

Renewal

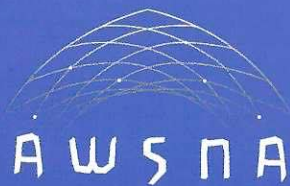
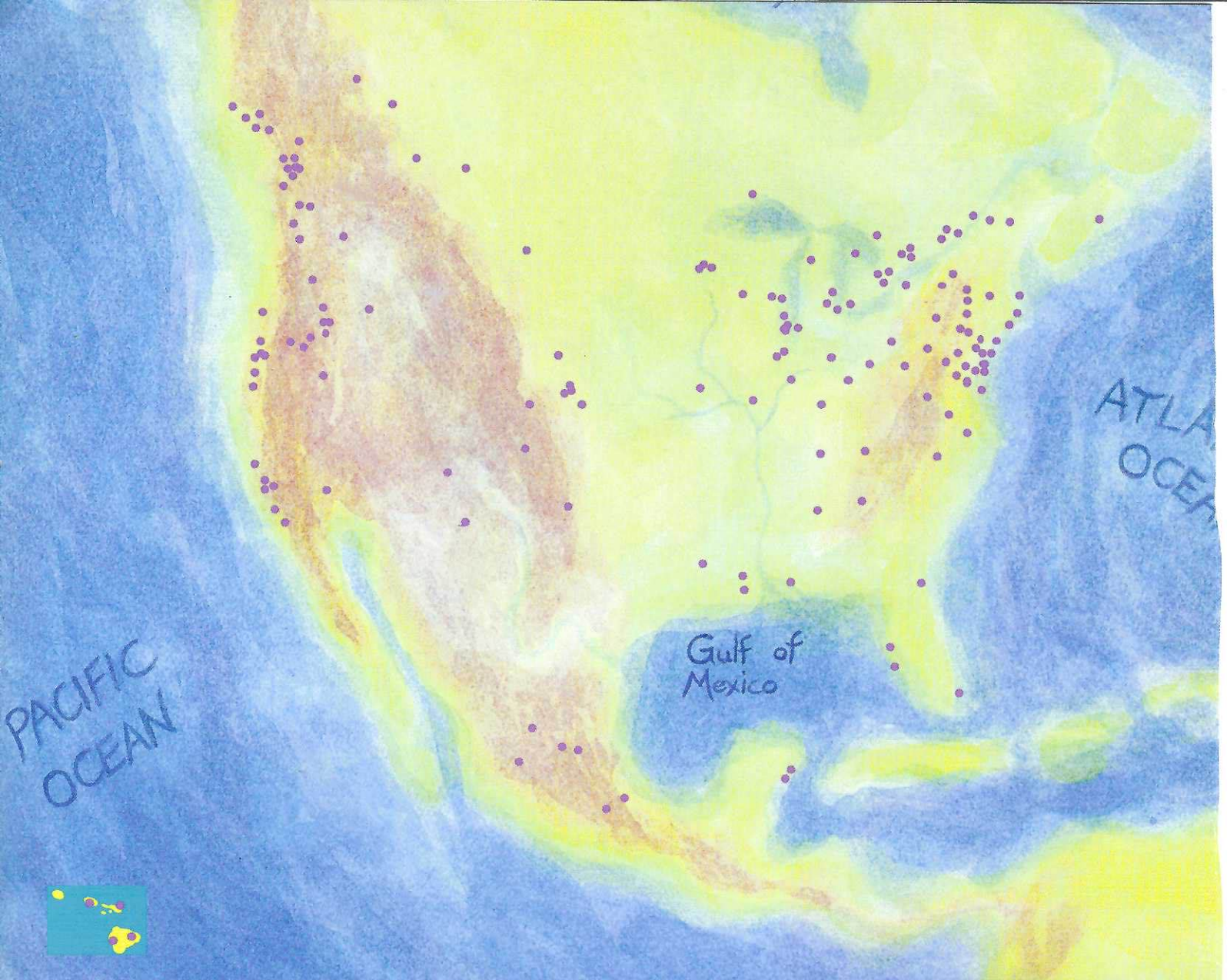
FALL/WINTER 2007 – VOLUME 16, NUMBER 2

Waldorf Education and Children's Health

Active Capacity Building for Reading, Writing, and Math

Waldorf Education in Mexico and Kenya

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION



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There are over 200 independent Waldorf schools, institutes, and early childhood programs in North America.

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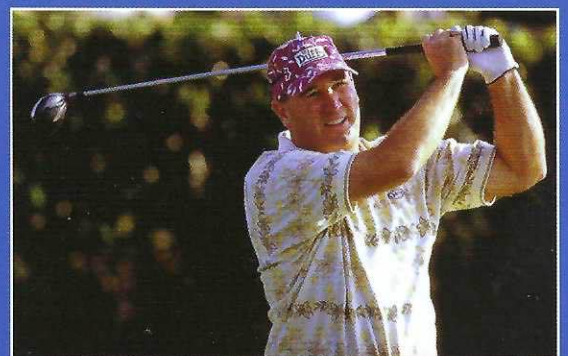
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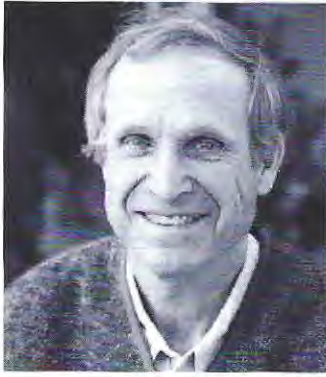
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VERNON AND LUCY WRIGHT



Duffy Waldorf, PGA Touring Golf Professional

COVERART: A watercolor painting by Devin Gray when he was in the fourth grade at the Sacramento Waldorf School



From the Editor

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

In early 1500, Pedro Alvares Cabral left Portugal with an imposing armada and, intending to sail to India, headed south along the coast of Africa. He veered to the west to avoid the calms of the Gulf of Guinea and on April 22, 1500, discovered an unexpected mass of land. In the custom of the day, Cabral claimed what he saw for his country and sailed on. Thus began the history of Brazil—at least from the European perspective.

Four hundred years later, Brazil, named after pau-brasil, the valuable dyewood that grows there, is a country that is almost as large as the United States and that occupies half of South America. Its 160 million citizens include descendants of the early Portuguese and other European “discoverers,” of the African slaves brought in to work the coffee and sugar plantations, and of later immigrants from Europe, especially from Germany and Italy. A small percentage of the population are descendants of the few native Indians who survived the invasion of European



Some of the countless high-rise apartments, often situated right next to favelas, or slums, that characterize the megapolis of São Paulo.

culture. More recent immigrants include Japanese and Chinese and people from Arab countries of the Middle East. A great deal of racial mixing has gone on over the centuries, and many Brazilians combine two or more ethnic strains.

Brazil calls up images of the vast,

still-only-partially-explored Amazon Basin, the pre-Lenten Carnival in Rio, the samba, soccer stars such as Pelé and Ronaldinho, remarkable mineral riches, and also images of extreme poverty, manifested most poignantly in the sprawling *favelas*, or slums, that punctuate the country's cities.

Brazil is also a country in which Waldorf Education and related anthroposophical initiatives for social renewal are flourishing. There are about forty Waldorf schools in Brazil and four teacher training centers. The Escola Waldorf de São Paulo alone has over 800 students. Also in São Paulo is a project in the Monte Azul favela that provides Waldorf schooling, childcare, adult education, and various social services to over 1000 people. There are a full-time eurythmy training and a number of biodynamic farms in the country, some of them very large.

One of these farms is part of a 400-person community called Demétria. Named after the goddess of agriculture, Demétria is located in the savannah of southern Brazil about two hundred miles west of São Paulo. It started thirty years ago when some Brazilian young people, inspired by

the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, began to rehabilitate an abandoned farm through biodynamic methods. Soon they founded a Waldorf school on the property. The school now has over 300 students, half of whom come from disadvantaged families in the nearby small city of Botucatu. Demétria hosts a eurythmy training and has a natural foods store and restaurant. There is also a recently built church of the Christian Community, the movement for religious renewal inspired by Rudolf Steiner. There are only unpaved, dirt roads in the community and no streetlights (by choice of its inhabitants).



One of the termite mounds ubiquitous in the fields and pastures of the Brazilian countryside. Subterranean passageways connect this hill to others in the area.

Renewal

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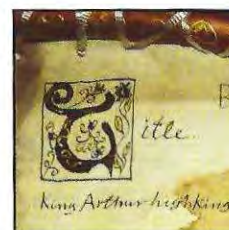
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Renewal: A Journal for Waldorf Education is published twice each year by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America. Founded in 1991, the magazine is intended primarily as a resource for Waldorf parents and teachers. It features articles about child development, parenting, children's health, the Waldorf curriculum and pedagogy, current research in education, and Waldorf Education in other parts of the world. *Renewal* is distributed throughout North America and around the world.

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From the Editor, continued

This summer I was in Demétria at a “north-south” conference of the Christian Community attended by about 150 persons from the United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Colombia, and other countries. Early one morning I stood on a dirt path below the church. The first rays of the sun were striking the peach-colored outer walls of the sanctuary. Cattle were grazing in a nearby field that was punctuated by the three- to four-foot-high termite mounds common in the south of Brazil.

I thought of Rudolf Steiner, a hundred years ago, dressed in black suit, white shirt, and black silk cravat, delivering his lectures and sowing the seeds for Waldorf Education, biodynamic farming, the threefold social organization, and the other daughter movements of Anthroposophia—“the wisdom of the true nature of the human being.” What an amazing journey, I thought, those ideas must have taken in the past hundred years to get from the lecture halls of Central Europe here to the Brazilian countryside to help create this farm, this school, this church, and all the healing human activity that takes place in this community.

The worldwide diaspora of anthroposophical ideas and of Waldorf Education is further described in this issue of *Renewal* by two articles—a Waldorf teacher’s account of her two years in Nairobi, Kenya, and a school portrait of Yeccan Colegio Waldorf in Guanajuato, Mexico. This theme is in keeping with the spirit of the season of Michaelmas. The Archangel Micha’el, whose feast day is September 29, stands for compassion, understanding, and a sense of the brotherhood of humanity that transcends all national, ethnic, and racial divisions.

Visiting a Waldorf school in the Kenyan bush, Ute Luebeck asked, “Dr. Steiner, did you ever foresee this?” Standing in the cool splendor of a Brazilian winter morning, I asked Dr. Steiner the same question. The answer—given, I sensed, with a gentle smile—was “Yes, of course.” ☉

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Subscriptions are \$13 for one year and \$26 for two years and can be purchased by contacting the *Renewal* business office in Ghent, NY. Foreign subscriptions are \$22.

Selected articles from past issues of *Renewal* appear on the AWSNA Web site: www.awsna.org



Hallie Jean Wootan

Changes

An AWSNA Update

For the past five years, Hallie Wootan has been *Renewal's* graphic designer and the person responsible for the production, advertising, sales, and distribution of the magazine. Hallie also designed the covers for books published by AWSNA Publications, as

well as the various outreach publications, informational brochures, letterheads, and envelopes used by AWSNA. And she oversaw the shipping and billing for AWSNA Publications. Hallie did many jobs and did them all well, with great energy and dedication.

Hallie joined the magazine staff in the spring of 2002 and produced ten graphically beautiful and exciting issues of *Renewal*. The man who represents the printing company that has printed recent issues of *Renewal* told Hallie that the Spring/Summer 2007 issue was the most beautiful publication he had ever seen. Hallie brought to her work imagination, aesthetic sensibility, intelligence, and a deep love for Waldorf Education. These permeated all that she did for the magazine and for AWSNA. Hallie now has decided to devote herself to freelance graphic design. She is also resuming the development of her lovely singing voice, having been accepted by audition into a select women's singing ensemble, Vox Musica, in Sacramento. Hallie has been married for nearly ten years to Nolan Wootan, and her considerable creative capacities are also engaged in the raising of their two children, Willamina, age 7, and Lucius, age 1.

Hallie's leaving *Renewal* and AWSNA is accompanied by other major changes. Jason Yates, a graphic designer and computer expert, and also a second-year student in the eurythmy program at Rudolf Steiner College, has taken over design responsibilities for the magazine. *Renewal* subscriptions and advertising sales are now handled by Ariana Coate in the AWSNA Office for Outreach and Development in Ghent, New York. Ariana is a former Waldorf class teacher and is now in her second year of working for AWSNA. The shipping and handling part of AWSNA Publications has moved to Earlton, New York (not far from Ghent), and is in the hands of

Robin Bellack. The editorial offices of AWSNA Publications, however, remain in Boulder, Colorado, with David Mitchell.

This all marks the end of an era in the history of AWSNA. For over twelve years, a house at 3911 Bannister Road in Fair Oaks, California, was the headquarters of the organization. The house is located right next to Rudolf Steiner College, a major center for Waldorf teacher education and the 400-student Sacramento Waldorf School. At one point there were six full-time employees working in the AWSNA building.

Three years ago, the reorganization of AWSNA resulted in the transfer of many of AWSNA's activities elsewhere. But Hallie remained at 3911 until this spring, continuing on for over a year to work with Rucha Powers. Rucha, formerly the receptionist for AWSNA, helped with sales and shipping for AWSNA Publications and compiled an article index for *Renewal* during that period. In the past year, part-time employees Charley Blatchford and Kassi Johnson have handled those sales and shipping tasks. In May of this year, all the books and supplies were packed up and shipped east, and the office was closed. Charley, who holds a PhD and is a former university professor, now semi-retired, has been and remains a valued copy editor for *Renewal*.

The house at 3911 has now become two apartments, in one of which now lives Martha Nañez, the property owner and AWSNA's gracious landperson for the past fifteen years. One remaining trace of AWSNA is my editor's office in a cottage next to that house. Another is the antique and weathered hand-painted, wooden AWSNA sign that bears an outdated logo and hangs next to my door.

We at *Renewal* and AWSNA are very grateful to Hallie Jean Wootan for her immense contributions over the past five years. We wish her well in what will surely continue to be a highly creative and productive life.



Renewal's current staff: (from left to right) Charles Blatchford, Anne Riegel-Koetzsch, Jason Yates

Teaching Children to Write, Read, and Spell

BY SUSAN R. JOHNSON, MD, FAAP

Learning and Proprioception

There is a widely held belief that if we start teaching children to write, read, and spell in preschool, they will become good writers, readers, and spellers by the time they reach the first and second grades. This is, however, not true. The truth is that children should be taught to write, read, and spell only when their neurological pathways for writing, reading, and spelling have fully formed. Many neuropsychologists, developmental specialists, occupational therapists, and teachers are concerned that the current trend of pushing “academics” in preschool and kindergarten will result in even greater increases in the number of children, particularly boys, diagnosed with attention problems and with learning disabilities related to visual processing.

In order for children to be able to sit still, pay attention, and remember abstract shapes, like letters and numbers, they first need to have developed their proprioceptive system. This system gives them the ability to experience where their bodies are in space. In my clinical practice, I see children who are being asked to sit still at a desk who can't yet “feel” where their bodies are in fact located. They have to keep their muscles and body moving all the time or sit on their feet or wrap their feet around the legs of their chair for their mind to locate the position of their body.

These children also have difficulty balancing on one

foot while their eyes are closed. Their drawings of a human being are more like that of a younger child—sticklike in form and lacking hands and feet. Because they are fidgety, have difficulty paying attention, and have poorly developed fine motor skills, these children often are labeled as having Attention Deficit Disorder.

These same children have difficulty recalling letters, numbers, and shapes that are shown to them, and they cannot recognize letters, numbers, and shapes that are traced on their back by a teacher or doctor using a finger with gentle pressure. They have difficulty remembering the orientation and direction of letters and numbers when writing, reading, or spelling. They often will confuse the letter **b** with the letter **d** and may write the number **2** or number **3** backwards and not even notice. For these reasons they are often labeled as having learning disabilities in visual processing—for example, dyslexia or other types of nonverbal learning disabilities.

The proprioceptive system is strengthened by physical movements, like sweeping with a broom, pushing a wheelbarrow, carrying groceries, emptying the trash, pulling weeds, or hanging from monkey bars. When a child does such activities, he stimulates nerve endings within his muscles, tendons, and joints that are sensitive to pressure, thereby allowing his brain to make a map of these various pressure



The physical movements involved in everyday tasks help children develop a sense of where their bodies are in space, a capacity related to learning to read.

receptors within the body. In this way, the brain becomes connected to the various parts of the physical body. The child now develops a sense of where his body is in space—proprioception—and even if he closes his eyes, he will be able to feel or sense the location of muscles, joints, and tendons within torso, arms, legs, fingers, and toes. In addition, as the child moves his arms, legs, hands, and feet forward, backward, up, down, left, and right, he will start to gain a sense of the spaces around himself.

When a child with a developed proprioceptive system looks at the shapes of letters and numbers, his eyes will follow and track the lines and curves. The memory of these movements can now imprint upon his brain. He has the capacity to make mental pictures or images of these numbers and letters and to be able to easily remember the correct orientation of numbers like **2** and **3** when he is writing. There is no more confusion between the letter **b** and the letter **d**. The correct orientation of the letter or number is seen within the mind before it is written.

The child's proprioceptive system affects more than the ability to sit still and to visually remember abstract forms. It also affects the child's ability to fall asleep by herself at night and to stay asleep through the night. When the proprioceptive system is not fully developed, a child will have difficulty falling asleep alone in her bed. Then she will frequently wake up during the night and need physical contact with her parents in order to fall back to sleep. Since her proprioceptive system is not yet developed, lying next to a parent is necessary to activate her pressure receptors and enable her to feel her body, relax, and fall back to sleep.

When such a child closes her eyes at night, to her perception, her body literally “disappears.” Her brain has no connection to the pressure receptors within her muscles, tendons, and joints. This is why many children want a light on at night when they go to bed, since they cannot “feel” their body when in darkness. They need to see their body and the spaces around them.

Reading, Spelling, and Writing

Our current mainstream educational system is teaching children to read in a way that doesn't make sense developmentally. Children in preschool and kindergarten are expected to memorize letters and words before their brains have developed the necessary pathways to identify letters, easily read words,

and comprehend what they are reading. We are asking these young children to read, when the only part of their brain that is developed and available for reading words is the right hemisphere.



A page from a first grader's main lesson book. Waldorf students first experience the letters not as abstract concepts but as shapes from the world around them.

The reading center in the right hemisphere of the brain develops between four and seven years of age. It then allows children to recognize words by sight. It enables children to focus on the first and last letters in a word and on the overall length and shape of the word. The right hemisphere reading center allows children to guess at words without paying much attention to spelling or matching sounds to letters—phonics.

In contrast, the reading center in the left hemisphere of the brain and the connecting bridgelike pathway between the left and the right brain don't start developing until seven to nine years of age. Girls may develop these pathways a little earlier, while some boys won't develop these pathways until ten or eleven years of age. This reading center enables children to match sounds to letters, to sound out words phonetically, and to remember how words are spelled.

Because the reading center in the right brain sees abstract forms like letters and numbers as pictures, it makes sense to first teach children to read by relating the shapes of letters to actual pictures that children experience and also draw themselves. This is what is done in Waldorf schools. For example, the letter **M** can be represented by two mountain peaks with a valley in between. As the teacher draws the picture on the blackboard, she tells the children



Rhythmic, harmonious, noncompetitive activities such as playing circle games, as in this first-grade class, help prepare young minds for writing and reading.

that the sound **M** is the first sound one hears when saying the word MOUNTAINS. Other examples include drawing a king out of the letter **K**, a bunny or a butterfly out of the letter **B**, and waves out of a **W**.

What doesn't make developmental sense is expecting children to just memorize the abstract shape of the letter **F** or memorize phrases like "**F** as in the word FOX," "**B** as in the word BOY," and "**C** as in the word CROCODILE." These words do not make any visual sense to the reading center in the right brain. The letter **F** doesn't look like a fox, the letter **B** doesn't look like a boy, and the letter **C** doesn't look like a crocodile.

When we push young children to read and they only have access to their right hemisphere for reading, we create learning problems for them in the future. Children using the reading center of the right hemisphere look at the first and last letters of a word, the length of that word, and then make a guess. Hence, they will look at a word like STAMP and may guess that the word is STOP or STUMP. If you show them the word TGOENTER they may read it as TOGETHER but will not realize that the word is misspelled. Words like FRIEND, FIND, and FOUND, as well as FILLED, FILED, and FLOOD, will all seem the same to them.

It takes a great deal of mental effort to read words using only sight memory. Sight memory was meant to be used for only small words. Children who are reading using only their right hemisphere often are exhausted after reading just a few paragraphs, and they can only parrot back words or sentences by memory. In addition, their minds are busy deciphering each word and therefore are not free to create the internal pictures and actual scenes associated

with the words they are reading. This limits their overall comprehension. These are the children who, when doing a report, are likely to plagiarize or copy a text word for word. This is because they can only recall the exact words they read and therefore can't summarize, condense, or comprehend ideas very easily.

For all of these reasons, reading should be taught in school only after children have developed both their right and left reading centers. This will enable children to use sight memory for small words and the more efficient method of phonics for larger words. In addition, children need to have developed the "bridge" pathway that connects the two reading centers together. When children have developed this connection between the right and left cerebral hemispheres (bilateral integration), they can access both the right and left reading centers of their brain at the same time. Therefore they can decide at each moment whether to read a word by sight, if the word is short (a right hemisphere activity), or sound out the word phonetically if the word is long (a left hemisphere activity).

A physical sign that children have developed bilateral integration and can now read both by sight memory and phonics is their ability to do the cross-lateral skip—swinging the opposing leg and arm forward at the same time—without thinking or concentrating. This is because movements on the right side of the body are connected to the left hemisphere of the brain, while movements on the left side of the body are connected to the right side of the brain. If children can move their opposite arm and leg at the same time, then the right and left hemispheres of the brain are "talking to" or connected to each other. If children can only skip using their feet or only skip extending the same arm with the same leg—the

homolateral skip—they are not ready to read, since they can't access both sides of the brain simultaneously.

Children who can simultaneously access the reading centers in the right and left hemispheres of their brain will read easily and will create visual images and pictures in their mind related to the content of what they are reading. They will be able to discuss or write about what they have read using their own words, because they can replay the scenes in their mind and don't have to think so much about the specific words used in each sentence. Therefore, they will have an easier time understanding the meaning behind the stories and books they are reading. Learning to spell will be easier, too.

Another common practice in mainstream education today, besides pushing children to read and spell before their brains are adequately developed, is to have children hold a pencil and write before they are ready. I see very young children being asked to write with one hand while they still have overflow movements occurring in the fingers of the opposite hand. Before the age of six or seven, the vertical midline of the child is not fully integrated. Movements made by the fingers of one hand are simultaneously mirrored by the fingers in the other hand. In other words, when a child moves the fingers of one hand in writing, the fingers on the other hand will also move, often without the child's conscious awareness. Children should not be forced to write until this vertical midline is integrated. If we force children to hold a pencil or pen and write before they have integrated this vertical midline, they will develop a tense pencil grip, a cramped writing style, and spatially compromised and jerky penmanship.

The sequence in which we teach children to write the different scripts is also important. Children should first learn to draw the capital letters as they are related to specific pictures. Next, the child can practice forms by repeating the small letters of the alphabet in cursive. Writing like this in cursive involves the right and left hemispheres working together. Printing the lowercase letters is a more



Cross-lateral movements such as skipping strengthen the bilateral integration of the brain and body, which promotes reading skills.

abstract and advanced developmental task that requires the advanced development of the left hemisphere, and this hemisphere often isn't developed enough for this task until seven to nine years of age. Girls may be ready to do this task by age six, while boys often can't do this task until after nine years of age.

I am seeing more and more fourth-, fifth-, sixth-, and even seventh-grade students from public and private schools who can't spell easily and are still reading primarily by sight memory. They can use their left brain to sound out words, but they approach every word they read first by using the reading center in the right brain, i.e., identifying by sight. For example, when I give such a child a sentence to read like "Six byos wnet on a vac-caiton tohgeter and tehy wnet fsihing in a bule baot," she often does not notice any of the misspelled words. Furthermore, when I have this same child read another paragraph where every word is spelled correctly, she often will tell me that both paragraphs are exactly the same or will

only note one or two words where the spelling is different.

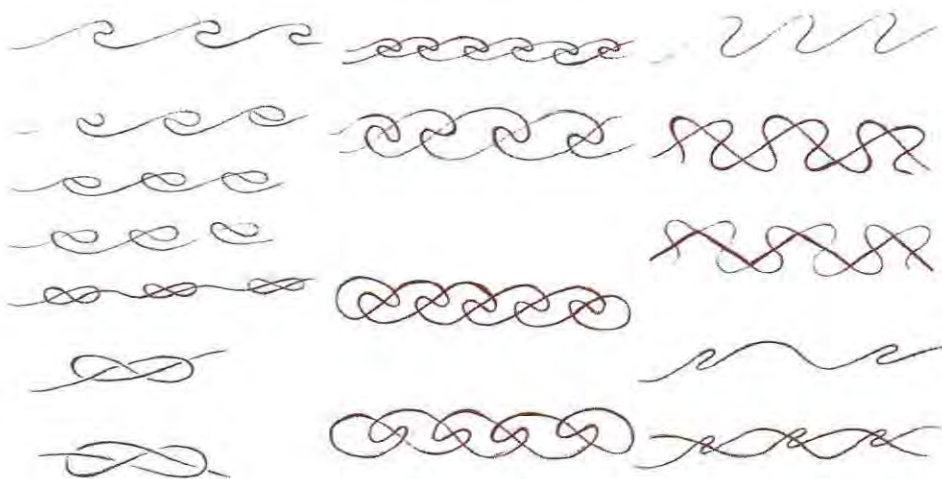
My worry is that these children were pushed to read too early, when only their right brain was developed enough for reading. They have compensated by learning to read everything using only sight memory. When the reading center in their left hemisphere finally developed, the habit of reading by using the reading center of the right hemisphere was already established. Therefore, these children first look at the words in a sentence using sight memory, and if the words don't make any sense, then they access the left reading center to sound out the words. The problem is they are not using the reading centers in the right and left brains simultaneously. Many of these children still lack bilateral integration in their physical movements as well as in their reading.

For some of the children, reading is slow and takes a tremendous amount of effort. For other children, their sight memory is so strong that they could read quickly, but their comprehension and spelling are still poor. Neither group of children can easily picture

the scenes from the words they read or remember how individual words were spelled.

Many of these children need cranial therapy because of a history of a C-section birth, prolonged labor, induced labor, or use of suction forceps at delivery. In addition, these children need lots of cross-lateral types of movements (in which the right arm and left leg move at the same time, and vice versa) to strengthen bilateral integration. Activities like walking or hiking with the arms swinging, swimming using the various strokes, rock climbing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and playing tennis all strengthen bilateral integration. Also, specific movement therapies such as therapeutic eurythmy, the Extra Lesson, Parelli horseback riding, Spacial Dynamics, Bal-A-Vis-X, Brain Gym, HANDLE, and sensory integration therapy will foster the development of these neurological pathways.

These activities and movements need to be experienced in a noncompetitive situation. Therapists and others working with the child need to avoid overstimulating the child or activating his fight-or-flight "stress" response. Neurological pathways do not form well when the child is stressed. Once these pathways and connections are formed, many of these children will need tutoring to relearn the rules of spelling and phonics and to start using their left brains for reading. Even if these children



Simple form-drawing exercises help children learn how to write cursively.

were taught phonics in the first or second grade, they need to review and relearn these reading skills because they didn't have access yet to the reading center in their left brain.

Prevention of Learning Disabilities

A number of other factors, including diet, sleep, and exposure to electronic media can affect a child's development. Parents and schools can support a child's healthy development and learning by serving healthful foods rich in protein, good quality fats (especially omega-3 fatty acids), fresh fruits, and vegetables, while eliminating partially hydrogenated oils and trans fats, which are formed when cooking or frying foods in corn oil. Removing sodas from the diet and limiting sugar and simple carbohydrates in general will keep B vitamins and zinc from being depleted from the body and reduce insulin and cortisol (stress hormone) secretions. Most soft drinks contain phosphoric acid, which pulls out calcium from the bones and contributes to osteoporosis in children and adults.

Adequate sleep increases the percentage of rapid eye movement or REM sleep, the type of sleep that promotes consolidation of the previous day's learning. A regular and early bedtime preceded by quiet time, a bedtime story, and perhaps an end-of-day verse can help the child get a good night's sleep.

Television, videos, and computer games stress the brain and nervous system with violent images and rapid sequences of pictures that the child cannot fully process. They also deprive the child of the opportunity to create his own inner pictures and imaginations. Eliminating or strictly limiting screen time, certainly on school nights, is essential, especially for younger children. Establishing and keeping to regular rhythms and routines in eating, sleeping, and other daily activities also will promote a more relaxed nervous system for learning.

Stress is certainly a critical factor. In children, especially young children, proper neurological development and learning ability both are negatively affected by stress. Forcing children to write, read, and to spell, and giving them standardized tests before they are developmentally ready, stresses their nervous systems. They may come to dislike reading and not want to go to school. If we insist on pushing

writing, reading, and spelling before the children's minds are ready, we will continue to create an epidemic of behavioral and learning difficulties, especially in our boys.

Thus, first grade is the time to introduce form drawing (the freehand drawing of patterns of curved and straight lines), the capital letters (as pictures that children can draw), and cursive writing. As the majority of children in the classroom strengthen their proprioceptive skills and integrate their right and left cerebral hemispheres, then the class can be more formally taught to read and to learn how to print the lowercase letters. The children's readiness for this will be indicated by their ability to stand on one foot with their eyes closed, identify the shapes that are traced by the teacher's finger on their backs, jump rope forward and backward by themselves, and easily do the cross-lateral skip.

It is time to remove the desks from kindergartens and preschools. Our preschools and kindergartens need to fill their curriculums with play involving lots of sensory integration activities. These play activities will strengthen fine motor movements, visual motor abilities, balance, muscle tone, and proprioception, as well as promote social and emotional development. Activities like imaginary play, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, walking the balance beam, playing circle games, singing, playing catch, doing meaningful chores, painting, coloring, playing hand-clapping games, doing string games, and finger-knitting will strengthen their minds for learning. Children need these healthy, harmonious, rhythmic, and noncompetitive movements to develop their brains. It is these movements of the body that create the neural pathways crucial for reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, and creative thinking. ☉

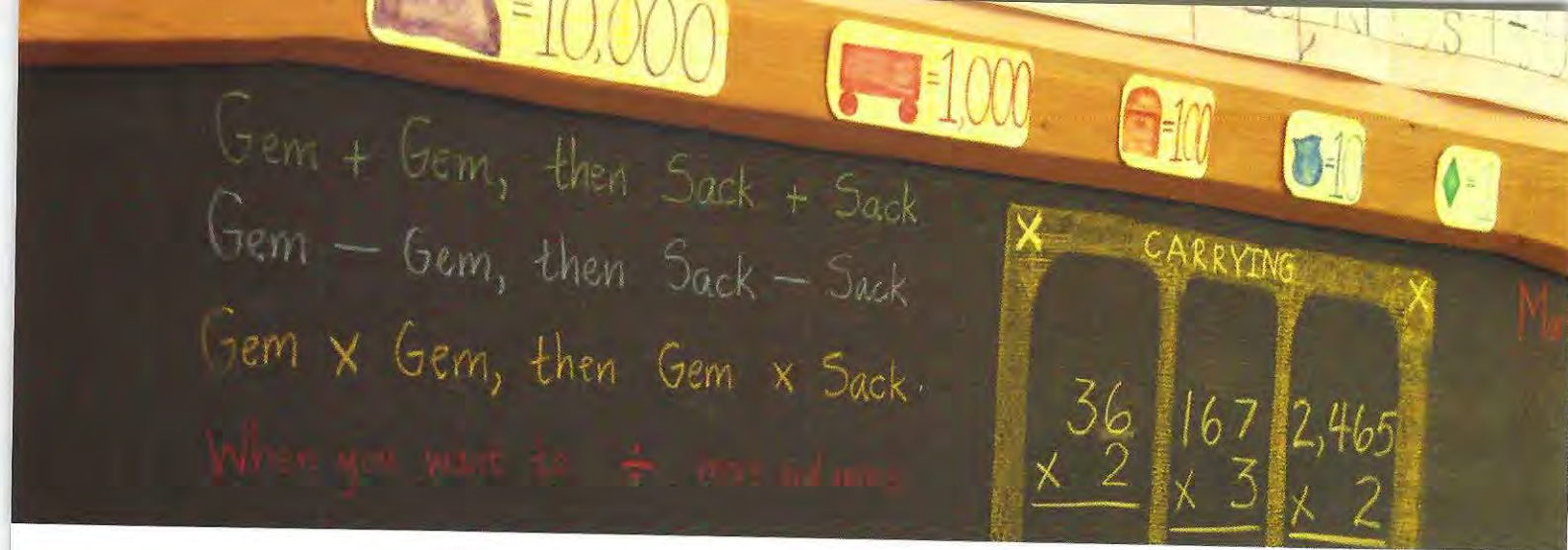


These third-grade Waldorf students are able to enjoy their library sessions, as they have been well prepared for reading through a variety of active, integrated learning experiences.



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For further information and to obtain for free the numerous articles she has written, visit Dr. Johnson's Web site: www.youandyourchildshealth.org



A blackboard from a first-grade math class

Mathematics and Memory

BY LORI MACKINDER, MA

It is an all-too-common evening scene in many homes: a child sits at the kitchen table, staring at a page in a math book, head in hand. Time goes by. The scene does not change, though there may be tears of frustration or anger. "I was able to do this at school," the child says to a perplexed but helpless parent, "but now I just can't remember how."

Many students who struggle with math can understand a problem while at school, or while sitting with a tutor, but when alone with the subject, they draw a blank. This is an issue of memory, and a close look at the development of memory will help make clear why some children have difficulty holding onto mathematical concepts and procedures.

The development of memory is part of the maturation of thinking and is crucial to the ability to perform math. The growth of memory begins early in life, when three distinct types of memory form: localized memory, rhythmical memory, and picture memory.*

Localized, or Movement, Memory

Localized memory, or movement memory, begins in the first year and is created through the activity of the limbs. Infants use their arms, hands, legs, feet, and tongue to experience and interact with

their immediate environment. Out of the bodily experiences of moving themselves and external objects—up and down, left and right, and backward and forward—they develop a sense of movement, of balance, and of the space around them. These bodily experiences lead to the ability to move inwardly, through thought, and to remember.

The infant therefore needs to be able to move and to interact with a variety of objects in the environment. If, during the first three years of life, free movement is overly restricted—by long periods of time strapped in a car seat, baby carrier, or stroller—the natural development of movement memory will be hampered.

An underdeveloped movement memory may first show up even in the first grade with the first experiences of working with numbers. The child may have difficulties with "number sense"—the ability to understand the meaning of a number and of place value. This is because the child, in the earlier stage of development, hasn't had enough experience moving various numbers of objects around by himself nor enough experience counting and sorting things.

A lack of movement memory also can manifest in the second grade when, in the addition and subtraction operations, borrowing and carrying begin.

Around the third grade, weakness in localized (movement) memory can become apparent when long division is presented. Without being able to comfortably move their own bodies and the objects around them, students cannot move easily between the various operations (multiplication, addition, and subtraction) and locations (left/right, above/below, forward/backward) in a long division math problem.

When these problems are present, opportunities to experience a variety of physical movements can help strengthen the movement memory. The activities should include large, gross motor movements such as the “zoo exercises”—imitating the movements of various animals—and jumping rope, skipping, and bean bag tossing. Fine motor activities such as the manipulation of blocks, counting sticks, beads, or beans, and practice in the proper way of holding a pencil also will help develop this type of memory. The child with weak localized memory may benefit from experiencing every mathematical problem in a concrete form first, using her limbs to move real objects that represent the abstract numbers. A problem in addition can then become the experience of moving separate piles of beans into a single pile—the sum.

Ideally, the child should stay at this stage of learning, exploring the movements and objects that make the math demonstrable, before moving to the next stage. Fortunately, in Waldorf schools, teachers recognize the importance of movement in learning and memory formation and thus support additional movement classes such as those that incorporate the zoo exercises in the second grade, Extra Lesson sessions or exercises, and curative eurythmy.

Rhythmical Memory

The second type of memory that develops is rhythmical memory. This is connected with the use of speech and song beginning in the second year



Gross motor movements such as this stepping exercise help to strengthen movement memory.

of life. We see this clearly in a child's first words—*ma ma* for mother or *da da* for father or *ba ba* for bottle. Sometimes this rhythm is stretched out, making the pattern more apparent: *ma ma ma ma ...* Every new word is repeated and repeated. The small child is forming rhythmical memory. The person or object, in this case the mother, is remembered through the rhythm of sounds in this one-syllable, monotone song. Later in school, this type of memory is called upon when the child learns a song to help remember the days of the week or rhythmically recites the multiplication tables.

There is a danger in moving to the rhythmical memory stage too early in school. If the child has not sufficiently experienced with his body what is being taught in rhythmic recitation, he has nothing in himself with which to connect it. Thus the song or recitation, while possibly fun, does not lead to independent thought formation. Many children will participate fully in class, reciting and chanting the times tables, and seem to grasp the mathematical facts. How-

ever, they cannot reproduce the chants on their own. These children need to go back to the movement memory stage and work with objects that they can touch and move with their limbs, or reenact the developmental movements from younger ages. Then they will be able to move on to verses, rhythmic chants, poetry, and stories as memory aids.

Picture Memory

Picture memory is the third type of memory that is formed. In the third year of life, the child starts to develop this way of remembering through the use of imagination, fantasy play, and listening to stories. Now the inner “movie screen” comes into being, and the child develops the ability to see something in the “mind's eye” and later to recall that inner image. Picture memory is of paramount importance in the study of higher mathematics in which abstract ideas are worked with.



Reading “chapter books,” which contain no illustrations, develops the ability to see something in the mind’s eye, a capacity important for higher mathematical skills.

Television and computer use can hinder the development of this imaginative capacity and the memory that goes with it. These external screens provide completely formed images to a child and thereby eliminate the need for her to form a self-created inner picture. On the contrary, reading stories to children, particularly from “chapter books,” which contain no illustrations, and playing “make-believe” and “pretend” with them support the growth of picture memory.

When the children begin to study pre-algebra in the middle school years, this faculty of inner picturing or its lack becomes apparent. However, a math teacher

can use stories (in presenting a problem, for example), images, and color-coding of the work to stimulate the picture formation in the student’s mind.

If a child struggles with mathematics, it may be a symptom of a deeper problem—that

he has not been given the opportunity to properly develop the kinds of memory that make mathematical skills possible. If we observe these struggles in a noncritical manner, and understand what memory skills may be underdeveloped, we can support the student in his going back through the missed stages, and lead him toward healing. This is the ideal task of education. ☺

Resource

* Karl König, *The First Three Years of the Child* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2004).



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Photos by Larry Canner from the Waldorf School of Baltimore



Waldorf students typically use rhythmic clapping and recitation to learn the times tables.



A "medieval scroll" created by a Waldorf fifth grader as a report on a book about King Arthur

Helping Children Find Their Excellence

BY GILBERT VAN KERCKHOVEN

Many children find their way to Waldorf schools after having been unsuccessful in, and damaged by, other schools. They are behind in many, or all, subjects and typically lack self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. The challenging task of the teacher is to help such children catch up academically, develop their latent gifts, and feel better about themselves and their capacities. That Waldorf teachers continue with their students through the grades, and thus can work with them longer, and that the curriculum includes a variety of artistic, craft, and other nonacademic activities both help the teacher meet this challenge.

In my twenty years of teaching, I have worked hard to develop means to help children build up their self-confidence and sense of achievement. One important element is to avoid applying, even subconsciously, negative labels to children. Every class has pupils with learning difficulties, children who have severe dyslexia or ADD, who are unable to apply basic math processes, or who can't recognize a note on the recorder. Focusing on the learning problem is a trap teachers easily fall into, but one that is dysfunctional for the learning of the whole class.

One way to avoid this pitfall is to observe the child and ask the question: *What is the latent talent in this child, and how can I help it to blossom?* Every Waldorf teacher, class teacher or specialist alike, needs to work with the pupils in a Socratic way, uncovering their as-yet-undisclosed inner wisdom and genius. Practically, then, each teacher has the duty—and responsibility—to bring out of each child what lies hidden as undiscovered talents and gifts. The big question is: *How does one do this?* For some children, the current educational practice whereby the teacher teaches from the blackboard and the children sit at their desks works well. For others, it doesn't.

One year I experimented with new approaches. I wanted to give my students an opportunity to express themselves in different ways from what I had traditionally been expecting of them. I asked my fifth graders to read a book each term and present a book report in written form. The first attempts were rather plain. But the next term one girl illustrated her

work and also made puppets of the characters in the book. This creativity inspired the other children, and they all took time and effort in their presentations, doing beautiful illustrations, making puppets, and even creating a miniature model of a scene from a book.

During the term in which we studied the Middle Ages, I asked the students to read a children's novel with a medieval theme and suggested that the review might take the form of a medieval manuscript. Only one student took up this challenge, and he was a boy who had learning difficulties. Everything in school was a chore for him.



A detail of David Wrigley's scroll, showing the illuminations and time-worn edges

To everyone's surprise, though, this boy did a brilliant job. He presented his report—on a book that dealt with King Arthur—as a scroll, made “old” by staining it with tea. He wrote on the scroll the way medieval monks used to do—with gold lettering, illuminations, and abstract designs. His project was voted best in the class and was later used in exhibitions of student work. His “scroll” hangs on the wall in the entrance hall of his home for all visitors to see. This success made him proud as a peacock and changed his whole image of himself and his capabilities. Though bright, he finds the academic work difficult. But given the opportunity to apply himself in a practical way, he excelled beyond anybody's expectation.

I once had a boy who came to the school in the fourth grade. To all appearances, he was a total mess. He was dirty; his clothes were always torn and scruffy; and he had no social skills whatsoever. The other children said he smelled and avoided him because he had “germs” and because he would not leave them alone. He refused to do the work he was asked to do, and, when scolded, he would just run out of the classroom and hide somewhere, refusing to come back into class. He was especially unruly during eurythmy and other specialty classes and soon became the class pariah.

Later that year, the class went to an outdoor activity camp with rappelling, a high ropes course, and other physically challenging activities. The boy couldn't manage most of the activities, but somehow in that nonschool environment a hitherto unknown aspect of his personality emerged. He turned out to be a clown, a jester, and such a funny character that he had the rest of the class in stitches. He also turned out to be a source of knowledge about nature, especially animal life.

The following year, this boy wanted to leave the school, claiming the work to be too difficult. His parents, the learning support team, and I all tried to find a solution to keep him in the school. The academic work was a challenge, but he had been accepted by the class. In fact, the children had grown quite fond of him.

The solution was found with the help of the gardening teacher/maintenance person. The boy would spend time helping him, not only with general maintenance and care of the grounds, but also with teaching gardening for the younger grades. He would be an “assistant.”



David Wrigley, the grade five scroll-maker, now 16 and in the 11th grade

The effect was magical. Not only did the boy's social skills improve week by week, but so did his academic work. He became one of the few pupils in the sixth grade—I was working with a combined sixth/seventh class—who understood the new math problems almost immediately and could solve them. And the children of the lower grades, even the most boisterous, loved working with him because he had such a gentleness and a patience about him.

Meanwhile the boy had acquired an almost encyclopedic knowledge of the local wildlife: lizards, birds, goannas, and the like. This love for and knowledge of nature resulted in an excellent main lesson presentation on nature observation and creative writing. It was the best work he had ever done. No one could have predicted a year earlier that this boy would be capable of producing such writing and illustrations.

There are still many questions about the boy and where his path will lead in the future. But doors have opened. Thanks to the gardening teacher, the boy had an opportunity to discover some of his talents that a normal classroom situation would not have uncovered. He developed both a social awareness and skills that were present, but hidden. He turned out to be a very bright lad, a genius in his own way, with many and varied talents.

Recently, I happened to meet this young man, who is now in the tenth grade. When I asked him how he was and if he liked school, he smiled and admitted, much to the merriment of his siblings who were also present, that he did in fact like school. He also

said that he is planning to finish the twelfth grade and then study to be a mechanic.

Waldorf Education aims to develop all the human capacities, the intellectual, the artistic, and the practical in each child. The special gifts of some children lie primarily in the intellectual realm; these are the ones who excel in academics. The gifts of others are in the arts; these usually do well in the arts-rich Waldorf world.

But there are also young people who learn primarily by working with their hands, in making things, in putting things together. These boys and girls thrive and develop when they have an opportunity to work in a practical way in an area unique to them and/or to apply in practice what they are learning.

Fortunately, the breadth of the Waldorf curriculum offers opportunities for these young people. But we as teachers need to be sure that they don't get lost in the shuffle and that they get the special opportunities they need.

Teaching is not trying to fit the children into a mold. Teaching is enabling the children to reveal their gifts and talents. We often have to search to find the right way to a child before we can succeed in effecting such a revelation. But once we succeed, not only the child and teacher but also the whole community will benefit from our efforts. ☉



GILBERT VAN KERCKHOVEN is currently class three teacher at the Noosa Pengari Steiner School in Doonan, Queensland, Australia. He is currently in his fourth teaching cycle. Born in Belgium, he emigrated to Australia after his Waldorf training at Emerson College. His articles have appeared in *Renewal*, *Das Goetheanum* and *Erziehungskunst*. He led workshops in form drawing at several international teachers' conferences in Dornach and is currently studying Egyptian hieroglyphs. His main interests are children's literature and creative writing. One of his short stories was highly commended in a national competition in Australia. A children's book with an Aboriginal theme is currently being considered by a publisher.

Photos by Gilbert Van Kerckhoven

The Child Study

BY VIVIAN JONES-SCHMIDT



What is important for future teachers is that, through their training, they have become capable of looking into the developing person. What is important is that they have acquired the skills that they can obtain through a thorough, real understanding of human beings. What is important is that they have become capable in the presence of each child and in each moment to newly form and re-form the educational task. For the true teacher, pedagogy must be something living, something new at each moment.... We could even say that the best pedagogy—stated radically—is one that the teacher continually forgets and that is continually reignited each time the teacher is in the presence of the children and sees in them the living powers of developing human nature.

—Rudolf Steiner

When Rudolf Steiner founded the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919, he instituted the “child study” as an essential element in the life of the school. On a regular basis, the faculty members choose a child in the school, and, with the permission of the parents, make this child the object of a process of observation, discussion, and therapeutic recommendation. This is done in the elementary grades and in the high school as well. Here, Vivian Jones-Schmidt, a former class teacher and now admissions director at the Charlottesville Waldorf School in Virginia, looks at this special element in Waldorf Education and describes one common approach. There are many ways to approach the child study. Christof Wiechert, for example (see sidebar), uses a somewhat different approach than described here.

—R. E. K.

“Every month the faculty devote part of their meeting to studying a particular child. I’d really like to present Madeline. Would that be okay with you?”

A Waldorf parent hearing this request from her or his child’s class teacher may legitimately ask: What does “studying a child” mean? What will the teachers be considering? Is my daughter being chosen because something is wrong? What is the goal of the Waldorf child study? Will the child need to take tests? Will I be involved in any way? What sorts of comments and recommendations will they make?

A central task of the Waldorf class teacher is to bring the richness and benefits of the curriculum to each child. Doing this requires much preparation of the content but also a deep understanding of each child based on close observation. In the child study, the class teacher, working together with colleagues, tries to form a picture of the true nature of the child and to find a way to deal with any imbalance or problems. The immediate aim is to support and help the child. The child study also helps the teachers

gain a deeper understanding of child development in general. Thus it is a crucial element in the faculty work in a Waldorf school.

In many Waldorf schools, each teacher is asked to bring at least one child for child study during the course of the year. A child might be chosen because of the loss of a beloved grandparent or a divorce in the family; because of social or academic difficulties; because she is so quiet she is often overlooked; or because she excels in every area.

Child study protocol differs from school to school. Typically, the class teacher first will speak with the parent or parents. He will explain the purpose and form of the study and ask permission to discuss the child with the rest of the faculty. The teacher might ask if anything unusual occurred during the pregnancy or early life of the child and for permission to share this information, if it seems relevant. Generally, the teacher will offer to convey to the parents any insights that might arise from the discussion.

During the discussion, the teachers ask three primary questions:

- What can we observe in the child's physical characteristics, movement, speech, habits, artistic and academic work, social interactions, and life history?
- How do these observations relate to one another?
- What is there in our approach to education that will support and strengthen this child?

As the faculty members study various children over time, patterns of development become clear. Gradually, too, the teachers gain skill in observation and also confidence, both in asking penetrating questions and in making specific recommendations.

A child study often begins with a reading of the child's birth week verse from Steiner's *Calendar of the Soul* and perhaps then a brief description of the child's family situation. The child's early biography is pertinent if, for example, the pregnancy or birth was difficult, the child experienced a traumatic injury or illness, or the family moved often. After these introductory remarks, all faculty members who know and have had an opportunity to observe the child contribute their observations.

The first question is, in effect, "What is the child's presence in the physical world?" Often teachers will

mention obvious physical characteristics: eye and hair color, facial expressions, speech, ease of movement, quality of rest. During this period, the teacher might pass around a photograph and samples of the child's work. Supplementary questions might include:

- Is the child able to imitate the teacher's actions?
- What are her habits with regard to eating, sleeping, helping others, and way of dressing?
- Can she follow the classroom routine?
- What are her preferences in activities and in playmates?
- Does she initiate play, or is she more likely to follow someone else's lead? Does she take offense easily?
- How are her academic skills?

While those teachers who know the child are answering such questions, those unfamiliar with her are paying close attention. They are trying to form a picture of this child in their minds.

Both groups are important for the second phase of the study—trying to see how the various observations correlate with each other. For example, the child moves through space in a particular way—lightly, methodically, reluctantly, or decisively. The way she paints may or may not reflect the same tendency. One teacher might relate this child's bold and quickly finished painting with her bold, purposeful walk, and the group might then recognize the child's choleric temperament. Another teacher might point out that the child has a strong, sturdy build and a purposeful gait but has difficulty organizing and finishing her work. One might expect a choleric child to complete her assignments in a polished and timely manner. Therefore the teachers might consider the significance, if any, of this apparent contradiction. Considering all the information that has flowed so freely thus far, the teachers deepen their understanding both of the particular child and of child development in general.



Each child is an individual who presents to the teachers a unique array of qualities, talents, and potentialities.

The prevailing mood is one of gratitude to the child for bringing his or her own unique characteristics into the world.

Now begins the third phase of the child study, as each faculty member considers what can be done to support this child. Knowing that the student has a choleric temperament helps the teachers choose appropriate measures to help her develop good work habits. Some of the standard elements in Waldorf Education already support the child in this

area. There are clear, predictable daily, weekly, and seasonal schedules and rhythms. Each morning main lesson is planned to alternate periods of intense focus with periods of relaxed conversation and movement. Rhythmic clapping, counting, and recitation are included in each day's activities.

The child's class teacher might consider his own presence and presentation in the classroom. He

can resolve to model good work habits, to make sure that the main lesson is clearly structured, to give students enough time to finish each assignment, and to warn them when that time is almost over. The faculty might suggest that the teacher assign the child a particular task, for example closing the classroom windows, to be carried out at the same time each day, as a way of strengthening the child's will forces. The parents might be asked to ensure that at home she has a regular routine of eating, doing chores, and going to bed.

With these comments and suggestions, a plan has been created that will affect the child's life at school and at home. Six to eight weeks later, the faculty members review the child's response to these measures. With this, the child study is complete.

What is not included in this type of child study is very important. The child has not been tested. None of the adults has attempted to analyze the child's personality or to read particular motives into the child's behavior. Neither the child nor her parents has been judged. The faculty have worked almost entirely with what they have observed in this child, with what they know about child development, and with what they can address within the confines of the school. Most of the agreed-upon interventions will support not only the child but also many of her classmates.

At the same time, focusing on this child will help the teachers better recognize and interact with other choleric children and with children who have poorly developed habits. Working together over time in service to the children they teach, the faculty create a common vocabulary. As every faculty member's contributions are recognized and valued, individuals gain confidence, and a greater sense of equality begins to grow within the group. This is truly an opportunity for the teachers as a group to further their own education.

As the child study comes to an end, the prevailing mood in the room is one of gratitude: to the child, for bringing her own unique characteristics into the world; to the parents, for permitting the faculty to focus on the child; and to one's colleagues, for their participation in one's own development as a teacher and as a human being. o

Resource

Rudolf Steiner, *The Spirit of the Waldorf School: Lectures Surrounding the Founding of the First Waldorf School, Stuttgart-1919* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1995), 85.

VIVIAN JONES-SCHMIDT was led to Waldorf Education when she wandered into the Charlottesville Waldorf School, trying to find the owner of a pair of children's mittens. That child never was found, but a new career was launched, and Vivian has been involved in the Charlottesville



A child's way of moving—in everyday activities, sports, games, eurythmy—is an important consideration in the child study.

Waldorf School since 1985. Vivian has taken two classes from grades one through grade eight, has taught handwork and chorus, and has served as chairperson of the college of teachers, the faculty, the grade school, and also of many committees. A delegate from the Charlottesville school to the

Association for many years, Vivian currently serves as enrollment coordinator for the school. She is also a longtime member of the editorial advisory board of *Renewal*.

Illustrations by Anne Riegel

Christof Wiechert on the Child Study



Christof Wiechert is the head of the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. As such, he is responsible for the welfare and development of the worldwide Waldorf movement. A native of the Netherlands

and a graduate of the Free Waldorf School in The Hague, Christof was for many years a class teacher in that school, the first Waldorf school founded outside Germany.

Since becoming head of the Pedagogical Section in 2001, Christof has traveled to North America a number of times to be the keynote speaker at Waldorf teacher conferences. His deep understanding of Anthroposophy, of human development, and of the principles and practices of Waldorf Education, his warmth, and his lively sense of humor have greatly endeared him to Waldorf educators in North America.

Christof sees the child study as an essential element in the life of the Waldorf school. At the 2005 AWSNA Teachers' Conference in Ann Arbor, Christof made the child study the theme of his talks. In May 2007 he gave a weeklong course on the topic at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California. In May 2008 he will give a supplementary weeklong course, again at Rudolf Steiner College.

In a recent interview Christof said:

The child study plays an important role in the ongoing process of improving the life of the school. It is an opportunity for the faculty to work

creatively together, and thus it strengthens their sense of community and cooperation. The child study helps the teachers develop their powers of observation and the ability to synthesize these observations into a living picture of the child. Then it challenges them to see what healing forces can, if necessary, be brought into the child's life. The child study really deepens the teachers' understanding of the child as a developing human being.

The child and parents of course benefit also. Today all education must have a healing element, and each aspect of Waldorf Education can have a therapeutic effect on the child. In each child certain tendencies exist—in temperament, in way of thinking, whether analytic or synthetic, in imaginative capacity. If there are deficiencies or imbalances, each of the various subjects—math and geometry, form drawing, calligraphy, music, singing—if properly presented, can be health-giving. Often in my teaching career in The Hague, the recommendations arising from a child study for a bit more of a certain subject or activity were a great help to the student in question.

Finally, offering encouragement to time-stressed Waldorf teachers in full-agenda faculty meetings, Christof added:

A child study doesn't necessarily require hours of discussion and agonizing over this or that recommendation. It requires close observation and the forming of a clear inner picture of the child and then an intuitive grasp of what will be of help. In the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Dr. Steiner often completed a child study in five minutes.

The child and parents benefit also. Today all education must have a healing element.

Waldorf Education: A Choice for Health

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI

Parents choose Waldorf Education for their children for various reasons. Some like the fact that academics are not stressed too early. Others are attracted by the central role of the arts and hand-crafts in the curriculum, which encourages the harmonious development of the child in “head, hands, and heart.” And some are drawn by the spiritual understanding of the world and of the human being that lies at the foundation of Waldorf Education.

There is another important consideration, of which most parents may not be aware. Waldorf Education may help provide the basis for a lifetime of physical health. Rudolf Steiner emphasized that proper education serves as a stimulus for the life forces in general and for the long-term health of the individual. Because of the predictable daily rhythms in the Waldorf school day and the considerable amount of physical movement that takes place—in eurythmy, classroom games and exercises, sports, craft and art classes—one would expect some general beneficial

effect upon the children’s health. The following examples, in fact, show several surprisingly specific healthful outcomes of a Waldorf education and the Waldorf lifestyle.

The Onset of Puberty

An interesting study was conducted in Germany in the 1970s that looked at the effect of Waldorf Education on the age at which children attain physical maturity. Two medical doctors, Hanno Matthiolus and Christa Schuh, were aware that in the larger society over the last century sexual maturation has been occurring earlier and earlier. They were concerned that this ever-earlier sexual maturity means that children experience pubescence without the emotional maturity to deal with it in a healthy manner. Improved nutrition is possibly one factor in this phenomenon. Better-nourished children, reaching their adult height and weight earlier, may enter puberty earlier. The effect of growth hormones



Gardening, one of the most healthful forms of activity, is a regular part of life for Waldorf students in all grades.

added to animal feed is another, more ominous, possible cause. In any case, Schuh and Matthiolus sensed that there may be other factors.

The two physicians chose the age at which girls have their first menstrual period as a guidepost that clearly marks the onset of puberty. In recent years, researchers have determined that there are a number of factors that can cause this first menstruation

to be playing a role. For the public school girls, the average age of menarche was 12.63 years. This is close to the age reported in the United States, which is 12.43 years. In the Waldorf school sample, however, the average age of menarche was 13.25, a significant difference of almost eight months.

One should not draw any definitive conclusions from a single study done in Europe over thirty years

Swedish researchers noticed that children not exposed to certain contemporary trends in nutrition, medicine, and child-rearing were less likely to suffer from allergies.

to occur earlier than normal. Most are social stressors: a mother suffering from depression, a single mother, the presence of an unrelated male in the home, high family conflict, an urban environment, and adoption from a developing nation into an affluent home. In the years since the German study was done in the 1970s, another possible cause has come to light, one that hardly existed thirty years ago—childhood obesity.

In contrast, factors known to be related to later maturation include a larger family size, warm and close relations with the biological father, and a low-stress, supportive family environment. The researchers wondered whether some aspects of Waldorf Education—the close-knit, family-like atmosphere of the Waldorf classroom, the fact that the teacher usually accompanies the class through its eight years of primary schooling, and a low-stress, noncompetitive environment without undue academic pressure, exams, and grades—might also be factors supporting the later onset of puberty.

In Germany, Waldorf Education is a significant element in the educational system. Though the circumstances vary from state to state within the country, many schools are in large part supported by government funds. There are today 208 Waldorf schools in Germany, many of which are very large, having 800 or more children. Even in the 1970s, Waldorf Education was well established in that country, and so it was not difficult for the two German researchers to get a significant sample of 1175 Waldorf schoolgirls.

Matthiolus and Schuh compared this group with 1118 public school students living in the same area. They took care to allow for other factors that might

be playing a role. However, it would be interesting to repeat such a study in the United States today to see whether these results would be replicated and would confirm the German researchers' intuitions.

Nearsightedness in Children

For most of the last century, scientists were quite sure that heredity is the most significant factor in nearsightedness among children. Researchers had noted a significant variation in the incidence of school-age myopia in different countries. Children in Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan had an incidence of around 40 percent, while in the United States the numbers were in the 10 to 16 percent range. The lower figure applies in the elementary grades and the higher figure in high school. This varia-



Various games and exercises such as this bean-bag-tossing exercise in a second-grade class are part of the daily rhythm of Waldorf school life.

tion between racial groups seemed to confirm that hereditary factors determine the refractive condition of the eye.

In recent years, however, this theory has come under criticism. On discovering that their own children required eyeglasses, some researchers who had no family history of myopia began to question the accepted wisdom. They wondered whether eyestrain was a more cogent explanation for the etiology of the condition. Relevant evidence came from a study of native peoples in Alaska. Two-thirds of the children developed considerable nearsightedness after starting school, while their illiterate parents and grandparents, who had never had formal schooling, showed no nearsightedness. Researchers were forced to conclude that the visual stress required by intensive reading and other close-focus work was the cause.

No formal study has been done, but many parents and teachers in Waldorf schools have noted that Waldorf students seem much less likely to wear glasses for nearsightedness than children at nearby public and private schools. This informal observation needs to be tested by an objective, quantitative, comparative survey. However, the fact that nearsightedness is caused, not inherited, gives this observation some credence and encourages a search for possible causes.



The close-knit, family-like atmosphere in a typical Waldorf classroom seems to support the health of children.

The visual life of the typical Waldorf child is much different from that of other children. He or she is less likely to be reading at an early age and less likely to be spending time looking at a television or computer screen. These fixed-focus activities are significant sources of visual strain.

In addition, Waldorf children are surrounded by and work



Sixth-grade girls do a eurythmy exercise with copper rods. Eurythmy, a form of artistic movement unique to Waldorf Education, promotes the healthy physical and social development of the child.

daily with color—a wide variety of engaging colors. The walls of each Waldorf classroom are painted in a color that corresponds to and supports the stage of development of the children in the class: a color from the reddish part of the spectrum in the first grade, for example, and a bluish color in the sixth. Usually the walls have been painted using a technique called lazuring, in which many thin layers of translucent watercolor paint of related but varying tints are applied in glazes over a white base. This creates a soft, luminescent, colored surface that seems to “breathe.” Also, every day the children work with color in watercolor painting, crayon and colored pencil drawing, and handwork. This environment of color and the active, daily involvement with color may provide relief from the strain that causes nearsightedness. Whatever the reason, Waldorf Education seems to promote the healthy development of the eyes.

Childhood Allergies

Another area in which Waldorf schooling seems to have a significant healthful effect is childhood allergies. About ten years ago, a team of Swedish researchers was concerned about the increased incidence and severity of allergic diseases in children in recent decades. They had noticed, however, that a group of children who had not been exposed to certain contemporary trends in medicine, nutrition, and child-rearing, i.e., children in Waldorf schools, seemed to have fewer allergies.

These researchers conducted a study, published in 1999, that compared 295 children from two Waldorf schools near Stockholm with 380 children of the same age in neighboring schools. The two groups differed, of course, in the way they were being educated. Besides that, there were a number of lifestyle/environmental factors that distinguished the Waldorf children from the other children. Since most had not received the MMR (measles, mumps,

rubella) vaccinations, they were more likely to have had measles. (Waldorf students account for most of the measles cases in Sweden.) The vaccinations they usually do receive—tetanus and polio—they get at a later age than other children. The Waldorf children had less exposure to antibiotics and antipyretics, or fever reducers. Also, they tended to eat more organic and biodynamic food as well as more food with lactobacillus, such as live-culture yogurt and lactofermented vegetables—sauerkraut, pickles, and beets. The Waldorf children were more likely to have been breastfed and less likely to have been exposed to secondhand smoke at home.

The research team collected medical histories from parents, performed skin-prick tests on the children for thirteen common allergens, and also took blood samples. Among the Waldorf students there was a 13 percent incidence of atopy or allergy-like symptoms. In the public school group, the figure was 25 percent. The researchers noted that the more Waldorf elements a family had incorporated into its lifestyle—organic food, rejection of vaccinations, and so on (each designated rather playfully as a “Steiner point”)—the less chance that children in the family would have symptoms of allergies.

With these promising results, an international group decided to replicate the study while looking more closely at some other variables. The new study compared 4606 students from Waldorf schools in Austria, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands with 2024 students in neighboring public schools. The results of this larger study were similar to those in the Swedish one, indicating that the Waldorf students “had statistically significant reduced risks for rhinoconjunctivitis, atopic eczema, and atopic sensitivities.” The researchers concluded that the Waldorf students had a lower risk of allergic diseases. Although they attributed this lower risk to the lifestyle choices of the families, they did not completely understand how these choices made the difference.

A commitment to Waldorf Education often is accompanied by other lifestyle choices made in harmony with the Waldorf philosophy. This synergy



The daily work with color in painting, drawing, and handwork is part of the overall enlivening experience of Waldorf students.

of what the schools and the parents bring to their children has long-term effects, not only for their mental and emotional well-being, but works on in the children’s long-term health as well. Waldorf Education is truly a healthful choice. ☺

Resources

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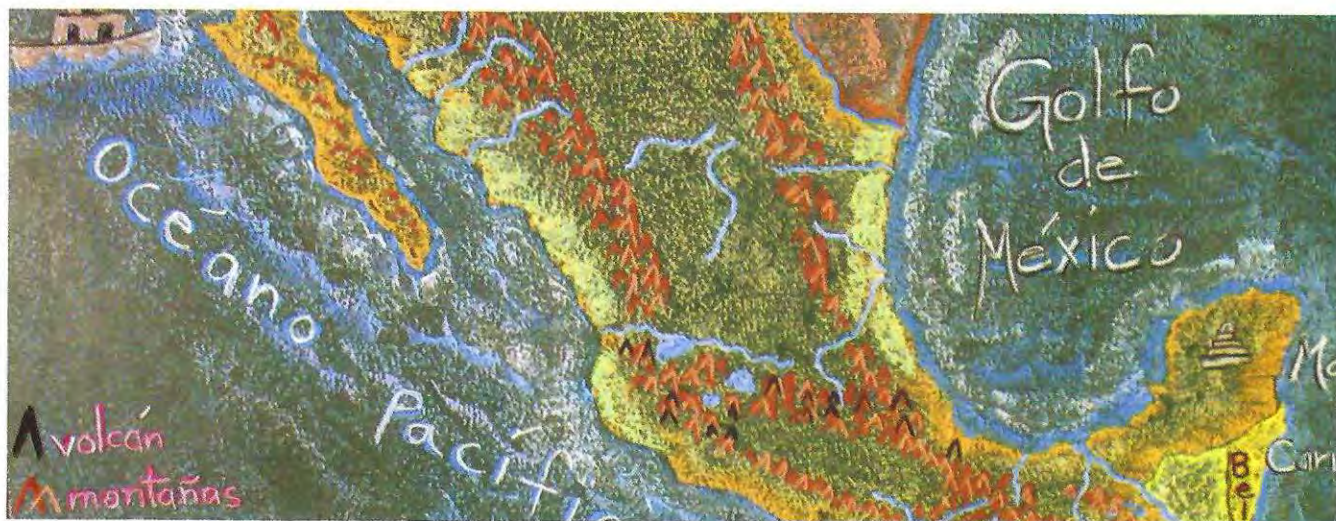


Renewal staff writer THOMAS POPLAWSKI works as a psychotherapist in western Massachusetts. Thomas is a trained eurythmist and has been a student of Anthroposophy for many years. His wife, Valerie, is a kindergarten teacher

at the Hartsbrook School in Hadley, Massachusetts, and his two sons are students at the school. Thomas’s recently published book, *Completing the Circle*, is a collection of articles on parenting, all of which appeared first in *Renewal*.

Colegio Yeccan Waldorf in Guanajuato, Mexico

BY TONY COHAN



The Mexican city of Guanajuato is surely one of the more dramatic settings for a Waldorf school. This mile-high regional capital of 140,000 people, five hours by car north of Mexico City, was founded in the mid-sixteenth century and built with the vast wealth from its mines, which for three centuries produced a third of the world's silver. In 1988 Guanajuato was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city's picturesque colonial center, steep winding streets and tunnels, university of 30,000 students, crafts, traditions, and yearly international arts festival offer Waldorf students, teachers, and families an inspiring physical and cultural setting.

Each weekday morning, students arrive at the gates of Colegio Yeccan Waldorf from all directions and by various

modes of transport—by car, by taxi, by way of the funicular cable car running up the steep hillside from the old center, and on foot, through the subterranean tunnels that honeycomb the city. The present campus, set on a hillside above the city with a wide view of the surrounding mountains, has recently been expanded to include a new annex across the street. This provides more classrooms for the school's 107 students and seventeen teachers, fifteen of whom are full-time.



Two early-grade students at the Waldorf school in Guanajuato

The student population tends to be drawn from the children of teachers and professors, government workers, professionals, tradespeople, and those involved in the lively Guanajuato arts world who are seeking an alternative to Mexico's traditional, highly codified public education system. The curriculum is in

Spanish, but English and German are taught by bilingual teachers and by guest teachers from Germany who spend a year at Colegio Yeccan as an alternative to military service. Each year, a small percentage of the students come from foreign families, or families in which one parent is of non-Mexican origin. This gives a distinct multicultural flavor to the classes, which until recently ran from preschool through the sixth grade. Hard work by teachers and parents has convinced the authorities that the school can support a high school, which in Mexico includes grades seven, eight, and nine. The school now has a seventh- and a ninth-grade class.

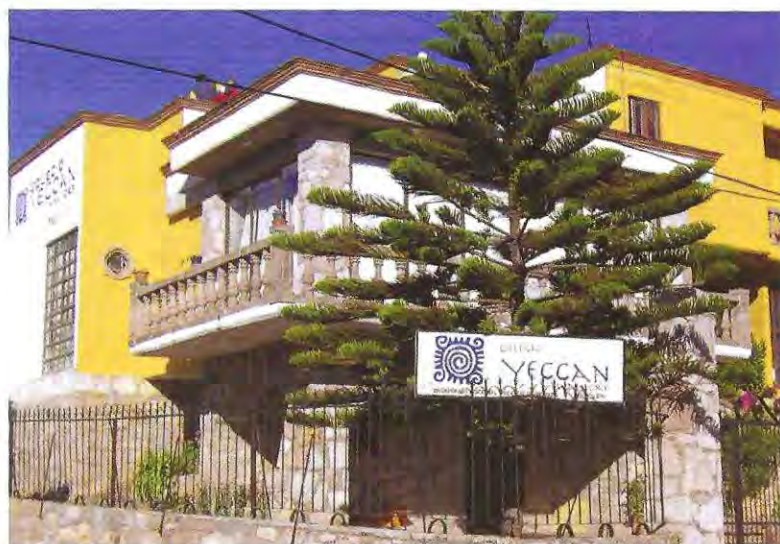
Colegio (meaning “school”) Yeccan (a Nahuatl word meaning “place of good living”) Waldorf was begun in September of 1994 by five concerned professional women and mothers who, in the words of cofounder Gabriela Sánchez Rodríguez, were “interested in an education that used all the human faculties.” It began with thirty-five students and for ten years functioned under the name Villa Educare de Guanajuato. The school eventually changed its name when, in the words of Señora Sanchez, “we came to identify more fully with the Waldorf pedagogy that had refigured our early expectations, and now has grown to interest many other parents who wish to offer a true gift to their children: an education with heart.”

Autumn is an especially festive time of year throughout Mexico, and nowhere more than in Guanajuato, providing an opportunity to bring many different events and cultures into play at Colegio Yeccan. In this city that, in the words of a recent state governor, “breathes culture,” the fall season begins with the International Cervantino Festival, a three-week October gathering of music, drama, and dance from all over the world. Streets, plazas, churches, and auditoriums become a living theater, providing the Waldorf community with a chance to observe and participate in Latin America’s biggest arts festival. Meanwhile students, teachers, and parents celebrate the *Festival de la Cosecha* (Harvest Festival) in an outdoor amphitheater in the nearby Santa Rosa Mountains with a Waldorf-style Michaelmas dragon play and a potluck picnic.

During Mexico’s vivid Day of the Dead observations, on November 1st and 2nd, traditional handmade *alebrijes*, little sugar figurines, are sold by artisans in the plazas throughout the city. Meanwhile up on the Colegio Yeccan campus, students delve into this ancient cultural tradition by constructing beautiful

altars to the departed, with crafted objects and *cempasuchil* (marigold flowers), and by preparing a *cajeta* (sweet jam) spread made of *camote* (sweet potato), guava, *canela* (sweet cinnamon), walnuts, and sugar. At the same time, Halloween is celebrated with pumpkins, apple-dunking, orange and black decorations, and songs and recitations in English—“Double, double toil and trouble,” from *Macbeth*.

“There is actually a north-south relationship lurking in there with Halloween,” explains teacher Michelle Marin. “The origins of All Hallows’ Eve trick-or-



The main building of the Colegio Yeccan Waldorf

treating arise from the need to cleanse the Earth’s atmosphere of evil spirits by scaring them, so that on All Saints’ and then All Souls’ Days, November 1st and 2nd, only the good spirits may enter. Many cultures sense a thinning of the veil that hangs between ours and the spiritual world at this time of year. With all of this in mind, the trick-or-treaters prepare the way for our *muertos* (the dead) who come to party safely among us.”

In the second week of November, Colegio Yeccan celebrates another Waldorf favorite, the *Festival de los Faroles* (Lantern Day) with a puppet show accompanied by lyre and recorder music and by candles, paper lanterns, songs, and games. Later in the month, taking advantage of the bilingual and bicultural faculty, the school community celebrates Thanksgiving with a turkey dinner. The year culminates with traditional Christmas *posadas* (processions), *piñatas* (candy-filled paper toys), and *pastorelas* (Nativity dramas).

Michelle Marin's fifth-grade classroom is a bright, airy space beneath a curved *boveda* (hand-built brick) ceiling. Wide windows and a balcony afford a spectacular view of nearby La Bufa, Guanajuato's



Students in costume preparing for a Halloween celebration

most prominent mountain peak. Inside the room, by clear morning light, plants, shells, baskets, balls, books, paint brushes, and musical instruments mirror her students' rich investigation of the world around them and the world within. In this well-ordered but relaxed ambience, a dozen fifth-grade students, alert and engaged, move through the steady rhythms of their school day.

Michelle Marin is a warm, striking woman whose presence invokes natural respect. A self-described "back-to-the-lander looking for alternatives for my children," she began as a Waldorf teacher in the late 1970s at Colorado's Lamborn Valley Waldorf School (no longer in existence), studying and learning as she went. From there she moved to Ukiah, California, where she taught at the Waldorf School of Mendocino County for fourteen years. Eight years ago, Michelle came to Mexico on a six-month sabbatical. "I didn't know there was a Waldorf school here," she says. Of Mexican heritage and fluent in Spanish, she was asked to help teach until the end of the year. Michelle ended up staying on to teach English, later becoming a class teacher. "I started with this class in first grade," Michelle says. "I'll go through sixth grade with them." Her daughter, Joaquina, also teaches at Colegio Yeccan.

Colegio Yeccan is one of five Waldorf schools with grades in Mexico and, as a developing school, is an active member of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America. As Mexico's delegate to AWSNA, Michelle Marin is well qualified to speak of both the pleasures and the challenges of teaching at Colegio Yeccan and in Mexico in general.

"Waldorf teacher training in Mexico is relatively new. There is only one training center for the whole country, in Cuernavaca—a three-week summer course, now in its sixth year. In the States, of course, it's different; there are many opportunities for training. So we don't yet have more than one or two fully trained teachers, though all are in training, going to the summer sessions. If the teacher agrees to return to the school, half of the training costs are paid through AWSNA's program."

But finding and keeping Waldorf-trained teachers isn't always easy. Though Guanajuato is a relatively prosperous city, Mexico is not a wealthy country and salaries are low. "We can't charge high tuition," Michelle says, "so we can't pay teachers enough. Many leave after a couple of years."

Funding at Colegio Yeccan remains a constant challenge. "We have a teachers' store and we sell things to support teacher training. The Christmas fair raises money. We sell baked goods and books and sponsor benefit concerts. If we're still short, parents



A Day of the Dead altar featuring marigolds, candies, and chocolate skulls



The city of Guanajuato as seen from the road leading down from the school

help financially with teacher training. But fundraising is more ingrained in the North American culture. Here, people tend to think: 'If you can afford to send your children to a private school, why work also to raise money?'"

Tuition charges, while not high by U.S. standards, limit those who can attend. "We do offer scholarships to parents who can't pay," says Michelle, "and we ask them to do other things. We ask them to disclose their income and we offer them discounts. And teachers get full tuition remission for their children, so their own children can be educated here."

Mexican city, state, and government institutions allow independent schools to operate but are not always supportive. Early in the school's existence, the city helped fund teacher training in return for the school giving local children free workshops in dollmaking, painting, and candle-making, but that has not happened since. And there are official restrictions on the curriculum: "For a long time we were allowed to go only as high as the sixth grade," says Michelle. "And there's lots of bureaucracy. They give us required textbooks and send supervisors to check up on us."

Still, the spirited ambience in classrooms, on the playground, and at the many school events throughout the year, along with a surge of new children swelling the preschool ranks suggest a healthy future for Colegio Yeccan Waldorf. In the summer of 2006, Guanajuato hosted one of the international Kolisko Conferences held that year. These conferences focus on the healing element in education and bring together Waldorf teachers, anthroposophically oriented physicians, and therapists (in music, eurythmy, and the Extra Lesson). The 2006

gathering in Guanajuato brought many Waldorf and anthroposophical visitors from abroad to this Mexican highlands city.

"Parents who value beauty and aesthetics are drawn to Guanajuato," Michelle says. "By comparison with the States, kids don't wake up to the hardships of the world as early here—middle-class kids. Innocence lasts longer. And Mexico itself is slower-paced. I'm more relaxed here, and it helps me give more easily."

At the end of the school day, students leave Colegio Yeccan for homes down in the city center or in the surrounding hillside communities where old mines and churches still stand—continuing the educational conversation between this exceptional city and the school on the hill. ☺



TONY COHAN is a writer living in Guanajuato. His daughter attends Colegio Yeccan Waldorf. Tony is the author of many books and articles, including the travel narratives *On Mexican Time* and *Mexican Days*. His memoir *Na-*

tive State was a *Los Angeles Times* Notable Book of the Year. His novel *Canary* was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year, his novel *Opium* a *Literary Guild* pick. He has written articles, essays, and reviews for *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The London Times*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, and other publications.

Photos by Tony Cohan

Teaching in the Nairobi Waldorf School

BY UTE ISABEL LUEBECK



Ute Luebeck with students of the Nairobi Waldorf School

"Be careful what you are praying for—you might receive it!"

When I prayed only a few years back, "God, please send me something different," I never imagined or dreamed that I would end up in Kenya teaching at the Nairobi Waldorf School. "Different" I most certainly got. The experience of living and working in a Third World country as a single woman was amazing, although it was not always pleasant. But it has been for me a colorful, personal journey of unparalleled depth, which, despite all its hardships, I would not have missed for anything.

I had never been to Africa before. The job offer and my acceptance were communicated via Internet and phone and involved faith and goodwill by both parties. After selling my few belongings and submitting my body to numerous vaccinations, I set

foot on African soil on August 4, 2005, with two suitcases, a backpack with my laptop in it, and a subdued enthusiasm after a seemingly endless flight from Los Angeles. To my heartfelt relief, I was met and welcomed by a future colleague, who graciously took me into her home for the first two weeks of my new adventure.

Soon I was hit with first impressions: the dangerous traffic on narrow streets (with the driving on the left side); the many potholes; the air pollution; the unexpected cold (Nairobi is 5500 feet above sea level); high prices; and the enormous polarity between poor people and those who are well-off and living in big houses with servants.

Kenya lies between Africa's two highest mountains, Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya, and is divided by the Great Rift Valley, which links eastern Africa with the

Red Sea in the North. Since Mary and Louis Leakey made their anthropological discoveries here in the 1970s, the region has been linked with the most ancient beginnings of human history.

Kenya is also known and popular for its wildlife—and for good reason. Watching the magnificent male lion, the amphibious hippo, the graceful, tree-pruning giant giraffe, the swift cheetah outrunning its prey, and the matriarchal, huge African elephant, all in their natural habitat, can make time stand still and send one's soul soaring. Such an experience can put one in awe of something utterly outside the self and remind one of the wonder and meaningfulness of God's creation. I am not sure I will ever set foot into a zoo again. Tourists from all over the world come here on wildlife safaris, enjoying luxurious accommodations and gourmet food, but few see and learn about the real Kenya and its people.

The first Waldorf school in Kenya was started by two Waldorf teachers from Germany. They were looking for a pioneering situation and were inspired by a former Waldorf student and artist who had lived in Kenya for many years. That person was troubled by the lack of opportunity for the native population to develop their cultural heritage and craft skills within the postcolonial educational system. A Waldorf school seemed a way to preserve those skills for future generations. This first school, the Mbagathi School, is located about fifteen miles outside Nairobi amid the grasslands of the Masai and on the edge of Nairobi National Park. Its early years were difficult and crisis-ridden. There was no anthropological groundwork at all, and the Kenyan parents were not interested in such work either. Yet help always seemed to arrive when most needed. Today the school has its own buildings, and the Kenyan teachers are studying Waldorf Education in a part-time teacher training course offered in two-week blocks over several years by the Center for Creative Education in Cape Town, South Africa. This is of course not comparable to the two-year, full-time training that I received at Rudolf

Steiner College in California, yet it is of tremendous value to the growing number of East African people interested in Waldorf Education. In addition, master teachers from abroad visit each year to mentor and advise.

I was deeply touched when I visited this school and first saw the sign "Rudolf Steiner School" in what seemed to be the middle of nowhere. I couldn't help talking inwardly with Rudolf Steiner and asking him, "Would you have ever thought this possible in 1919?"

The Nairobi Waldorf School, where I taught, was opened in September 2000 through the efforts of a few enthusiastic and committed parents. The school is nestled on beautiful forested grounds, each classroom housed in a separate little building. It is located in Karen, a suburb named after Karen Blixen, the author of the novel *Out of Africa*, on which the movie of that title was based. The Karen Blixen house, now a museum, was on my way to school. It contains many things from the movie, including furniture, china, and clothes worn by Meryl Streep and Robert Redford. The novelty of this, however, soon wears off.

The Nairobi school is relatively small, with grades one through five and a combined sixth/seventh-



Ute and a student in front of Ute's colored chalk drawing on a blackboard made of painted wood

grade class with only a few students. The bigger classes have to carry the smaller ones. The school is often short of funds, materials are scarce, and the blackboards are made of painted wood. Yet the situation fires the imagination and calls for flexibility, and I learned to appreciate the stimulation and the challenge. In my second year, my class, which had grown from nine to fifteen students, was culturally diverse. About half the pupils were black Kenyan children, the others from Israel, England, Holland, Brazil, and the Philippines.

The very dedicated faculty is likewise diverse, including teachers from Germany and France as well as Kenyans. Although not one of the other teachers was fully Waldorf-trained, I learned from each of them in ways I never anticipated. School life is much like that of a Waldorf school in the West. The curriculum is taught in main lesson blocks; there are school plays and festivals, assemblies and meetings, joys and crises.

From the beginning, I had to cope with the cultural differences between the native people and those of us from the West. The black/white issue, a residue of a long colonial past, is still very much alive. There was in addition the issue of language. Even though Kenya's principal language is English (a colonial legacy), each of the black Kenyan students, as a member of one of the many tribes, spoke a dialect of Swahili first. Also, the Kenyan people possess a beautiful openness and warm-heartedness, yet they can have an unexpected emotional sensitivity in their relationships with Westerners.

Another aspect, which struck me quite deeply, is the issue of our Waldorf festivals. One has to



Elephants crossing a river in a Kenyan national park



Street scene in downtown Nairobi

remember that Kenya is in the southern hemisphere and therefore the seasons come at the opposite time of year as in North America. When I brought a Michaelmas play to Kenya for the first time, I struggled with my introductory speech to the community on the festival's meaning. The Archangel Micha'el is connected with the experience of autumn when the spirits of nature having to do with light and growth withdraw, when the world starts to become darker and inner dragons loom larger as we become more reflective. But on his festival day in late September, it is spring in Kenya. And yet the deep meaning of the struggle between Micha'el and Ahriman, the adversarial being who manifests in the cold and hardening tendencies present in winter, lives in the souls of us all at all times. It is a universal, human struggle binding us, regardless of time and place. While Anthroposophy, the foundation of Waldorf Education, was not as familiar to my dear Kenyan colleagues as it was to me, I could often feel their hunger for it.

The big challenges for me lay in the general circumstances of life. For a Westerner everything is new—the climate, the rains, the dust, the food (which requires special treatment since the vegetables may have been watered from contaminated rivers), the traffic, the deeply potholed streets, the need to sleep under a mosquito net, the illnesses, the people, the culture, the different sounds, and the isolation and lack of freedom of movement. The freedom to go just anywhere is not a given. It is too dangerous,

especially for an unaccompanied Western woman.

Kenya's communication system is expensive. People usually can leave only short phone messages. All bureaucratic and administrative activities—such as banking and mail services—are extremely slow, problematic, and often seemingly totally irrational. There can be a strong phlegmatic element in the culture, resisting change and putting up with inconveniences.

Finding safe and affordable housing was a challenge. The big homes in the Nairobi suburbs have huge, parklike gardens and are surrounded by walls or thick impenetrable hedges, often with electric wire on top. There is only one entrance, guarded at all times. In a society where poverty and disease—beyond what a Westerner may imagine—afflicts a large proportion of the population, this kind of security is necessary. I finally found a small furnished apartment adjacent to a big house owned by English people. Even after two years I felt like a first grader in a land where I felt I had little control over external circumstances.

During my Easter break in 2006, I visited an orphanage called Lusi Village near Lake Victoria at the Tanzanian border. One of my class parents is involved in this important project, which helps children who have lost their parents to HIV, malaria, or another of the many tropical illnesses that plague the continent. The project also promotes self-sufficiency for the local people, for example, teaching crafts and techniques to prevent water contamination, which is the main cause of many illnesses. I have grown to be in deep awe of the parent who gives her all to this highly important undertaking.

The ride to Lusi Village was a long one over terrible roads through the beautiful tea fields near Kericho in western Kenya. Finally, part of gigantic Lake Victoria came into sight. There was no running water at the village and no electricity. Yet it was a gift to spend time among those children of all ages in tattered clothes, so grateful for being offered a little fish, maize, and spinach (*ugali*, the “common” food). These children—who have little to nothing materially—were smiling and laughing as they listened to my telling of the fairy tale “The Emper-



A view inside Ute's classroom during her second year of teaching in Nairobi, when children of non-African backgrounds had joined her class

or's New Clothes,” translated by the oldest girl into Kiswahili. As I was sitting among them, there was a moment when I had to turn away, hiding my tears, which were saying, “You have no idea how much you are teaching me!”

Africa teaches things of immense importance—patience, compassion, perseverance, acceptance, and gratitude. But, most of all, Africa forced me to think about life in new ways. I had to live in the moment, since danger was always present. Africa can be brutal and beautiful, all at the same time.

As a visitor to Africa once said, “[My experience in Africa] seems like a gradual discovery of a continent and its secret creatures, its mysteries, its great dramas, and its strong emotions, but also an unexpected confrontation with inner and most unprotected truths...” My own time in Africa was just such an experience. ☉

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Photos on pages 30 and 31 provided by Ute Luebeck; photos on page 32 by Webshots; photo on this page by Ruth Magan

Creating a Waldorf Culture Friendly to Fundraising

BY JASON P. DRUCKER, PhD, AND LUCY SCHNEIDER

Schools are small communities. People tend to talk to each other—a lot. Perceptions and feelings are shared freely, forming a miasma of partial truths and opinions that can complicate the decision-making process. Nowhere is this more problematic, perhaps, than in the relationship of parents and faculty to the work of the development office. Faculty, as well as parents and alumni, whose experience of philanthropy and of independent school culture is limited to what goes on in a Waldorf school, often misunderstand the reason for fundraising, much less its details. Many teachers and families come to Waldorf Education to escape the excessive materialism



There are a variety of fundraising activities that go on in a typical Waldorf school. The annual school fair is one of the most colorful and visible of such events. The photos in this article depict scenes from the harvest fair at the Sacramento Waldorf School.



and values of our consumer society. And, increasingly, middle-class families who are committed to Waldorf Education for their children find themselves squeezed financially to pay for tuition. These factors, when combined, can be a daunting backdrop for anyone who is planning to introduce a fundraising program at his or her school.

Today, fundraising in Waldorf schools has much in common with fundraising in philosophically based, “spiritual,” or grassroots nonprofit organizations: leadership tends to be diffuse; those being solicited are highly suspect of consumer culture; a strong volunteer corps supplements “staff” roles; and fundraising is seen as either antithetical to the mission of the organization or as a necessary evil.

No independent school today can ignore the necessity for fundraising. While most parents are highly satisfied with the curriculum of Waldorf Education and the benefits for their children, many problems exist. Some of these are directly related to finance. Faculty and staff are underpaid and have few retirement options; facilities are strained; and many families who would like to enroll their children cannot afford to do so. It is true that neither a



Parent volunteers help out at the garland-making booth ...

beautiful building nor a well-paid faculty guarantees a good education. But, the converse also holds true. An impoverished school does not translate into a more dedicated faculty, increased programs, or a more holistic school community.

Fundraising can appear to create or exacerbate the anxieties about consumerism and the influence of money in private education, but in truth those anxieties are usually already there, just below the surface and already substantial. However, a development effort that invites all members of the community to participate as donors, whether small or large, and as volunteers—in the classroom, at special events, and on school committees—can build the kind of community that develops mutual understanding and trust.

Rudolf Steiner designated the economic realm as the realm of brotherhood and sisterhood. This is not a coincidence. There is no better way to create community and enthusiasm for greater involvement in the well-being of a Waldorf school than through special fundraising events. Parents and others who volunteer to help at special events often are the people who come to understand the annual fund drive, join the school's board of trustees, work actively in parent leadership circles—including parent education programs—and are the largest financial contributors themselves. Acknowledging fundraising as an important function in a Waldorf school is critical. Pretending that fundraising is not important probably will have a poor publicity and community-relations effect.

School publications, such as an annual report or school newsletter, can help the immediate and extended community recognize the enormous ways in which parents or alumni volunteer or

contribute. The school leaders need to spend a significant amount of their time—in class meetings, general school gatherings, and other venues—acknowledging every gift, large and small, of money and of volunteered time and work, and thus give visibility to the volunteers and donors who are essential to the running of a Waldorf school. Volunteer work often goes unnoticed, so even small gestures of recognition here go a long way.

Along with a vital community of volunteers, a flourishing development program is essential to running a proper Waldorf school. Just as those involved in admissions, finance and accounting, management, and maintenance play a vital role in a well-run Waldorf school, development staff (part-time or full-time) and development initiatives—well planned and well carried out—are essential to a school's success. Money will always be connected to the social/cultural life. Indeed, it is the responsibility of the economic sphere to support the cultural sphere, and it is the responsibility of the cultural sphere to use the money wisely and well to strengthen the work of the institution. Waldorf schools are not in danger of accumulating money for the mere sake of accumulation.

It is well understood that Rudolf Steiner's comments on the healthy social life demand that individuals working within a particular community must find the reason for their work and must perceive and feel the meaning and value of that community. Thus, creating goals that engage the perspectives of the entire community enables us to work together to



... and on the archery range.



Local craftspersons sell their work and pay part of their profits to the school. Jan Schubert, a Waldorf parent and teacher, displays her handmade beeswax candles, beautiful sources of warmth and light.

ensure the future of the school. Reaching these goals through a carefully developed philanthropic plan is responsibly fulfilling our duty as a cultural institution to our children and to those of the future. The first Waldorf school was made possible through the request and generosity of a private donor, Emil Molt. That Rudolf Steiner had the vision to create an inspired education that would serve children all over the world does not diminish our appreciation of the underlying philanthropy that made this possible.

Philanthropic gifts are made not by angels but by individual human beings. And, the best way to ensure healthy philanthropy is by making it a truly professional activity within

the school. This does not mean just hiring professional staff. It also means engaging all members of the community in philanthropic goals, determining together and stating explicitly where the school is now and where you want it to be tomorrow, next year, a decade from now. When development work is done well, it is in service to the short- and long-term vision of the school and its mission, taking into account the views of faculty, board, parents, and alumni. It means planning for the stability of the school's finances, the enhancement or growth of academic and scholarship programs, and the upgrading of its facilities and endowment.

Since all community members should be actively engaged, conducting fundraising only among "wealthy" families and alumni just reinforces stereotypes and class bias in schools. Any exclusion ultimately undermines rather than creates community. Every gift is an act of participation, and having 100 percent participation in a community is as important as achieving the dollar goal of a campaign. Gifts to Waldorf schools tend to come from current parents, alumni, and alumni parents. It is wishful thinking to assume that local foundations or businesses are

going to sweep in and fulfill philanthropic goals. Even so, it is important to bring people from outside the immediate school community into your mission. However, the highest priority should be helping every community member to contribute, as they are able, and to recognize each person for his or her unique contribution.

Waldorf schools have much to learn from the long-standing and successful fundraising traditions of independent and religious schools. These schools derive much of their support from alumni, many of whom were scholarship students years ago and are now able to endow scholarships for a next generation.

The signs of a healthy Waldorf school are:

- a significant and growing participation in the annual fund drive
- a strong volunteer corps
- a community spirit that manifests in inspired fundraising events, and
- the commitment of all members of the community to larger capital and endowment goals



Beeswax candles, those most quintessential items of the Waldorf lifestyle, here crafted into acorns and pinecones, become symbols of growth and abundance.



In the crafts room, items made by parents and teachers are on display and for sale.

It is only through this diversified approach to philanthropy and volunteerism that Waldorf schools will flourish. ☉

This piece is a condensed version of a much longer article describing the entirety of fundraising activities at a Waldorf school. It is available on AWSNA's Web site: www.awsna.org

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Both authors worked closely on developing an expanded philanthropic program at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City, the first Waldorf school in North America, and are deeply committed to helping the Waldorf school movement develop the philanthropic expertise to flourish in the twenty-first century. They are indebted to the work of the development committee of the school, especially parents Dawn Trachtenberg and Stephanie Papoulis, development colleagues Shannon Williams and Rhoda Lauten, and consultant Diana Morel of SERAPIS, who helped create this vision and is still involved in its development. Thanks also to Patrice Maynard, leader for outreach and development, AWSNA, and John Bloom, director, Advisory Services Program, Rudolf Steiner Foundation, for their thoughtful edits to an earlier draft of this article. Those who would like additional ideas and resources about fundraising, please go to the Web sites for AWSNA or the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

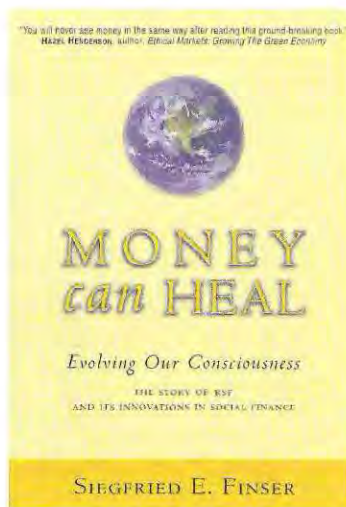


Well-known Waldorf-style dollmaker Truth Almond displays her creations at a school fair.

Money Can Heal: Evolving Our Consciousness

An Important New Book by Siegfried Finser Tells
the Story of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation and its
Innovations in Social Finance

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH



Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) held that the future of humanity depends on our ability to transform each area of individual and collective life on the basis of a spiritual understanding of the human being and of the world. Steiner called this spiritual worldview Anthroposophy, or the “true knowl-
edge of the human

being.” With this basis, he offered practical suggestions for rethinking and reforming virtually every area of human activity. These suggestions led to the creation of Waldorf Education, biodynamic agriculture, anthroposophically extended medicine, organic architecture, and the other so-called “daughter movements” of Anthroposophy.

Rudolf Steiner also spoke about money, capital, and business, particularly in a series of lectures given in 1922 and published under the title *World Economy*. In those lectures, Steiner lamented the anonymity of the financial system and the prevalence of egoism and self-interested competition and called for a new understanding and way of working with money.

Students of Anthroposophy, first in Europe and more recently in North America, have worked to develop and to put Steiner’s ideas into practice. Siegfried Finser is a Waldorf school graduate and a former Waldorf class teacher, treasurer of the Anthroposophical Society in America, and business consultant. In 1981 he began working together with several other anthroposophists to “begin a process of working with money in a new way. We wanted to bring the emerging human consciousness into a responsible relationship with money and to see how we can use it to change the way the world works with money.” This led in 1984 to the reviving of the long dormant Rudolf Steiner Foundation (now known as RSF Social Finance) as a financial institution seeking to introduce a new, spiritual impulse into the world of finance.

Siegfried Finser’s book *Money Can Heal* is a spiritual autobiography, an explication of basic Anthroposophy, and a primer of Steiner’s ideas about money. It is also an account of how those ideas have been developed and put into practice by the author and by others, a history of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation, and a guidebook for those individuals wishing to change the way they think about and handle money.

Siegfried Finser blends stories, examples, and anecdotes about ordinary, everyday occurrences with penetrating analysis in search of meaning and truth. His sixty-four short chapters, each focusing on a

single idea, move the reader along without strain and yet challenge all the ideas we presently cherish about money, its movement, and its significance in human life.

Today we tend to experience the world of money and finance as something problematic, even dark and menacing. Finser's overall message, however, is one of hope and empowerment in that he maintains that money can help us realize our highest intentions and ideals.

An oft-reiterated theme is the changing relationship of the human being to the "gods" or the "spiritual world" and the concomitant evolution of human consciousness. In ancient times—as is depicted in the Norse myths—the human being was a child and the gods the main actors in life. Gradually the gods, the higher spiritual beings, withdrew so that today the human being stands alone in the world, conscious of his independent identity, free to decide how to think and to act, capable of compassion and empathetic love, and able to take responsibility for and to transform the world in a positive way.

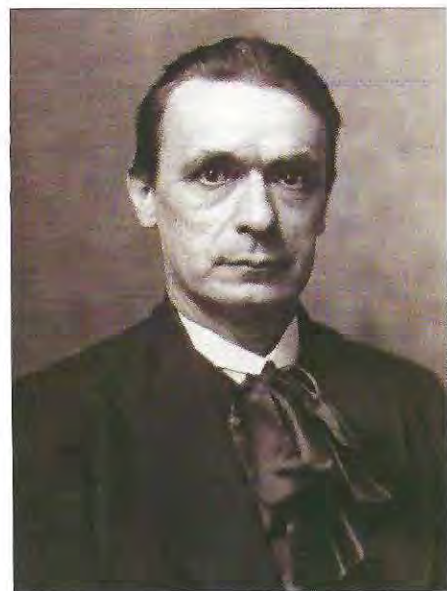
Finser also refers to the threefold nature of the human soul, manifest in the activities of thinking, feeling, and willing. He notes too the threefold nature of human society, the separate spheres—the cultural, economic, and political—where, respectively, freedom, cooperation, and equality should prevail as guiding principles.

This threefoldness is reflected also in the three main types of financial transactions: buying/selling, lending/borrowing, and giving/receiving. Each involves two parties, but each has its special characteristics. In the purchase transaction, each party fulfills a need or desire of the other. During this process, an economic value is created. Siegfried Finser concludes that no physical object or service has any inherent economic value. The value is created not by the work or effort involved, but by the buying and selling that gives a dollar amount to the object or service. This appears to be a unique revelation from his personal experience.

Through a loan transaction, the lender enables the borrower to do something he would not otherwise be able to accomplish

and consequently to fulfill his destiny in the world. The lender typically has a deep concern for the borrower, and thus there is an impetus toward community.

In the gift transaction, the giver selflessly offers his own substance so that something good can come into the world, usually something of cultural and spiritual value. The actual value of a gift—for example, money to build a school—cannot be computed since it benefits all humanity for many years to come, even into the limitless future. Finser's conclusion is interesting: that the individual or institution accepting a gift is not the true receiver, but a party to the giving. The real receivers of any



Rudolf Steiner

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are both illuminating and practical.*

Renewal



One of the ecologically and socially conscious projects funded by RSF Social Finance, EcoTimber of San Rafael, California, manufactures and sells sustainably produced hardwood and bamboo flooring. (Photo copyright iStockphoto.com/Nicholas Monu)

gift are those who benefit: namely, the whole of humanity for eternity.

One of Siegfried Finser's basic points is that in each of these transactions we can and should be totally conscious and that we can act out of our highest, most noble instincts, not only for the good of ourselves but for the good of others and of the world. Compassion for the suffering of others, concern for the environment,

and the desire to create a better, more humane world can be conscious considerations in each of our dealings with money.

Thus, when we consider buying something, we should be aware that we are telling the world to continue to produce what we purchase. If we buy organic vegetables, we are sending a different message than if we purchase vegetables raised with chemicals and pesticides. If we buy a cheap T-shirt made in an Asian sweatshop, we are helping to perpetuate that system of exploitation. If we ourselves are producing and selling something, we need to consciously judge if that product or service is good for the purchaser and for the world.



Another project, Better Energy Systems, manufactures Solio, a solar hybrid charger for hand-held electronic devices. (Photo copyright Better Energy Systems)

Renewal

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Regarding the loan transaction, Finser suggests that periodically we ask ourselves to whom we would be willing to lend money and why, and also from whom we would be willing to borrow. If we lend, we always lend to someone who will accomplish something to which we have become a party. Will it benefit the world? If we borrow, we should observe how we become involved in the lender's destiny and life circumstances. Finser notes that behind each loan transaction lie hidden forces of karma from the past, as well as the seed of future karma.

Investments are a purchase, not a loan, so the issues about what kind of company we invest in and its effect on the world are identical to those involved in a buying/selling transaction. Investing in a company developing solar energy and investing in an arms manufacturer have quite different implications for the world and for one's own karma.

With respect to the third type of transaction—giving and receiving—Finser suggests that “whenever the spirit moves [us]” to

make a gift we should donate money so that something that lives in the imagination, something that benefits and ennobles human life, will be brought into the physical world. The human being has an innate generosity that seeks the welfare of others and of the world. The inspiration and actual motivation for any gift, regardless of personal nuances, usually makes the donor a party to something that has deep spiritual significance.

Siegfried Finser's underlying and inspiring message is that the human being of today has evolved enough so that money can be used to manifest love and compassion in the world. Through our conscious striving and free decisions, we can make money a force to heal the sicknesses in our society and to create and sustain a healthy world.

RSF Social Finance has, on an institutional level, been using this approach to lending/borrowing and giving/receiving since 1984. In that year, it generated a \$500,000 loan that helped the Pine Hill Waldorf School in New Hampshire to rebuild after a disastrous fire. Since then, RSF Social Finance has helped bring together investors wishing to support a worthy cause with worthy causes in need of loans. By providing loans as well as sound financial counseling, RSF Social Finance has supported Waldorf schools, biodynamic and other sustainable forms of agriculture, integrative medicine, clean technology, and other worthy enterprises. In each of these loan transactions, there has been direct, ongoing, and personal contact between RSF staff (and sometimes the investors as well) and the key individuals in the organization borrowing the money.

The Foundation has also helped philanthropists to find and to give money to causes worthy of support. Its donor-advised funds allow investors to give money to individuals and initiatives that need financial assistance. For example, RSF Social Finance has been instrumental in gathering and directing funds to Waldorf initiatives in China and Nepal.

Finser encourages readers to consider investing through RSF but generously suggests other financial



Numi Organic Tea, aided by RSF Social Finance loans, offers premium quality teas, uses renewable packaging materials, pays fair wages, and provides employment opportunities for disabled adults here in the U.S. (Photo copyright Fair Trade Foundation)

institutions that also have an anthroposophical and/or socially aware approach. These include the New Century Bank in Kimberton, Pennsylvania, the South Shore Bank in Chicago, and the New Resource Bank in San Francisco. He also recommends the RSF's *Quarterly News* for information about worthy projects in need of financial support.

Siegfried Finser is particularly committed to Waldorf Education as the most modern, innovative educational approach of our time and to its role in transforming the world. In his chapter about Waldorf schooling, he affirms its ability to help young people fulfill their potential and its importance as an educational system not restricted by government control.

RSF Social Finance is also strongly committed to Waldorf Education. Over the years, it has been a reliable lender to many Waldorf schools. Recently, RSF launched the "Waldorf Collaborative" program through which schools reap financial benefits for making the conscious investment opportunities of RSF known in their communities. Last year some twenty million dollars of investment capital came into RSF through this program, and about \$20,000 was paid out to participating Waldorf schools. Investors can thus help worthy borrowers and at the same time benefit their local schools.

Money Can Heal stretches and changes the ways we understand money and financial transactions. It provides each of us an opportunity to start to work with money in a way that is consistent with our ideals and with our concern for society and for the planet. ☺



Money Can Heal: Evolving Our Consciousness
by Siegfried E. Finser

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What Are They Like? Where Do They Go? What Do They Do?

A Survey of Waldorf High School Graduates Gives Some Encouraging Answers

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH



The high school graduating class of 2005, Sacramento Waldorf School

Late in 2005 David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin, codirectors of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education, working with Arthur Pittis, a high school teacher at the Austin Waldorf School, distributed questionnaires by e-mail to almost 900 graduates of the twenty-six Waldorf high schools in North America that had twelfth grades at that time. (There are a total of thirty-seven Waldorf high schools on the continent. In 2005 the other eleven still-developing Waldorf high schools had not yet graduated any students.) Of the graduates approached, 556 filled out and returned the survey.

The survey asked questions concerning higher education, profession and employment, lifestyle,

values, and attitudes toward Waldorf Education. The data were quantified and analyzed, and in March 2007 a 171-page report, called *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II*, was published. This supplements *Phase I*, which focused on the colleges and universities attended by Waldorf graduates. These two publications constitute the first comprehensive survey of Waldorf graduates in North America.

Some of the respondents had graduated as far back as 1943 with the first graduating class of the High Mowing School in Wilton, New Hampshire. Others were members of the Class of 2005. A majority attended the fifteen or so “mature” Waldorf high schools, and the “young” schools, all of which have

been founded in the past decade, were consequently less well represented. Over half of the respondents had attended Waldorf school from kindergarten through high school. About 57 percent were women and 43 percent men, these figures reflecting typical enrollment in the Waldorf high schools.

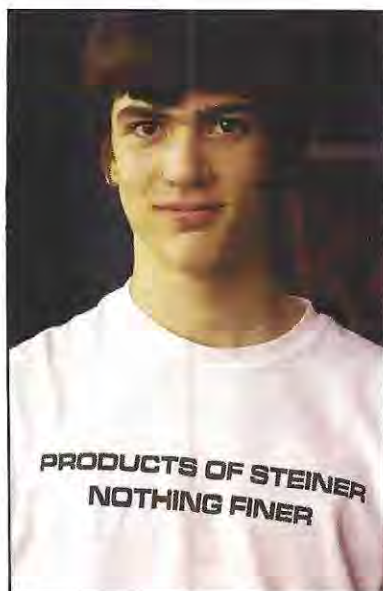
The queries were arranged in twelve sections. Section one identified the respondents in terms of school, date of graduation, and other basic categories. The other sections dealt with:

- higher education
- relationship to career path
- cultural and social interests
- graduates' attention to local, national, and international news
- human relationships
- assessment of life and life skills
- reflections on Waldorf Education
- influence and importance of Waldorf Education in their lives
- aspects of Waldorf Education initially rejected but now viewed differently, and
- physical and mental health

A separate set of questions concerned the graduates' relationship to Anthroposophy. The questionnaire also included five open-ended questions that invited respondents to write about their greatest gifts, joys, and challenges.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents have been to or are currently in college, and the list of institutions with the most Waldorf students includes Oberlin, Hampshire, UC Santa Cruz, and other well-respected schools. This corroborates data from Phase I of the survey, which indicated that Waldorf students in North America apply to, get accepted by, attend, and excel at many prestigious and well-regarded colleges and universities not only in the United States and Canada, but also around the world.

The Phase II survey indicates that a quarter of the graduates take a year off after high school to work,



*Jarrad Cole graduated from the Sacramento Waldorf School in June 2007. Shortly thereafter, Jarrad was killed in a tragic accident.**

study, or travel. Over half have done or intend to do postgraduate work. The Waldorf alumni favor the arts and humanities as majors, but among recent graduates almost as many are going into the behavioral and life sciences and also into physics and math. The former Waldorf students are less likely than their non-Waldorf contemporaries to study business or engineering.

The researchers also sent questionnaires to professors and employers identified by the respondents. The professors rated the Waldorf graduates very high in terms of problem-solving ability, communication skills, initiative, ethical standards, and caring for others. Interestingly, they also gave the former Waldorf students high marks in leadership, a quality to which the graduates themselves

attach relatively little importance.

The graduates have entered a wide range of professions, the most popular being education, fine arts and architecture, performing arts, and health and medicine. There are some significant differences between older and younger graduates. The former are more likely to have entered the educational field and the latter more likely to pursue careers in science and technology. A large majority are satisfied with their vocation. Those aspects most valued in the work environment include good atmosphere, the chance to help others, opportunities for creativity, ethical principles, and the opportunity to work with others. High income and job security are at the bottom of the list.

The leisure activities most preferred by the graduates include socializing with friends and family, reading good books, being active in art and handcrafts, and going to museums and theatres. Watching television, driving a fast car, and attending athletic events are at the bottom of the list. For the most part, these preferences are reflected in actual behavior. The graduates express a high interest in the news, particularly in world and national news.

* Editor's note: When members of the design team chose to run this photo, we did not know it was of Jarrad Cole. We agreed, though, that there was something particularly pure and sweet-natured about this young man that bespeaks the essence of what Waldorf Education seeks to cultivate.



Katarina Mitchell graduated from the High Mowing School in Wilton, New Hampshire (a Waldorf boarding high school), and is currently studying for a Masters in Social Work. Her two children attend the Hartsbrook (Waldorf) School in Hadley, Massachusetts. Nathaniel Mitchell is a graduate of the Shining Mountain Waldorf School in Boulder, Colorado. He attended Dartmouth College and played on the varsity football team there. Nathaniel currently works in California as a venture capitalist involved in renewable resources at the firm of Draper, Fisher, Jurvetson.

The graduates place great value on their intimate personal relationships and friendships, and the majority are satisfied with them. Most are married or in long-term, committed relationships and are content in them.

When asked if they would send a child for whom they were responsible to a Waldorf school, 90 percent of those who answered simply either "yes" or "no" said "yes." Most of the others gave a qualified yes, citing the distance from a Waldorf school and tuition costs as discouraging factors. About 30 individuals expressed concern about the qualifications of class teachers. Some 20 graduates said they would send the child to Waldorf lower school but not to the middle and high school, and mentioned weakness in the science program and college preparation as areas of concern. The researchers noted that these are the only overtly negative comments in the whole survey and merit serious consideration by Waldorf educators. Eighty-six percent of the graduates with children said that their Waldorf schooling had influenced the way they had raised their children.

The answers to the questions regarding "greatest gift and source of joy" reveal a clear pattern. Human relationships with family and friends, education, artistic activity, helping others, and experience in

nature hold pride of place.

The life skills that the graduates most value are communication, truthfulness, problem solving, and ethical values. Reputation, wealth, and control come out on the bottom of the list. A very interesting chart on page 69 of the study relates the capacities held important by the graduates to the perceived influence that Waldorf Education had upon that capacity. The chart reveals that the graduates recognize the role their Waldorf schooling played in developing their self-confidence, ability to express themselves, creativity, love of learning, ability to work on their own, and their ability to resolve conflicts.

Virtually all of the respondents have an appreciation of and warm affection for their schooling. Many expressed unsolicited gratitude to their teachers, schools, and others who had made their education possible. Even those who voiced a critical opinion were grateful for the whole experience.

A very interesting question asked the graduates if there were aspects of Waldorf Education that they once perceived as negative but that they now appreciate. The answers include the following:

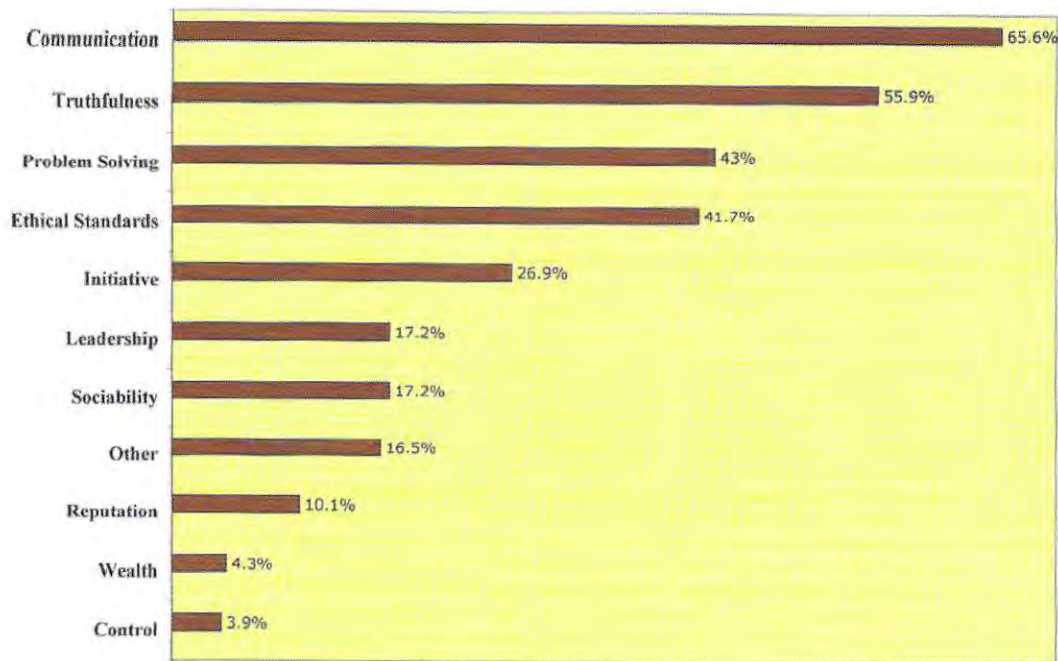
- eurythmy, now seen as promoting grace and coordination and social awareness;
- discipline and form, now seen as having been a protection and as providing a model on how to set boundaries;

FIELDS OF STUDY LISTED BY RESPONDENTS

Sorted from most to least frequent with number in each category

English, Literature & Creative Writing	53
Psychology	36
Biology and Environmental Studies	34
Fine Arts (Visual, Sculptural, Metal & Fashion)	25
Modern Languages: Fr, Sp, Ger, Rus, It	25
Music	25
History	23
Anthropology	21
Education	21
Theater (Design, Performance, Tech)	18
Business	15
Political Science	15
Sociology	14
Medicine	12
Liberal Arts (Humanities)	12
Philosophy	11
Religion	10
Economics	9
Engineering	9
International Studies (Relations, Politics, Development)	9
Film (Video; Animation)	7
Nursing	7
Chemistry	6
Computer Science	6
Government	6
Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science	5

Waldorf Graduates Value Communication and a Strong Moral Foundation as Important Life Skills



- the multifaceted curriculum, now seen as providing a comprehensive view of the world, as well as varied artistic and craft skills, possessed by few of their contemporaries;
- restrictions on the media, now seen as having given the opportunity to develop their own ideas and values without external pressures and biases; and
- the spiritual aspect, now seen as having been a stimulus to think about the larger questions of life and to formulate their own views and values.

Anthroposophy is the worldview of Rudolf Steiner, and, while providing the foundation for Waldorf Education, it is not taught in the schools. Some schools offer an introduction to Anthroposophy on a voluntary basis to adult members of the school community. Forty percent of the graduates said they had a positive or engaged relationship with Anthroposophy; 36 percent were neutral. A number of the graduates said they didn't know what Anthroposophy is.

This survey is not without its admitted limitations. Its conclusions are based on data from those Waldorf graduates who took the time and trouble to fill out the questionnaire. Over 300 graduates who were invited to take part in the survey chose not to



Heidi Boucher, a graduate of the Sacramento Waldorf School, has had a varied and successful career in film, television, and theatre for over twenty years in Oregon and California. She has been active in virtually all aspects of production—acting, directing, set design, set decorating, lighting design, wardrobe, props, and location. Heidi also has had a successful retail business specializing in recycled children's clothing. Further, having trained with natural death-care advocate Nancy Poer, for twenty years she has cared for many people who have wanted a natural passing at home without the after-interventions of a funeral home.

Profile of a Typical Waldorf Graduate

- After graduating from a Waldorf high school, attends college (94%)
- Majors in arts/humanities (47%) or sciences/math (42%) as an undergraduate
- Graduates or is about to graduate from college (88%)
- Practices and values lifelong learning (91%)
- Is self-reliant and highly values self-confidence (94%)
- Highly values verbal expression (93%) and critical thinking (92%)
- Expresses a high level of consciousness in making relationships work—both at home and on the job
- Is highly satisfied in choice of occupation (89%)
- Highly values interpersonal relationships (96%)
- Highly values tolerance of other viewpoints (90%)
- At work, cares most about ethical principles (82%) and values helping others (82%)

fill out the online questionnaire. One must ask how the answers of these graduates, who are perhaps less kindly disposed to their education and/or less satisfied with their lives, would have changed the results. (Some of these nonrespondents expressed to the researchers that it was the rigid form and format of the survey that kept them from filling it out. These graduates said that they are positive about their Waldorf schooling but wanted to be able to express themselves more freely.) The fact that a large percentage of the respondents came from mature schools, and that two or three of these schools were very heavily represented, also may have skewed the results.

Nevertheless, what the survey indicates is compelling enough to give Waldorf educators and supporters heart. Combined with the anecdotal evidence that one can derive from observing and speaking with graduates whom one knows, the survey tells us that Waldorf Education seems to be doing what it seeks to do. In fact, Waldorf Education is helping young people to develop

- independent thinking
- love of learning
- self-confidence
- a commitment to human relationships and the ability to make them work
- an interest in and concern for other human beings and for the natural environment
- a desire to make the world a better place



Patrick Judson Blatchford, 1987 graduate of Sacramento Waldorf High School, was awarded a PhD in Analytic Health Sciences on May 25, 2007, by the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. The title of his dissertation is Monitoring Bivariate Endpoints in Group Sequential Clinical Trials. He is now guiding the statistical aspect of clinical trials performed by two research units of the University of Colorado.

- an appreciation of beauty and artistic activity
- the ability to create a healthy and satisfying personal and work life, and
- a strong inner moral sense that guides their personal and professional behavior

The designing of this survey, carrying it out, collecting and analyzing the data, and publishing it in an attractive and accessible form was a huge task. The lead researchers and all those who helped them merit our deep gratitude. Thanks are due also to those Waldorf graduates who filled out the questionnaire. The time and effort they spent may result in other children enjoying the same educational opportunity that they had, perhaps even with improvements. ☺

Resources

The survey can be downloaded either from www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org or www.waldorflibrary.org, the two Web sites of the Research Institute. A bound hardcopy may be purchased from AWSNA Publications by phoning 518-634-2222 or by e-mailing publications@awsna.org



DAVID MITCHELL has been a Waldorf teacher for thirty-seven years. Starting in Norway as a specialty teacher, he returned to the United States to take the first class through the Pine Hill Waldorf School in New Hampshire.

He then became a high school teacher, specializing in the life sciences. He has also taught blacksmithing, woodworking, stone sculpture, and copper chasing. David was one of the initiators of Antioch University's graduate program in Waldorf Education. Currently he is the chair of AWSNA Publications and the codirector of the Research Institute. David has authored several books, including *Will-Developed Intelligence*; *Windows into Waldorf Education*; *The Wonders of Waldorf Chemistry*; and *Resource Guide for Waldorf Teachers*.



DOUGLAS GERWIN, PhD, codirector of the Research Institute, is director of the Center for Anthroposophy and also chair of its Waldorf High School Teacher Education Program. Himself a Waldorf graduate, Douglas has taught for

over twenty-five years at the university and high school levels in subjects ranging from biology and history to German and music. He is editor of four books related to Waldorf Education—*For the Love of Literature: A Celebration of Language and Imagination*; *Genesis of a Waldorf High School*; *The Andover Proceedings: Tapping the Wellsprings of Health in Adolescence*; and *Who Shall Teach the Teachers: The Christ Impulse in Waldorf Education*. Douglas has also written various articles on adolescence and the Waldorf curriculum. He currently resides in Amherst, Massachusetts, with his wife, Connie, a Waldorf high school teacher of math at the Hartsbrook School.

What is the Research Institute?

The Research Institute for Waldorf Education is an initiative working on behalf of the Waldorf school movement. The Institute was founded in 1996 in order to deepen and enhance the quality of Waldorf Education, to engage in serious and sustained dialogue with the wider educational/cultural community, and to support research that would serve educators in all types of schools in their work with children and adolescents.

The Research Institute supports research projects that deal with essential contemporary educational issues such as attention-related disorders, trends in adolescent development, innovations in the high school curriculum, learning expectations and assessment, computers in education, the role of art in education, and new ways to identify and address different learning styles. The Research Institute has sponsored colloquia and conferences that have brought together educators, psychologists, doctors, and social scientists. The Institute publishes its *Research Bulletin* twice a year and develops and distributes educational resources to help teachers in all aspects of their work.

The Research Institute receives financial support through the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), the Midwest Shared Gifting Group, the Waldorf Schools Fund, the Waldorf Curriculum Fund, the Waldorf Educational Foundation, as well as private donors. The Research Institute is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization and gratefully accepts donations.

