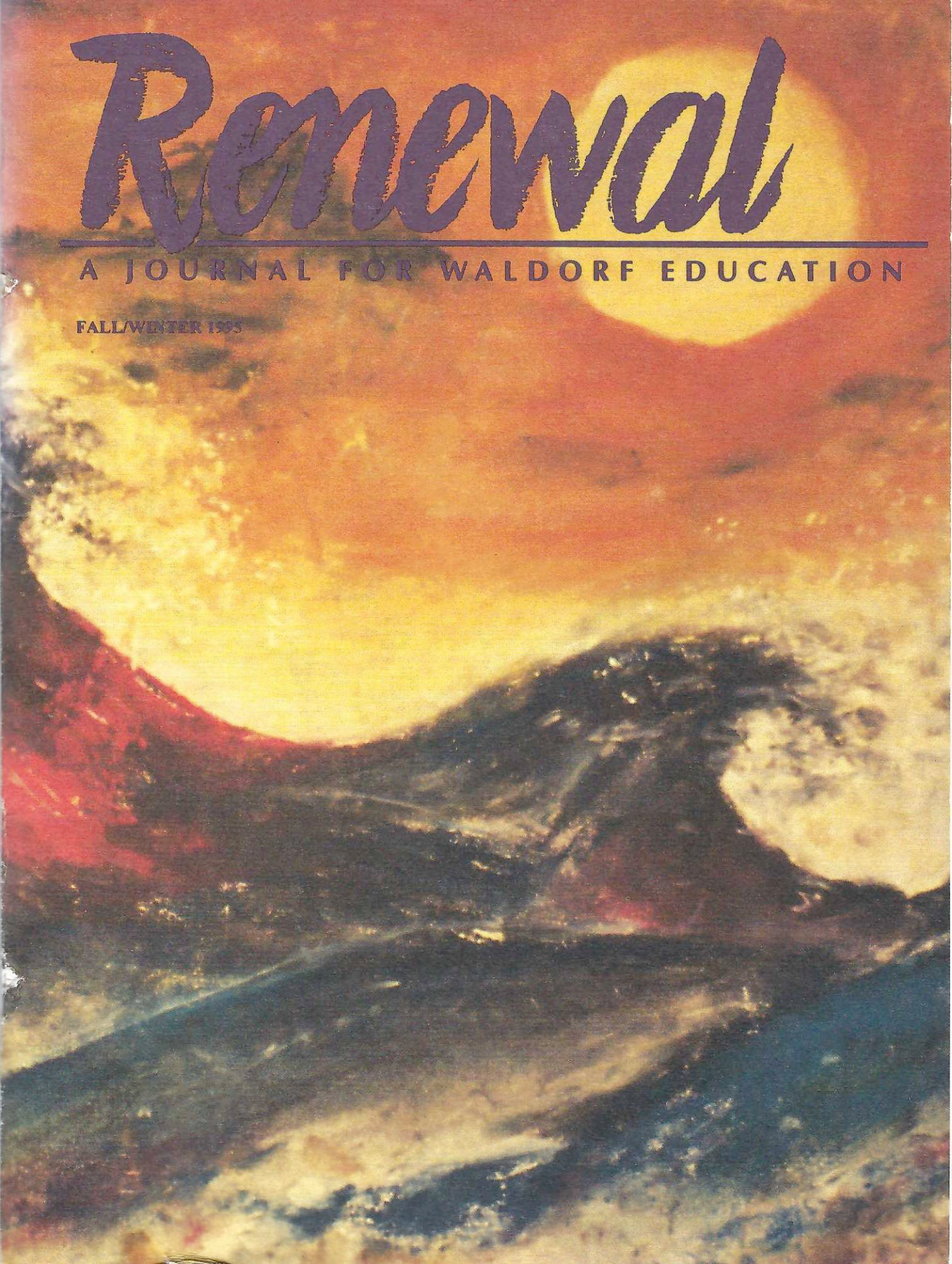


Renewal



A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

FALL/WINTER 1995

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Articles

Seasonal Festivals for Young Children <i>Holly Koteen</i>	1
Teaching Writing as an Art <i>Arthur Pittis</i>	5
Reverence, A Poem <i>William Ward</i>	9
Reading Handwriting: Why Teach Handwriting in a Technological Age? <i>John Bloom</i>	10
Class Size <i>Peg Lopata</i>	12
The Organization of a Waldorf School <i>Siegfried Finser</i>	14
School Forms in Waldorf Education: Enhancing the Learning Partnership <i>Christopher Schaefer</i>	19
The Waldorf Community <i>Sheila Harrington</i>	24
A Drop of Water <i>Noel Bell</i>	27
The Lyre Reborn <i>Mary Lynn Channer</i>	29
The Urban Waldorf School of Milwaukee: A Summary Report <i>Ray McDermott</i>	35
Threads of Promise, Threads of Tension <i>Cynthia Dillard</i>	37
The Waldorf School of Toronto versus the Ontario Ministry of Education <i>Anne Greer</i>	41
Advertising	46

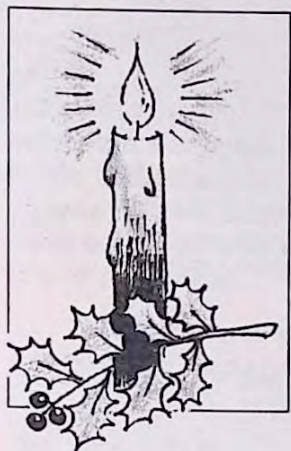
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Seasonal Festivals for Young Children

by Holly Koteen



For young children, every day is a cause for celebration. They live in wonder at the world and experience great joy at what is revealed to them through their explorations and discoveries. In this way, young children help rekindle in us – their parents and teachers – a new reverence for life.

At the same time, our young charges need guidance in becoming a part of our human and earthly community. Those of us who work with children quickly learn how important is the establishment of daily and weekly rhythms. The ritual of bedtime and the regular doing of Saturday chores are key examples. Becoming conscious of how we can help our children enter into the rhythms of the year is also important.

One of the ways we mark our journey together through the year is by celebrating what is unique about each season. The seasonal festivals are the most natural meeting place for our children's instinctively celebratory mood and our own need to be conscious of ourselves in relation to the world around us. Each of us has childhood memories related to family holiday festivals. Truly meaningful festivals can help root our children in the continuity of time and also lift us adults out of our everyday difficulties and struggles.

In ancient times, the festival life of a community was closely linked with its agricultural cycles. While human life today is generally more removed from these natural cycles than in earlier times, our lives are still profoundly influenced by nature's forces and by the seasons of the year. Seasonal festivals, because they allow us to reconnect with one another and with the cosmos that

surrounds us, are perhaps more essential to humanity's well-being than ever before.

In the Waldorf kindergarten, the seasonal festivals form the core of the curriculum. Through songs, dances, stories, crafts, and foods, old traditions are recast and new ones are created to meet the needs of our times and the needs of the families who come to us.

While we teachers and parents work to understand the meaning behind the activities and symbols of each festival, what we share with the children are not explanations but pictures: at the end of summer a "harvest loaf" wrapped in red cloth; a lighted lantern against the fading light of autumn; a spiral of greens for the advent of winter; a decorated egg for spring.

Rudolf Steiner characterized the cycle of the year as a mighty breathing of the earth in relation to the cosmos.

The children are nourished by the pictures and mood of the festival activities and by the earnestness with which the adults work to find expression for the relation between the human being and the changing forces of nature and of the cosmos.

In Waldorf schools, teachers strive first to understand the universal and spiritual realities behind the processes of the earth and cosmos during the course of the year. Then, depending on the country and culture in which the school is located, they will choose traditions and customs to help the children to experience these archetypal pictures and processes. Many seasonal festivals are connected with religious holidays. In our school kindergarten, for example, teachers, with



Saint Nicholas leaves a classroom after his annual visit.

the help of parents, honor the cultural and religious traditions of the families who are represented in our group. Thus, the festivals of Judaism, Buddhism, of African and Hispanic culture, and of other religions and cultures may be celebrated, as well as those of Christianity and northern Europe.

The Festivals of Autumn

One summer morning we notice a crispness in the air that has not been there before. By noon, the impression has faded, but we realize that summer has turned its face toward autumn. In late August, the afternoon light has a golden cast, and by the time school has started, the wind in the evenings rattles hollowly through the dry seedheads of plants along the roadside.

Autumn is a time of transition. It marks the end of the growing season, and the early autumn festivals celebrate the bounty of the harvest. In the latter half of the season, the community completes its preparation for winter. As darkness, cold, and death dominate in nature, human beings must cultivate inner light and warmth. This is what stands behind the tradition of Allhallow's Even (October 31) and the various festivals of lights, such as Chanukah, Divali, and Advent.

Rudolf Steiner characterized the cycle of the year as a mighty breathing of the earth in relation to the cosmos. What is breathed in and out, however, is not air but "forces." Those forces, which, among other things, "push" the plants out of the ground in the spring, are "inhaled" during the autumn as the plants wither and fade.

Our lives are clearly more outwardly oriented during the summer than during winter. Autumn, as a transition between the two, is a time when we tend to "come in," to focus our lives more inwardly. In the autumn we gather in the harvest of the field, and we "gather ourselves in" as well. As the strength of the outer sun fades, we must light the inner fires – in our hearths and in our hearts.

The kindergarten festival celebrations arise from the context of all our other seasonal activities. Thus, we prepare for our Harvest Festival by putting up the fruits of the summer. Working with the children, we dry fruits, vegetables, and herbs, preserve blackberry jam and applesauce, and make hearty soups from the garden vegetables.

In October, we gather nuts, rake leaves, and plant bulbs. Around Halloween, we make cider and carve jack-o'-lanterns. In November, it is time to mulch the garden and clean and oil the garden tools. We also gather kindling for our Lantern Festival bonfire.

Michaelmas, or the feast day of Saint Michael, is celebrated in most Waldorf kindergartens. In the northern hemisphere, this festival takes place on September 29 just after the autumnal equinox. In the kindergarten and the first and second grades, Michaelmas is celebrated primarily as a harvest festival, while for the older children overcoming the forces of darkness is the predominating image.

In my kindergarten, the harvesting activities of our first month of school culminate at Michaelmas in the making of the "harvest loaf." We participate in all the processes of transforming the grain into bread – from threshing and grinding, to making the bread, to sharing the "harvest loaf" with family and friends. Through all,

we cultivate a feeling of gratitude for the bounty of Mother Nature, who provides us with food and our other material needs.

A song we sing at this time is the "Harvest Song" from *Mother Goose*:

The boughs do shake,
The bells do ring,
So merrily comes our harvest in,
Our harvest in, our harvest in,
Merrily comes our harvest in.
We've plowed, we've sowed,
We've reaped, we've mowed,
So merrily comes our harvest in,
Our harvest in, our harvest in,
Merrily comes our harvest in.

At the core of this outward work is the reality of the human will that enables us to transform the gifts of nature for human use. The free human will and the courage to carry out deeds for the good of the community is exemplified by the archangel Michael – who was known as Mithra in ancient Persia and as Marduk in ancient Babylonia.

If humanity were to follow the course of the sun and of nature in the autumn, we would also diminish and die. Instead, we must call forth our inner spiritual light and, with it, balance the outer darkness of nature. On a psychological level, there are also forces of darkness, often symbolized by "the Dragon." The children in the kindergarten experience this need to overcome the darkness through stories in which a brave knight (an earthly representative of Saint Michael) overcomes the Dragon with his "sword of light."

The shooting star is another symbol connected to Michaelmas that is found in the stories that we tell in the kindergarten. Rudolf Steiner spoke about the relationship between meteoric iron (the meteor showers of late summer) and the iron in our blood. Each is needed to balance an excess of sulfur. Meteoric iron balances the cosmic sulfur that results from the plant growth of spring and summer, while iron in the blood balances the sulfur in our physical organism. This iron in the blood,

according to Steiner, is connected to our strength of will and to our capacity for initiative. We find this same thought expressed in common phrases such as "an iron will."

Our individual lives are purified by our acts of selfless service, courage, and initiative. In the same way, at this time of year on a cosmic level, Michael is involved in the purification of the cosmic forces that are being "inhaled" back into the earth during autumn.

Rituals to honor the dead are an element of autumn festivals in many cultures. The American Halloween (from Allhallows' Even) is rooted in the ancient Celtic festival of *Samhain*. In our kindergarten, we minimize the outer aspects of Halloween – the costumes and "trick or treating." Instead, we emphasize the protective nature of light by incorporating the jack-o'-lanterns and the bonfire into our Lantern Festival. In the early autumn, we called up will and courage so that it would shine in our deeds. Now this same will and courage must be strengthened to prevail against the increasing forces of darkness.



A child intently hollows out a jack-o'-lantern for the Halloween festival.

In early November, the kindergarten children spend a week or two making paper lanterns – their "candle houses." We also sing our lantern songs in preparation for the festival. The words of one song are:

The sunlight fast is dwindling,
My little lamp needs kindling.
Its beam shines far in darkest night,
Dear lantern, guide me with your light.

(P. Patterson in *Autumn*, Wynstones Press, United Kingdom.)

At dusk, on the eve of the festival, parents and children gather around a bonfire and share hot cider and pumpkin bread. Then the lanterns are lit, and the procession of light begins to thread its way through the dark forest.

From a distance, the bobbing lights look like the stars traveling in their twinkling arcs across the night sky. For some young children, this is the first time they have ever been outside walking at night. The image of their community manifesting the power of light against darkness is a strong picture for the children, and they seem to grasp it without intellectual explanations. Later, in the first winter festival – Advent – each child will have a chance to carry his or her own light (a lighted candle in an apple) through the spiral of evergreens of the Advent Garden.

The mood of the winter festivals is, of course, quite different from that of the autumn festivals. During the winter months we experience stillness and quiet and perhaps a feeling of awe at the rebirth of the sun and at the mystery of the new year about to unfold. In the springtime, we find joy welling up within us as the world of nature comes to life again. Summer often brings to us a spirit of adventure.

Each season has an inner as well as an outer mood. In winter, we (like nature) are quiet physically, but, just as there is much hidden activity beneath the earth in preparation for spring, there is much activity in

our hearts and minds. In summer, when we, like the natural world, are outwardly quite active, there is an inner quiet and rest and an occasional moment of reflection and deep insight.

Our yearly journey through the seasons is clearly a dynamic process and, potentially, a creative one. The way we bring this passage through time to the children in the Waldorf kindergarten gives form to their natural reverence for nature and to their instinct for celebration. It gives them, too, a sense of continuity and community. Also, in moving through the inner and outer moods of the festivals, our children can develop a "flexibility of soul" that will help them as adults in living in the world and with other people.

Holly Koteen has three sons, now nineteen, twenty-two, and twenty-four years old. When they were children, Holly started a school for them on the farm where the family lived. Through that work, she became interested in Waldorf Education. Holly has been a kindergarten teacher at the Seattle Waldorf School since 1988. In 1991-92, Holly, husband Michael, and two of their sons took an eleven-month trip around the world (cf. *Renewal* Vol. 2, No. 1). Holly likes to spend her free time gardening.



A trio of kindergarteners, dressed up and enjoying their harvest meal.

Teaching Writing as an Art

by Arthur Pittis

In the Waldorf curriculum, no subject is taught as an end unto itself. Integrating academic, artistic, and practical skills, each discipline helps the student develop an appreciation for the breadth of human knowledge and experience. Traditional academic skills approached academically, but also artistically and practically, can enable children to develop, out of their own creative powers, spiritually nourishing imaginations of what it means to be human. The teaching of writing in the elementary grades provides an excellent example of this worthwhile process.

The preparation for the development of writing skills begins long before the elementary grades when the young child is learning the mother tongue. The lively use of spoken language in the home, nursery, and kindergarten establishes through imitation an enthusiasm for verbal expression. This can be transformed into written language skills through formal instruction.

In grades one through three, the introduction of writing is largely imitative. It grows out of the teacher's oral storytelling. The stories are reviewed through the children's own retelling and by artistic activities such as painting, drawing, clay modeling, and role playing. As part of this process, the class teacher composes the main lesson texts, using vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to the children's level of development. These texts are usually written by the teacher on the board and are copied by the children into their main lesson books. They serve as the children's first readers. They are actually modeled writing exercises, designed to develop and reinforce a variety of skills, both technical and

stylistic. If the teacher is thoughtful and sensitive in creating beautiful texts, the children will develop unconsciously a deep appreciation for language and writing and will acquire positive habits that will be reflected in their work later in school.

It is important to note that, except for simple sentences and paragraphs, the children in the early grades are not *required* to write creatively. There are two reasons for refraining from the popular practice of having young children "write out of themselves," of having them make up stories. First, when we write creatively, we are diverting the creative life forces that build. In the

young child, the primary job of these forces is to form a healthy physical body. Diverting these formative forces into premature intellectual work can overtax the child and thwart his or her healthy development.

The second reason is practical. The normal seven- or eight-year old child lacks the images and tools to write well.

Nine- and ten-year-olds, however, have the maturity, images, and tools to begin to consciously explore creative writing. They can construct a variety of types of simple sentences. They have a good ear for rhythm and understand basic narrative exposition. Also, they have a large store of literary images, built up unconsciously during the kindergarten and primary-grade years in the Waldorf school. What they have not had is conscious training in how to bring all these elements together into a well constructed composition. It now becomes a primary responsibility of the class teacher to develop these latent faculties for written language.

If the teacher is thoughtful and sensitive in creating beautiful texts, the children will develop unconsciously a deep appreciation for language and writing and will acquire positive habits that will be reflected in their work later in school.

Fourth graders and their class teacher have the good fortune to work with the great tales and myths of the Norse heroes and gods. The Norse sagas, like all the great literatures of the world, celebrate the full range of human emotions and experiences, from love to hate, joy to sorrow, and victory to defeat. Three years ago, I led my (then fourth-grade) class through two main lesson blocks of Norse mythology. The first block, opening the year, took up the daily ninety-minute main lesson for three weeks and covered the mostly humorous adventures of Thor. In the writing assignments, I followed the format based on modeling, which had been very successful in the earlier grades. By the end of the block, I knew a change of orientation was appropriate; so, in the second Norse block in the early spring, I started out in a new direction.

While the first block had been comic in mood, the second, a four-week block, was tragic. In it I told the Volsung Saga and the stories of the twilight and passing of the gods. The first three weeks covered the saga, the tales upon which Wagner built his Ring Cycle of operas, and the final week covered the Ragnarok, the final catastrophe which is prelude to a new creation. I had decided to make the academic/artistic focus of this block eight creatively written episodes. I faced, therefore, a considerable challenge in designing the block so as to have adequate time for outlining, writing, in-class reading, correcting, and rewriting, and for the final copying of the texts onto the appropriate pages of the already-illustrated main lesson book.

I solved these management problems by making a complete "dummy" book, designating exactly what would go on each page. I could then make my own lesson book each night from this model. The problem of the differing amounts of room that would be needed from student to student I solved by using large format lesson books. These books are eight-and-a-half by twenty-two inches, instead of the standard eight-and-a-half by eleven. I oriented the books horizontally and divided each page into two writing areas. Thus there was more than enough space to accommodate various sizes of handwriting and lengths of text. The pages on which the composition would go would be minimally formatted, having just

borders and numbers. The other pages would then be done on a day-by-day basis. They would contain the bridging illustrations and texts, as well as verse excerpts from Wagner's libretto. To complete the book would be an epic undertaking in its own right.

A description of the first week of this block will show the rhythm I devised for developing the actual composition. On Monday, I began with Andarvi, the dwarf, stealing the Rheingold and forging the ring of power. On Tuesday, I related how the magical ring passes from Andarvi to Loki, the mischievous god, and then to Odin, the benevolent supreme god, and then into the hands of the smith Hreidmar and his sons Regin and Fafnir. On Wednesday, I told of how Fafnir then murders his father for Andarvi's golden ring and flees into the wilderness. On Thursday, and for the next two weeks, I told the rest of the saga to its tragic end and, on the final day of the block, turned to the equally tragic twilight of the gods.

The composition work began on that first Wednesday with a review of Tuesday's story. The space between review and new presentation I have always used as the time for introducing specific academic skills. Accordingly, I gave the class their new composition books and explained how they were going to write this story in their words as homework for the next two nights. They were very excited, and several were prepared to outdo Wagner himself. The important thing was to limit the focus to a single episode, or else the compositions would become unmanageably long.

The first of the two initial compositions would tell of how the Rheingold passed from Andarvi to the house of Hreidmar. The second composition would describe the events leading to Fafnir's patricide and the murder itself. The first composition was broken down into three paragraphs, each between fifty and seventy-five words, and each dealing with a specific part of the episode.

I then put an outline on the board, and the class copied it into their main lesson books. How each paragraph should begin, develop, and conclude was discussed, and key words and proper names were gathered and listed. I answered

many, various questions and then went on to the history of the Volsung. How the saga and the story of the twilight of the gods would intertwine became the overriding artistic concern of the class. They knew the two stories needed to be woven together.

That evening I learned from a parent, who is a learning disabilities specialist, how to improve this assignment by supplying brief plot outlines for the children with learning difficulties. This advice was invaluable, and I have used the technique for the past three years.

The next morning the class was eager to show me their work. After opening exercises and before outlining the next episode or reviewing the previous day's story, I asked each individual, without exception, to come forward and read what she or he had written. Some were eager, some reluctant, but each student read and was greeted with spontaneous and enthusiastic applause. Success. We then repeated the outlining process for the concluding segment of the episode in which Loki steals the gold and Fafnir murders his father.

We followed this same pattern for each subsequent assignment, day by day adding new episodes and honing narrative skills. In addition to hearing each version, the class began reading and proofing each other's work. We assessed each student's work, as well as the passages I had written on the blackboard, noting strengths and offering suggestions for improvement. Two ends were thus served. The class became comfortable with criticism, and I was able to give mini-lessons in narrative and rhetorical technique. In the course of these weeks, many of the children became completely caught up in an imagination of themselves as authors, and in several cases individual children discovered talents they had not known they possessed.

Once all eight assignments had been completed, I had the awesome task of correcting the more than one hundred and twenty individual compositions. And each child had the equally awesome task of rewriting his or her stories. Over the weekend I corrected all the compositions and wrote extensive comments about what was strong

and weak in each passage. During the last week of the block, the children's only homework assignment was to neatly rewrite all eight compositions, incorporating the corrections and suggestions. I had prepared a guideline for rewriting that included format requirements (single-sided, double-spaced pages) and the advice that they read the most recent compositions first, then go back and work on the earliest.

Once again, I received a huge stack of paper. As I corrected them, I was amazed by how good the writing had become. Even though the parameters of each assignment were the same for all, each child retold the episodes in a highly individualistic way, expressing his or her temperament and interests. Within the form of the assignments, the children had found an opportunity to express themselves individually. In fact, without the form and structure I had set, they would not have been able to develop their writing skills to anywhere near the level they did.

The key factors in this block's success are simple to identify. The first is the relevance of the stories themselves to the children's inner experiences. Fourth-graders are emerging from the crisis of individuality that marks the change that takes place during the ninth year, and the Sigurd Saga describes the heroic, sacrificial struggles of an individual encountering destiny. The second is that I organized the block down to the minutest detail, all the while having a clear vision of what I wanted to achieve. The third and most important factor is that the children had the opportunity to work in-depth artistically with the curricular material itself, in this case, in narrative writing.

In the years since, I have developed multiple variations on this approach. Two aspects of this method I have found invaluable: the students' reading, proofing, and assessing of each other's work, and the rewriting of first and second drafts. Through this practice of rewriting, the class has begrudgingly developed the understanding that, while inspiration is beneficial, hard work and continual refinement are essential on the path to achievement.

In the fifth grade, each child composed his or her own version of the *Ramayana*, the great epic

of ancient India, and later that year the children decided on their own to write versions of the Greek myths in the first person.

By sixth grade, a radically different approach was called for. Eleven- and twelve-year olds fiercely want to express their independence but at the same time need to understand that they must live and act within socially acceptable boundaries. The age is full of powerful feelings of sympathy and antipathy, of attraction and rejection. The children meet the world with either confrontation and conflict or whole-hearted enthusiasm. The class teacher's work must serve as a forge and anvil against which they can work. In this way, the students' passionate extremes of feeling can be brought to brief but significant moments of balance and perspective.

In this year, I made a departure from my methods of the prior year and a half. On the one hand, I went back to modeled writing to reawaken the children's sense for style but also to show them that they were still far from knowing everything. And on the other, I finally granted them opportunities to write out of themselves, replacing the earlier modeled assignments with ones that forced them to write from both sides of conflicting points of view. The resultant writing was as passionately alive and unrestrained in boldness as the children themselves.

As it is traditional in Waldorf schools to display examples of the students' artistic work, I will end with examples of how one girl in my class, Sarah Lande, handled the final writing assignments of a Roman history block in the fifth grade. The only guidelines were titles and approximate word count. What follows is an excellent example of the range of "in-your-face" feelings that govern the hearts of sixth-graders.

Throw Them to the Lions

"You should have been there!" laughed Marcus.

"It was hilarious," cried Enock, "the way those Christians bent down and prayed when they were about to be eaten. Ha! As if they were expecting their fake god Jesus to come down and save them. Those wretched brutes; I doubt their own god bothers himself about them."

Here Marcus stopped and took a deep breath, as if about to speak.

"You should have seen . . ." exclaimed Enock.

"Stop interrupting Enock, or I shall have to have you sent out; you are a rude boy. Anyway, as I was saying, the blood and gore were great. One man with half a leg and a big slash across his head actually tried to climb the wall. Oh, that was the funniest part; everybody made bets to see which one could push him down first; that was funny."

Marcus picked up a cake and started eating.

"I love how the sand looks afterwards with all the little puddles of blood," he said with his mouth full. "Then the stage masters went out afterwards and put all the blood and brains in pitchers and sold them. Oh, I just remembered I bought one; I don't remember where I put it. Oh well. But the best part is next week; one thousand Christians will be killed. I'll count on you being there; I know you'll love it."

I Will Fear No Evil

As I sit in the dark I feel the warm bodies all around me; outside the stamping of feet, inside the soft crying of babies and the murmur of prayer. Now I look towards the end of the tunnel and see a spot of light. At any other time I would have gone towards the light, but today I shrink back because out there in the light is something I could not imagine. Death had never been real to me, but today it was less real than it had ever been. My mother told me before we came here that we would sacrifice our lives for the sins of the world and that we would be rewarded, that my brother and I should not be afraid to go out of the dark room because we won't be dying; we would be starting a new life, a better life, a life that would last all eternity.

But there is no more time to think, for as I watch the speck of light grow it takes the shape of an open door and behind us the guards start jostling us forward, so I stand up and prepare to start my new life. I will fear no evil.

Before training to become a Waldorf teacher, Arthur Pittis was a biodynamic farmer at the Kimberton Farms Waldorf School in Kimberton, Pennsylvania. He is now in his fourteenth year at the Waldorf School of Baltimore

and is a member of the Eastern Regional Committee of AWSNA. Arthur has taken one class from first through eighth grade and is currently teaching the seventh grade. In addition, he has taught middle school arithmetic and algebra as a special subject for the past ten years. Arthur is doing pedagogical research in dramaturgy and performance theory for children as part of a Master of Drama Studies program at Johns Hopkins University.



Reverence

By William Ward

Who am I
to teach you, child?
I am old,
but not yet wise.
I've forgotten
all I've learned
except today's sunrise.

Teach me to touch
in water's flow,
enduring stone and sturdy wood,
matter's generous substance,
father ground of good.

Teach me to taste
in daily bread
the sacrifice of grain,
uniting in its narrow shell
sun, earth, wind, and rain.

Teach me to hear,
silently,
in wind and song the tones
of reverberating harmonies
revealing depths unknown.

Teach me to see,
cloudlessly,
world all thoughts awake
as still as the sun's reflection
in the mountain lake.

May I learn
how you dared cross
the hidden gate of birth,
willed yourself upright
to walk the fallen earth,
receptive, heard the world word,
woke thinking's living light . . .
as the rising sun, today,
embraces star-filled night.

Guide me, child,
to revere in you
one who would
the world renew
on the way
to becoming Man,
free in me
who I am.

William Ward is a class teacher at the Hawthorne Valley School in Harlemville, New York.

Reading Handwriting: Why Teach Handwriting in a Technological Age?

by John Bloom

Technology in all its forms represents a true challenge for educators. It has been pushed as a solution to "failing" education efforts and as a key to the nation's future success in the global economy. High technology seems to most educators to be an attractive and effective tool to educate children. But it does not help us foster the child's developing consciousness and provides little insight into the child's emerging individuality. Nonetheless, Waldorf educators are asked constantly why we do not use computers in the elementary grades. The comment that our approach seems "out of touch with reality" could not be more ironic or more mistrusting of common sense.

In Waldorf Education we try to help students be in touch with their senses and to realize who they are. We also try to provide the tools necessary for them to continue their education long after they have finished school. Despite its apparent obsolescence, writing by hand is a critical part of accomplishing these goals.

In an article called "The Living Hand" (*The New Yorker*, January 16, 1995), Edmund Morris discusses former President Reagan's handwritten announcement regarding his affliction with Alzheimer's disease:

Script's primary power is to convey the cursive flow of human thought, from brain to hand to pen to ink to eye – every waver, every loop, every character trembling with expression. Type has no comparable warmth; matrix dots and laser sprays and pixels of LCD interpose their various screens between writer and reader. . . . Why, in the age of voice mail, is script still

the preferred style for messages of great intimacy? Because it is both direct and enduring. Handwritten words mean more the more they are read, and time only increases their first force.

One could not make a more cogent argument for the value of handwriting.

On the first day of the first grade in a Waldorf school the children usually draw a straight line and a curved line – the basic forms of written language. They learn to write using block letters first and by third grade are using cursive writing. In the fourth grade they begin to use fountain pens. Because handwriting is crucial in a child's development, Waldorf teachers throughout this process take great care that students learn to write clearly and beautifully.

Handwriting immediately and directly expresses the state of the inner being of the person writing. Thus the writing the students do in their main lesson books – with its particular quality of line, placement on the

page, and so forth – provides a living picture of each student's unfolding individuality over the years. Technologically generated writing could never reveal each child's individuality and state of mind at the moment as does writing by hand.

Our work is to educate character. One place that the children's unfolding character, developing senses, and their feeling and thinking life are revealed is in their written work. Handwriting gives the teacher and parents a window into

The Lamb by William Blake

*Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life and bid thee feed
By the stream and over the mead,
Gave thee clothing of delight
Softest clothing, woolly bright.
Gave thee such a tender voice
Making all the vales rejoice.*

A poem in cursive writing from the third-grade main lesson book on clothing.

the child's inner life. Technologically produced writing masks the living reality with which both the teacher and the child need to be in touch. Our handwriting is an expression of our inner being. But it also shapes us. Writing by hand is a creative and transformative act. The forms of the letters shape the person writing them. As the children form the letters so too are they forming their thoughts and feelings, and, in turn, their senses are being nourished. You can get an intimation of this relationship between handwriting and our inner being by consciously adopting a new handwriting. Word processing does not offer this opportunity for transformative involvement with language.

There is no question that technology will play an important part in the lives of our students. But each benefit gained through technology will have its concomitant sacrifice. What is lost when word processing replaces writing by hand is just one example. For this reason, we introduce computer skills and many other aspects of working with technology into our schools with an awareness of, and preparation for, that sacrifice.

Children approach the realm of conceptual thinking at about the age of fourteen – the appropriate time to introduce technology into the curriculum. They are then ready in their development to consciously understand and constructively use the gifts of technology.

John Bloom is administrator at the San Francisco Waldorf School. He is author of *Photography at Bay: Interviews, Essays, and Review*, published by the University of New Mexico Press in 1993. John has four children; two have graduated from the San Francisco Waldorf School, one is currently enrolled, and one is soon to be in the kindergarten there.

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Class Size

by Peg Lopata

According to the "common wisdom" about education, smaller classes mean better education. Public schools are faulted for their large classes. Most independent schools have small classes and are proud of it. Many parents send their children to independent schools just so that they will get the individual attention possible in a small class.

Thus, when I first visited a Waldorf school, I was surprised that many of the classes were large, some with more than twenty-five children. I learned, though, that in the Waldorf world, this was not a matter of concern, that it is, in fact, considered pedagogically desirable.

On many issues in education, such as early reading, computers, and competitive sports, the Waldorf approach goes against mainstream ideas. On the question of class size, too, Waldorf represents a dissenting view. Waldorf educators are not against small classes. They do not consider them necessary for quality education, though, and they see large classes as having some important advantages.

Social development is an important part of Waldorf Education, and the Waldorf teachers I interviewed pointed out several ways by which a larger class can help this process. A child who has been pampered and overprotected by parents may benefit from a larger class in which he is just one among many. Children learn from watching each other, and the more diverse the group, the more there is to learn. Jean McKay, a Waldorf class teacher for sixteen years, explains: "We're all enlarged by living with the gifts and weaknesses of others. The work that happens between children develops their full humanity."

Also, in a large group there will more likely be a balanced mix of the four temperaments – sanguine, choleric, melancholic and phlegmatic. This creates a socially and intellectually stimulating environment. Especially in the upper grades, diversity promotes complex discussion and exciting debates. Also, a large, diverse class can create theatrical productions and carry out class projects that are on a grander scale. Just as a sapling thrives in a diverse forest, children become more flexible and adaptable in a diverse classroom.

This type of growth is necessary to become a fully capable adult.

One concern regarding large classes is that it is possible for

difficult or slower students to "slip through the cracks." But in fact some children may be helped by a large class. According to Roberto Trostli, class teacher at the Hartsbrook School in Hadley, Massachusetts, "Even those children who have difficulty in the classroom get carried along by the will of the entire class to do what is asked of them."

In a culture that focuses on the individual, the Waldorf classroom is a model based on a different perspective. Jan Baudendistel, also of the Hartsbrook School, believes that too much individual attention can sometimes be a burden to a child. In a large class, the slower thinker can "hide" in the class and take his or her own time mulling over what has been said without worrying about having to speak up. Therefore, in a large class the children can develop and learn at their own pace.

In a smaller group, the child is more frequently in the spotlight. Being singled out in this way can be overwhelming for some children. Young children are often shy; older children may

Children learn from watching each other, and the more diverse the group, the more there is to learn.

be self-conscious. Baudendistel feels that, for the elementary school child, being a member of a group is more important than standing out as an individual. The ability to stand alone evolves slowly and naturally as the child grows.

Individual attention is appropriate at times, but it is better given outside the group, where the child will not be exposed. Virtually all Waldorf schools offer individual and small group tutoring for students who need help with specific academic skills.

Although many Waldorf classes are large, the individual child is still focused on in the Waldorf setting. But some of the ways in which this is done are different than in public and other private schools. For example, Rudolf Steiner suggested that teachers hold each of their children in thought before going to sleep, imagining them in their best light. Sometimes, Waldorf teachers join together to "hold" a child or a child's family when, there are extraordinary challenges, such as serious illness, facing that child and family. This type of individual attention affects the child in an intangible way, as a prayer may benefit a sick loved one.

Also, Waldorf teachers spend much time and energy getting to know each child personally. Teachers about to begin first grade visit each child at home to meet the parents and siblings and to become familiar with the child's home life. The relationship with the child and the family usually continues for the eight years of primary school. Over time, even a teacher with a large class gets to know each child quite well.

A large class does not work for every child. Arthur Auer of the Pine Hill Waldorf School in Wilton, New Hampshire, notes that "at times, the bubbliness of the big class is overwhelming for some children." Also, ultrasensitive children may have trouble focusing in a large group. A child with a serious learning disability or numerous special needs may be better off in a smaller group.

Also, a large class is not manageable for every teacher. For some, fewer than twenty students is "large enough" for a class. Maintaining

order may be difficult, and the demands of holding parent conferences, writing individual narrative reports, checking homework, and grading tests for a large number of children can become overwhelming.

Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, was well aware of this issue. When asked by first Waldorf teachers how many children should be in a class, Dr. Steiner replied, "How many parents can you handle?"

On the whole, large classes seem to work and may even be something positive in Waldorf schools. That doesn't mean that large classes will work in a typical public school environment. Waldorf school children are likely to come from privileged and stable home environments and are unlikely to present serious disciplinary or academic problems. This is not the case in many public schools. A first-grade teacher at a small New Hampshire public elementary school laments the fact that her children might never have had an adult read them a story. She wonders if an adult has spoken to them in the past twenty-four hours. She says:

I need a smaller class because I can't maintain more than twenty children. I have some six-year olds who haven't had breakfast. Right now I have a suicidal seven-year old waiting for foster care placement, who takes up the energy of many adults.

The situation today in many public schools might call for smaller classes. And as Waldorf schools come to serve a wider spectrum of the population, the thinking on class size may in some situations have to adapt to social realities.

Peg Lopata is a freelance writer and painter living in southern New Hampshire. She has written for numerous regional and national magazines, and her paintings are in galleries in New England. Peg has a degree in sociology and library science. She has two children, ages two and five. The older child attends a Waldorf kindergarten.

The Organization of the Waldorf School

by Siegfried Finser

One aspect of Waldorf Education, and one which is often bewildering to newcomers and outsiders, is school organization. This piece by Siegfried Finser carefully describes the various "organs" that make up the "body" of the typical Waldorf school and their separate, complementary, and sometimes overlapping functions. Christopher Schaefer's article (p. 19) describes the benefits of this type of organization and suggests that it can be applied to public schools. Sheila Harrington (p.24) portrays the vital community life that a Waldorf school can help create, in part because of the way it is organized. These three articles together provide an excellent introduction to and overview of the organization of Waldorf schools. As Siegfried Finser points out, however, the Waldorf community is constantly working to refine and improve school organization.

R.E.K.

The Rudolf Steiner Foundation is the financial services organization for the Anthroposophical movement in North America. It works with borrowers and lenders as well as givers and receivers. During the past twelve years, it has advised hundreds of clients on matters related to fund development and credit worthiness.

In our work with Waldorf schools, we at the Foundation frequently deal with organizational issues. We are asked to clarify the tasks of the several organs of the school – the Faculty, the College of Teachers, the school Board of Trustees, and the Administration. We are often asked to strengthen the work of the Board and the Administration.

Following are some ideas concerning the organization of the Waldorf school. These ideas, based on our experience with client schools and on our work in Anthroposophy, are part of a continuing search for inner realities. They are not meant to establish any absolute norm. Also, they do not apply to every school. Schools are at different stages of growth, and in some schools all

organs are not yet fully developed. Some schools have unique situations in which certain organs are simply not required.

The Task of the Individual Teacher

The task of the individual teacher is relatively clear and is the best understood of several functions. On this question Rudolf Steiner gave the most help. The main task of the teacher is to guide the process of incarnation of each child, a process begun by the parents and continued by the teachers.

In lectures published under the title *Study of Man*, Rudolf Steiner describes how the teacher helps each child's incarnation and how the teacher's work assists the integration of the various subtle bodies so that the child has the best opportunity to be a "whole being" in adulthood. It is a sequential task in which each preparatory step overlaps the next. The physical body, etheric body, astral body, and ego (higher spiritual self) are nurtured in such a way that the other aspects of the soul and spirit can unfold in natural order at later stages of life.

The primary task, then, of the Waldorf teacher is to help each child to incarnate harmoniously, integrate the various bodies, and prepare for the later incarnation of the three soul members and the three spiritual members inherent within them.

The Task of the Faculty

The task of the Faculty is to help the teachers be successful in their work. The Faculty functions well, as an organ of the school, when it fosters supportive collegial relationships, increases understanding of the educational processes, and encourages the development of improved capacities in each teacher. When the

teachers feel helped and supported in their work through their participation in the faculty body and its activities, we can say that the Faculty is meeting its responsibility to the school.

The Faculty naturally engages in, but is not limited to, such activities as:

- Pedagogical and curriculum study.
- Study of child development and actual children and grades.
- Understanding current social, political, and economic events.
- Deepening understanding of Rudolf Steiner's indications for teaching.
- Structuring the school's daily, weekly, and yearly rhythms.
- Creating the social forms within the school community.

The fundamental responsibility of the Faculty is to support the work and development of each teacher and to foster the creation of a professional faculty body with purpose and direction.

The Responsibilities of the College of Teachers

A teacher can, usually after a year at a school, elect to become a member of the College of Teachers. Not all teachers do. But when a teacher does join the College of Teachers, a greater commitment to the other teachers, to the school, and to Anthroposophy is asked. This is because the College has tasks that are qualitatively different from those of the Faculty. It is additionally responsible for the development of the school, its organization, and its connections with the land and the surrounding community.

Also, the College coordinates and balances the activities aimed at fulfilling two major spiritual tasks. One is to ensure that the work of the individual teachers with the incarnating children can be fruitful. The other is to guide the incarnating processes of the "being" of the school. Just as each child is a picture at every moment of an incarnating human being, so the life of the

school at each moment is a picture of the incarnating personality of the school. Responsibility for that emerging being of the school falls within the teachers' realm when they become members of the College.

Activities of the College include:

- Forming the ideals of the school and stimulating the activities necessary to realize them.
- Ensuring the quality of programs and maintaining the highest possible standards in the conduct of the school's activities.
- Envisioning the future of the school.
- Creating policies by which staff are paid and will be cared for in illness and old age.
- Creating the administrative procedures by which children are admitted and parents are oriented and introduced into the parent community.
- Ensuring that the budget reflects the ideals of the school and that the manner in which income is generated supports both the social and financial intentions of the school.
- Deciding how the school grows, on what land it locates, what buildings it needs, how the buildings should look, and what image of the nature of the school they should convey.
- Dealing with problems between people, and around particular persons, and resolving conflicts in a positive way.

In a young school that does not yet have a visible College of Teachers, the Faculty and Board will together carry these responsibilities in a way that works for them.

The Task of the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is comprised of teachers, parents, and supporters of the school. Its work appears to be largely financial and legal. The Board of Trustees is almost exclusively involved with such activities as:

- Determining and planning how the school can efficiently and effectively realize its vision.

- Overseeing the acquisition, renovation, and maintenance of land and buildings; and managing the conservation, wise use, and growth of capital resources.
- Achieving the necessary balance of income and expenses.
- Ensuring the exercise of budgetary disciplines, from forming and finalizing the budget, to monitoring and acting on imbalances, through seeing from year to year that budgets reveal direction and purpose.
- Creating and organizing a volunteer structure around the school that provides ladders of opportunity for volunteer development and recognition.
- Nurturing the service of volunteers and encouraging their involvement in the many tasks and challenges that make the school a known and respected presence in the community.

The sometimes routine and mundane subjects worked on by Board members are actually revelations of progress as the personality of the school struggles to take its place in the world and to become wholly present.

- Managing the external relationships of the school with the surrounding community so that mutual respect and cooperation develop.
- Formulating policies under which the school conducts its business with vendors, contractors, government agencies, and local organizations.
- Resolving problems that are not resolved by other organs of the school.

In the Waldorf community, the spiritual tasks of overseeing the process of the incarnation of the children and of the being of the school are usually seen as the exclusive domain of the individual teachers, the Faculty as a whole, and the College of Teachers. The Board of Trustees usually is seen as having the financial and legal tasks. If the Board assumes a spiritual task, it may be

criticized for overstepping its bounds. This view does not coincide with our perceptions of what really happens in many schools. Something is missing in this frequently held view of how a school functions and should function.

After contemplating the many tasks of Trustees, we believe that the Board of Trustees has the chief responsibility for the spiritual task of incarnating the being of the school into its full reality. However, the Board can only carry this responsibility in close collaboration with the College of Teachers, which is actively concerned with both the incarnation of the children and that of the school.

We are advocating the acknowledgment of the spiritual work of the Board, not on philosophical grounds, but on the basis of what we have observed in Waldorf schools. The Board functioning as a purely temporal organ is not what we find in the schools.

A school Board of Trustees includes teachers, College members, parents, and members of the community. The Board is a microcosm of the entire community that cares about the incarnation of the school.

Boards take on important and often monumental tasks. They marshal immense volunteer forces to bring about the purchase of a building, the acquisition of land, the renovation, enlargement, and improvement of facilities. Boards carry out significant capital campaigns to make possible a suitable home for the school. They often have to fight for the very existence of the school.

This work is detailed; it is concerned with the physical realities; it consumes much volunteer time and energy. In what it brings into being, the work often creates miracles. Above all, it is permeated (usually) with spiritual energy. When work is permeated with spiritual energy, those doing it are carried in their activity by forces much greater than their own personal strengths. They are playing parts in a drama in which the choreography exceeds their individual and collective capacities.

The sometimes routine and mundane subjects worked on by Board members are actually revelations of progress as the personality of the school struggles to take its place in the world and to become wholly present. Financial information is a mere shadow of the reality it mirrors. It reveals the biographical process that is bringing about the full individuality of the school.

Administration

Administration has sometimes been called "the art of the possible." It involves "how things are done" at the school and helps form the identity of the school. Good administration develops procedures that foster orderliness, consistency, accuracy, and completeness.

Administrative work does not exclude anyone. Every individual working within the school has some administrative task at one time or another. The official administrative staff, however, provide the focus for all such work, regardless of who may actually be doing it.

Administration involves so many details that a high level of consciousness cannot be maintained for each. Procedures by which a group of details can be routinely managed must be created with great consciousness. Administration is an art form that is intensely human and yet relies on systems-thinking in order to stay human. It ultimately serves the entire school, supports all the organs, maintains the vast flow of detail, and establishes connections required for the organization to function.

Administration also acts as the facilitating link between groups and committees of the school. Frequently called upon as "the bearers of consciousness," administrative personnel remind, push, and heckle individuals as part of their general task of seeing that things get done.

Administration supports all that happens in the school yet remains relatively invisible. It is a kind of adhesive, holding all together, but staying unobtrusive so as not to get in the way of what others must do. Administration, no matter who

actually does it, translates imaginations, inspirations, and intuitions into "real-time" processes that retain the spiritual intentions of the school.

The Question of Ultimate Authority

Many schools feel that identifying which individual or which organ has the authority to make a final decision on an issue clarifies responsibility. Sometimes it does. However, authority is such that it cannot easily be divided up or evenly distributed. Today, authority is usually earned or is brought over from a previous lifetime during which it was earned.

Authority is usually gained in the same way as trust. It grows incrementally, in small steps, as individuals and groups act and interact. Groups and committees gain authority largely to the extent that they share a common spiritual task, have penetrated it with their understanding, and imbue their activity with their feelings and wholehearted goodwill.

Authority seldom works if it is arbitrarily conferred. And true authority that has grown out of inner striving often goes unrecognized, even by those who observe its presence. It may be better to experiment with responsibility, assigning it to competent and willing individuals and also recognizing authority when it grows out of such assumption of responsibility.

Summary

There are two tasks central to the mission of any Waldorf school:

(A) To be a focused entity in which the incarnating processes of children are guided, assisted, and nurtured.

(B) To incarnate the distinct being whose biography represents the birth, development, maturation, and culmination of the entity called "the school."

If (A) is not managed well, the school loses its reason to exist.

If (B) is not managed well, the school does not enter into a healthy physical and social existence. Either one not fulfilled weakens the other. They are both essential; neither can be taken for granted.

The teachers have primary responsibility for (A). The Faculty is the organ that assists and supports the teachers in achieving (A). The College of Teachers is the organ that inspires and integrates (A) and (B) so that both are accomplished. The Board of Trustees has primary responsibility for (B). Administration of the school supplies the healthy processes that facilitate both (A) and (B) and weaves the common threads between the various organs into a cohesive pattern that fully reflects the spirit of the school.

All the organs are not only essential, but each has significant spiritual, social, and temporal responsibilities. None is inferior or subordinate to another. Each has to be competent and also must be inspired by the spirit that lives in the organism of the school.

There is probably no such thing as purely temporal work. The ancient saying, "Matter is never without spirit; spirit is never without matter," pertains to the work of a school. The question to be answered is, "What spirit?" or, more correctly put, "Which spirit?" By segregating any organ from its direct spiritual participation, the school becomes more vulnerable to unfriendly influence.

We hope these thoughts are helpful to all who care about the continued development of Waldorf Education. We are sure that, as we at the Rudolf Steiner Foundation work more with them and experience the unique way each school expresses them, we will evolve our understanding and gain further insights. Please share with us any comments or thoughts that this short description may evoke. Disagreement is welcome, since it also helps us to form sound judgment.

Siegfried E. Finser is a graduate of the Rudolf Steiner School of New York, Rutgers University (B.A.), and of New York University (M.A. in Educational Psychology). He also studied at the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. He spent many

years in the corporate world as an executive with Xerox and ITT and as a management consultant and division head for Barrington and Company and Harbridge House.

Siegfried taught at the Rudolf Steiner School of New York for seven years and has been Treasurer of the Anthroposophical Society of America and the President of the Threefold Educational Foundation. He cofounded and, until this year, was Chairman of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation. The Foundation works with money to foster socially constructive projects such as Waldorf schools, Biodynamic farms, Camphill villages for the handicapped, and similar initiatives and organizations.

Waldorf Parents on the Information Superhighway

Internet is a computer-based, international electronic mail medium. If you have a computer and a modem you can join and subscribe to any of a variety of "mailing lists" on different topics. You then receive electronic mail from all the other member's on the list, and your own messages go to all other subscribers.

Recently a "Waldorf" mailing list has been established on the Internet. While most of the subscribers are Waldorf parents, some Waldorf teachers and administrators also participate. Messages from many parts of the United States and Canada appear, and also from other parts of the world, including Germany, Scotland, Russia, Australia and the Far East.

Festivals, fairy tales, the effect of music on children, financial models for schools, and the challenge of dealing with gifted children are among the many topics that are dealt with.

To subscribe to the Waldorf mailing list send the following command to `LISTSERV @ SJUVM` or `LISTSERV @ SJVM.STJOHNS.EDU` in the body of e-mail: `SUBSCRIBE WALDORF` your first name/your last name. For example: `SUBSCRIBE WALDORF Clara Smith`. There is also a mailing list on the Internet for Anthroposophy.

School Forms in Waldorf Education: Enhancing the Learning Partnership

by Christopher Schaefer, Ph.D.

This article is a summary of a talk given at Teacher's College, Columbia University, on December 3, 1994, at a conference entitled "The Politics and Economics of Holistic Education," sponsored by the Center for the Spiritual Foundations of Education. Readers wishing to get the full text with references may contact the writer through Sunbridge College (914-425-0055).

There is today a crisis in education, particularly in public education. The primary partners in the educational enterprise – teachers, parents, and children – feel isolated, alienated, and powerless. Many good teachers are leaving the system. Many children are not being educated. Many parents want to take their children out of the system, and if they are able, do so. There is an obvious need for radical change, and attempts at reform and restructuring are being made in many parts of the country.

Waldorf Education has something to contribute to the discussion about school reform.

Regarding aims and methods, for example, Waldorf Education holds that schooling should serve human freedom and creativity. Education should not aim primarily at creat-

ing employable, skilled adults, but rather at helping children to become self-aware, creative, and responsible human beings. In Waldorf Education, there is an effort to educate the whole child, the capacities of thinking, of feeling, and of will. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, not only described these three soul faculties in detail but also proposed a curriculum in which each is addressed in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Waldorf Education can also speak fruitfully about school organization. The organization of a Waldorf school aims to bring to consciousness and foster the right relationships between the partners of the school community. School form can and should help create a healthy school and a healthy sense of partnership.

The partners in a school community are the teachers, children, parents, administrators, and friends (alumni, alumni parents, supporters). In a healthy school form, the basic aims of each of these partners are recognized and furthered. The organization of the Waldorf schools is such a form, enhancing the learning partnership in the school.

After many discussions with people involved in schools, I believe that each of the partners in the educational enterprise has several primary concerns.

Teachers want to be able to meet the children in a free and creative way through offering a

The organization of a Waldorf school aims to bring to consciousness and foster the right relationships between the partners of the community.

curriculum that responds to the children's need for an age-appropriate, stimulating, and holistic education. Because of their experience in educa-

tion and their love of children, they want freedom in the classroom and, with their colleagues, a voice in determining the content and nature of the education. Also, teachers want a say about who their colleagues will be.

Children want first of all to be "met," to be seen by the teacher, and to be appreciated as the individuals they are and can become. They want

to learn. They want to be encouraged and inspired to learn with enthusiasm.

Parents send their child, that which is most precious to them in life, to school. They hope that their child will be encouraged, inspired, and educated. They want to understand the education their child is receiving and to support it financially and with their time, energy, and knowledge.

Administrators, if they have not been brainwashed by corporate models of education, want to support and nurture the educational process. They want, in their myriad administrative tasks, to be perceived by teachers and parents as equal partners in creating a healthy school.

The alumni, former parents, friends, and supporters of a school also wish to have the possibility of helping, of getting involved, financially and in other ways.

In almost all public schools, the school form does not meet the needs and wants of these partners. Teachers have limited freedom and responsibility. They are controlled by a hierarchic school bureaucracy that tells them what to teach and how and when to teach it.

Children are often being educated toward only two basic ends: to achieve high scores on standardized tests and to become skilled workers in the competitive economic system.

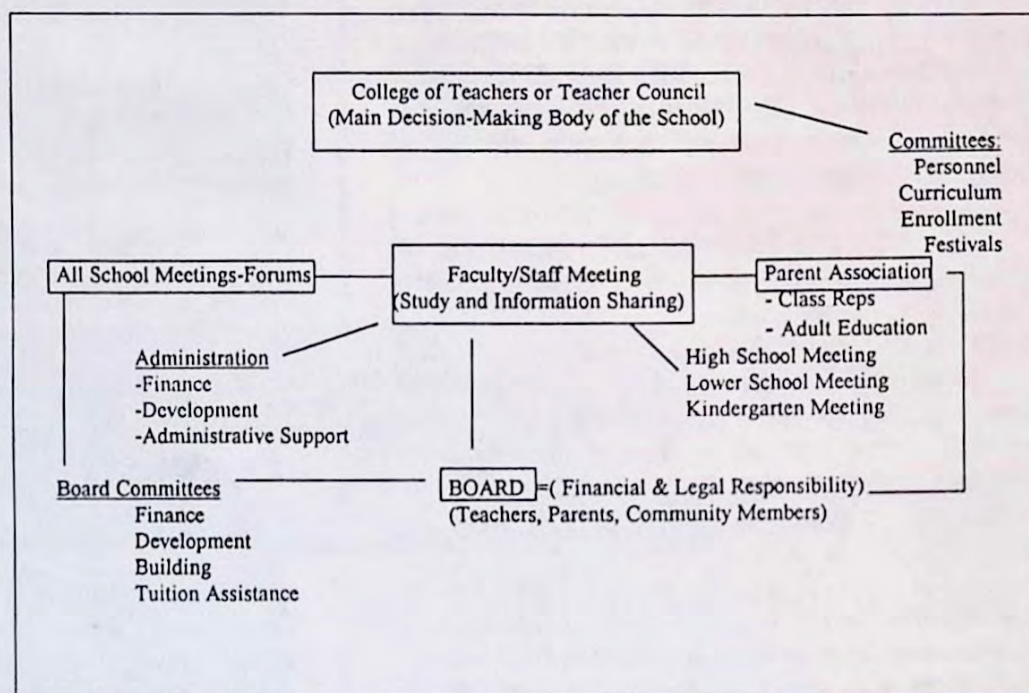
Parents feel left out of the educational process. Often they have no choice about the school or the teacher their child will have.

Administrators have become the managers rather than the supporters of education,

making pedagogical decisions that they may not be qualified to make. The higher one's position in the administrative bureaucracy, the less contact one has with children. Administrators are often perceived by the other partners in education as managers or adversaries rather than as partners.

The principles of Waldorf school organization provide an interesting and useful alternative to the centralized bureaucratic model of public education.

There are over one hundred-twenty Waldorf schools in the United States and Canada. Each school is independent and self-administered and linked to other schools through the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). There is no one standard school form. Each school is striving to find the structures and relationships that best fit its circumstances. However, most full Waldorf schools (K-12) have the following form.



In Waldorf schools, there are no principals or headmasters. There are chairpersons of the College (or Council) of the Faculty and often of the High School and Lower School. The College of Teachers or the Faculty Council is usually the main decision-making body of the school. It makes curricular and staffing decisions and also

decides on important aspects of the budget and salaries. The College meets weekly and usually sees itself as inwardly and outwardly carrying the main life of the school. Membership in the College usually is open to full-time teachers and to administrators who have been at the school one year or more.

The weekly faculty-staff meeting is a time for study and information sharing. It is often a place where committees report and where schedules are shared. The main faculty committees, reporting either to the College/Council or to the full faculty staff meeting, are usually a curriculum committee, a personnel committee, a festivals committee, and a budget committee.

Most Waldorf schools have a small administrative staff – a bookkeeper, one or two secretaries, a development person, and sometimes a main administrator. The administrative staff of the school reports to both the Board and the College and is seen as serving the educational process. It is the servant of the teachers and the school – not the manager, which today is the case in many schools and colleges. Most teachers are involved in administrative tasks as well, and some teachers spend up to a third of their time in committee or administrative work.

In a full Waldorf school (K-12), there are also separate high school, lower school, and kindergarten faculty meetings.

Waldorf schools have a parent representative for each class. The class representative works with the class teacher (in the lower grades) or with the high school class advisor. Generally, there is also a Parent Council or a Parent Teacher Association which has a variety of functions – from planning adult education work, to running fairs and special events, to raising issues of concern at all-school community meetings.

Parents also are on the school Board of Trustees, often comprising a majority. There they provide the legal, financial, real estate, public relations, and fundraising expertise needed to develop the school. The Board is an active partner in the life of the school, seeing that tuition and donations support the operating budget, and

working hard to provide adequate facilities. Board committees usually include Finance, Development, Building, and Tuition Assistance. These committees, like the Board itself, are composed mostly of parents, former school parents, and friends of the school.

In the typical Waldorf school form, the main decision-making bodies of the school are the College of Teachers and the Board of Trustees. The College carries the main pedagogical, internal responsibility, and the Board, the main financial responsibility. Both these groups and the main committees work with a consensus process of decision-making in which all members have to agree to the decision being made.

Teachers, having the central role in determining the content and form of the education, can fall into the error of not valuing the concerned, and at times critical, parent as a true partner in the process.

Thus, in a Waldorf school, the teachers – the people most intimately involved in the education of the children – have the responsibility of running the school and deciding on curriculum and pedagogy. The children are being taught by individuals who want to nurture them as full, creative human beings. The parents have many opportunities for involvement in the decision-making processes of the school, as Board members, class representatives, and as members of the parent association. Administrators have a supporting role, making possible the functioning of the school. They are not the directors or managers of the school.

Friends and supporters of the school have opportunities to help. One woman I know, a former public school teacher, had not known about Waldorf Education when her children were young. She is now a committed supporter of Waldorf Education and spends countless hours in school Board meetings helping a new Waldorf school to grow in her community.

In Waldorf schools there are, of course, considerable struggles and difficulties. Teachers, having the central role in determining the content and form of the education, can fall into the error of not valuing the concerned, and at times critical, parent as a true partner in the process. Also, since there is no hierarchy, there is the issue of teacher evaluation. Who evaluates whom and on what basis? A clear teacher evaluation policy and program for professional development are important. In some Waldorf schools, this has been implemented. In others, it has not, and parental disenchantment and dwindling enrollment can be the telltale signs of the need.

Usually, though, the Waldorf school creates communities of unusual vitality. Teachers, administrators, children, parents, and friends are actively engaged in and committed to the life of their school. The rapid growth of Waldorf Education on this continent testifies not only to the value of the educational philosophy but also to the validity of its principles of school organization.

The principles that underlie Waldorf school forms go back to the origin of Waldorf Education in 1919. In the chaos of post-World War I Europe, Rudolf Steiner suggested an alternative approach to social organization, which he called the Threefold Social Order.

Steiner held that society has three distinct spheres – cultural, political, and economic. Each of these spheres has its own concerns. Each is governed by its own law which, if followed, maximizes the effectiveness of activity in that sphere. In the cultural sphere, the principle is freedom. In the political or rights domain, the principle is equality; in the economic life, fraternity and cooperation. According to Steiner, each sphere should function independently of the others. It is especially important that the cultural/spiritual sphere should not be controlled by the political sphere, or state.

Education is part of the cultural sphere. Therefore, in Waldorf Education, the freedom of the teachers and of the school from the state is held to be very important, as is the freedom of parents to choose a school for their children.

The school, like every social institution, has itself a threefold division. The teachers play the dominant role in the cultural/ spiritual life of the school. They have substantial freedom in the classroom, exercised within an agreed-upon philosophy and curriculum of education. The teachers make all pedagogical decisions together and also most personnel decisions, usually in consultation with other members of the school community. The teachers help parents and the other members of the school community to understand the education and its underlying view of child development. Here, leadership is individual. The teacher teaches in his or her classroom, using his or her individual capacities and judgment. And the teachers together make decisions on all pedagogical matters.

The rights sphere of a school concerns questions such as moving the school, disciplinary procedures, dress code, salary and tuition policies, structure and principles of school governance, long-term planning, and the school schedule. These are all areas that affect the members of the school community more or less equally. On these issues, all the adult partners – teachers, administrative staff, parents, and friends – should have a voice. Issues are discussed by all, and decisions are reached by consultation and consensus. In Waldorf schools, this area of rights and responsibilities, of agreements between partners, is often the aspect of school life of which people are least conscious.

The economic sphere involves budget, tuition, and salary decisions. The Faculty and school Board confer and work together to produce a viable financial policy. If, in the cultural life of the school, the teachers help the parents understand the education, so in the economic sphere, the parents – with their tuition and their expertise – help the teachers by making the education possible. The principle of fraternity is evident in tuition aid to needy families and, in some schools, a salary system that takes into account individual circumstances (for example, the number of children in a teacher's family). In the economic sphere, leadership is "republican," being based on competence and delegated to individuals who carry out the work on behalf of the whole.

The threefold organization of the school can be shown in a chart as follows:

Threefold Social Order	Principle	School	Principle of Leadership
Cultural Life (Spirit)	Freedom	Teachers/College or Council	Individual
Rights Life (Soul)	Equality	Everyone/Faculty/PTA/Forum	Democratic
Economic Life (Body)	Fraternity	Board/Dialogue with faculty (Committee System) Task Divisions	Republican

education is controlled by a political and economic process. Teachers have limited freedom in the classroom and little voice in the discussion of the mission and purpose of their schools. There is no partnership among teachers, parents, and administrators in arriving at agreements on rights and responsibilities. Hence, relations are often adversarial, and agreements are often not honored.

When these principles are consciously worked with and implemented (as they are in most Waldorf schools), an unusual vitality results, with all partners in the school community involved and dedicated to the life of the school. This is because the body, soul, and spirit of the institution and of the individuals involved are being nourished.

Another important principle of Waldorf schools is that of collegiality, of non-hierarchical forms. Behind this is the idea that hierarchical forms block the proper meeting between individuals and do not allow people to be effective partners on the path of mutual development. In the struggle to arrive at consensus, as equals, in faculty meetings or on the Board, we are encouraged to understand and value each other's thoughts and to bring to consciousness our own one-sidedness. We are encouraged, coaxed, and sometimes pushed to meet each other at deeper levels. For Steiner, modern Western consciousness is increasingly isolated, self-conscious, and cut off from others and the world. Thus, the search for social forms that encourage people to meet at deeper levels is an essential aspect of social reform.

In most institutions of public education, the reverse of these principles is in effect. Public

There is also an unconscious economic relationship, since public education is tax-funded. The result is limited creativity, adversarial relationships, and pronounced individual or group egotism in the schools. People are prevented from truly meeting. Education suffers. Everyone suffers, especially the children. We in Waldorf Education need to consciously study, work with, and experiment with the social forms suggested by Rudolf Steiner and with his underlying sociological perspective. Steiner sought forms that bring to consciousness the right relationships and the right attitudes between the partners in any commonly willed activity. Along with the rich curriculum of Waldorf Education, he provided appropriate principles for building effective school partnerships. We need to understand those principles and to share them with those seeking educational reform today.

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The Waldorf Community

By Sheila Harrington



I have been a parent at the Washington Waldorf School for seven years. During that time, I have come to believe that a Waldorf school is more than a school and that those who come here have a task beyond the education of children.

Teachers, because of their years of training, come with a sense of mission and a conscious knowledge of their broader goals. Parents, however, who come to enroll their children, only gradually and almost unknowingly assume another task. By participating in the life of a Waldorf school, we parents and teachers ultimately are building a village.

What does this mean? The members of any school community have shared concerns, as do individuals who come together for any common task – a political campaign or disaster relief, for example. What makes a Waldorf community special? What makes it a village?

The Washington Waldorf School is located in a suburb of Washington, D.C. The Washington metropolitan area is not what one thinks of as a nurturing environment. There are many factors that make maintaining a stable community life here difficult. People change jobs, homes, and spouses; relatives often live far away; days and evenings are filled by work, meetings, team sports, projects, classes, errands, and the ubiquitous television. Children come to the school from widely dispersed locations, and for classmates and families to see each other after school or on weekends usually means a lot of driving.

The traditional environment of the human being, for thousands of years, has been the village. Human beings are made for a life in a cluster of shelters around a central gathering

place, working, playing, and raising children together, following the rhythms of the seasons, celebrating common joys, mourning common sorrows, within speaking, walking, and touching distance of one another, living with a sense of belonging and purpose.

Many of us in twentieth-century America find ourselves living otherwise, but on some level we know what we are missing. We are starved for these seemingly simple yet unattainable things. We are desperate to fill a void and – without knowing the names of our neighbors – seek community through the media and the Internet, and satisfaction through constant activity, entertainment, and the accumulation of information and possessions. These are poor and empty substitutes for face-to-face and hand-to-hand contact with other human beings. Overwhelming pressures divide us from one another. We must struggle constantly to build and maintain a sense of community that will help us live a sane and whole life, raise healthy children, and do useful work.

Parents choose a Waldorf school for a variety of reasons. Some are familiar with Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy and believe that a school should have a spiritual foundation, but many are only slightly aware of the underlying philosophy. They are attracted mainly by the whole-person, arts-based approach to learning. Or they are drawn to what they perceive to be a nurturing environment, a peaceful and beautiful refuge in a hectic world. Whatever the particular reason for choosing Waldorf Education, the parents share a deep concern for their children and for their children's education.

Inevitably, through a connection with the school, other connections are formed. Through our children, we parents find each other. Parents raising their children together naturally look to one another for support. "I have jury duty. Will you take my child after school?" "Where can I buy

this book?" "Do you know a good dentist? . . . a carpenter? . . . a non-dairy cake recipe? . . . a house for rent? . . . a babysitter?" "What's wrong with my car?" Questions like these are asked and answered again and again. Parents take responsibility for each other's children, giving rides, snacks, and help, stepping in during emergencies. When there is a new baby, an illness, or a crisis, families provide meals and child care for each other. Parents of older children can understand and help parents of little ones. Families console each other through hard times, remember birthdays, pass along outgrown clothing, share information and thoughts on subjects ranging from diaper rash to teenage drinking.

We make connections with each other through helping the school with practical tasks. A Waldorf school's survival depends not just on its teachers and tuition but on the time, energy, talent, ideas, and goodwill of the parent community. Evoking the quilting bees and barn raisings of another time, parents pitch in on school projects – scrubbing, painting, gardening, making curtains and costumes, building a sandbox, and organizing flea markets, auctions, and car washes. Parents help in the classroom, accompany groups on field trips, serve on committees, and offer their professional skills. The annual bazaar is a major community activity with a constellation of smaller related ones – weekly handwork groups where small children are welcome, cooking groups, and decoration-making groups.

Often these activities are as much social occasions as work. Sometimes families gather just for fun, too, for a potluck dinner, picnic, or country dance. At the Washington Waldorf School, independent gatherings have grown out of shared interests and concerns. These include a fathers' group, several book groups, and a parent drama group. Some families spend holidays and vacations together.

The result is that we know each other over a long time, in different ways – dressed up,



Parents enjoy the traditional May festival, one of the high points in the cycle of the school year.

stressed-out, grubby and sweaty, making mistakes, learning something new. We know each other's families, sometimes intimately. We experience each other as whole and complex individuals, not as persons in the limited role of "teacher," "parent," or "student." We change and are changed by one another.

We parents become family to all the community's children. In a Waldorf school, the community is small and close-knit and lives by certain predictable patterns. Thus we see everyone's children, year after year, in changing yet familiar contexts, moving from kindergarten to the grades, performing in children's festivals, going off on their farm stay, playing in the orchestra, selling pizza, giving speeches in German, playing soccer, singing in the choir. We watch every child unfold from chubby toddlerhood through lanky adolescence and beyond, each child at each stage of development revealing surprises: a quirky sense of humor, a forthright opinion, an unusual new haircut! We see the first grader who had difficulty forming letters creating beautiful calligraphy as a

high school student and the shy third grader blossoming on stage in the eighth grade.

The perpetual renewal of life, embodied in our children, is reflected in the rhythms of the Waldorf year. For the children, the days and weeks are marked by familiar songs and verses. The whole community celebrates a cycle of seasonal festivals – Michaelmas, carol sings, the Oberufer plays, the Maypole celebration. The Christian Community, to which some families belong, parallels this rhythm in its services. The CSA (community supported agriculture) farm that is connected to the school marks this same rhythm with its weekly harvest and its seasonal celebrations. These are not forms of entertainment, detached from meaning. Each event has its joyful outward expression but also an underlying spiritual significance that is the real source of its strength.

This underlying significance may be felt yet not understood. Some parents are content to see their children knit gnomes, paint pictures, and play the violin, as long as they are also learning to read and calculate. But other parents wonder about what they see and wish to deepen their understanding of their children's education.

Some Waldorf schools in Europe offer and even make obligatory a parent education program. Although the Washington Waldorf School does not do this, it does offer many opportunities to learn about and to experience Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education. It does this through study groups, lectures, workshops with visiting teachers, eurythmy and veil painting classes, and books available from the parent library. Parents can deepen their understanding of an education that is based upon the spiritual nature of the human being, an education with the true goal not of filling children with information but of helping each one grow as a whole, independent, free being able to fulfill his or her destiny. Through this understanding, parents can recognize their role in this endeavor, not only for their own children but for all the children, for the community, for themselves, and for the world. This vision of a larger goal underlies the work of a Waldorf community.

Sharing practical information and working together to accomplish a given task takes place in every group and organization. The difference between a network and a community is that a network can exist as an end in itself, be nothing more than a bulletin board. In a village, in a community, the interaction between people is a visible manifestation of something more profound. When we help each other, when we help the school, there is, even in the middle of an ordinary activity, an unspoken sense that one is working for something greater than the project at hand.

This sense, so vivid at certain moments, is hard to retain in difficult times. In any community there are problems. The intimacy that brings such satisfaction also means that there are no secrets. One is never invisible. Family troubles, illnesses, children's difficulties and misbehavior, and job status are public knowledge. People not only know each other's business, they often comment on it. There is gossip. There are petty squabbles. Uncomfortable feelings can arise – jealousy, rivalry, insecurity. Disparity in financial situations can give rise to envy, resentment, or guilt.

In a Waldorf community, people respond differently to the strong philosophical foundation. Some, rebellious, may grow resistant. Others, more rigid, needy, or fearful, may cling inflexibly to what they perceive to be a set of "rules" to live by and criticize those who don't conform. This can lead to a narrow provincialism, a closing of self to new people and a rejection of what they might have to offer – the equivalent of chucking stones at the stranger from the village over the hill.

Misunderstandings about the underlying purpose of a Waldorf school can lead to false expectations and to feelings of disappointment, betrayal, and anger when these expectations are not met. Sometimes, too, parents mistakenly believe that they don't fit into the "Waldorf" culture. (Despite seeming evidence to the contrary, Rudolf Steiner left no indications on the importance of wearing Birkenstock sandals.) Such confusions lead naturally to discussion and disagreement. This, in itself, is not a bad thing, but it may seem

threatening. It is difficult to find and keep the delicate balance between faithfulness to a purpose and a healthy questioning.

It is possible to live on the surface of the school community, using it as a support system in the raising of children and as a temporary social center, and then to move on. One might say that to participate in a living, working community today is an achievement in itself. But those who so choose can discover its other purpose, beyond all that is tangible.

In this village we build, two things can happen. The first is that, through our physical connection, we become more conscious of our spiritual connection and our responsibility to one another. The second is that we become more conscious of our connection and responsibility to all the world and beyond. Eventually, every choice we make is touched by our recognition of these connections. We work toward a transformation of self and humanity.

Despite our late twentieth-century yearnings, we will never achieve the beautiful, harmonious village of tales and dreams. What we do have is an archetype, an ideal, a spiritual landscape, which we can internalize through our work as members of the Waldorf community. What begins as a small group of people helping each other with the practical concerns of daily life gives birth to a village-of-the-heart, one independent of geography, a place that does not exclude, expel, or throw stones, but acknowledges with faith, love, and hope the special path of each person.

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A Drop of Water

By Noel Bell

This story does not mention Waldorf Education, education, nor even children. It does express, though, a truth close to the heart of Waldorf Education.
R.E.K.

It was late 1944. I was in the British Army barracks in Woolwich, waiting for a posting to active duty. To keep us in good spirits, the army offered us many kinds of entertainment, cultural and popular. One of these was a talk by a retired Army Major. I have forgotten his name, but I have never forgotten his story, the details of which are as clear to me today as they were fifty years ago. The Major speaks:

It was in the early years of this century that I was sent, as a very junior officer, on a military mission to Tibet. [This may have been the Younghusband Expedition of 1904.] The British Government was becoming concerned about Russia's designs on India. Alliances with the countries bordering on India were essential. So, with a Colonel, a Major, a Captain, soldiers, porters, and all, I joined a caravan traveling from northern India to Tibet. Our transport was, in those days, camels, horses, mules, and donkeys. After some weeks of travel, we arrived in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital.

Here the Major describes the lives and customs of the Tibetan peoples, which have since been well told by Heinrich Harrer in his *Seven Years in Tibet* and by others. The Major continues:

Negotiations had been completed and a pact signed. Now it was time for us to leave Tibet. I shall describe the formalities of our farewell. The four of us waited outside the audience room of the Dalai Lama. To enter, one has a white silk scarf draped over the extended

hands; with bowed head one approaches the Holy Man. If the scarf is removed, one may straighten up and address him. If the scarf is not taken, one must retreat backwards, with head still bowed.

The Colonel went in first. After about ten minutes he came out. In his hands was a solid gold statuette of the Buddha! Even in those days, such an artifact was worth a prince's ransom. I began to dream of my soon-to-be-acquired wealth and what I could obtain with it: polo ponies, my own yacht, frequent furloughs home to England, accelerated promotions . .

In the meantime the Major had gone in. When he came out, he had NO BUDDHA. My heart dropped into my boots, all my dreams shattered. "Ah well," I thought, "someday I'll be a Colonel, and perhaps some of the perquisites may be mine." Then the Captain came out – with a golden Buddha! As quickly as my spirits had dropped, they shot up again. "Maybe the Major was staying in Lhasa, or perhaps he was having his statuette delivered somewhere," I thought.

Now it was my turn. Silk scarf over my hands, with bowed head, I approached the Dalai Lama. The scarf was removed, and I straightened up. I gave my short, well-rehearsed farewell speech, which was translated by an interpreter – a Lama or monk. I had a feeling that His Holiness understood every word that I had said but that he would lose face by letting me know. The Dalai Lama then spoke his words of farewell, which were interpreted for me.

Then he said: "My son, as a token of our esteem, and for you to remember us, we should like you to accept a modest gift. Please choose one for yourself." He pointed to a low round table, piled high with solid gold statuettes of the Buddha. I didn't know that there was that much gold in the world!

I walked to the table in a daze . . . and was reaching for my Buddha, when the Dalai Lama said: "If you would rather, my son, I offer you an alternative: a drop of water and an old man's blessing." "He must be out of his mind," I thought, as I picked up my Buddha. Suddenly something – I don't know what it was – came over me. "Why would such a wise old man offer me such a stupid choice?" I asked myself.

Without knowing what I was doing, I put the statue down and said, "I will accept your blessing."

"You have chosen wisely, my son," the Holy Man said. The interpreter told me to approach the Dalai Lama and to hold out my hand, palm down. He then held out a bowl of water. The Dalai Lama dipped his finger in and put a drop of water on the back of my hand. He then gave me his blessing, which was not translated.

We left Tibet by the way that we had come and returned to our regiments in India. Within a year, the Colonel and the Captain were captured by hostile tribesmen and died the most horrible deaths under torture. The Major, after a lifetime of perfect health, both mental and physical, died recently in his sleep. He was seventy-five. At seventy years of age, I am still healthy and look forward to many more years of useful work in military research for the British Government.

Such was the Major's story.

Noel Bell was born in 1917 in England. Both his parents were Anthroposophists. In 1937, Noel met his future wife, Diana, at Michael Hall, the first Waldorf School in England. They were married in 1945. Since 1960, both have been actively involved in Waldorf Education. Noel was a class teacher at the Highland Hall School in Los Angeles until 1966. He then spent seven years teaching science and mathematics in Waldorf high schools in England and nine years as a class teacher at the Vancouver (British Columbia) Waldorf School. Since 1982, Noel and Diana have been at the Honolulu Waldorf School, actively engaged with adult education, teacher training, Anthroposophical studies, science teaching, and Bothmer gymnastics.

The Lyre Reborn

by Mary Lynn Channer



The lyre is the most ancient of stringed instruments and was known during Greek times as the symbol of Apollo. It has been recreated in the twentieth century by musicians and craftsmen inspired by Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education. The lyre today plays an important and growing role in education (primarily in Waldorf schools) and in other areas of life as well. The mellow, ethereal tone of the lyre can activate a new kind of "heart listening" that points toward a future development in social awareness. The lyre helps us to learn to listen to others and to the world around us in a deep and sensitive way.

The first modern Anthroposophically inspired lyre was built in 1926 by Lothar Gärtner from scraps of wood left over from the building of the first Goetheanum. In his book *Playing the Lyre: An Introduction*, Edmund Pracht writes:

Every lyre played today . . . is connected by invisible but real bonds with that building, comparable to none in all previous architecture, whose double cupola glistened down from the Dornach hill until it sank in a sea of fire on the New Year's Eve of 1922-23.

Pracht and Gärtner were among many young people inspired by the words of Rudolf Steiner in the first decades of this century. It was a time of old forms falling away and of new forms waiting to become manifest. While guarding over the construction of the second Goetheanum, which is built of concrete, they dedicated themselves to a new, small structure of wood whose archetypal idea would radiate out into the world. Edmund Pracht saw the lyre as a means to transform the human soul by a "tone-gesture" that is

"filled with light." Lothar Gärtner, a master craftsman, carried out the building of the lyre in the first of its varied forms.

Since that time various lyres have been developed. Today, lyres of high quality are produced in Germany, Sweden, and other European countries, and in North America as well.

While the lyre resembles a harp, it is played in a different way and produces a different tone. The harp is played by plucking the strings with the tips of curved fingers and produces a brilliant tone. The lyre is played by stroking the strings inward toward the heart with the pads of relatively straight fingers held vertically. Each finger stroke of a string comes to rest on the inner neighboring string, thereby producing a lighter and more mellow tone.

The tone quality of the lyre in its newly created form is essentially different from that of other instruments of recent centuries. These other instruments seem to say, "Listen to me!" From the lyre we hear, "Listen, not to me, but beyond my sound." It does not impose itself upon us but invites us to participate in the supersensible aspect of its sounding. When the lyre creates or "frees" a tone, we may ignore it or listen to it in a passive way, allowing it to wash over us, soothing us. We can also take up the tone's call to become free with it, actively listening with the ear of our heart, going with and beyond what we have heard with our physical ears.

As the lyre becomes a force working in the world today, its tone reminds us of our striving to become human in the highest sense. The lyre can be used in various ways and in various situations, making spiritual light more visible in our lives.

Transitions in life can be blessed by the tones of a lyre. The "Blessing Way" is a traditional Native American ceremony that is finding new

forms in modern American life. This festive ritual can be celebrated shortly before a baby is born. On such an occasion, there are the lighting of candles, the burning of sage leaves, the bathing of the mother's feet, and the brushing of her hair. The emphasis is upon spiritual gifts rather than physical ones. Words of inspiration and encouragement are spoken, poems are recited. Songs are sung with lyre accompaniment (Songs 1, 2, and 3).

Playing the lyre while a woman is in labor and giving birth demands great musical sensitivity. Whether the mother is "singing" during contractions or silently squeezing a caring hand, the intensity of the rhythm of the baby's journey downward needs its tonal counterpart. The music of the lyre touches the newborn child in the same gentle and reassuring way that the mother's hands and voice touch it (Songs 1, 2, and 3).

Children are so alive and so anxious to be a part of the day world that they often resist bedtime. Candlelight and its tonal counterpart – the music of a lyre – can help ease a child peacefully into sleep. These tones remind the child of the spirit world that they enter each evening.

For infants and smaller children, the music of the "kinderharp" or "kinderlyre" is most appropriate. The kinderharp has seven strings and is tuned pentatonically. It has a subtle, quiet, silvery tone that matches the voices of young children (Songs 2 and 3).

One archetypal song that can be played on the kinderharp for children in kindergarten and the early grades is "Mother Earth" (E. Lebrecht: *Pentatonic Songs*, p. 1). It can be played by stroking the longest, lowest string for Mother Earth the highest for Father Sun, all the strings for Sister Rain, sliding the fingers up and down the strings to make a whistling sound for Brother Wind, and playing the melody for the last verse. Such a song can set the mood for nature stories or puppet plays.

The lyre is a wonderful help at transition times and at nap time to help focus and calm the children. It can also bring children to a state of inner wakefulness rarely experienced in our

present day. At the end of a song, such as "Bouncing Baby Bear," (M. L. Channer: *Xavier Sings*) the children may be asked to listen with closed eyes for the bubble to pop. A tone is then played so softly that it is barely audible, but the eyes of the children open wide and sparkle when they hear it. The mood of silent expectation creates an open vessel for a tiny drop of spirit.

The Rose Lyre is a small soprano lyre made in New York State of native hardwood. Its creator, Patrick Thilmann, had an inner imagination of a tone and developed a free-ringing instrument that would produce that tone. A small soprano instrument, such as the Rose Lyre, is lightweight and easy to play while standing. In the lower grades, teachers play it for the children and accompany their own and the children's singing with it. A good source of songs to be sung and played in these years is the book *Quintenlieder: Songs in the Mood of the Fifth* by Julius Knierim.

The small soprano lyre, which has twenty-seven strings, is used largely as a classroom instrument. The full-sized soprano and the



A first-grade lyre class.

alto lyre are used mostly as performance instruments. There is also a tenor lyre and a bass lyre. The bass lyre looks like a huge human ear.

Children can also experience the lyre through playing it. Some Waldorf schools are now having the children play the seven-string lyre in the early grades. The teachers in the Chicago Waldorf School introduce the lyre in first grade by telling a story of how the music of the lyre comes to remind us of heaven. As the children draw their fingers lightly across the strings, the strings are pictured as the stars' shining rays with the wind playing over them. In second grade, the focus is on improvising games to train the ear. One child might make up a short melody and classmates repeat it. In some schools children in the middle and upper grades learn to play a small soprano lyre.

Diana Ingraham, a former Waldorf class teacher and now music teacher at two Waldorf schools in Pennsylvania, used the lyre to accompany her children's singing throughout grade one. In grade two she began teaching them to play the seven-string lyre. The children learned to pass tones to one another, breathing in as they strummed toward themselves, and breathing out as they sent their tones to someone else with palm facing outwards. The children also played a listening game in which two children make waves with a long silk cloth and the others are angels who go under the waves while strumming.

When in the third grade the children have become more "grounded," they are introduced to the diatonic C scale. Until this point, mostly melodies and open fifths have been heard on the lyre. Now harmonies using thirds may be added.

Harmony, in the fuller sense of the major/minor polarity, is introduced in the fourth grade. This is the ideal time to introduce the Bordun lyres, made in Sweden. Each Bordun lyre is tuned to a particular chord and thus has only three or four notes (i.e., C-E-G or C-E-G-B), but in different octaves. A wonderful social experience arises as each child alternately contributes his or her rich, strummed chord to the general harmony.



A young student displays his lyre.

By sixth grade, students also are capable of building their own simple lyres. At this time, or even earlier, they also have the capacity to play a diatonic or twelve-note lyre. Most Waldorf students learn to play an orchestral instrument. Should they perhaps be given the opportunity to choose the lyre as their instrument?

One day I was giving a violin lesson to a fifteen-year old student. In desperation, I asked her to put away her instrument, and we began playing the lyre. Soon she was creating tones with a sensitivity that she had never shown when she was playing the violin. This student has chronic ear infections, and the sound of the violin is

painful to her; but she was immediately at home with the lyre, and its tones caused her no discomfort.

The lyre can add much to seasonal and religious festivals. In the Advent Garden celebration a few weeks before Christmas, for example, each school child carries a candle embedded in an apple into the center of a spiral of evergreens. The child lights the candle from a flame burning there and places it along the spiral as she walks out. Music of the lyre and singing accompanied by the lyre can mark each child's passage in and out of the Garden (Song 4).

At the opposite time of year, in the St. John's Festival (June 24), torches are carried from a flaming bonfire into the heart of a spiral-shaped outdoor garden and planted there. Joyful songs accompanied by the lyre are played (Song 5).

Michaelmas is the festival of courage. It helps us begin each new school year. The children love to move and enact "The Knight and the Lady" (E. Lebrecht: *Pentatonic Songs*, p. 12) to the galloping accompaniment of lyre music!

At Easter, a simple round about bells can be sung by high and low voices. This song can be played on the lyre even by beginners (Song 6).

The lyre can be used to advantage at religious services. I was once present at an inner-city church service in which three lyres were being used. When their first chords sounded, a hush fell over the congregation as the people were called to a deep physical and spiritual listening. The Christian Community is a religious movement which grew out of ideas of Rudolf Steiner. Its services have a meditative, inward mood, and the lyre is often used in them. The inward listening that a lyre can evoke is welcome at the sacraments of marriage and of the last anointing of the dying. At a christening, the lyre helps to bridge the seeming gap between earth and heaven (Song 7).

The music of the lyre is appropriate at any ceremony with a spiritual component. While to date this possibility has been little explored, the lyre could be used in the rituals of Judaism, Buddhism, and other faiths.

Until now, lyre playing has put down its deepest roots in the Camphill curative education movement, which works with children and adults who are developmentally handicapped. In the Camphill schools and communities it has become an integral part of everyday life. The lyre is used for therapy, especially when the pure experience of the tone is needed. It is also used for Sunday morning services, for festivals and storytelling in the classroom, and as a means to establish a peaceful mood in the evening (Song 8). Recently, Camphill co-workers and villagers have given fund-raising concerts on lyres and other new instruments in Carnegie Hall and in other well-known concert halls in New York City.

The lyre has a strong connection to eurythmy. The original indications given by Rudolf Steiner that led to the creation of the lyre were made in connection with eurythmy. The marriage of the ethereal sound of the lyre and the flowing bodily movement of the new art of eurythmy (characterized as "visible speech" and "visible music") is truly remarkable. Yet only occasionally have I seen a eurythmy performance accompanied by the tones of the lyre. It takes great sensitivity for pianists to transform their instrument in such a way that their tones have the quality of "giving" that the lyre so naturally projects. One reason the lyre is not used more often for eurythmy may simply be that there are many more fine pianists than lyrists.

The lyre can also be used to further meditation. The music of recent centuries has tended to become a sound "substance" woven of such polarities as tension/release, loud/soft, high/low, and fast/slow. To some extent, such movement between emotional extremes is also possible on the lyre. But the essence of the lyre tone is something more intimate: one can come to rest within it as if all future tones were contained in one vibrant, timeless drop of sound.

The use of the lyre in offices, factories, and other places is uncharted ground with many possibilities. What if prisoners were offered classes in playing the lyre as a way of softening their "hard core"? What if office and factory workers had a time each day for lyre "conversations" with one another as a creative relief from tedious tasks?

The essential tone of the lyre is one of healing. Playing the lyre for someone who is ill can bring a mood of gentle joy. The tones of the lyre can help the soul of the listener come back in a whole way into the physical world. The ill and the aged also find solace in stroking the strings of a kinderharp. The lyre certainly has a role in hospitals, nursing homes, and hospices. For the dying, the music of the lyre can ease the passage into the spiritual world.

It is now common to hold funerals in funeral homes with hymns played on a small electric organ or, more often now, from a tape recording. But can recorded or electronically generated music create a feeling of unity between the souls of the dead and the living in the way that the pure tones of the lyre can? I have spoken with funeral directors about this, and they have said that people choose taped music, even when live music is available. We cannot miss what we have never experienced.

Today we need to remember and to experience that each person is a musical instrument sounding in the world. We have to develop the ability to listen to the "music" of others and to create our own music in harmony with that of others. Selfish individualism, "doing what feels good," needs to be balanced by a new social awareness and cooperation.

The lyre has come to us to help develop a new capacity for listening. Its tone is so balanced that from it we can learn to listen, to create our own music, and to harmonize with the music of others. From the lyre a selfless playing, a selfless singing, and a selfless movement can arise. And from these a new social life can unfold.

AMERICAN SOURCES FOR LYRES:

Choroi:
Karen Klaveness
4600 Minnesota Avenue
Fair Oaks, CA 95628
(916) 966-1227

Gärtner:
Paula Moraine
3911 Bannister Road
Fair Oaks, CA 95628
(916) 863-1926

Choroi and Gärtner:
Stephan Rasch
Camphill Village
Copake, NY 12516
(518) 329-4511 or 7972

Rose Lyre:
Patrick A. Thilmany
P.O. Box 164
Stuyvesant, NY 12173
(518) 851-3324

Kinder-Lyre:
Harps of Lorien
HC 81 Box 610
Questa, NM 87566
(505) 586-1307, Fax (505) 586-0067

LYRE LITERATURE:

Channer, Mary Lynn. *Xavier Sings of his Alphabet Friends*. Available for \$10.00 from Mary Lynn Channer, 8452 Adler Road, Lambertville, MI 48144.

Knierim, Julius. *Quintenlieder: Introduction to the Mood of the Fifth*. Available for \$13.95 from Rudolf Steiner College Press, 9200 Fair Oaks Blvd., Fair Oaks, CA 95628.

Lindenberg, Christof-Andreas. *In Praise of the Seasons*. Available for \$20.00 from Windrose.

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Windrose: 171 Water Street, Chatham, NY 12037 Tel. (518) 392-7815 Fax (518) 392-3415

Mary Lynn Channer was born in Canada, received her music and education degrees in America, and has played and taught violin professionally. She and her husband have two grown sons. One of the original teachers of the Rudolf Steiner School in Ann Arbor, she first taught music there and later assisted in the kindergarten. Now she works artistically with people of all ages at the Waldorf Kindercottage in her Michigan home. She has composed many songs and two cantatas, has given music workshops, and has recently undertaken the Waldorf Remedial Training.

1. *Mary Lynn Channer*

A beau-ti-ful birth! A beau-ti-ful birth! My moth-er and daddy they hold me with glee.
(other verses may be invented)

lyre acc.

2. *Rudolf Steiner* *MLC*

(Before birth) May the soul of the child Be given to me According to your will Out of the worlds of the spirit.
(After birth) May the soul of the child Be guided be me According to your will In-to the worlds of the spirit.

3. *MLC*

Bye low, my ba-by Cradled beneath my heart I'll rock and cuddle you in my arms 'til you fall asleep.

4. *German*

Ad-vent, Ad-vent a can-dle burns first one, then two, then three, then four Then stands the Christ child at the door.
I light the night a can-dle burns My heart is shin-ing like a star.

5. *MLC*

In-to the gar-den we go, we go, we go Bearing our tor-ches high-o, high-o, high-o.

6. *Johanna Russ*

Swinging, swinging, swinging Ringing, ringing, ringing Sounding, bells are sounding Easter Sunday morning

7. *Novalla* *Jürgen Schriever*

He is the star He is the sun He is the eternal life begun From herb, stone, sea and lights pure glance

shineth his child-like coun-ten-ance, coun-

(no ties when played by lyre)

ten-ance, coun-ten-ance.

8. *Lyre Piece for a Festive Occasion* *Christof-Andreas Lindenberg*

The Urban Waldorf School of Milwaukee: A Summary Report

By Ray McDermott

(On behalf of the research team which included Paul Byers, Cynthia Dillard, Freda Easton, Mary Henry, Ray McDermott, Ida Oberman, and Bruce Uhrmacher)

For the past few years, the City of Milwaukee has been opening public schools based on models of education that are intended to help children from diverse backgrounds. In September, 1991, the Urban Waldorf School of Milwaukee welcomed 343 children, most of them from the surrounding inner-city neighborhood. In the United States, Waldorf schools mostly have served middle-class students whose families could afford tuition. In Milwaukee, it was hoped, the Waldorf approach could be adapted as an effective model for educating urban children in public schools.



The Urban Waldorf School.

A team of seven researchers who study learning in schools was brought together by the Waldorf Schools Fund to visit and study the Urban Waldorf School. Our team was to ask: Just what is being done in the school? Does it work? Can it be copied? In our full report, we try to describe what is going on, and we offer opinions about whether it works, and, if so, whether it can be duplicated. In this summary, we offer only our conclusions.

We were at the school for a full week. We attended the daily round of school activities, visited classrooms, ate in the cafeteria, and talked to anyone who had time for us. Some team members focused on a single class. Others visited several classes. One team member focused on the office and the teacher's room and another on developments at the district level in the city. We attended a spirited faculty meeting. At the end of our research week in 1994, we made a brief oral report at the school about our observations and some time later submitted a full, written report. After the staff had had a chance to respond, we submitted a second written report.

We have come to some far-reaching conclusions. Although several of us went to the school with reservations about Waldorf Education in general, all members of the team now agree on the following:

- Despite the difficult environment that surrounds the Urban Waldorf School and some of the children in their daily lives, life inside the school is safe, quiet, well-ordered, and, in terms of relationships, warm.
- There is little aggression, and misbehavior is reasonably and consistently managed. We noted the negotiation of difficult issues by children among themselves and by children and teachers.
- The school is unusually attractive. This is primarily because it has a strong arts program and the artistic work of the children is everywhere on display.
- In the classrooms we visited, it is generally possible for a child to learn a great deal.
- The school, overall, is a place where teachers can teach.

- The school has extraordinary leadership in the principal's office, hard-working and concerned teachers, and a good *esprit de corps*. The few parents we interviewed also had a positive attitude toward the school.
- We place little stock in traditional measures of school success, but, even by such arbitrary means, the Urban Waldorf School has been performing well. For two of the last three years, the children's performance on the citywide third-grade reading test has improved. In 1992, the school ranked among the lowest in Milwaukee. In 1995, sixty-three percent of the children were above the district's standard for their grade levels. This has happened despite the fact that the school does not stress the early acquisition of reading skills nor the early development of test-taking skills.
- The children and their background and heritage seem to be treated with respect. The school emphasizes not just cognitive learning but also development of character as a preparation for taking one's place as an educated citizen. Our sense, although vague, is that this makes a great difference.

These conclusions point to a remarkable achievement.

It was not easy to imagine such success at the start. The Urban Waldorf School faced many obstacles, including the effects of poverty and racism on many of the children and the high rates of crime and drug addiction in the surrounding neighborhood. There was also a big city bureaucracy – complete with teacher certification, pupil evaluation, and union regulations. In addition, most of the teachers had no background in Waldorf Education. They volunteered to dedicate themselves to a vision of schooling that promised both structure and gentleness, and they signed on for an intensive Waldorf teacher training.

How could this educational experiment have turned out so well so quickly? We do not know the answer, and we would doubt anyone who would offer a single, simple answer. We could attribute the success to Waldorf Education and not be wholly wrong. We could just as easily point to the strong principal recruited for the job of organizing the school or to the desire among

teachers in America's public schools for an educational approach that promises a caring engagement with children.

Although we can offer no explanations, we can say that Waldorf Education seems to have been a wonderful stimulus for the achievements of the Urban Waldorf School. There are no guarantees that the same success could be achieved in another public school system or on a national scale. We can say, though, that within the Waldorf environment in the Milwaukee public school system, teachers and children have come together, learned to live together, and learned to do well together in school. There is reason for everyone in the school to be proud and for everyone in American education to be hopeful.

Ray McDermott is Professor of Education and Anthropology at Stanford University and Codirector of the teacher training program there. One of his current areas of research is the history of literacy and money.

Threads of Promise, Threads of Tension:

The Urban Waldorf School of Milwaukee and the African-American Child

by Cynthia Dillard

As I reflect on my first visit to the Urban Waldorf School, several threads run through the experience, not unlike those the children so intently knitted together during handwork lesson. The threads are strong, multi-layered, brightly colored, sometimes tangled, and seemingly without end, but I have tried to weave together a coherent account. This I humbly place at the feet of the beautiful first-grade children and their teacher who allowed me to share a week of their lives in school.

I consciously made a choice to spend my days in one classroom. I wanted to know what matters to those most important in schools – the children. Thus, while I learned about Urban Waldorf from parents, teachers, and administrators, what I write is based largely on my experience with the first-grade class. It doesn't necessarily apply to the whole school, but it does point to the possibilities of Waldorf Education for African-American children.

The first thread identifies the Urban Waldorf School classroom as a place for the children of its predominantly African-American student population to be what they naturally are: bright, capable, creative, energetic, and powerful. The curriculum and the teaching methodology in this classroom were centered on what children can do. Traditionally, most educational policy and practice for African-American children has been based on a deficit model, which focuses on what the children *can't* do. At the Urban Waldorf School, the pedagogies were strikingly

different. Expectations for the children were high. First graders worked on multiplication and other sophisticated mathematical applications, told stories, learned Spanish, created beeswax sculptures, read literature, and made beautiful paintings. Each day they would prepare to engage in the day's work by singing together a song that embodies these expectations: "I'm just as ready, as ready can be . . . I fold my hands like a king and a queen."

Too often for African-American children, the social and economic systems in the United States create negative conditions – economic, social, cultural, and spiritual – that are played out in the schools. We intuitively know, and research shows, that certain factors are necessary for the stability, growth, and wholeness of children: high expectations for academics and behavior; continuous positive interaction with teachers and with other students; and a caring classroom environment that nurtures the head, heart, and body. The



Kindergarten children at Urban Waldorf School await morning circle.

Urban Waldorf School generally attempts to provide these to its children.

A second thread has to do with teaching. Both teaching and learning for the African-American children need to be grounded in cultural referents, symbols, artifacts, and language that are familiar to them (Asante, 1992). Children must be able to see and feel themselves attached to the curriculum and the people of the school. As one teacher stated:

This [awareness of the children's historical roots] needs to be the foundation. We must teach these children about themselves and where they come from—not from slavery or even the Middle Passage [the traumatic forced transport of enslaved Africans from their homelands to North America]—but from the continent[of Africa].

All children, and young African-American children in particular, are positively influenced by seeing themselves both in the curriculum and in adults in school. "I think Ms. Wilson is really pretty," one first grader said, a big smile across her shining little face. "And you know what," she continued, "she's an A-fri-can-A-mer-i-can just like me!"

Learning is best ensured when we provide multiple ways for children to inquire, to learn, and to express themselves in an integrated manner. One fine example is the nature "story" the first graders and their teachers do each morning. This integrates physical movement, hand-eye coordination, counting, and song. Other examples abound: students depicting what they are learning in drawings in their lesson books, creating and telling imaginative stories, and constantly questioning the content and the process of their own learning. The goal is to engage the whole child in the learning process.

Children must be active agents in their own education. They must be given both the ways (strategies, knowledge, and tools) and the means (opportunities) to make their way successfully in the world. It was not the exception but the "rule" that children in the first-grade room would solve problems and arbitrate disputes that arose

among them and would negotiate tasks with their teacher and with each other.

A third thread connects to a core component of Waldorf philosophy and pedagogy: the attention paid to the spirituality of the child. As the teacher lights a candle placed in a seasonal arrangement of flowers, branches, and miniature sculptures of beeswax made by the children, students give thanks to the natural and spiritual through their daily morning verse. Such spirituality and giving of thanks traditionally has been a strong focus in African-American culture. It is manifest in call-and-response prayer, gospel music, and the healing function of African-American religious settings. At a time when it is much needed, this fundamental element of their culture is less present in the lives of African-American children than it once was.

A fourth thread appreciates the Urban Waldorf School's reliance on a strong sense of community and the encouragement of responsibility and caring for others. These were present in the first-grade classroom and in the school as a whole. For example, during "morning work" each day, children copied sentences into their notebooks and worked on three or four math problems listed on the board. The following is just one of numerous acts of caring and cooperation I saw at the Urban Waldorf School.

Child A: (Walks up to Child B) Do you want to do morning work with me?

Child B: (Pointing to an empty corner of her desk) Yea! Here! Here! You can do it right here!

Child A: You got a pencil I can borrow?

Child C: Here you go. (She leans over and gives him one of her pencils).

Child A and Child B begin to intently copy their sentences from the board into their notebooks. After about ten minutes, it is time to move to the next part of the morning activities.

Child B: (Waving hand in the air) Ms. Wilson, I ain't done yet!

Teacher: That's okay, dear, you can do it later this afternoon.

Child A: Let's do this. I'll come to your desk at free time, okay?

Child B: Yea, so then we can finish our stuff.

Child C: (Leaning over again) I'll help you if you need help.

The four threads which I saw at the Urban Waldorf School make up a strong fabric that:

- is safe and uses curriculum focused on potential rather than deficit;
- has good teaching and is struggling to be sensitive to diversity;
- is alive to the spiritual, aesthetic, and emotional needs of African-American children; and
- encourages caring and cooperation over competition.

I was impressed and excited about what I saw at the Urban Waldorf School. The teachers were doing exactly what Maya Angelou (1990) says they should be doing: "loving the children to understanding." And the children in turn, despite difficult odds, were struggling to learn and grow, wanting desperately to show the world the brilliance and talent that is theirs.

My experience at the Urban Waldorf School has confirmed for me the potential of Waldorf Education as an appropriate model of schooling for African-American children in urban communities. But, it has left me concerned about at least three areas of possible tension. These issues are inherent in any attempt to relate, in relevant and appropriate ways, a model of education to the realities of life for inner-city African-American children. The threads of tension also point to issues seldom or never discussed among teachers, parents, and students even at the Urban Waldorf School. Left untouched, or touched but unresolved, these issues can become sources of conflict.

First, tension surrounds what I see as a desperate need for positive identity development in the African-American child. Even given the exciting

learning and teaching environment at the Urban Waldorf School, I observed interactions among children that were chilling to me as an African-American woman. I would argue that many of these children have a distorted and negative picture of blackness, an internalized prejudice that runs very deep. This is understandable, given the way in which racism and sexism, particularly through the media, have informed these children's lives and the lives of their local communities. It is inexcusable not to attempt more positive, African-centered identity development.

Even in the generally caring and loving environment at the Urban Waldorf School, when children were hurt or wanted to hurt one another, they did so with a string of expletives and adjectives that "called out" their own African-ness and that of their classmates. Seldom did I hear children affirm themselves or other African-American children as beautiful. Too often to mention, I did hear degrading terms such as "big-lipped," "nappy-headed," and "big butt" coming from the children, both in classrooms and on the playground. This points to a near-desperate need to develop more systematic ways and means for nurturing a strong sense of identity and a love of self amongst African-American children. Further, it points to the need for Waldorf parents and teachers to discuss the extent to which the "whole child" philosophy of Waldorf Education includes attention to the racial and ethnic identities of the children it serves.

The second tension springs from the disparity between the developmentally based curriculum and pedagogy of Waldorf Education and what many at the Urban Waldorf School call the "streetwise" nature of the urban child. I saw first-grade children whose reality and state of mind could not be described by the term "dreamlike." These children could, in an adult manner, have detailed and vivid conversations about drugs, violence, sex, drinking, and gangs. I wonder how (and if) the Waldorf pedagogy can make school a place where childhood is truly protected and celebrated, given the realities of life for children in the inner city and their effect upon the children.

A third matter of tension has to do with the aims of education. I believe that education should have three fundamental goals:

- It should help one be able to free oneself from oppression in its multiple forms.
- It should provide access to a multiplicity of opportunity.
- And it should provide one with the means to critique and transform one's own education and society. It is not enough for children to be safe and happy in school. They must be learning to be aware and critical of the society and world in which they live.

As I leave the Urban Waldorf School, I am hoping that these political purposes of schooling can be a topic of conscious and crucial conversation at the school, as they should be in virtually every urban elementary school in this country. As James Baldwin (1980) has suggested, our work as teachers is not neutral. It is political and cultural work that must be directed to finding ways to develop the tremendous potential of our African-American urban youth. That is our challenge. These children's lives are what must matter to us.

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TV-Free America

More than four thousand schools, libraries, and community groups, and over one million individuals throughout the United States participated in the first "National TV-Turnoff Week," April 24-30, 1995.

With guidance and materials provided by TV-Free America, a non-profit organization, regional organizers coordinated TV-turnoffs in all fifty states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. National TV-Turnoff Week is supported by many organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the Children's Defense Fund, and the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America.

The 1996 National TV-Turnoff Week is scheduled for April 24-30. TVFA wants to quadruple the number of organizations and individuals who participated in 1995.

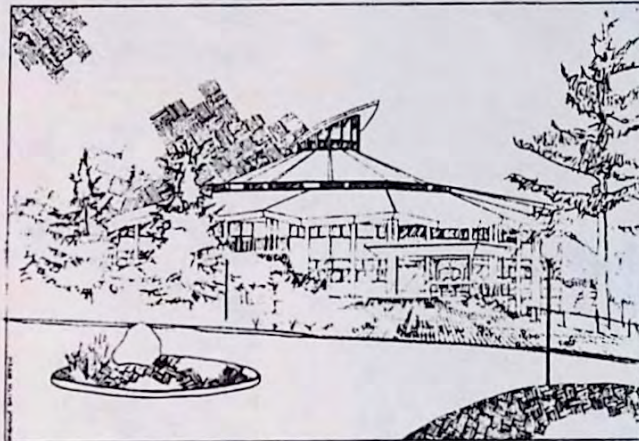
An "Organizer's Kit" is available and includes a guidebook detailing ways to organize a home, school, or group; pledge cards; certificates of achievement; a list of alternative activities; a bumper sticker; a poster; and an information packet containing articles and statistics.

Send \$5.00 to TV-Free America, 1322 18th St., N.W. #300, Washington, D.C. 20036. Tel: 202-874-0436; Fax: 202-887-0438; E-mail: tvfa@essential.org.

The Toronto Waldorf School Versus the Ontario Ministry of Education

by Anne Greer

On May 24, 1995, the Toronto Waldorf School began legal proceedings against the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. The oldest Waldorf school in Canada – the model for Waldorf Education in the country widely known as the Peaceable Kingdom, the country whose highest ideals are "peace, order, and good government" – took the Ministry of Education to court.



Two years before, on a hot June morning, the TWS High School faculty was having its final meeting of the 1992/93 academic year. Most of us had just returned from weeklong class camping trips; we were a little worn from marking the last of the year's main lesson books and writing final reports. We had spent several hours finishing up the year's business. As lunchtime approached, the Chair read a memorandum from the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training announcing that, during the next academic year, the province's 140,000 grade nine students, ours among them, would take part in an obligatory Provincial Reading and Writing Test. The faintest murmurings of "Hey, wait a minute" began to be heard.

We weren't entirely sure what taking part in such a test might mean. Other than the underlying assumption implicit in the memo that the test was a good thing, the rationale for it was somewhat vague. The content was not yet available but was promised soon. Mandatory in-service training for our teachers would need to be scheduled. Assessment was to be carried out by an anonymous "central committee of teachers." Most disturbing of all, the process would require

fifteen percent of the English curriculum time allotment and the inclusion of the results in the year's evaluation of students.

Throughout the memorandum, the tone implied an element of choice; the term "you are asked" was used repeatedly. Some of us wanted to make a decision there

and then to have nothing to do with the request; others felt that we couldn't risk upsetting the Ministry. But, that hot June morning with summer beckoning and with the Canadian spirit of compromise informing the group, no one was in the mood for lengthy debate. We agreed to give it a try if we had to. After all, our relationship with the Ministry had been relatively amicable for the previous eighteen years, and we were certain that something could be worked out.

In Canada, education is under Provincial rather than Federal jurisdiction. When the Toronto Waldorf School began its high school in 1975, following the graduation of its first eighth-grade class, it seemed prudent to offer the common currency of Ontario Ministry of Education credits. Credits lead to the widely recognized Secondary School Diploma, allow students to transfer from one school to another, and enable entry into post-secondary institutions and the work force.

Over the years, the Ministry has issued guidelines sufficiently broad in scope to allow us to develop a curriculum largely true to the ideals of our pedagogy, although there has always been some compromise necessary. Each year,

the Ministry sends an inspector to determine that all is well. When there have been problems, they have been in the area of "paperwork" – formats of course outlines, time requirements for specific subjects, evaluation practices, and record keeping. The Ministry has viewed TWS teachers as professional, competent, and committed, and found the level of instruction more than adequate for credit purposes. Our high school is strong, usually with a healthy enrollment of about one hundred students, and it positively affects enrollment in the lower school and kindergarten. But accreditation is essential to our school. Parents of nursery school children often ask, "Do your high school students get credits and go on to University?"

The Fall term of 1993 was very busy and full. News from the Ministry trickled in. The first battery of tests was conducted with much fanfare. We were to take part in the second round. When the resource material arrived, it didn't seem so bad. No, it wasn't exactly *Oedipus Rex*, *The Odyssey*, or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but there were a few poems that we could use, if we really had to. Finding between twelve and fifteen classroom hours to cover the material provided by the Ministry in preparation for the test and arranging substitute coverage for the in-service training days would be difficult.

After Christmas, a preparation kit arrived containing sample booklets. At first glance, it appeared to be a hoax. Surely this was an obvious but funny parody of a standardized reading and writing test, complete with the Ministry letterhead. On the first page was a facsimile of a Kraft Philadelphia Cream Cheese package. This page, when turned sideways, was entitled "How to Read a Label." Two of the multiple-choice questions that followed could not be answered from the material presented, relying instead on consumer knowledge gained from corporate advertising. Imagine testing musical knowledge by asking students to sing a popular soft-drink jingle!

The second item was a short piece of fiction called "Baloney Sandwiches," containing a glaring spelling error and written entirely without punctuation, except, strangely enough, for two

apostrophes. It described a young person wishing to emulate

... two long haired short stubbled guys ... and hey isn't that a knife sheathed at the guy's side. ... and both of them take out a quart of milk and gulp some of it and then a loaf of bread jar of mustard slab of baloney and now those knives come into play slicing baloney and smearing mustard to makes sandwiches ... and chew and gulp everything leaving the plastic bag milk cartons and empty jar in the shopping bag on the step.

One of the questions following this piece was:

Why do you think the writer chose not to use punctuation?

- a) The writer does not know how to write proper sentences.*
- b) The writing is supposed to be like that of a very young child.*
- c) The writing is supposed to flow like thoughts coming into your head.*
- d) It is from a diary and punctuation does not count.*

Come on! Choose one! Who could be blamed for thinking that this was a joke?

It wasn't. "Hey, wait a minute" became "Should we require our students to take part in such a travesty?"

One of our most frightening realizations has been that, if the sample test hadn't been as bad as it was, we might unthinkingly have fallen into line. The blatantly trivial and commercial content demanded a full stop. What, exactly, were we being asked to take part in?

A meeting with the grade nine parents showed that there was enough support at least to question the school's involvement. Yes, credits were essential, but there were principles of Waldorf Education that could not be violated.

In January, our annual Ministry Inspection took place. As usual, our teaching was found to be exemplary, and we were given the authority to grant credits. Our course outlines would need to be revised yet again. This time what was required was "an outcomes-based approach in keeping with the Common Curriculum." Outcomes-based approach? Common Curriculum? The Ministry would be glad to provide models. We raised our concern about the test and were asked to wait until after the in-service teacher training session.

The training, rather than quelling our doubts, inflamed them. Ministry rationale was more clearly articulated: the test was necessary to meet increasing demands for accountability to parents and to ensure that Ontario students be competitive in the new global economy. In spite of concerns about the commercial content and triteness of material, the direct imposition of curriculum, the amount of time required for the process, and the possible abuse of results, none of the other fifty or so private schools represented at the training session had any questions other than queries about how to make the process smoother: Should more time be given to disadvantaged students? Could computers be used? . . . After all, if the Ministry said "Jump!" an accredited school was expected to respond "How high?"

Within a week we had notified our inspector that administering the test would conflict with our program and approach and that we were willing to offer alternative proof of our students' abilities. The inspector's response was an immediate angry message on the school's telephone answering machine: If we did not take part, our students would not receive their grade nine credits. This, of course, alarmed many of the parents and faculty. No one was willing to risk the future of the young people in our care, but we could not take part in something that so blatantly undermined all that we stood for. The Faculty, Board, and Parent Association Chairs wrote a joint letter to the Minister of Education reiterating our request to present alternative evidence of literacy and asking for either his assurance that accreditation would not be threatened or a meeting with him to discuss our concerns. The February test

period came and went while we continued to await the response of the Minister.

Our concerns had by now reached public attention. Canada's national newspaper ran our article criticizing the test. Several days later, the Minister himself responded at length in the same newspaper. A local radio station arranged an on-air debate between us and a Ministry official. The official explained how important it is that students be tested on their ability to handle "environmental print," that is, anything that carries a message: advertising, T-shirts, hairdo descriptions, and the like. We asked what had happened to literature. We began to receive phone calls and letters of support. There were many within our own school who had well-founded fears that, by engaging in thrust-and-parry with the Ministry, we were risking the future of our high school. It was encouraging, though, to know that there were those who shared our growing doubts about what is happening in education.

A small group of teachers and parents were meeting regularly to prepare a position paper and find out all we could about the new mood in education. We realized that we had been pre-occupied with keeping afloat our own little island of idealism. As our study group looked up and surveyed the horizon, we began to understand the growing sense of educators throughout the world – that our profession had been betrayed. To inform ourselves of the larger picture, we ordered fifty copies of the Winter/Spring 1993/94 issue of *The Threefold Review*, an issue of that journal dealing with the question of freedom in education and the increasing intrusion of government into independent schools. We began to understand something of the forces behind the educational reform sweeping the Western World. And we began to feel stronger and more confident about our "We'd rather not, thank you" reply, which initially had been rather nervous and tentative.

What right has any government to prescribe specific curriculum content and methodology for all schools? Parents choose independent schools because they present an alternative to public education. In independent schools, teachers are directly accountable to parents, reporting

to them regularly and frequently. National educational reform, while it tosses about phrases like "parental choice" and "need for diversity," is actually based on government-controlled definitions of what students should know when: outcomes-based education and performance indicators. Governments, in turn, are being pushed by the global marketplace to employ behavioristic models in education to "produce" compliant workers and consumers for the new global economy. What has this to do with Waldorf Education?

By late March, a senior member of the Ministry's Curriculum and Assessment Team agreed to meet with us. He told us that the Minister expected us to take part in the third round of scheduled testing but denied any connection between participation and accreditation. Within a few days, we had the same message in a letter from the Minister himself. With the risk minimized, community resolve was strengthened to resist. Following an "unofficial" suggestion that we might simply send the tests back blank, we did just that. About a month later, a letter arrived from the Ministry thanking us for our participation. Our study group had completed its task and that seemed to be that.

In November, 1994, our appetites whetted somewhat by the previous year's events, three of us attended the Social Renewal Foundation's conference on "National Education Goals and Standards: A Critical Review and Dissent," held in Harlemville, New York. Critical dissent seemed to be exactly what had been missing in Ontario. Americans are so refreshing. Throughout the weekend, the "Spirit of Revolution" reigned, supported by righteous anger. We returned to Loyalist Ontario rekindled and with clear objectives: to resurrect the study group, to mount our own conference, to seek allies among other independent schools in Ontario, and to encourage a worldwide Waldorf community awareness of the threat facing us all.

What a coincidence: awaiting us was a phone message from the Ministry announcing a mandatory training session for the "Grade Nine Reading and Writing Test 94/95." We replied that, as last year, we would not be taking part.

We were told that this year "the rules had changed . . . ; the Minister is tightening the net." The same afternoon, a fax arrived from our new inspector with a "friendly reminder" about the training session. We attended under duress and with many questions. It was made clear that "all inspected private schools were to participate or lose credits for the Grade Nine program." In early December, we wrote to the Minister once again requesting a meeting and reiterating our position that we would not replace our own curriculum with a government-imposed curriculum. We awaited his response.

In late February, our inspector called to say that holiday plans would interfere with her scheduled inspection visit. She would come instead in March.

In late March, the answer to our December inquiry arrived from the Minister: it was indeed the policy that all students participate in the "curriculum unit." We were required to take part by law, and, if we did not, our students would lose all grade nine credits. Once again, the media got wind of our struggle. We became known as a rebel school, and our inspector, fearing media questions, once again canceled her visit. She was, she said, "a bureaucrat and not a politician." We again requested a meeting with the Ministry and asked for immediate clarification as to the rights of individual parents to request exemption for their children. No, there would be no meeting. Exemptions were to be granted only in "unique and exceptional circumstances," and no parent had the right to refuse to have a child tested.

In late April, the Ministry raised the ante: our inspector offered no excuses this time – she simply refused to come. She reminded us that, without her visit, we had no authority to grant credits for any of our current subjects. Nor would she send Ministry diplomas for our graduating students.

In late May, following a flurry of calls, faxes, and letters, the Ministry agreed on a meeting. During the two-and-a-half hour dialogue, the Ministry official repeatedly confirmed that she understood our concerns about the infringement on parental rights and the government's disregard

of our philosophy. She insisted, though, that the credibility of the test was much more important and was contingent on participation of all students— even our twenty-nine. She reiterated that all our credits as well as our graduation diplomas were at stake and, following the meeting, put the threats in writing. We phoned our lawyers.

Of course, fears ran high. What could possibly be done before the fast-approaching end of the year? How could we deprive our students of credits and diplomas? We had to maintain our principles, but you couldn't expect to beat the government by gambling with the future of the students. Wasn't it time to admit defeat and quit this bluffing game? How bad could the test be? Several parents threatened breach of contract if the credits weren't awarded; others threatened to leave if Waldorf principles weren't upheld. We set aside one of the two remaining weeks of ninth-grade class time in case it was needed for preparation for the test.

On May 24, an application for judicial review was delivered to the Ministry of Education, just a few weeks before an important Provincial election in which education was a key issue. There was something both chilling and exhilarating about seeing the words *The Toronto Waldorf School versus The Ministry of Education* in stark black and white.

The first sign of a blink came with a phone call from the Ministry regretting any "unfortunate misunderstanding." Neither credits for grades ten, eleven, and twelve nor graduation diplomas were in jeopardy. Inspection would take place the same day as the provincial election. But the grade nine students would not receive any credits unless they took part in the test. We held our breath as the date for the hearing approached.

Our lawyers called, full of excitement: the Ministry was asking for an out of court settlement. The judge had granted them a postponement to prepare for cross-examination but had appeared sympathetic to our students. They were willing to grant exemptions upon application from parents, if we promised not to go to the media until after the election. With only a few days before inspection and election, we went to

work preparing letters of exemption for parents to sign, requesting immediate response.

June 8 arrived with not one but two dark-suited inspectors. They saw as many classes and as much paperwork as they possibly could within the few hours they could manage to be with us. They dutifully perused the twenty-nine requests for exemption, a few of which had arrived only minutes before. The room set aside for the beginning of the test remained empty, the box of materials neatly packed and undisturbed, and the students engaged in main lessons, woodworking, choir, and track and field. There was some opportunity for conversation, and the inspectors left, apparently satisfied.

As far as we know, we are the only school in the Province that did not take part in the test either year. We have been instrumental in a newly formed council of independent schools. Our concerns have been carried to the Hague Circle, an international group of Waldorf educators, which meets regularly in the Netherlands. We have received from the Circle an encouraging and lengthy reply, offering letters of support and explaining what is happening in Europe. Our own conference on diversity in education took place in October, 1995, with John Taylor Gatto as keynote speaker. Our faculty committee is actively engaged once more in deciphering Ontario's Common Curriculum. We have a strong feeling that the real battle is only just beginning.

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