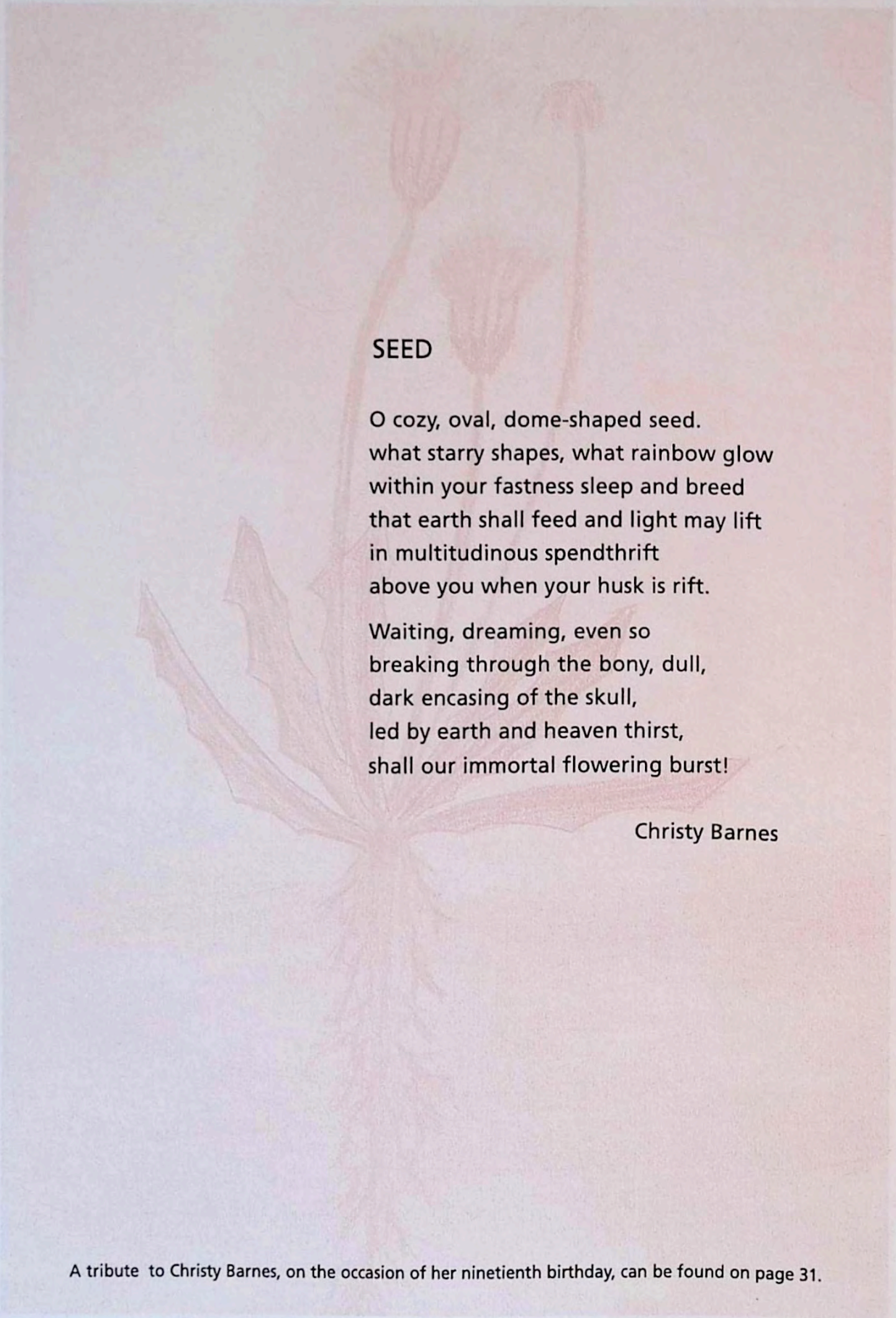


Renewal

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION



Spring - Summer 1999 Volume 8, Number 1



SEED

O cozy, oval, dome-shaped seed.
what starry shapes, what rainbow glow
within your fastness sleep and breed
that earth shall feed and light may lift
in multitudinous spendthrift
above you when your husk is rift.

Waiting, dreaming, even so
breaking through the bony, dull,
dark encasing of the skull,
led by earth and heaven thirst,
shall our immortal flowering burst!

Christy Barnes

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Editor's Column

By Ronald E. Koetzsch



Many years ago I visited Camphill Village in Copake, New York, for the first time. Going to see a friend working there during a college interim term, I had no idea what to expect. The Village turned out to be an amazing and affecting place—a rural community where handicapped adults (villagers) lived and worked together with “normal” adults (co-workers) and their children.

I was struck by many things—by the well-tended fields, gardens, and orchards; by the colorful, oddly angled, non-rectilinear buildings; by the workshops for weaving, woodworking, candle making, and bookbinding where villagers and co-workers labored side by side; by the obvious care that had been taken to create beauty in every small thing; and by the peaceful rhythm of daily life. I was most deeply touched by the warmth, care, and love that formed an invisible but palpable atmosphere in which community life took place. I knew I had to find out more about the Camphill movement and its origins.

That visit led to my discovery of Rudolf Steiner and of Anthroposophy—Steiner’s understanding of the origin, nature, and destiny of the human being, and of the cosmos and world in which we live. The Camphill movement, I learned, is a practical application of Anthroposophy, and there are many others—relating to social life, art, architecture, education, medicine, agriculture, music, nutrition, personal development, the care of the aged—relating in fact to virtually

every area of human activity. I began to investigate these initiatives, all springing from a common source, and in time came upon Waldorf Education.

One of the special things about Waldorf Education as an educational movement is that it is founded on an explicit and coherent view of the world and of the human being. Also, it is related to other movements that are trying in different areas of modern life to bring an impulse of healing and renewal, an impulse based on a spiritual understanding of the human being. Some awareness of Anthroposophy and of the many sister movements is essential in understanding Waldorf Education.

In this issue of *Renewal* there is an article by Karl Koenig (1902-1966), founder of the Camphill movement and a student of Rudolf Steiner. The piece deals with a principle that is central to Anthroposophy and to Steiner’s teaching on Curative Education.

Also, there is an article about Camphill Special School – Beaver Run. Beaver Run is a Camphill village for children. In the village school, the understanding of child development on which Waldorf Education is based, as well as the Waldorf curriculum and pedagogy, are used.

In coming issues, *Renewal* will include articles dealing with Anthroposophy and articles presenting other movements that, like Waldorf Education, have come out of Anthroposophy. We hope that these articles will promote a deeper understanding of Waldorf Education and its place in modern life.

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Cover art, a block print in five colors, by Julie Umphenour, an eleventh-grade student and player on the Sacramento Waldorf School girl’s varsity championship basketball team.

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Waldorf Schools in North America

United States

ALASKA: Aurora Waldorf School **ARIZONA:** Desert Marigold School • Enchanted Desert School **CALIFORNIA:** Camellia Waldorf School • Cedar Springs Waldorf School • Davis Waldorf School • East Bay Waldorf School • Highland Hall School • Live Oak Waldorf School • Mann Waldorf School • Pasadena Waldorf School • Rudolf Steiner College • Sacramento Waldorf School • San Francisco Waldorf School • Santa Cruz Waldorf School • Sierra Waldorf School • Summerfield Waldorf School • Waldorf Institute of Southern California • Waldorf School of Mendocino County • Waldorf School of Orange County • Waldorf School of the Peninsula • Waldorf School of Santa Barbara • Waldorf School of San Diego • Westside Waldorf School • Willow Wood School **COLORADO:** Denver Waldorf School • River Song School • Shepherd Valley School • Shining Mountain Waldorf School • Waldorf School of the Roaring Fork **CONNECTICUT:** Housatonic Valley School **GEORGIA:** The Waldorf School of Atlanta **HAWAII:** Haleakala School • Honolulu Waldorf School • Kona Pacific School • Kula Maku • Malamalama Waldorf School **IDAHO:** Sandpoint Waldorf School **ILLINOIS:** Arc-turus • Chicago Waldorf School • Four Winds School • Great Oaks School **KENTUCKY:** Waldorf School of Louisville • **MAINE:** Ashwood School • Memeconeag Waldorf School • The Bay School **MARYLAND:** Waldorf School of Baltimore • Washington Waldorf School **MASSACHUSETTS:** Cape Ann Waldorf School • Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School • The Hartsbrook School • Waldorf School • Waldorf School of Cape Cod **MICHIGAN:** Detroit Waldorf School • Oakland Steiner School • Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor • Waldorf Teacher Development Assn. **MINNESOTA:** City of Lakes Waldorf School • Minnesota Waldorf School **NEW HAMPSHIRE:** Antioch Waldorf Teacher Training Program • High Moving School • Monadnock Waldorf School • Pine Hill Waldorf School **NEW JERSEY:** Waldorf School of Princeton **NEW MEXICO:** Santa Fe Waldorf School **NEW YORK:** Aurora Waldorf School • Green Meadow Waldorf School • Hawthorne Valley School • Mountain Laurel Waldorf School • Spring Hill Waldorf School • Waldorf Institute of Sunbridge College • Waldorf School of the Finger Lakes • Waldorf School of Garden City • The Rudolf Steiner School **NORTH CAROLINA:** Emerson Waldorf School **OHIO:** Cincinnati Waldorf School • Spring Garden Waldorf School **OREGON:** Corvallis Waldorf School • Eugene Waldorf School • Portland Waldorf School • The Waldorf School of the Rogue Valley **PENNSYLVANIA:** Kimberton Waldorf School • Susquehanna Waldorf School • Waldorf School of Pittsburgh **RHODE ISLAND:** Meadowbrook Waldorf School **TEXAS:** Austin Waldorf School **VERMONT:** Green Mountain Waldorf School • Lake Champlain Waldorf School • Upper Valley Waldorf School • Wellspring School **VIRGINIA:** Crossroads Waldorf School • Spring Meadow Waldorf School **WASHINGTON:** Olympia Waldorf School • Seattle Waldorf School • Whatcom Hills Waldorf School • Whidbey Island Waldorf School **WISCONSIN:** Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School • Prairie Hill Waldorf School • Tamarack Community School

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MORELOS: Colegio Waldorf de Cuernavaca

For a complete list of Waldorf Schools please contact the AWSNA office or visit our web site www.awsna.org

News From AWSNA

By David Alsop, Chairman



Recently, at a gathering of organizations addressing ways of collaborating to strengthen their work, the following statement was made: "Any organization that doesn't invest in research and development is heading for obsolescence." While we usually relate "R&D" to business and industry and their search for new and improved products, there is no question that it is also a key consideration for the Waldorf school movement and for AWSNA. Two recent initiatives illustrate the point.

The Waldorf High School Research Project is working to address challenges made visible by the explosive growth of new Waldorf high schools. The Project is addressing two broad questions: What capacities and needs are we meeting in the current generation of students? What curricular and social innovations would enable Waldorf high schools to educate more effectively? The intent is that new Waldorf high schools should be consciously formed and not necessarily based exclusively on existing models.

The Waldorf Learning Expectations and Assessment Project has as its goal to develop learning expectations and a model assessment system for grades K-8 in Waldorf schools. This system would be fully aligned with the curriculum, teaching methods, and goals of Waldorf Education and would provide Waldorf teachers and parents with a rich, qualitative picture of their students' progress toward achieving those goals.

While very different projects, these two initiatives deal with issues in Waldorf research that must be addressed if we are to avoid obsolescence. In the first, the need to change in response to the evolving needs of the student is addressed. In the second, making explicit a common understanding within Waldorf school communities of the goals and expectations for student learning and development reflects a growing expectation in our time that everything be, well, explicit. There is no reason to expect that this will lead to uniformity, as the teacher will still need to exercise a great deal of creativity in the classroom.

What about the investment part? AWSNA supports—and encourages others to support—the Waldorf Education Research Institute at Sunbridge College in Spring Valley, New York. For the past three years, the Institute has been assisting and reporting on Waldorf research. Through its *Research Bulletin*, the Research Institute has published research on a number of topics ranging from computers to health issues to leadership to testing. Each year, AWSNA has contributed what it can to the Research Institute (\$10,000), and we are attempting to raise additional funds for the two projects mentioned above. It would be wonderful if individuals reading this magazine would be inspired to help underwrite such research. In the future we will be challenged to find the best way for everyone connected with Waldorf Education to be invested in research and development.

Issues in Education, 1961 and 1999

By Henry Barnes

In 1961, Henry Barnes was a teacher of history in the high school of The Rudolf Steiner School in New York City. This article appeared in the school's 1960-61 yearbook. It is as relevant today as it was thirty-eight years ago. Although "retired," Henry Barnes is still very active in the Waldorf movement. He has served on the Editorial Advisory Board of Renewal since its founding eight years ago.

From the vantage point of the year 2000, when today's seniors will be men and women of close to sixty, this year may well stand out as marking the first organized invasion of American schools by the so-called "teaching machines." Our seniors, looking back, may well ask whether we, their teachers and parents, kept our heads in the face of the tide or succumbed to the general confusion.

The teaching machine has already proven to be a persuasive gadget, yet in itself it is only a symptom for a far more insidious attack on the foundations of American education: the general mechanization of instruction and the standardization of values.

The colleges, for example, lament the fact that their students cannot write English, yet permit increasing emphasis on standardized tests which atomize vocabulary and substitute for genuine knowledge and skill in the use of words a crossword puzzle mentality. At an elementary level, the teaching of reading is fast becoming a matter of mechanical "word efficiency" in which the wonder and excitement and dreamy pleasure of an unfolding imagination

has no place. The writing of a paper tends, already in the upper elementary school, to become a matter of "research" in which the raw material is skimmed from an encyclopedia and is presented, undigested, in lieu of the student's own observations and conclusions. Grades have become an end in themselves and the student works for marks instead of for the sake of the subject and out of an interest in learning.

These are symptoms only, over against which stands the example of countless devoted individual teachers, yet the trend is clear and the results, we know, may be the apparently successful training of technicians. But it will not, and cannot, be the creative education of free, intelligent men and women.

What can effectively turn the tide?

There is no simple, single recipe. Only a knowledge which can find its way to the spirit in man can help, a knowledge which reveals the "inner man" who experiences the world in its qualities and weighs its imponderable aspects, recognizing the difference between wisdom and mere information.

It is Rudolf Steiner's contribution to the modern art of education that he opened the door to such a knowledge of the spirit in man and in the world, a knowledge that is as exact and responsible as the scientific knowledge of the material world. And it is only in taking this fundamental step forward in knowledge that we can hope to transform the merely mechanical imparting of information and the training of routine skills into a genuine process of inner growth and education.

Letters

In an article in our Fall 1998 issue, "Partial Vision" in *Alternative Education*, Ron Miller, a leading historian of alternative education, both praises and criticizes Waldorf Education. Miller, whose son attends the Lake Champlain Waldorf school in Vermont, mentions with approval that children in Waldorf schools are treated not as future job seekers or consumers but as "evolving spiritual beings who seek lives of meaning, beauty and inspiration"; and that Waldorf Education is trying to build "a new culture rooted in a deeply spiritual, ecological, and organic understanding of life."

On the other hand, Miller expresses concern about aspects of Waldorf Education. In particular, he mentions that 1) Waldorf "offers itself as a universal ideal of education and lacks the self-criticism and openness to other perspectives that would permit flexibility and responsiveness to diverse human situations"; and that 2) the emphasis in a Waldorf classroom is on authority, structure, and imitation rather than on the child's freedom and self-expression.

Several readers responded. Here is a paraphrase and summary of their responses.

Some readers agreed with Miller that Waldorf educators often have an arrogant, exclusive attitude, viz., "We have the truth about education, and everyone else is well-intentioned, but wrong."

please turn to page 34

Cleaning Up Toxic Childhood

By Joan Almon

About twenty years ago, I and other Waldorf teachers in North America began to notice that children seemed to be less healthy than they had been even a few years before. We wondered if this was just our imagination. Doctors and therapists of that time, though, were noticing the same thing. Kindergarten children were thinner, more nervous, and more hypersensitive. It was as if they had grown thin-skinned, with their nerves uncovered and exposed to a world intent on overstimulation. Today this phenomenon is so widespread and so widely recognized that major newspaper and magazine articles frequently refer to childhood today as "a toxic experience."

In the past two decades many books have appeared on this subject and have had a significant positive impact. These include *The Hurried Child* by David Elkind, *Endangered Minds* by Jane Healy, and *Evolution's End* by Joseph Chilton Pearce, and, more recently, *The Shelter of Each Other* by Mary Pipher, *Failure to Connect* by Jane Healy, and *Saving Childhood* by Diane and Michael Medved. These books describe a serious decline in children's overall health and make concrete suggestions for changes in family, school, and community life. The central

message is clear: Young children are in danger and need our protection and healing.

Reports from the United States and Germany indicate that children today have a much higher incidence than before of nervousness, stress and hyperactivity, of eating and sleeping

Humanity is in great need of the gifts and capacities that the younger generation brings, but we create many obstacles to prevent them from bringing their gifts.

disorders, eczema, allergies, and asthma. There is also a growing incidence of learning disabilities, and a suspected increase in autism. In Germany about 25 percent of children at age four have significant speech difficulties.¹ Such a statistic has not been found for North America, but for some years, Waldorf teachers have been noticing an increase of speech problems among their children.

One problem—hyperactivity—was recently the topic of a two-day meeting at the National Institute of Health (NIH) in Washington, D.C. Experts

discussed this nearly epidemic condition that affects about two million children in the United States alone. It was pointed out that many factors contribute to hyperactivity and that it takes different forms in different children. No one is certain of the cause, and there is no simple test for diagnosing hyperactivity.

The consensus at the NIH meeting was that Ritalin is successful as a short-term aid for hyperactive children, but that it is not a cure nor a long-term solution. Even as a short-term therapy, it is more successful when combined with changes in behavior and lifestyle. There are no simple or self-evident answers to the question of hyperactivity. Thus the door is open for a nondrug-based approach that considers childrearing and educational practices, diet, the effect of the mass media and computers on children, as well as new medical therapies, both mainstream and complementary. Even before the NIH conference, the Waldorf community and the anthroposophic medical community were taking steps toward doing a comprehensive study of

Joan Almon, for many years a Waldorf kindergarten teacher, is now an internationally known writer, lecturer, and consultant on early childhood. She is co-chair of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America and co-founder of the Alliance for Childhood.

hyperactivity, seeking to discover what steps have been most effective in helping children in Waldorf schools and in anthroposophic clinics.

Compared to the children of twenty years ago, today's children are more afflicted—to an alarming degree—by illnesses, both new and old. Yet there is another side to the picture. Many children and young people show a remarkable degree of spiritual awareness and a highly sensitive social conscience. In a quiet way, many young people take a deep interest in the problems of poor and underprivileged people and of the earth. Well over half of college students do volunteer work in these areas, and many young people have founded organizations that work locally or globally on a broad range of social concerns.

I recently met some of the more well-known of these young people when I attended the State of the World Forum in San Francisco. One day I had lunch with Craig Kielburger, a clear-eyed, upright fifteen-year-old from Toronto. At age twelve, Craig had read about a ten-year-old Pakistani boy who had been chained to a rug loom since age four and forced to weave rugs all day long. I had read the same article and was appalled. Craig, in a way typical of today's children and youth, was not only appalled, but was moved to do something about the problem. He formed an international youth organization against child labor.² During the past three years he has traveled widely and done much to raise awareness about the dreadful plight of children forced into labor.

Some might argue that Craig is too young to take on such tasks, that he should have more time for youthful activities while he is still in high school. This may be true, and certainly one does not want him to burn out or become ill because of his activities. Yet Craig seems calm, focused and unstressed. He is doing what his heart and mind dictate. Indeed, the message of the young people at the Forum was: "Do not tell us we need to wait until we are in our thirties

Children cannot remain healthy in the face of the growing onslaught of commercialism, technology, and the media, particularly when these are combined with inappropriate education, inadequate child care, and a hectic home life.

and forties to become leaders in our fields. We are active and already leading." This may sound brash and arrogant, but when you meet these young people and see what they are actually doing and the modesty and inner maturity with which they are doing it, you find yourself reassessing your conventional view of youth and making room for this promising and special generation.

The current generation of youth is often called Generation X, presumably because they comprise a mysterious generation not easily described. Now some social commentators are

saying that the X stands for excellent and extraordinary. This generation stretches downward into the children of today. It even seems that each new wave of the generation is more remarkable than the previous in terms of openness to the world, in both its earthly and spiritual dimensions, and in terms of a willingness to be a full participant in the world. As a kindergarten teacher I was often amazed during the 1980s by how many kindergarten children became vegetarians of their own volition. Five-year-olds would tell me, "I don't want to eat animals anymore," and would stick to their decision despite family pressure to continue eating meat. I now hear of babies and toddlers who refuse to eat meat products and realize that children becoming vegetarians is a widespread and probably growing phenomenon. It deserves the study and documentation necessary to understand it more fully.

Given that this generation is open, sensitive, and committed to helping the earth and humanity, it is especially tragic that it must cope with many society-induced illnesses. Humanity is in great need of the gifts and capacities that the young generation brings, but we create many obstacles to prevent them from bringing their gifts. There is an urgent need for social change so that today's children have the opportunity to grow up in safety and in health.

The Waldorf movement in North America and worldwide is concerned about how best to help children in our own schools and at the same time about how

to reach out to help other children. As the movement seeks to deepen its own work, an important step has been to bring together the insights and experiences of teachers, doctors, and therapists. For example, at last summer's Kolisko Conference in Fair Oaks, California, 900 Waldorf teachers, doctors, therapists, and remedial educators from thirty-five countries met to explore the problems of children today and the ways in which Waldorf Education can bring healing to children. Themes such as hyperactivity, learning difficulties, eating disorders, and bullying and teasing were explored in depth.

Within the Waldorf early childhood movement there have also been a number of conferences that have brought together teachers and doctors who want to better understand children from birth to age seven. At the same time, kindergarten teachers have recognized a need to go beyond the boundaries of traditional half-day nursery/kindergartens in order to meet the needs of children and families today. New developments in North America include the following:

- About half of the North American Waldorf kindergartens and schools now offer a parent-toddler program for children under three. In a typical program, parents—accompanied by their children—spend a morning or two each week experiencing a Waldorf environment and learning about the Waldorf approach to childrearing. Parents have responded very positively to these programs and see them as offering an

alternative to the childrearing practices encouraged by the highly commercialized mainstream culture.

- Many Waldorf schools now offer full-time care through after-school programs, and a large number of Waldorf child care centers are being planned. One that opened this year, the LifeWays Center in Wisconsin, places full-time child care into the context of a nurturing community life that includes programs for elementary-aged children, adolescents, and adults.

- To help the vast numbers of children who live in difficult social and economic circumstances, Waldorf kindergarten teachers have taken up work in places that would not otherwise be served by Waldorf Education—on a Lakota Sioux reservation, in homeless shelters in San Francisco and Hawaii, and in various public schools serving low-income children.

- Advanced courses are planned that will bring together doctors, therapists, and kindergarten teachers. Together they will explore how to further develop Waldorf early childhood centers as healing environments for children.

Because of its broadening approach to early childhood issues, the Waldorf Kindergarten Association of North America decided in 1998 to change its name to the *Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America*. The acronym, WECAN, signifies not only our broader intentions, but also the will to accomplish them.

We have also realized that we have to work outside our school environment. If children's well-being and health are to improve, significant changes need to occur in the wider society. Children cannot remain healthy in the face of the growing onslaught of commercialism, technology, and the media, particularly when these are combined with inappropriate education, inadequate child care, and a hectic home life. When children are faced with many stressful factors in life, they cannot integrate them all and remain healthy. The sum total of stress facing most children is simply too great and results in a wide range of illnesses. These and related concerns have caused us to found a new organization—*The Alliance for Childhood*.

As Waldorf educators have engaged more and more in dialogue with others concerned about children, it has become clear that the time is ripe for working together. Already many disparate groups have formed coalitions to address issues affecting children's health and well-being, especially problems linked to poverty and abuse.³ Waldorf educators can work within existing alliances, but for other issues we need to take the initiative. The Alliance for Childhood will bring together parents, educators, doctors, therapists, researchers, and social activists. Its main areas of concern include:

- The overexposure of children to media and technology that prevents their growing up with appropriate levels of individual and family activity;



Waldorf kindergarteners enjoy mixing bread dough on baking day.

- The intense commercial advertising directed at children, which orients their attention too strongly toward material goods and consumer products;
- The emphasis on early academics rather than creative play as a foundation for learning in early childhood;
- The hurried lifestyle of most families today, which prevents the family from being a shelter that nurtures the growth of all family members, both children and adults;
- The inadequacy of much of today's child care, which needs to be transformed so that it brings health-giving nurture and warmth to children;
- The overprescription of antibiotics and other medications, such as Ritalin and Prozac, and the need to use

more natural remedies and therapies to treat children's health problems.

The Waldorf movement has insights and experiences to offer in each of these areas. It also has an overview that puts such problems into a context. Yet, there are many organizations that have entered one or another of these realms much more deeply than have Waldorf educators. We have much to learn from others about these and related problems. Most importantly, if there are to be changes that will benefit children and will detoxify childhood, we and others need to work together. Single-handedly we cannot effect much change.

There are several signs that the public is ready to hear about these issues and to bring about

social change. One is the growing number of articles in mainstream publications during the past two years highlighting the problems of children. Other indicators are the new and surprising directions being taken by a number of organizations, such as the Parents Television Council, which urges parents to pressure sponsors to clean up television.⁴ Another new organization, called Commercial Alert, created by Ralph Nader, tackles the problem of commercialism directed at children and young people.⁵

The Alliance for Childhood is based on the idea that all children are wonderful and that they need a chance to develop in healthy ways. The Alliance will be a confederation of individuals and initiatives, which gives space for each group to find its own

starting point. Common concerns, communication, and collaboration around certain issues will be the unifying factors.

Funding will be through donations.

Early in 1999, the Alliance, under the dual sponsorship of the Center for the Study of the Spiritual Foundations of Education of Columbia University's Teachers College and Sunbridge College, a Waldorf teacher training institute, will hold a two-day meeting, or "consultancy." It will bring together about two dozen people, including Waldorf teachers from North America and Europe and university professors and social activists. Together they will explore ways to create social change in regard to some of the problems affecting children. Also, Waldorf educators working on behalf of the Alliance in North America and Europe are planning two large conferences to launch this work in the next millennium. One will be in Brussels in October 2000 and the other in Washington, D.C., in 2001.

The Alliance is also encouraging and supporting community-based endeavors, such as the Los Angeles Alliance for Childhood.⁶ As its starting point, this group offers parent courses and conferences focusing on the health and nurture of young children. The active involvement of parents is key in the work of the Alliance. Parents' love and concern for children can bring enormous social change. ✱

For more information

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ENDNOTES:

1. Reported in *Erziehungskunst* (September 1998, p. 1001), a magazine for Waldorf parents. In an article entitled "Zeichen der Zeit" ("Signs of the Times"), Peter Lang and Susanne Pühler describe a German Waldorf initiative called *Recht auf Kindheit*, which is part of the international Alliance for Childhood.

2. Craig Kielburger's organization, "a network of children helping children," is Free the Children, 16 Thornbank Rd., Thornhill, Ont. L4J 2A2, Canada. Tel.: (905) 881-0863; Fax: (905) 881-1849 web site: <http://www.freethethechildren.org>
e-mail: freechild@clo.com

3. One such broad-based alliance with 450 organizational members is the Coalition for America's Children, 1634 Eye Street, NW, 11th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20006. Tel.: (202) 638-5770 web site: <http://www.kidscampaign.org>

4. For information, contact the Parents Television Council, 600 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90017.

5. More information can be obtained from Gary Ruskin at Commercial Alert, 1611 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 3A, Washington, D.C. 20009. Tel.: (202) 296-2787 Fax: (202) 833-2406 e-mail: gary@essential.org web site: <http://www.essential.org/alert>

6. For information, contact Wiep deVries at the Los Angeles Alliance for Childhood, 647 Devirian Place, Altadena, CA 91001.

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SUGGESTED READING:

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Turning Off the Television

Obesity, violent and aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, a sense that the world is ultimately a mean, dangerous place; sexual promiscuity; eating disorders; family dysfunction; alcohol abuse; and the belief that for every ailment—from hemorrhoids to indigestion—the best cure is an over-the-counter drug: these are some of the blessings that, according to recent studies, television is helping to visit upon the American people.

Each year Americans watch more than 350 billion hours of television. According to Rutgers University psychologist, Robert Kubey, millions of Americans not only watch television, they are addicted to it. Among the symptoms of pathological dependency that many children and adults exhibit are:

- watching more than they intend to
- not recognizing that they watch too much
- canceling or curtailing family and personal activities to watch
- finding it more difficult to turn the television off the more they watch
- exhibiting withdrawal symptoms when they stop watching.

Television has a particularly devastating effect on the development of the young child. Television impacts children on many levels—physically, emotionally, socially, and mentally. Children who watch television or videos tend to have difficulty with creative play. Their imagination and fantasy apparently is weakened by regularly viewing images created by others. Considering how important creative play is for the development of language and social skills as well as for creative thinking, the loss of play is a very significant factor in the life of a child. Television also lessens the time that small children spend in the physical activity that is essential to healthy growth. It subtracts too from the time that they spend in real interaction with each other and with their parents.

Read a short story — Go
fishing — Keep a diary —
Work out — Watch the
sunset — Go to a museum —
Make a collage — Play
music — Stargaze

It is not surprising then that alarm about television viewing is spreading in American society. It is even appearing among the very young. Waldorf educator Joan Almon recalls:

During our Thanksgiving gathering, my six-year-old nephew bid the remote control of his grandparents' television. He later explained that he did it because "television rots your brain." A few weeks later, I visited a former neighbor who recently had had surgery and had been allowing her four-year-old twins to watch more television than usual. At one point she urged them to watch television so she could rest. "No," cried one of the boys, "let's have a TV-Turnoff Week."

This remark refers to a week each year in April when millions of families around the country and abroad choose to turn off their television sets and replace passive viewing with individual and family activities. TV-Turnoff Week is organized by a group called TV-Free America and is endorsed and supported by fifty-six national organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the President's Council on Fitness and Sports, and by thousands of local schools, libraries, and community organizations.

The fifth annual TV-Turnoff Week will take place April 22 through 28, 1999. For information about TV-Turnoff Week and for help in turning off your television and in planning alternative activities, contact TV-Free America:

Tel.: (202) 887-0436
Fax: (202) 518-5560
e-mail: tvfa@essential.org
www.tvfa.org

R.E.K.

Handwork and Intellectual Development

By Eugene Schwartz

Out of natural insight many ancient peoples connected weaving, braiding, and knot-tying with the development of the intellect and wisdom.

Isis, the female deity of Egypt who exemplified wisdom, disguised her identity to wander on the earth until she was discovered as she taught a princess to braid her hair.

Athena, who was born out of the head of Zeus and ruled over the world of thoughts, was also the patron of weaving. The preponderance of braidlike and woven strands in temple paintings and ritual sites in New Mexico, northern and southern Africa, Peru, and central Asia suggest a link between the activities of weaving and braiding and

humanity's aspirations to an independent life of thinking.

In the Middle Ages, a third craft arose to take its place alongside weaving and braiding. Although the origins of knitting are obscure, old woodcuts and medieval illuminations place its appearance in Europe at about the time that the game of chess and the mathematical approach of algebra became known to Westerners. Indeed, among the earliest knitted textiles discovered in Europe are two Islamic-inspired knitted cushions, one of whose patterns suggests castles on a chessboard.¹ It is significant that the most intellectual of games and the most cognitive approach to numerical problems accompanied the development of knitting. It is as though a new degree of adeptness in the hand had to go side by side with newly discovered capacities in the head.

Recent neurological research tends to confirm that mobility and dexterity in the fine motor muscles, especially in the hand, may stimulate cellular development in the brain, and so strengthen the physical foundation of thinking. In Waldorf schools first graders learn to knit before they learn to write or manipulate numbers.

Over decades and in hundreds of schools around the world, the experience of Waldorf educators seems to corroborate this connection between manual dexterity and intellectual development. The learning disabilities specialist A. Jean Ayres states that

Praxis, or the ability to program a motor act, shows a close relation to reading skills, even though reading

would appear to be only distantly related to goal-directed movement of the body. . . . [Research indicates that] children with finger agnosia [awkwardness and lack of control] made more errors on a test of arithmetical ability than did children without finger agnosia.²



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Second-grade knitting projects on display in the classroom.

Waldorf schools were, of course, not the first schools to bring knitting to children, but the Waldorf approach is unique in the way it links knitting to children's developmental stages and integrates it into the rest of the curriculum. The heyday of knitting in schools had actually occurred just before the first Waldorf school was founded, when, during World War I, soldiers suffering in the harsh trenches that bisected Central Europe needed scarves and gloves and clothing that was warm and protective. Anne McDonald, a schoolgirl in England at the time, wrote:

Knitting is the best thing to steady your nerves. The boys in our room who used to sit and fumble their ink-wells, or tap their pencils, or tinker with their rulers, or maybe flip bits of art-gum at you when somebody was reciting, are so busy with their knitting that they never fidget or misbehave. And the girls—my, how their knitting counts up! Pauline and Esther each knit a sweater a week and keep up with their lessons as well as ever, while Guy's the champion boy-knitter of the school. He has finished three sweaters and four pairs of wristlets, and is

*knitting a helmet now. Helmets are hard, too, but we've got half a dozen boys well started on them.*³

For the often over-stimulated, nervous, or hyperactive children at the century's end, the rhythmical activity of knitting can be a means for them to become calm, soothed, aware of and engaged with their social peers, and productive at the same time. Although American Waldorf students are not called upon to support a war effort with their handwork, they, too, can engage their will in supporting something grand in scale.

A representative project of this nature involved the "pac-coat." The pac-coat is a large and warm garment de-

signed to serve homeless persons. It can be worn as a coat, or carried as a backpack, or used as a sleeping bag. Eighth graders in the Green Meadow Waldorf School volunteered for the project and thus gave up the time which they would have used to sew articles of clothing for themselves. Working in groups of three and sewing by hand and by machine, they worked for many weeks under the supervision of their teacher, Christa Montano, to complete the pac-coats. The garments were offered to a center for the homeless in Manhattan. The students were invited to the center to present the pac-coats and experienced there firsthand the plight of New York's disenfranchised population.

What occurs when a child sets about to knit? Needles are held in both hands, with each hand assigned its respective activity. Bilaterality is immediately established, as well as the eye's control over the hand. From the outset the child is asserting a degree of control over his will. The right needle must enter a rather tightly wound loop of yarn on the left needle, weave it through and pull it away, in the process tying a

knot. Only a steady, controlled hand can accomplish such a feat, so the power of concentration is awakened—indeed, there is no other activity performed by seven- or eight-year-olds that can evoke such a degree of attentiveness as knitting.

This training in concentration helps, to use a phrase of Dennis Kloczek, a teacher at Rudolf Steiner College in California, to “teach the will to think.” It will go far in supporting the child’s problem-solving capacities in later years. Children who do not have the opportunity to “follow the line” of yarn through its interwoven knitted knots may have difficulties when they are asked in later years to follow a line of thought. Jane Healy quotes a well-known psychology teacher at a major university in Florida as saying:

It’s a source of amazement to me how many students can’t link ideas together; they can’t follow one idea logically with another. . . .⁴

To knit properly, the child must count the number of stitches and the number of rows. By using different colors and different row lengths—as in the pattern for a four-legged toy animal—the teacher encourages not only attentiveness to numbers, but also flexibility in thinking. As children learn more arithmetic, teachers can devise patterns that call for two rows of blue, followed by four rows of yellow, followed by six rows of blue, and so on. In this way, numerical skills are reinforced in a challenging yet enjoyable manner. Nor should we underestimate the self-esteem and joy that arises in the child as the result of a skill that has been learned.

Years before the first Waldorf school was founded, Rudolf Steiner and some of his associates had provided educational courses for the workers of the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette Factory in Stuttgart. One aim of the courses was to provide each worker with a sense of how the work he did on the assembly line fit into the “big picture” of the whole factory, how that factory fit into the bigger picture of the conveyance of cigarettes from place to place, and how that movement fit into the currents of international commerce. Waldorf schools arose so that the factory workers’ children could experience the same feeling of being part of a process, which is in turn one of a multiplicity of processes that “make the world go round.” When describing some of the qualities that were essential in a

Waldorf school, Steiner stressed an active interest in working with one’s hands:

Anthroposophy itself is not to be taught in a Waldorf school. What matters is that its teaching should not become mere theoretical knowledge, or a world outlook based on certain ideas, but it should become a way of life, involving the entire human being. If therefore a teacher who is an anthroposophist enters school, he must have so worked upon himself that he has become a many-sided and skillful person, someone who has developed the art of education. And it is this latter achievement which is important, but never a wish to bring anthroposophical content to pupils.

Waldorf Education is meant to be pragmatic. The Waldorf school is meant to be a place where anthroposophical knowledge can find practical application. And when one has made such a world outlook—so linked to practical life—one’s own, one will not turn into a theorizer who is alienated from life, but into a skilled, capable person. By this I do not

Children who do not have the opportunity to “follow the line” of yarn through its interwoven knitted knots may have difficulties when they are asked in later years to follow a line of thought.

mean to assert that all members of the anthroposophical movement have actually reached these aims. Far from it! I happen to know that there are still some men among our members who are not even capable of sewing on a trouser button which may have dropped off. And no one suffering from such a shortcoming could be considered a full human being.

Whoever has to deal with theoretical work ought to stand in practical life even more firmly than people who happen to be tailors, cobblers, or engineers. In my opinion, any passing on of theoretical knowledge is acceptable only if the person concerned is also well versed in all practical matters of life, for otherwise his ideas will remain alienated from life.⁵

Thus it is wonderful if the setting of a particular Waldorf school makes it possible for the children to touch the sheep before they ever touch their yarn. The child who understands that the sheep gives up its coat so that we can be clothed and adorned has already made a step toward becoming an “educated consumer.”

Meeting the sheep also gives a child a sense of how profoundly "natural materials" are transformed as they pass through human hands. Children are amazed that the rough, oily, and tangled mass borne by the sheep, filled with briars and caked with mud and manure, will one day be the soft, colorful, and uniform yarn with which they knit. It is a memorable experience for a child to witness the shearing, to see the shearer exerting his will, wrestling with a recalcitrant ewe even as he carefully spares her surprisingly tender skin from nicks and cuts. Without preaching an ecological sermon, the one who shears reveals that nothing comes to us from nature without great effort and care.

Over the course of the following days, the children may get to wash and card the wool—"So *that's* how it gets so clean!"—and watch it being spun into yarn. A walk through the woods and fields with their teacher to collect tree barks, flowers, and other things to use in different dyes may be followed by participation in at least one of the steps in the dyeing process. At long last the children receive the wooden dowels which they carefully sand until they are smooth and pointed: their first knitting needles. Now they are ready to learn the steps of "casting on," and finally knitting itself.

An article in praise of knitting by Susanna Rodell in *The New York Times Magazine*⁶ elicited a number of responses from readers. Two letters in particular point to the effect that handwork has at once upon the will and the life of habit:

My mother has forgotten a lot of things, but not how to knit. She, my sister, and I knit four-inch squares and sew them together to make crib blankets. This project



gives Mother purpose, comforts my sister and me during our nursing-home visits, provides an activity we all can share, and helps a woman born in 1903 and her middle-aged daughter bless with their handwork babies who will live most of their lives in the 21st century. . . .

Knitting has got me through good times and bad. It has helped me learn the lessons of "doing it right," "correcting your mistakes," and patience. My Christmas gift to the young people in my extended family this year was needles, yarn, and a knitting lesson. . . .

After they have worked with wool in such a "hands-on" manner for two or three years, the children's perspectives are widened as they study how wool has been derived and utilized throughout the world and in the course of history. The child's "will-first" experience has laid a healthy foundation for this second, more intellectual experience. If it is possible for children to have samples of different kinds of wool with which they may knit—or which they may simply touch—they can compare such qualities as softness, weight, fiber strength, and warmth. They can experience how different is the "feel" of lamb's wool and sheep's wool, and learn why the wool of some animals is garnered by shearing, while the wool of the angora rabbit or the Alaskan musk ox—among the most precious wools in the world—is gently pulled off the animals' coats in the spring.

Once the child's sense for wool's varied qualities in relation to geographical space is established, she is ready to learn about wool's role in history, i.e., its relation to time. When was wool, rather than sheepskin, first utilized for clothing? Why did the Roman army issue woolen capes only to officers? How did the wool trade bolster the reign of Elizabeth I of England and thus alter the power structure of sixteenth-century Europe? As the children mature, the yarn with which they have worked—



the wool that they first encountered through their will—becomes the foundation of ever-wider inquiries into history, geography, and economics.

In eighth grade, Waldorf students learn about the Industrial Revolution and the powerful effect that the invention of such machines as the "Spinning Jenny" had on English society in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Even as they are studying this profound historical transformation, these eighth graders, who have been knitting and sewing by hand for seven years, are now learning how to operate sewing machines in their handwork classes. Where they once created an entire project from one skein of yarn, now they learn—in a more modern fashion—to "piece together" their shirts and jackets using commercial patterns. Just as the students once "recapitulated" the history of the alphabet from story to letter, now they may re-experience the transition from a manual to a machine-based culture.

In an age when children are too often encouraged to become passive consumers who (as Oscar Wilde once said of a cynic) "know the price of everything and the value of nothing," learning to knit and engaging in other areas of handwork can be a powerful way of bringing meaning into the child's life. For the child who has gone through such a set of experiences, an item of clothing will not be merely a status symbol or a disposable mark of fashion; it will be a piece of embodied will activity, meant to be valued and cared for.

There are other benefits. The author Raven Metzner, who graduated from a Waldorf school, writes:

A simple thing—I was at my girlfriend's house and a button came off my shirt and I sewed it back on. She flipped out. "You can sew?" and I said, "I can sew, I can knit, I can do woodworking." Not that those accomplishments are so wonderful, but they give you the confidence that you can take on anything.⁸

It seems fitting to conclude with a passage from Goethe's *Faust*, a work often studied by twelfth graders in the Waldorf high school. The words are those of Mephistopheles, as he instructs a naive student in the ways of logic and pedantry:

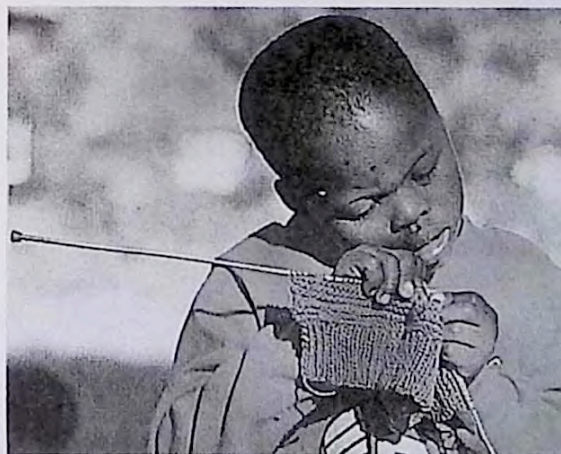
*My friend, I shall be pedagogic,
And say you ought to start with Logic . . .
Days will be spent to let you know
That what you once did at one blow,
Like eating and drinking so easy and free,
Can only be done with One, Two, Three.*

*Yet the web of thought has no such creases
And is more like a weaver's masterpieces:
One step, a thousand threads arise,
Hither and thither shoots each shuttle,
The threads flow on, unseen and subtle,
Each blow effects a thousand ties.
The philosopher comes with analysis
And proves it had to be like this:
The first was so, the second so,
And hence the third and fourth was so,
And were not the first and second here,
Then the third and fourth could never appear.
That is what all the students believe,
But they have never learned to weave.⁹*

✱

ENDNOTES

1. Vibeke Pedersen, Master's Thesis (Spring Valley, N.Y.: Sunbridge College, May 1994).
2. A. Jean Ayres, *Development of Sensory Integrative Theory and Practice* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1974), 84.
3. Pedersen, op. cit.
4. Jane Healy, *Endangered Minds* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 100.
5. Rudolf Steiner, *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education* (Spring Valley, N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1986), 128-29.
6. Susanna Rodell, "Sweater Girl," *The New York Times Magazine*, December 10, 1995.
7. Letters, *The New York Times Magazine*, December 31, 1995, 6, 8.
8. Paul Margulies, *Learning to Learn: Interviews with Graduates of Waldorf Schools* (Fair Oaks, Calif.: AWSNA, 1996), 9.
9. J.W. von Goethe, *Faust*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1963), 199.



The Third Grade: A Time of Transition

By Jack Petrash

Every Waldorf class teacher has a special grade, a year that is especially filled with magic, wonder, and light. For me, third grade has always been that special year.

The third-grade students bring a unique blend of innocence and capability. They are energetic, eager, and physically resilient. Unlike older children, they are intimately connected with the world around them. They still inhabit a world where magic reigns, where animals speak, and where enthusiasm abounds. This enthusiasm is characteristic of third graders. They are eager to take part—to plow, to hoe, to hammer or saw, to thresh or grind, in short, to do.

Enthusiasm, describing the quintessential third-grade characteristic, is derived from the Greek word *enthousiasmos*, which means “infused with divine spirit.” The third graders are still at one with the divine, and a heavenly light still shines in their eyes.

The third graders combine the best of both worlds. They are young at heart, connected to and interested in all that goes on around them. They are physically stronger than younger children and more attentive. The third graders stand at a juncture, a crossroads, between

young and old, between immediacy and separation. In Waldorf Education we call this juncture “the nine-year change.”

As a Waldorf teacher I have always been deeply grateful to Rudolf Steiner for the guidance he has given us for our teaching. Sometimes I stop and am humbled to think how I might have taught (and lived) had I

There is so much in the third-grade year that is memorable. It is a year filled with projects—painting murals, baking bread, planning and building a structure—and with growth.

never encountered Waldorf Education. There are so many deep and valuable insights. More and more often we see “innovations” in modern education that parallel what has been done in the Waldorf school for decades. We now see “looping,” in which one teacher stays with the same children for a number of years. We see “site based management,” longer class periods, cross-curricula teaching—all positive changes in public school education. But we don’t see anything corresponding to Steiner’s insights about child

development, especially child inner development. And nowhere do we find any mention of “the nine-year change.”

From the beginning of his work with teachers, Rudolf Steiner drew attention to this period in a child’s life. He showed how this change in the inner life of the child marks an end to the period of imitation, when the child largely replicates what others do and say, and how it is connected to the emergence of self. At this turning point, the child becomes more distinct and separate from the world. This separation brings a new awareness, the beginnings of objectivity, but at the same time a new sense of separation and loneliness.

Steiner observes:

And the way in which a teacher responds to this situation may be the decisive factor for the child’s entire life. Whether [he or she] will grow

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up into an unstable character or into a person strongly integrated into life may well depend on whether the teacher is acting with inner certainty or unclear thinking during this crucial time.*

In Waldorf schools the teachers are extremely aware of this change taking place in the students at this age. Most Waldorf schools require that children turn seven before or during the first grade. Thus many or most of the children experience the onset of the nine-year change during the third grade, though this period of transition does also, for most, carry over into the fourth grade. Given the previous statement by Rudolf Steiner, it is natural that Waldorf teachers in the third grade feel a great responsibility in shepherding children through this crucial transition. They are continually asking themselves, "What should I do to help my children at this time?"

The answer is simple: teach the third-grade curriculum in all its fullness. Teach it in as lively and enthusiastic a manner as possible. The curriculum was designed by Rudolf Steiner to help children through this important transition.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which the curriculum addresses the nine-year change is through the stories that are told in the course of the year. The stories of the Bible offer the children pictures of the beginning of the world. They are wonderful images: the separation of light and darkness, the creation of Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden. These are the pictures of a time of innocence and harmony, pictures that mirror the inner life of the young

child. It is the Fall from Paradise and the subsequent banishment from the Garden of Eden that presages the nine-year change. It is always striking to observe the children in our Waldorf school watching "The Paradise Play" performed each year shortly before Christmas vacation. The third graders gasp and call out when Adam and Eve are on the verge of eating the apple from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The play depicts the Fall from Paradise, which they too are experiencing or are about to experience.

Waldorf teachers use these stories from the Bible to teach a wide variety of subjects. The children work with measurement, the writing of compositions, recitation, spelling, even grammar, but the deeper lesson, the one pertinent to the inner life of the child, is by far the most important.

Years ago I taught a grammar lesson on "doing-words" (verbs) with my third graders. I had the blackboard completely clean, and I asked the children to tell me some of the things that they could do. Initially, they were slow to

respond, as my question puzzled them, but little by little they started to realize what I was looking for. "I can run." "I can paint." "I can sing." "I can dance." "I can jump . . . walk . . . write . . . throw." And with each sentence I would write the verb on the board. Suddenly, one child with a mischievous look on her face said, "I can kick." The other children understood her meaning immediately, and there was tittering in the class. I wondered what to do. I simply wrote *kick* on the board and moved on. After a series of other words like *bike*, *sing*, *laugh*, *sleep*, and *eat*, there came another mischievous contribution, "I can punch." Now the children began to snicker again, but I put *punch* up on the board with the other doing-words. Before long the entire blackboard was covered with verbs, nearly one hundred

Feeling words, Adjectives

The feeling words tell us something about all the visible and invisible things. They tell us what we feel when we see, hear, smell, think and do. They tell us if it is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, honest or dishonest. The feeling words tell us how things are.

A page from a third-grade main lesson book on language.

of them, and it was a visual tribute to all that human beings can do, a testimony to human versatility.

Then came a true educational moment when one child asked, "Why are there so many nice words like *sing* and *dance* and *paint* and *smile* and then other words like *kick*, *punch*, *bit*, and *spit*?" And there it was in a simple grammar lesson, a most vivid picture of human freedom, a picture closely connected to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and of the new awareness brought on by this "nine-year change." The children are awakening to the fact that—both in the world and within themselves—good is not the only reality.

Other parts of the third-grade curriculum also are designed to help the nine-year-old. The study of housebuilding is also of great assistance. One feature of the nine-year change is that the children begin to experience uncertainty. They are unsure of their surroundings and begin to question and to be afraid. The study of housebuilding corresponds to

the third graders' need to find stability in the world in which they live.

In this block the children begin to see how people all over the world have made homes for themselves on Earth. Through studying the teepee, the igloo, the pueblo, the yurt, et al., the children experience a world where people can provide for their own needs by using their hands and what the Earth provides. This fills them with confidence that they too can make a home for themselves here on Earth, that they can confidently put their two feet firmly on unshakable ground.

This confidence is furthered by the study of how a modern house is constructed. The children can feel the solidity of the foundation, the firmness of the floor joists, and the uprightness of the stud walls. The children have a great interest in all that people can do with their hands and are fascinated by the plumbers, the electricians, the roofers, and the painters. They come to sense their own human versatility and that they too "can do."

And this feeling is empowering. It works to allay fears and to quell insecurities. At the same time, the children can sense on an intuitive level that their own "house"—their physical body—is being built up in as solid and secure a way as any external dwelling.

One source of great help in preparing to teach the third grade is a book by a Swiss Waldorf teacher named Hermann Koepke. This excellent book, *Encountering the Self*, is subtitled *Transformation and Destiny in the Ninth Year*. It details parents' accounts of changes that take place in children at this age and a teacher's efforts to understand these changes and to help parents understand them as well. This is crucial work at a Waldorf school, work that should be done well in advance of the actual nine-year change.

Parents will inevitably notice the effects of this change. At home, the children may exhibit new moods and behaviors and/or old ones in an extreme form. They may seem moody, fearful, or solitary. Some will even suffer from headaches and stomachaches.



A Waldorf third-grade class and the ark-shaped chicken coop they built with the help of their parents.

They may have nightmares frequently. They may no longer be willing to hold a parent's hand or to give a kiss good-bye. The intimacy that existed previously between parent and child may suddenly disappear.

Parents will also see changes in the way children respond to school. Enthusiasm, exuberance, and joy may give way to indifference. A heightened individual awareness may lead to a feeling of separation, and children will say that they have no friends, when in fact they have many playmates who enjoy their company. Less inclined to spontaneous and unreserved participation in activities, children may experience and complain of boredom. All of this causes many parents to ask: "What's wrong? My child used to love school."

Parents need to know in advance that this change is coming and that it is a temporary and necessary stage of child development. It is part of the transition from an experience of oneness with the world to an experience of separate and distinct individuality.

Often first-grade parents say, "My child loves school. They want to come to school even when they are ill. You are doing a fine job." I use this opportunity to point out that in a few years, when I will be working just as hard and doing just as good a job, their child may be responding very differently to school. I mention the nine-year change and say that, at the beginning of third grade, we—parents and teachers together—will study this change in the inner life of the child. For this purpose I use *Encountering the Self*.

In reading this book I was struck by the role that farming can play in helping the children find a sense of security. I was so impressed by the notion that our solid, bountiful Earth gives this assurance to the children, that I taught farming as the first block in third grade. Even though our farm trip would not come until the spring, I wanted the children to experience the bounty of a harvest.

We went as a class and picked apples for the whole school for the Michaelmas celebration at the end of September, and when we stood in the orchard looking at all the apple trees laden with fruit it was enough to give the children a deep sense of well-being, such as that given by a well-stocked pantry before the coming of winter. We picked apples; we cored them; we sliced them; we hung them in our room to dry. We also harvested sweet potatoes at a local farm, and the children followed the potato digger and unearthed the potatoes as if they were treasures hidden in the earth. Each child lugged a heavy dry-wall bucket full of sweet potatoes from the field. When we looked back at the field, there were still so many sweet potatoes drying in the sun that you couldn't even tell that hundreds had already been taken away. The children could experience the wonderful bounty of our Earth, and I knew that this experience would be a healing medicine for pains that "the nine-year change" would bring.

The farm trip, as well, provides children with quiet confidence for this new phase of their life. For many children it is the first time that they are away from

home without their parents. They have to unpack and pack their bags, make their beds, clean their rooms, clear the table, and eat some of everything that is put on their plates. Each day during the week at the farm, they are called on to work, to muck out the barn, to gather eggs. In short, they are asked to be grown-up. Rising to the occasion fills the children with a sense of self-worth, which dignifies and ennobles their newly emerging sense of self.

There is so much in the third-grade year that is memorable. It is a year filled with projects—painting murals, baking bread, planning and building a structure—and with growth. The children at the end of third grade are quite different physically and emotionally than they were in September. They are no longer young children. You can see this change in their eyes. There is a bit more reserve than there was in September, but also a bit more self-awareness, more clarity about the human being that the child is striving to become. The third graders are now students ready for the challenges of the coming years. They have come through a major change in the way they view and relate to the world in which they live. We hope that with the help of the Waldorf curriculum, they will be standing firmly on their feet, filled with enthusiasm for this life, which they are now beginning to see in a new way.

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* Rudolf Steiner, *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education* (Spring Valley: Anthroposophic Press, 1986), 166.

A Waldorf Father Reminisces

By Barry Schaye

Barry Schaye is a parent at the Chicago Waldorf School and served for five years as the chairman of the school's Board of Trustees. Barry delivered this talk at the graduation of the school's eighth grade on June 7, 1998.

Like many Waldorf dads, I am here today because of a Waldorf mom. I want to tell you that I did not come willingly to this education. My wife, Lin, had experienced Steiner communities in England and was excited to find that Chicago had a Waldorf school. I agreed to give it a very skeptical look.

My initial reaction was one of dismay. I was taken aback by the crumbling infrastructure and appalled by the general air of chaos in the school at that time. I remember attending an orientation at the Marshfield building, in a room that was the office, the teachers' lounge, and the school library combined. Remember, when the eight grades and all the special subjects were packed into the two floors above the church? That was not the kind of school I had imagined for my children.

"Let's just put Josh in the kindergarten. What harm can kindergarten do?" pleaded Lin. I agreed with an uneasiness that turned to alarm when, at the

first parent evening, Josh's teacher expected us to clap our hands, stomp our feet, and sing, while we were uncomfortably seated in tiny chairs. She then proceeded to tell us that "scientific" studies had proved that watching television altered the brain waves of small children. "Sure it did," I thought. "What am I doing here?"

That, of course, was only the beginning. I still had to learn about beeswax, handwork, and eurythmy. Somehow, Lin had neglected to tell me that they

Because their intellectual understanding is rooted in this heartfelt sensibility, our children have developed a special capacity for observation that enables them to see the interconnections of the natural world, in all its beauty, subtlety, and complexity.

don't teach reading until the children reach third grade, and that grade-school children never touch a computer. Gee, I thought, are they intentionally educating a generation of Luddites who will never fit into a world where information and technology rule? Still, I thought, it's only kindergarten. Let them play, for now. There will be

plenty of time to get serious about the real business of education, at a real school, when it's time to start first grade.

Two years later, Ben started preschool. Josh by then was in his third year of kindergarten. It occurred to me that kindergarten can last for three years at a Waldorf school so that fathers have a chance to learn something about the education before having to make a commitment for first grade and beyond. And sure enough, somehow I had begun to find my way in. The children seemed very happy to be at school—at least the younger ones, to whom I paid the most attention. Some of the teachers seemed to be okay, too.

In fact, one of them, Jim Starzynski, asked me to join a group that was looking for a permanent home for the school. Hmm, I thought to myself, with three small children at home, maybe a night out at a committee meeting would provide a welcome respite. Shortly after I joined, the group went through a crisis—the nature of which for the life of me I can't remember today—and I found that Jim and I were the only members left. My own "Waldorf education" had begun in earnest.

I remember slowly beginning to perceive in Waldorf Education what became for me its fundamental ideal: to truly

put the needs of the children first. Other schools may say that they do this, but much of the time the needs of the parents, or the teachers, or the administrators, or the board members come before those of the children. At the Chicago Waldorf School, the devotion of the faculty to this principle is unmistakable. Don't take this to mean that I think our school always succeeds in meeting these needs—far from it! But I came to believe in the reality and sincerity of the attempt.

In the meantime, I began to see the developing capacities of my children and their classmates: their respect and reverence for nature; their engagement with the world; and—something that struck me most strongly as they grew older and continues to amaze me today—their genuine empathy for others.

It has become almost a cliché about Waldorf Education that the children form a special connection with the natural world, but I have in fact found this to be true. I think it is the way in which artistic activity is integrated into the curriculum that accounts for the strength of the bond they feel with nature. In the upper grades and particularly in the high school, the students learn the scientific principles that are necessary to understand and interpret natural phenomena. But, the foundation for the depth of feeling they develop is laid much earlier, in their singing, painting, modeling, and, yes, even in their eurythmy. Because

their intellectual understanding is rooted in this heartfelt sensibility, our children have developed a special capacity for observation that enables them to see the interconnections of the natural world, in all its beauty, subtlety, and complexity. In so doing, the children often become in fact our teachers.

This engagement with the world is obvious to those who know the children well. I have often heard them speak of their

embrace the consciousness of the ancient Hebrews, of the ancient Indians during the time of the Buddha, and of the classical Greeks.

The children's empathy for others is founded in the strong loyalty they feel to their peers. I remember a particular class some years ago that had a child with a developmental disability. In many schools, this student would have been put in a special education class. What was most striking

about the situation was not how the faculty stayed with this child—which they did with deep commitment—but how his fellow students supported his efforts in all that he did. I can still recall watching those eighth graders guiding this child through a complex eurythmy exercise that they had mastered, but which was a little beyond his abilities, even at the expense of their own performance. They refused to let him fail.

We have often seen that dynamic at work throughout the years with this eighth



experiences learning about other cultures. The descriptions, grounded in a depth of feeling that only begins to emerge consciously and idealistically in adolescence, reflect a fundamental truth: that by acknowledging the true humanity of others, we strengthen our own. This understanding has its roots in the early and middle years of the curriculum, when the children

grade, most recently in their wonderful production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I know many of you were impressed with how they worked together for the success of everyone in the performance. This deep feeling of connection—the sense that one's success is intimately linked to the success of others—is the ground in which a far-reaching social transformation will grow.

I was asked to speak today about my experience as a Waldorf parent who has been intimately involved in the life of the school. My engagement with the questions of rightful governance, long-range planning, administration, and accountability is rooted in a deeply held belief that this education is different—and that it can truly make a difference in the world. I was motivated to work not only for the benefit of my children and their classmates. My hope is that one day a Waldorf education will be an option available to parents and children everywhere.

We have a ways to go before that can happen, and that outcome is not preordained. It will come to pass only if the Waldorf movement can find ways to adapt itself to the new realities of life at the beginning of the twenty-first century, while preserving and deepening its understanding of the unique insights about children and childhood that are the foundation of this education. I believe this means cultivating genuine, honest partnerships between parents and teachers, and between this community and other human beings and institutions around us.

As I step back this spring after five years as chairman of the Board of Trustees, I want to share with you some of the lessons I have learned about the cultivation of these partnerships.

First, I am learning to listen to others. Those of you who know me well are aware of how much room for improvement there was and still is in this area. Yet, I have begun to understand that the ideas and inspiration of

others are most powerfully evoked when we learn to listen to them with reverence and attention.

Next, I cultivated trust in others, and hoped that they trusted me as well. This can be tougher than it sounds, because it requires a respect for those who hold opinions at variance with our own and a faith that one's contributions have value, even when that opinion is not universally shared by one's colleagues. On the other hand, the essential goodwill of many of the adults with whom I have worked in this community is unmistakable, and has made this task easier.

Third, I have tried to remember that in the same way I experienced this school as being here for my children and for me, other parents and teachers must also feel a profound gratitude that they were able to find this place. Even when I disagreed with them, I tried to remember that they chose Waldorf Education for some of the same reasons that inspired me.

The final lesson is both humbling and inspiring. Our individual contributions may sometimes be difficult to measure. Tasks that you think should be accomplished in months, can take years. The true meaning of the greater partnership may never be absolutely defined. Yet, by participating in this enterprise, each of us acknowledges that we have a role to play in the process of carrying this ideal into the future, for the benefit of humanity. I salute all of you teachers and students, parents, grandparents, and friends of Waldorf Education, who have chosen to play a part in this struggle. ✱

1999 International Conference for Young People

From July 19 to 25 the 1999 International Conference for Young People will take place in Santa Cruz, California. The conference will carry forward and develop the work of the First International Youth Conference held in July 1997 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. About 250 young people, a large percentage of them Waldorf school graduates, gathered there to explore questions related to inner development, community awareness, and community-building.

The new generation now nearing adulthood is a gifted one and has much to offer the world. It is important that these young people develop the inner strength, the will, and the ability to apply their talents and capacities to solving problems of everyday life in modern society. These problems often seem insoluble and can oppress people into apathy and hopelessness. The conference aims to help young people find ways to bridge the gap between ideals and actions.

The conference will feature workshops on practical skills for sustainable living, to help people "find their craft."

There will be opportunities for inner meditative work to help people discover

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"Reorienting" Upper-Grade Parents

By Judy Chaves

By the time my older daughter entered the upper grades in Waldorf school, I had sat through five years' worth of school assemblies, watching and familiarizing myself with the activities of children in grades one through five. I had, as well, studied the exhibits of the work of each graduating eighth-grade class to see what they had accomplished during their years at the school. And I had attended several day-long conferences—including one on adolescents—each presenting the Waldorf view on an issue, as well as any number of lectures, panel discussions, and orientation evenings on Waldorf Education. In other words, by the time my daughter entered sixth grade, I prided myself on being as informed about and prepared for the upper grades as a parent who is a not an Anthroposophist could be.

How wrong I was. Some time after my daughter entered sixth grade, I found myself, in spite of my preparation, growing increasingly confused and anxious about her education. Sure, there were no surprises as far as the subjects she was being taught. What took me by surprise, though, was how, and the extent to which, she was being taught these subjects. I was

taken aback, for example, that the children were being taught such subjects as algebra and chemistry by their class teacher—rather than by specialty teachers—when the class teacher



was having to refresh her own long-past study of algebra and chemistry in order to teach them. I feared that the depth, accuracy, and vitality of the subjects would be jeopardized.

Also, I was surprised by things my daughter was learning in science, things that seemed either out of date or not terribly scientific: a definition of "polarity" that sounded more like philosophy than chemistry; the

suggestion in a physiology lesson on the human heart of a connection between the heart and human emotion. I wondered, as a result, to what extent the worldview and ideas of Steiner's era and of Anthroposophy influenced the content of what my daughter was learning. I looked ahead to such subjects as evolution and history with trepidation. I was surprised by what seemed inadequate amounts of class time and homework time devoted to math and writing skills. I feared that my daughter might not cover all that was necessary to enter ninth grade at a local, non-Waldorf high school on a level with other ninth graders.

I began to lose sleep, worrying about my child's future, trying to remember the supposed benefits of a Waldorf education, wondering if we had made a terrible mistake in keeping her at the school, a mistake whose repercussions would be felt for a long time. And, I discovered in talking with other upper-grade parents, I was not the only one worrying about such things. Others were losing sleep as well.

Judy Chaves is a writer and a mother with children in the Lake Champlain Waldorf School in Shelburne, Vermont.

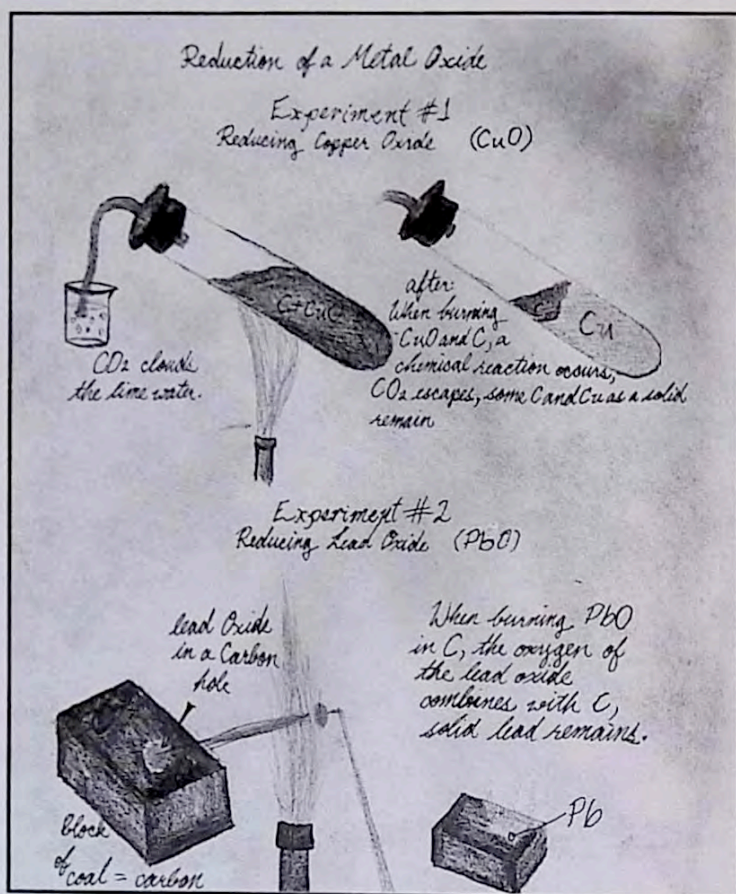


Illustration from a seventh-grade chemistry main lesson book.

Eventually, a conversation I had with a teacher at the school during the worst of my "upper-grade crisis" began to answer many of my questions. Some of the things that I viewed with concern had, I now learned, aspects that could be seen as strengths. One reason the class teacher was teaching algebra and chemistry, for example, was so that the children could benefit from watching an adult take on new, challenging subjects with confidence and enthusiasm—even in the face of occasional mistakes.

Both the benefits and drawbacks of this were illustrated for me a year or so later by my daughter, when she described the perseverance with which her class teacher worked to demonstrate a tricky chemical reaction—

the combustion of limestone—that required the repeated digging of and firing-up of an underground kiln. On the one hand, my daughter's delight in and respect for the teacher were heightened by this drastic example of an individual in pursuit of first-hand knowledge. On the other hand, the experiment never worked.

Some of the things I saw as weaknesses I still saw as weaknesses, but at least I now understood and could respect the underlying rationale for them. I still had doubts about some of the science being taught, for example, but I could certainly appreciate the goal of teaching science with an eye toward the senses and feelings.

And some of the things I

was concerned about were concerns, it turned out, not only of myself and other parents, but of faculty as well. A faculty committee was being formed, for example, to establish a school-wide curriculum for all subjects. A survey of the local high schools concerning what they expected incoming students to have studied, was to be taken into consideration in the project.

If I had known even half of all this beforehand, many of my surprises and anxieties could have been avoided.

When a child enters the upper grades of a Waldorf elementary school, it is as much a turning point, a decision-making point, for a family as when the child enters a Waldorf first grade. As such, it is a time when parents need information. Parents need to make the decision to send their child into the upper grades—just as they made the decision to enroll him or her in first grade—with as much information and understanding and with as few misconceptions as possible. The alternative is the confusion, frustration, and, indeed, anger that often plague upper-grade parents when they are hit, as I was hit, with surprises. Imagine not explaining to the parents of incoming first graders that the Waldorf approach to reading is slower than at other schools, but letting them discover this for themselves!

Just as parents of children entering first grade are told, "Your child may not read until second or third grade. This is okay, and here's why . . .," so too do parents of children entering sixth grade need to hear, "Your child may not be doing such-and-such until seventh or

eighth grade, or even high school. This is okay, and here's why . . . " I suggest, then, that just as parents with children entering a school are given a thorough orientation, so too should parents with children going into the upper grades.

What would such an orientation be like? First on the agenda would be an explanation of the philosophy underlying the upper grades. This should include an answer to the basic question: What is the primary goal of the school during this time? My understanding is that the goal in the upper grades is to encourage and inspire the children

- to think clearly and independently and to question the status quo;
- to learn out of their own experiences and not to be satisfied with second- or third-hand knowledge;
- to study and work not in order to pass an exam or get a good grade but to satisfy their own desire for learning;
- to have a sense of their own dignity as human beings; and
- to have a sense of belonging to the world and of being needed in the world.

Developing these attitudes and capacities underlies all that goes on in the upper grades. The children are being prepared, not to pass specific exams or succeed in a particular school, but to thrive in any future situation and to have confidence in their abilities to do so. These are the goals that originally draw parents to the school and are what, ultimately, keep parents at the school. They need to be articulated at the beginning of and throughout the upper-grade experience, to remind parents

why their children are at a Waldorf school, why things are done the way they are. They remind parents of the larger perspective and the relative value of this or that particular aspect of the experience.

But a worthwhile and effective orientation must go beyond general philosophy. If a school merely presents its underlying philosophy and tells parents that they should trust in it, it is not imparting all that is necessary. It is not answering the additional questions that parents will, sooner or later, have, and it is doing little to alleviate misconceptions.

Parents with upper graders are faced with very specific and concrete concerns for their children that will not be quelled by philosophy alone. Whereas parents might have thrilled, five or six years earlier, to the idea of an education without tests, grades, and computers, they now face the fact that their children will very soon be in a world rife with tests, grades, and computers. Whereas, years earlier, parents could see for themselves that their children were learning and loving to read, they now would like similar reassurance that their not-as-forthcoming adolescents are learning and loving to deal with higher math concepts and research skills.

Parents need more than an underlying philosophy; they need to see how adherence to it does not handicap their children for non-Waldorf academic reality; they need to see how the Waldorf emphasis on the process of learning does not compromise the content of what is being learned.

Here, then, is a list of topics

beyond that of general philosophy, topics that I suggest be introduced at an orientation for parents with children entering the upper grades. These topics raise certain questions. How these questions are answered depends on a class teacher's interpretation and implementation of Waldorf philosophy, and on the degree to which he or she will use non-Waldorf practices in the classroom. These are questions, then, that have no one "Waldorf answer," but, rather, have as many answers as there are Waldorf schools or, indeed, Waldorf class teachers.

The topic of homework, for example, might well elicit responses ranging from "no homework at all" to "homework every night" to "it depends on the subject and the needs of the children." My point in listing the topics, then, is not to say how they should be handled in all Waldorf schools. It is rather to encourage schools to let parents know how their particular school and class teachers handle them, and—if a topic is currently under discussion—to invite parental participation. I present the list in full knowledge that it is by no means definitive—it is simply the list of issues that gave me and some of my fellow parents serious concern—and in the hope that it stimulates the suggestion and discussion of additional topics.

■ Curriculum

Reasons behind broad-based, renaissance quality of curriculum (more depth saved for high school), and how it relates to overall philosophy. Age-appropriate topics to engage students' feelings and

imaginations. Use of firsthand experience. Use of historical biography.

Additional questions: Does the school have a minimum, standard curriculum for each subject, for each grade, regardless of teacher? How does this curriculum compare with that of local non-Waldorf schools and the expectations of area non-Waldorf high schools? How much influence does Anthroposophy have on subject matter? Examples? Is an effort made to include women in the curriculum? How are subjects such as sex education and drug/alcohol abuse handled? I suggest that the orientation include a panel discussion of recent graduates who are currently at a variety of high schools, and who can speak about their experiences—both academic and social—in making the transition to high school.

■Role of Class Teacher

Reasons for having the same class teacher for eight years and, again, how this relates to overall philosophy. The teacher as a window through which children see the world. The change in role from that of "shepherd" to leader, from "holding" children to encouraging them to do things on their own. The relative benefits of having children see this one person take on a range of subjects against the benefits of being taught by specialty teachers. Progressive increase in students' critical analysis of class teacher and how this leads to the need for only specialty teachers in high school.

Additional questions: What preparation/training does the class teacher receive in the main lesson block topics; in learning to switch his or her

role? Is there an option for the class teacher not to continue with the class if he or she doesn't feel well suited for the upper grades? What resources does the teacher have? How are a teacher's areas of academic weakness recognized and then bolstered? How often are specialty teachers asked to teach a main lesson block? Who are specialty teachers? Are there specialty teachers to regularly teach skills in particular subjects, such as English and math?

Are Steiner's indications concerning the class teacher for the upper grades still valid at the end of the twentieth century, or do we need to adjust for the acceleration of maturity in today's adolescents? In other words, do we need to look ahead to Steiner's suggestions regarding teachers at the high school level and apply some of them to the grade school's upper grades?

■Homework, exams, grades

Reasons for using or not using each—and, again, how this relates to overall philosophy. The need for children to spend time after school pursuing non-intellectual activities. The need for time away from a subject. The effects that grades and exams can have on motivation. Ways homework and exams can be designed so as not to conflict with overall goals. Ways parents can help at home.

Additional questions: How much and what type of homework is given in the upper grades? How is this determined? Similar questions for exams and grades. The issues of homework, exams, and grades should also be raised at a panel discussion of graduates. How

prepared were they for these realities of high school life?

■Computers

How are they understood in the overall Waldorf philosophy? Reasons for using or not using computers. Ways parents can support the school policy at home. Additional questions: Are children ever allowed to use computers to do research or to write a paper? If not, why? The issue of computers also might be raised at a panel discussion of graduates.

Obviously, no orientation, no matter how well conceived, will anticipate all the questions that will arise during the upper-grade experience of a given class. Nor will an orientation give answers with which all parents agree. Indeed, after attending an orientation program, some parents may decide that the upper grades at a Waldorf school are not what they want for their children. And many concerns of parents will never be fully alleviated until parents see for themselves the results of a Waldorf grade-school education in their own children.

But surely the concern and anxiety that both parents and teachers experience during the upper grades can be kept to a minimum if we enter these years with as much knowledge and understanding as possible, and if we make the commitment to talk with one another. Indeed, one major benefit of an orientation program, in addition to imparting information, is that it can act as a model for, and put into motion, the process by which issues are to be raised and discussed among parents and faculty in the future. ✱

Like, That, and Whatever: Consciousness, Child Development, and the Misuse of Words

By John Wulsin

If children grow up with the habit of seeing and describing clearly in speech the true connections between things, then they will be able to think more clearly in high school and to act more consciously in adult life.

Parents and teachers, we need to prepare our children and students to navigate through the everchanging, turbulent waters of the present and future. One of the best tools we can give our children to meet and thrive amidst unforeseen changes is a proper use of language. Speech is an expression of consciousness. It is also a shaper of consciousness. Teachers at every level—nursery, kindergarten, lower school, and high school—and parents need to work together in forming the way our children speak.

My concern arises not out of a belief in an absolute right or wrong in the use of language. I am not a grammarian speaking out against anti-grammarians. This is not the last-ditch cry of a defender of a grammatical Alamo, holding out against the changing language of the masses. Language always changes. Our language changed more in the Elizabethan period than in almost any other time. Poets need to be changing, revitalizing language. There has often been a healthy interchange between the language of the streets (and fields) and the language of the groves of academe, and interchange between the established language patterns of the past and the percolating slang of the present. Such tension is necessary for the language to stay alive. Today, the uniformity of our pervasive mass media is a major new force deadening that vital interchange.

As Waldorf parents and teachers, we need to choose what is timeless and essential in our language. We need not take a stand on one side or the other of the perennial polarities of traditional and progressive, classical and romantic, lawful and free, established and pioneer, past and future. We are concerned primarily with the healthy development of the child into his or her individuality, and into a healthy relationship

with the world and with other human beings. Thus we in Waldorf Education work both traditionally and progressively, classically and romantically, lawfully and artfully. We must draw on the past to prepare to meet the future.

At various points during the last thirty years, six major changes in usage began to creep into American English. Now firmly established in day-to-day speech, particularly

John Wulsin worked as an Instructor with Outward Bound on Hurricane Island, Maine, and in the Austrian Alps before discovering Waldorf Education. After completing his Waldorf teacher training at Emerson College in England, he prepared further to become a Waldorf high school teacher by completing his B.A. in English at Harvard College, and then by teaching four years in two non-Waldorf independent high schools. John has an M.A. in English and American literature from Columbia University. For nineteen years he has been teaching English and drama at Green Meadow Waldorf School in Spring Valley, New York. Also, he has for years been teaching poetics at the Eurythmy School in Spring Valley. John currently serves on the Board of the Arts Council of Rockland County (New York).

among the young, each of these usages involves a dangerous confusion. Together they are, I think, signs and creators of a degenerating consciousness, rather than of a new, vital, and healthy consciousness. They concern the following words: 1) *like* 2) *who/that* 3) *whatever* 4) *good/well* 5) *each one/their* 6) *me/I*. If we teachers and parents understand the nature of these dangerous confusions, we can work together to help develop our children's emerging and enduring consciousness in a healthy way. I will address in this article the first three of these new language habits.

Like

A recent discussion among the faculty members at the Green Meadow Waldorf School revealed that their most urgent concern about the speech of the children is the pervasive abuse of the word *like*. *Like* is a fine word. It is usually a preposition, with a noun or pronoun as its object: *like a rock, like a bird, like her*.

The advertising firm for Winston-Salem cigarettes in the 1950s is probably responsible for jarring *like* loose from its clear role as a preposition and establishing it as a conjunction, followed by a clause containing a noun and a verb. "Winston tastes good *like* a cigarette should." That role of conjunction, for a clause, had been performed, ever since Homer, primarily by *like's* good cousin, *as*. In fact, one could say that Homer gave the clearest and finest mission to the word *like* and its companion *as*—or, to be exact, to the words in classical Greek that correspond to our English *like* and *as*.

A simile gives expression to an important capacity of Western mind, one that was emerging in ancient Greece. This is the ability to recognize and to state that two normally dissimilar objects are in fact similar. A is like B. This woman is like a tree. "Thetis . . . rising like a dawn mist from the sea into a cloud . . . , soared aloft in heaven to high Olympus" (Homer's *Iliad*, Book One, 11.496-99). The relationship is not one of mathematical equality, that is, $A=B$, but rather one of comparison. One exercises the imagination, rationally. The fact of the similarity is stated explicitly, through language. The possible similarities usually remain implicit, active in the imagination of the reader.

When the similarity is recognized, not simply between two objects but between two activities or clauses, then the word *as* is used. Homer's extended similes can become quite developed, taking on a life of their own. For example:

*From the camp
The troops were turning out now,
thick as bees
That issue from some crevice in a
rock face,
Endlessly, pouring forth, to make
a cluster
And swarm on blooms of summer
here and there,
Glinting and droning, busy in
bright air.
Like bees innumerable from ships
and huts.
Down the deep foreshore streamed
those regiments
Toward the assembly ground—
and Rumor blazed
Among them like a crier sent
from Zeus.*

(Homer's *Iliad*, Book Two, 11. 81-90,
tr. Fitzgerald)

In either case, the normal simile with *like*, or the extended simile with *as*, it is absolutely crucial that both the speaker/writer and the listener/reader are clear which image is the actual subject (called by literary scholars the "tenor") and which image is the "vehicle" that helps us better understand the original, actual subject. In the extended simile the actual subject is almost always a particular activity in a particular place, while the "vehicle" is almost always an activity which can take place almost anywhere, at any time, even forever. There will always be, we hope, bees swarming on blooms of summer. The Homeric extended simile points to an eternal dimension within the life and activities of mortals on earth. One might even say that the Greeks, being guided in life on earth by these great stories, were, through similes, not only shown the connections between things on earth but were also reminded of the timeless realm from which they themselves had come.

Now that we have a historic-linguistic context for the role of *like* in our language and literature, we can turn our attention to the role of *like* in the life of the developing child. In Waldorf Education our concern for the child is that he or she incarnate as healthily as possible into life. We nourish the young child artfully through imagination, always trying to guide him or her into the reality of the world in which we live, and also into the reality of the world which he or she will help create.

The child, especially in fifth and sixth grades, develops thinking capacities that made their appearance first in ancient

Greece and Rome. These have to do with a healthy and balanced relationship to the reality of the world. One cannot become so lost in the swarming bees that one forgets that actually the soldiers are running to the ships. The simile is meant to bring us further inside the original image, not to take us away from it. In literary language the "vehicle" is meant to illuminate the "tenor," not to eclipse it. We could also say, as parents and educators, that the simile should help us more fully "incarnate," that it should bring our spirit and soul in harmony with our physical body and the real world, rather than create a dissonance.

Now, what happened with *like* about thirty years ago? Here is one amateur linguist's version of the recent career of *like*. In the late 1960s American society became polarized. The hardening asphalt of the cool fifties was rent asunder by mere flowers—the "flower children" of the dawning new "Age of Aquarius." In the opposition between repressed, oppressive establishment and uninhibited, liberated hippies, young people sought to expand their consciousness, up and away from the bedrock of day-to-day reality. Drugs gave the illusion of further expanding consciousness, to the extent that, for some, the connection to actual, quotidian reality evaporated.

In literary terms, the conscious connection between the actual image and the figurative image, between the tenor and the vehicle, between the actuality and the illuminating perspective, was lost. In terms of "A is like B," B lost A.

"Like, I went to the like store, and, you know, like I met

like Freddie." The speaker of this sentence is living completely in the world of the illuminating perspective. Yet there is no contrasting reality to illuminate. There is no darkness to shed light on. The light has no bearing; the light is lost. But there is no good without evil. As William Blake said, "Without Contraries, there is no Progression."

The arbitrary proliferation of *like*, like a virus or cancer, robs the speaker and the listener of the vitality of the dynamic of clear polarity. The virus of misused *like* gives the speaker the illusion of living completely in the "illuminating perspectives," yet the irony is that in fact it is only a weakened shadow of day-to-day reality. It is not at all that larger timeless dimension of the vehicle in Homer's extended similes.

Young children don't need explanations; they just need to hear the correct usage after they have used the incorrect one, and then they need to imitate it.

Unfortunately, the drug culture of the sixties spawned a senseless proliferation of *like*, so that today it permeates the verbal atmosphere in which the children grow up. The insidious danger is that, like chemical, atmospheric pollution, the misuse of *like* will seriously interfere with the healthy incarnation of the child. The growing child needs to find a vital, conscious, and true connection

to the earth. This misuse of *like* incarnates rather than incarnates the growing child, pulls him or her away from living actuality.

I can well imagine that at a future stage of development, we will no longer need the word *like* to help us perceive and experience the connections and similarities between things. We will be able to experience the thing in itself and will not need to have something else illuminate it for us. But at this time *like* does help illuminate our world for us and for our children. If children grow up with the habit of seeing and describing clearly in speech the true connections between things, then they will be able to think more clearly in high school and to act more consciously in adult life. They will be able to make connections consciously and thus allow the eternal to permeate the particulars of their lives. In this, the correct use of the splendid word *like* can make a crucial difference.

Who/That, Which

"Any person that speaks this way to another is highly inconsiderate."

"Any girl that stays quiet in class because of fear is being unfair to herself."

To put it simply, a person is a *who*. A place, thing, or idea is a *that* or a *which*. Yet the tendency to dehumanize is powerful and pervasive—in media advertising, in the computer world, in business, the armed forces, in prisons, in public school, and even—through careless use of language—in our own Waldorf schools.

The problem is not with *that* or *which* as adjectives. There is nothing wrong with

"Which boy finished his work?" or "I see that child in the green shirt." But there is something wrong with "the boy that finished his work." It refers to a human being as a thing. The proper use of the relative pronoun is the simplest way to differentiate clearly between what is human and what is not human: the person *who* or *whom* . . . , the thing *that* or *which* Each time a child hears himself or herself referred to as *who*, the child subconsciously experiences a confirmation of his or her humanity. Every individual lives with the question "Who am I?" At the least, the corollary answer should be "I am who."

Whatever

This third grammatical confusion is the most recent, the simplest, and perhaps the most insidious. Where has it come from, this trail word, this tail word of the 1990s? I wonder.

Whatever has perfectly respectable uses, as a pronoun and as an adjective. In "Do whatever you think is best," or "Whatever happens, keep the faith," it is an exemplary pronoun. In "Whatever merits the work has . . ." or "Whatever the reason, she refuses to go," it functions nicely as an adjective.

As a pronoun, *whatever* is either the subject or the object of a verb, a dynamic part of a thought. As an adjective, *whatever* clearly qualifies or modifies a particular noun.

"She can come if she likes. Whatever." "I think that's bad, whatever." "I might do it—whatever." How is this word working in the sentences? It does not seem to be working as any recognizable part of speech.

Maybe it comes closest to an exclamation like "hooray" or "uh-oh." How is it affecting or reflecting the rest of the sentence? It does not affirm or reinforce. It does not ask for elaboration. It does not negate, does not take a stance in opposition. This word, used in a manner that is almost alien to the functions of the eight parts of speech, seems to undo, to diffuse, to virtually invalidate whatever the previous thought has been!

What is the appropriate punctuation to follow this floating *whatever*? It is not a period

If what one does or says has no meaning or importance, what one feels or thinks also has no meaning or importance.

that ends a statement. It is not a question mark that expresses the need for open exploration or consideration. It is not an exclamation point of either excitement or command. The punctuation mark for the trailing *whatever* would have to be something like a squiggle, perhaps a drooping squiggle.

Essentially, *whatever*, used this way, is a cop-out word. *Whatever* articulates the epitome of moral relativism, of indifference, of impotence. *Whatever* is the attitude of the twenty bystanders who see and hear a woman being murdered, without either coming forward to stop it or even lifting a finger to call the police. *Whatever* is the attitude that words do not have meaning, and hence, it implies that what one just said doesn't matter. If what one does or says has no

meaning or importance, what one feels or thinks also has no meaning or importance. And if that's the case, why live?

This use of *whatever* as a negating trailer is insidious. Whereas the misuse of *like* is like a virus causing our thinking to disintegrate, this misuse of *whatever* is like a virus alienating us from our own attitudes, thoughts, and actions.

The word *whatever* always has to be followed by something. And whatever this something is, it matters. The point is to name *it* and to find one's relationship to it. Then every thought, every word, every feeling, every action matters. Then we, and the world we inhabit, become fully alive. Children need to learn to use *whatever* as a valid pronoun or adjective and not as a cop-out word. This will help them develop clarity of thinking, the will to complete a thought, as well as a consciousness in the soul that is profoundly different from the attitude that "anything goes."

These then are three major and insidious misuses of language that permeate speech today. What can we, as parents and teachers, do to protect our children from them and from their effects? First, we need to be sure that we ourselves are not guilty of these misuses. Second, we should gently correct our children whenever we hear them misuse words such as *like*, *that*, and *whatever*. Children learn to speak from us. Imitating their elders, they form their habits early. We need to help those habits become clear, strong, true habits that support the process of healthy incarnation. Young children don't need explanations; they just need to

hear the correct usage after they have used the incorrect one, and then they need to imitate it.

We probably will have to point out time and again that *like* is a word that needs something in front of it and something after it; that *who*, not *that*, is to be used when referring to a human being; and that *whatever* needs to be followed by a noun or clause, so that a complete thought is formed. But it is very important that we have the will and the patience to do so.

Among themselves our young people will continue to speak their own peer lingo, which often includes "likety-like" speech and the devaluing use of *whatever*. We cannot, of course, affect that. They will enjoy their slang jargon. That's fine. Some of it is new and vital language. But, if we are clear in our own speaking at home and at school, and correct them gently when necessary, they will greatly benefit.

Let us remember that we want our children to be able to play in the language, to play with the language, to make up new language, to learn the laws of the language, to work as freely and flexibly as possible within those laws, to love the art of language, to go beyond the laws when artistically appropriate, to use the language so that it helps all of us to think clearly, to feel fully, to act truly. Yet, we want to recognize when certain developments pose real dangers. When we do recognize such dangers, how we speak—and how we encourage the children to speak—can make a crucial difference. ✱

Christy Barnes: A Tribute

By Carol Ann Bärtges

The Rudolf Steiner School of New York City, on the occasion of Christy Barnes's ninetieth birthday, has published a book of poetry and prose written by Christy's students during her twenty years as teacher of English and literature in the high school (The Key, is available for \$6.00). The following tribute appears as an introduction in that book. It describes an experiential approach to the teaching of literature and writing, an approach that Christy was instrumental in developing and that has become normative in Waldorf high schools in North America.

Christy Barnes turned ninety on January 10, 1999. Among the myriad achievements of her lifelong involvement in speech and literature stands her work as a teacher of English at the New York City Rudolf Steiner School. Those of us who were Christy's students and colleagues during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s have been forever marked by her devotion to the gesture and spirit of language. Her teaching was an appeal to resurrect the power of the word, for, as Shelley said, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." In every course she taught, Christy reinforced the belief that, far from the typical image of the effete diletante, scribbling in an ivory tower, the writer is an instrument for change and renewal in the world. His/her artistic powers are a divine mandate to transform our ordinary consciousness and, therefore, our social, political, and spiritual realities.

Christy knew that if we students were allowed to study the great masters of literature, first through imitation, that our assimilation of their voices and forms

would inspire us to find our own unique style and point of view. Our immersion into literature was always first and foremost an artistic experience, not an analytical exercise. Who can forget Christy's voice as she read from Melville: wave upon wave of the rich, sonorous language pouring out to us as sea and whale and man were brought together in epic collusion? As we recited "Ode to a Grecian Urn," or "Ode to a Skylark," we students were transported to other realms through the sensual texture of Keats' and Shelley's poetry. We wrote Sapphic lyrics and spoke the chorus of Sophocles. The alliterative verses of *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* stirred in us the assertive vigor of the Anglo-Saxon tribes. As we recreated the subtle brush strokes of a haiku, the contemplative world of the Eastern ascetic was laid open before us. Truly, the archetypes and soul gestures that embodied each age were experienced in the deepest possible way through our active, artistic involvement with literary forms and genres.

To wonder, to imagine, to be inspired, to intuit, and to love our mother tongue—these are the capacities of the poet. Christy bade us all immerse ourselves in these activities with the utmost earnestness. In our struggles to put feeling into form, to convey a living thought through language that was artistically compelling, we were all of us "initiates" on our individual quest for truth and beauty. That Christy believed each student to be capable of such a mission was a gift of trust that invigorated and ennobled us.

Carol Ann Bärtges was a student of Christy Barnes at the New York City Rudolf Steiner School and is now a class teacher there.

Circus Waldissima

By Sieglinde and Don
Basmajian

The guard—who happens to be riding a unicycle—dribbles the basketball down the court. She passes to a forward who lays the ball up and in. The crowd cheers. Out of nowhere comes a player wearing a gold-colored shirt, and also on a unicycle, but one much taller than the others. The crowd laughs and cheers. This new player steals the ball and shoots at the losing team's basket to even the score. Then he disappears. Several faculty members dressed as cheerleaders leap out and lead a cheer using eurythmy gestures. This "unicycle basketball game" is part of the fun at *Circus Waldissima*.

Circus Waldissima is the annual circus at Summerfield Waldorf School in Santa Rosa, California. About 125 children from grades three through twelve take part in the circus, which is part of the school's May Fair. Last year almost five hundred people watched the performance. Performers, wearing

costumes and makeup, juggle balls, pins, torches, and other objects. They walk the tight-rope, walk on stilts, and balance on the rolling globe. They do clown routines and perform magic tricks, ride the unicycle, do gymnastic and acrobatic tricks, and perform stunts on the trapeze.



The inspiration for the circus came from Sieglinde Basmajian, who for some years was the eurythmy teacher at Summerfield. Sieglinde grew up in Germany and attended the Waldorf school in Freiburg. Her grandmother, who was a teacher both of religion and Bothmer gymnastics at the school, taught the children circus skills and

helped them put on an annual circus. Sieglinde had a vision of creating such a Waldorf circus at Summerfield. She and her husband, Don, who is a class teacher and a graduate of the Spatial Dynamics Course, and who came to share this vision, worked together to bring it to reality. The first Summerfield Waldorf School circus was held in 1991 with just a few children from a handful of classes participating. But the circus has captured the heart of the school. Under the name *Circus Waldissima* (with *Waldissima* pronounced in the German way—VAHL-DISS-EEMA), it has become an important part of the life of the school.

Why have a circus in a Waldorf school? There are a number of reasons besides the joy of movement and performance experienced by the children and the entertainment afforded parents, teachers, and friends. In fact, the circus arts nourish the healthy physical, soul, and spiritual development of the growing child.

Many teachers in Waldorf schools have found that movement is an important factor for the proper integration of the soul and spirit into the growing physical organism. Movement activities are necessary for the emergence later of thinking and intellectual skills. Certain kinds of movements are essential in the first seven years of life and

Sieglinde and Don

Basmajian encourage movement teachers to bring circus arts to their school. They are available for consultation and for answering questions. They can be reached through Summerfield Waldorf School. Tel.: (707) 575-7194 Fax: (707) 575-3217.

prepare the child for learning in the lower school and high school. Thus, games involving stamping, clapping, jumping, and skipping are an important part of life in the Waldorf kindergarten and especially in the first three grades. For this same reason also the young children learn how to knit, crochet, sew, draw abstract forms, and also practice eurythmy from kindergarten on.

After the first three years of school, movement begins to fade in most lessons.

Eurythmy of course continues through the twelve years of school and helps the child develop grace, poise, coordination, and a sense of the three-dimensionality of space. But the circus arts can also help the child, by developing coordination, flexibility, strength, presence of mind, and teamwork. They give children the experience of the simple joy of movement and of control of one's body and mind. These capacities once developed serve the children in other aspects of school life, such as their drama work together, and in competitive sports, which at Summerfield begin only after the sixth grade. Circus arts are an excellent complement and balance to competitive sports.

In a schoolwide circus program students of different classes and ages work together and help each other. This strengthens the social fabric of the school.

Circus activities are especially helpful for adolescents. When the child reaches puberty



and feels the heaviness of earth weighing down the physical body, acrobatics are a help. Teenagers often long to experience levity and will go to extreme lengths to do so. The circus performer has to use his or her inner strength and awareness to discover the balance between gravity and levity. The social dimension is positive and strong. There must be constant and clear communication among the performers—sometimes silent, sometimes verbal—close physical contact, and trust in the other as they prepare to do a dangerous stunt. Even when a pyramid collapses and everyone topples down upon each other, there is laughter and a sense of joy.

Especially for the student twelve years and older, juggling is a wonderful activity. There is constant movement of the hands as the juggler keeps the balls, bowling pins, or fire torches in the air. The juggler must be firmly rooted in his or her feet while finding an inner space of quiet and calm.

Also, Circus Waldissima brings the children of the school out into the community in a healthy and positive way. The circus troop has performed at a street market, a home for handicapped children, in Santa Rosa's annual Rose Parade—where it won a first-place trophy—and at other schools.

Circus arts are taught at Summerfield in the physical education classes, at an after-school Circus Club, at the Circus Waldissima Summer Camp. Recess is a favorite time for the children to practice and perfect skills introduced in class. So at recess most of the circus equipment is available, and the school grounds are full of active, engaged children improving their circus skills. The unicycles have been the craze for the past two years. There are often as many as twenty unicycles zooming on pathways and up and down ramps and stairways at recess (and before school). Pedestrians must be cautious

and alert. Everyone knows that unicyclists have the right-of-way!

Children are allowed to take circus equipment home during the weekends to practice. Thanks to the generosity of parents, the school now owns a number of unicycles, a trapeze, and various other equipment, as well as a supply of circus costumes. Costumes and makeup help children enter into their roles as performers and into the mood of the circus. They also help the shy children move out into the performing space and become more courageous and sure of themselves.

These circus activities before school, during recess, and even sometimes as part of the main lesson, have increased the simple joy on campus. A not uncommon sight is a child who after days of trying to find his balance on a unicycle suddenly succeeds and rides away from the spotter. Child, spotters, and observers near at hand smile in celebration. Further away, a parent who has for days been unobtrusively watching the child's progress also smiles. Surely, this is "The Greatest Show on Earth!" *

Letters

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Thom Schaefer, a Waldorf teacher and consultant in Colorado, while allowing that this mindset does exist, says that those who have this attitude are betraying the true spirit of Waldorf Education and of Steiner's teachings. For Steiner, open-mindedness and creativity are essential for the true Waldorf teacher, and he suggested meditation exercises to help develop these characteristics. Schaefer points out that the official policy of AWSNA is to reach out to like-minded educational movements, and that there is much research and development in the Waldorf community about various issues. He mentions too that Waldorf Education has been successful in a wide variety of cultural contexts. There are Waldorf schools in over eighty countries.

David Adams, a former Waldorf teacher and school administrator, points out that Steiner himself made clear that the Waldorf Education he was forming in Germany in the third decade of the century was appropriate to that time and place and that the education would have to change and develop with changing conditions. Steiner's intention was that the Waldorf movement never stop questioning and improving its practice. Adams adds that the movement is not fully realizing this ideal because "it is difficult to find individuals today who possess the pedagogical insight and breadth of learning to adapt the truths of child development to the educational practice and content [needed today]."

James Peterson, a Waldorf-inspired teacher working in the public schools of California, agrees that Waldorf teachers can

be exclusive and suggests that they look at other spiritually-inspired educational approaches such as that of Sri Aurobindo and of the Sufi teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan. Peterson also agrees with Miller's view that a warm, caring, and positive relationship between teacher and students is as important as the particular pedagogy employed.

On the issue of freedom in the classroom, several readers observed that the balance between authority and freedom changes during a child's Waldorf years. Patti Livingston, for many years faculty chair and teacher of handwork in The Rudolf Steiner School in New York City, said "What you find in a first-grade classroom is different from what you find in a fourth-grade classroom, which is again different from what you find in an eighth-grade classroom."

David Adams observes that while there is a general emphasis on authority in the elementary grades a good Waldorf teacher leaves room for "student initiative, expression, and exploration." There is more emphasis on student independence in the high school, where "students are definitely encouraged to question the teacher." This is because the central principle from which all the rest of Waldorf Education is derived is its very specific understanding of child development. While a certain type of authority may be appropriate and helpful at one age, it may be inappropriate at another.

Waldorf Education's view of child development is based on its understanding of the nature of the human being in general, including a detailed philosophy of human freedom. Adams attempts to summarize Steiner's view of true freedom as residing in our ability to

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Curative Education

By Karl Koenig, M.D.

Karl Koenig was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1902. He became a physician and was deeply interested in the care and treatment of physically and mentally handicapped persons. Koenig was also a student of the work of Rudolf Steiner. When the Nazis took over Austria, Koenig fled to Great Britain and founded in Scotland the first Camphill village. In this community, persons with disabilities and "normal" persons lived together, and Curative Education—an approach, initiated by Steiner, to the treatment of persons in need of special care—was applied and further developed. Since that time the Camphill movement has grown into an international movement with eighty-five communities in eighteen countries. Some of these villages care for adults, some for children. In the latter, principles of Waldorf Education are applied in the education of the children. Karl Koenig died in 1966. This piece written by him over thirty years ago is still a relevant and compelling expression of the essence of Curative Education and its significance for the development of humankind.

R.E.K.

Our society has begun to forget its innermost humanity. It has forgotten the heavenly order, become godless, and thus though it seeks a new ethics, this new ethics cannot be found. But such a society creates within itself a new task—to help those who are frail, who are handicapped, who have become timid, lame, and sickly; to help them in such a way that they can regain their humanity.

Is it not a great miracle that wants to reveal itself to us? Mankind develops the ability to destroy itself, yet creates for itself something new, which in the decaying part of its existence allows a germ to grow. Curative Education is like a seed germinating in a rotting fruit.

The true mission of Curative Education is not only in child psychiatry, not only in the pedagogical and psychological attempt to help children who have not developed according to normal patterns and adolescents who have not found their way in life. Curative work wants to become an all-embracing activity, so that the "threat to the person" that is apparent everywhere in our society can be confronted. The "curative attitude" must find expression in any and every kind of social work—in the soul care of troubled persons; in care for the aged; in the rehabilitation of those who are

mentally ill and of those who are physically handicapped; in the guidance of orphans and refugees, of suicide candidates, and of the despairing. It should also be applied in the work of international development agencies such as AID and the Peace Corps.

This is the only answer that we—as human beings wishing to preserve our humanity—can offer humanity dancing along the edge of an abyss. No philosophical congresses, international religious meetings, nor scientific monster conventions will alter anything with regard to this dance macabre. In such meetings, everybody only wants to hear himself and, according to the situation, must try to push himself into the limelight.

Only the meeting of individual human being with individual human being, the encounter of Ego or higher self with another Ego—two persons eye to eye, becoming aware of each other's individuality without inquiring into creed, world conception, or political affiliations—creates that Curative Education that counters, in a healing way, the threat to our innermost humanity.

Even this, however, can be effective only if a fundamental recognition occurs within our heart. This necessary insight is difficult to realize and more difficult to bring into practice.

For it concerns our perception and understanding of self and the expression of that perception and understanding in our work. I mean the following. We must learn to see that as curative educators, we are not only the guides, but simultaneously also the guided ones. We are teachers, but at the same moment we are also pupils. As long as the physician only judges the patient and does not see that he himself is a patient, the physician remains a person merely administering medicines and a quack.

How many psychologists and psychotherapists consider those whom they analyze to be grass rather than flowers and do not realize that they themselves, even if they have gone through an instructional analysis, are not flowers either, but also part of the grass?

Curative teachers and social workers often feel superior to the children and parents they work with. It is easy to play the strong person when meeting handicapped people, people who are in need of help, people who ask to be taken care of. The curative educational attitude comes about only when a new kind of humility begins to grow in the heart. This humility recognizes the brother in every being who bears a human countenance. It is a humility that is tender and undaunted. In the face of need, degradation, and suffering it brings to our eyes tears, tears that make our will to help strong, devoted, and ready for decision and action. That is what really matters. Such tears make me recognize immediately that I can help only if I am willing to see in my brother the helper and in myself the one who receives help. When I help

him, I am helped. When I lead him, he will guide me. When I feed him, I myself am given bread. Only then will we begin to experience the reality of which the Gospel speaks:

In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (Matthew 25:40).

Curative Education is a science, a science that is developing. As such, it belongs to the field of psychiatry and is part of pediatrics, neurology, and psychology. But it is also a practical art that is growing. As such, it is part of pedagogy and special education. Curative Education includes as part of itself physiotherapy, eurythmy, curative eurythmy, educational painting, drawing, making music, music therapy, and speech therapy. Also to it belong all the handicrafts—like weaving, pottery, woodwork, and so on, and any other kind of so-called occupational therapy.

In its widest aspects, however, Curative Education is not only science, not only practical art, but an attitude of the human being. As such, it can be given like a healing medicine to those who stand under the crushing threat to the human person. It is the destiny of every human being today to live with this threat. To counter it, to help and to receive help, is the purpose and value of Curative Education. ✱

Youth Conference

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within themselves an unassailable place of refuge and source of strength.

There will be discussions around basic questions such as: Who am I? Why am I here in this life? What am I here to do? What are society's problems and needs today? What is spirit?

Members of older generations who have been able to live with integrity in our society will also participate, as teachers, but also as examples of what is possible for a person who does not conform to society's expectations and dictates.

The conference is open to all persons (ages 18 through 35), regardless of origin or particular orientation, who are striving to find their path and goal in life.

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Financial support is needed to advertise the conference and to provide scholarship help for those who could not otherwise attend. Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to:

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Camphill Special School – Beaver Run

A Children's Village

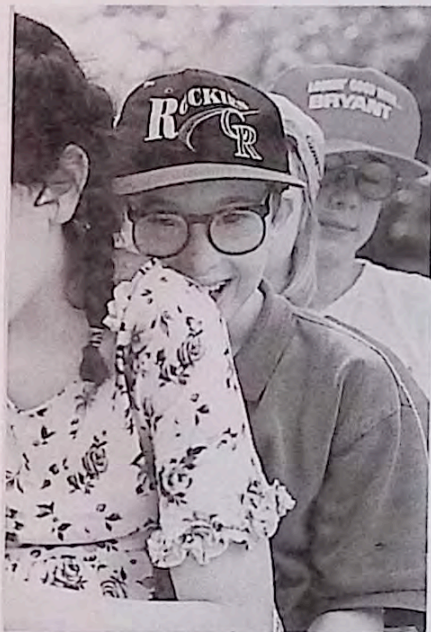
By Becky Rutherford

I am walking slowly and carefully because I am carrying a dishpan containing eight clay figurines of the prophet Muhammad, and they rattle with every step. My sixth graders have made them, and I am taking them to be fired. Before me is a view of rolling green hills and high blue sky. I can see that the little orchard is in full blossom and that the cherry trees are "hung with snow." I notice that some of the older children have brought the horses and Ringo the donkey down from the stable to the paddock closest to the schoolhouse. The silence of midday hangs in the spring sunshine. A quarter of an hour earlier the road was full of children and adults noisily on their way home for lunch. Now I am alone on the road. As I pass each house on the way down the hill, I can hear those inside singing a blessing before the meal. I will surely be late for lunch, but the moment is so lovely, I cannot help taking my time. There is something about life's rhythm in this place that holds time in a special way, as something precious, but abundant.

This is Camphill Special School – Beaver Run, located in rural Pennsylvania, about an hour's drive from Philadelphia. Founded in the 1960s, it is actually a village community and part of the international Camphill movement. It is the only Camphill village in North America that specifically serves children. About 150 people live here—including couples, families with children, unmarried persons, and about seventy children with disabilities. Community members live together in houses, each house having houseparents and about twelve residents in all.

In a Camphill village we practice Curative Education, an approach to working with handicapped persons that was begun by Rudolf Steiner. Steiner referred to persons with disabilities as "persons in need of special soul care." A primary principle of Curative Education is that each human being possesses a healthy, whole, and intact spirit that can be nurtured and educated, regardless of handicaps. The aim of our life together is—through living and working out of Anthroposophy—to develop the gifts that each person, regardless of abilities, can bring to the community.

We try to create an environment of beauty—in our school, houses, gardens, and grounds. This is important in a situation of healing. Also we try to perform every act and task with purposeful and deliberate care. And we nurture this awareness of beauty and this attitude of deliberate care in the children. For example, during the warm season students work daily in the flower



Children from Beaver Run.

Becky Rutherford is the seventh-grade teacher at Beaver Run. She has a B.F.A. in painting from Beaver College and an M.S. in art therapy from Hahnemann Medical College. Becky has completed

trainings in Curative Education and youth guidance. An art therapist with twenty years' experience in traditional special education, she went to Beaver Run nine years ago seeking and finding true humanity in education. She is the mother of Alice, a former Waldorf student, who is currently spreading her wings at the local public high school. Becky's hobbies are shape-note singing, cooking, and reading British novels. This year Becky will help her class present a Shakespeare play.

garden. Although the harvest is not great in volume, in this work a soul gesture is engendered that is readily observable in a person with a handicap—the soul gesture of caring. The unself-conscious and deliberate care with which a child with a disability plants a seed into the earth is healing—for the child, for the earth, indeed, for all of us.

Each weekday, after all have shared morning chores and have eaten breakfast, the children go to the school and the co-workers—the adults who live and work here—begin their activities as teachers in the school, as houseparents dealing with the myriad details of running a large household, as workers in the office, or as members of the land crew. But as the day unfolds, each person will change "hats" several times. Administrators will turn into dishwashers, schoolchildren into supper cooks, farmers into musicians, teachers into gardeners, housemothers into stablehands. Each realm of community life touches and colors the others.

The school program offers kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Each classroom presents its own picture. These might include children signing the morning verse as well as speaking it; a child walking backwards on a balance beam in time to a poem; children sitting enchanted while listening to the teacher's story of Hannibal crossing the Alps; or a child answering a question by pointing to pictures on a language board.

Teachers at Beaver Run endeavor to weave together the wisdom of the Waldorf curriculum with the techniques of Curative Education as indicated by Rudolf Steiner, while including aspects of traditional special education. Music, drama, painting, and sculpture are integrated into the curriculum and are part of every school day.

In our present society, intellectual ability is seen as the golden key to entitlement. Often, in

schools, "gifted" children are the ones who are taught with a creative, hands-on approach. "Average" learners must make do with worksheets, and if you are "special," then you had better just concentrate on learning your address.

At Beaver Run, we know that wisdom is not synonymous with intellect, that curiosity is not an ability. Through the use of the Waldorf curriculum, all students regardless of their cognitive abilities can grow in their soul life as well as in their academic skills.

Frequently, children in traditional self-contained special education classes are divided according to diagnosis. For example, all children with autism are schooled together, separated from the class of students with cerebral palsy. There is sometimes a broad age range within the group. At Beaver Run, because our school is based on the developmental insights of Waldorf Education, children, regardless of diagnosis, are grouped according to age. Thus at each age they receive a curriculum

that meets their current needs and helps them to evolve, to mature, and to be healed.

The age-appropriate Waldorf curriculum is important for all children, but it is particularly important for handicapped children. In traditional special education programs the mental age of the child often determines the curriculum to which he or she is exposed. Thus an adolescent with a three-year-old's mental level may be given activities for three-year-olds—practicing counting using little plastic teddy bears, for example. But soul age and mental age are not the same thing. And that adolescent may be inwardly longing for stories of revolution or for a risk-taking adventure. It is important that the needs of the child's changing inner life, regardless of cognitive ability, be met. The life of the soul must be nourished as well as the life of the intellect.



Photo credit: Eduardo Passado

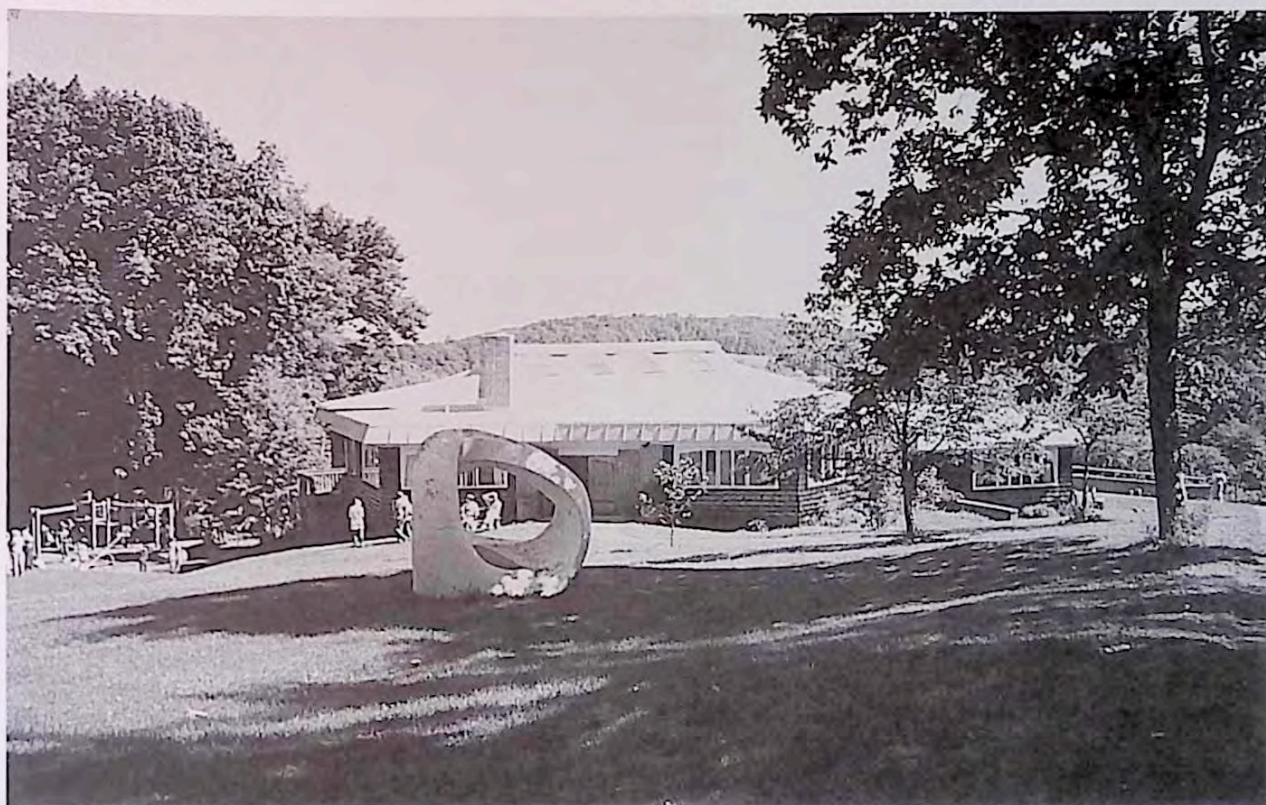
Grouping by age usually results in a very mixed constellation of personalities, and there is benefit in this. Just as in a classroom of typical children the different temperaments polish and smooth each other, in a classroom of special children different syndromes can interact in a positive way. A curative teacher may never coax speech from an autistic child. But a classmate with Down's syndrome may just manage to do so.

How to adapt the Waldorf curriculum is the challenge to all Waldorf teachers. What is the story this class needs to hear? How can I tell it so that it really will live in these children? These are the questions that all Waldorf teachers ask themselves, whether their class is made of typical learners or those in need of special care.

Often at Beaver Run, we search for and focus on the essence of a particular study block. Usually, the breadth of a subject cannot be embraced. But the central core of that subject can carry its truth. Perhaps not all the stories of the world explorers can be presented in the seventh grade. However, within a four-week period, the thoughtfully repeated images of the travels of Magellan can carry the same essence to the children—and eating stale bread and dried fish for snack can really bring the message home!

Main lesson books are carefully created day by day with much pride, even though in some cases, there is only a single word, traced and retraced, on each page. After recess, which follows main lesson, the students regroup according to cognitive ability. Small group and individual tutorials in academic areas take place at this time. The main lesson content provides a context for this instruction: what the teacher has written on the board may serve as the child's reader; a math drill may be based on calculating Caesar's taxes; a list of new words to be learned may include the names of the equipment used in that morning's physics experiment.

Traditional and anthroposophical therapies play a crucial role. Speech therapy, occupational physical therapies, as well as curative eurythmy, oil rubs, therapeutic baths, play therapy, music, therapeutic horseback riding, and painting therapy, all can contribute to a child's growth. Twice-yearly child conferences led by an anthroposophical physician allow all those involved in a child's life an opportunity to consult together and to discern the subtle needs of the child. The curriculum, therapies, home life, and cultural life of the community combine to create an environment in which each individual, handicapped or not, is recognized as a unique spiritual being with freedom, dignity, and a purpose in life.



A view of the grounds and the main schoolhouse at Beaver Run Special School.

Camphill Special School – Beaver Run is also home in North America to the International Seminar in Curative Education. This three-year training brings people from all over the world together in a unique program that combines a foundation in Anthroposophy and Curative Education with daily work with the children in the houses, in the school, and in the therapy sessions. Completion of the Seminar certifies the individual to work in a curative capacity in any Camphill community in the world, while also providing a basis for further study in special education, psychology, or therapies.

As a healthy intellectual and artistic life is vital to everyone, the Seminar is a positive presence in community life. Study groups, evening lectures, workshops, and opportunities for music and artistic activity nurture our inner lives. We grow as individuals and as persons able to make changes in our students' lives.

As I consider this description of Beaver Run, I have to smile, since it sounds as if our life here is all work and no play. We surely do play, and the timely celebration of the year's festivals brings joy and sometimes hilarity into life. Our festivals celebrate the seasons, the gifts of the earth, and the events of the religious year.

Michaelmas (September 29) brings an autumn feast, Halloween perhaps a gypsy campfire or a hayride. Saint Martin's (November 11) is a moonlit lantern walk when the woods are brightened by our singing. Advent is full of hushed preparation. On December 6, Saint Nicholas pays a solemn visit, and soon thereafter Santa Lucia brings us early morning cookies. Hanukkah parties shine the light brighter still, and everyone joins in performing the Shepherds Play just before vacation. We gather at Candlemas (February 2) to light "earth candles." (Earth candles are made by pouring the melted wax from Advent candles into shallow holes in the earth.) This is also Groundhog Day—surely the groundhog won't see his shadow this year! Mardi Gras gorgeously outdoes itself every year. Palm Sunday is a parade of Hosannas, and Easter morning brings Easter egg trees to the breakfast table. On Ascension Day (forty days after Easter) we may hike up a mountain for a huge picnic, and at Whitsun (ten days later) all our voices sound the many languages of our community. Saint John's Day (June 25) may find us lighting a bonfire to mark the coming of summer. And so the year

cycles, bringing an abundance of all things—work, study, friends, joys, sorrows, frustrations, and victories. . . . The beauty of the spring landscape is beguiling, and I stand daydreaming. Ringo heehaws me out of my reverie. I really will be late! When I arrive home I take my seat at the table and say—by way of apology—"Blessings on the meal." Everyone greets me. No one seems cross. No wonder. These people are part of my family. Besides, it is my turn to do the dishes today. ✱

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determine the motives for our own acts. This freedom is possible because the human being possesses an ego or essential spiritual individuality capable of self-objectification. The child does not yet fully possess this self-aware ego. The teacher must represent this unifying guiding self for the child, directing and teaching the child in a way that allows for the healthy development of his or her own self-motivated, freely acting ego. To treat the child as if he or she possessed an adult ego is to risk long-term injury, because the self has its own developmental pattern that needs to be respected.

Our thanks to Ron Miller and to our contributing readers.

R.E.K.

Book Review

Failure to Connect *How Computers Affect Our Children's Minds—For Better And Worse*

By Jane Healy

Simon & Schuster (New York), 1998
350 pp. \$25.00

Reviewed by Andrew Sullivan

In Dr. Jane M. Healy's new book, *Failure to Connect*, she points out that no evidence exists that there is a critical period for learning to use a computer. A person can master the computer at any time in life, and many have done so in midlife and later. If computer time subtracts from the time children spend socializing, playing, imagining, and learning to focus the mind internally, the lost ground may be hard or impossible to regain (134).

Why then is the prevailing opinion in American society that the earlier children master computers the more likely they are to succeed? Healy addresses this question, among many others, in her meticulously researched study of computers in education. Her focus is broad, and she draws on diverse expert opinions, a multitude of case studies, and the latest in brain research. Though she suspects that the latest computers are more than merely tools, she considers it not only misguided but dangerous to expect them to be beneficial to children without the guidance of a quality teacher.

Children younger than seven, in Healy's estimation, learn better in a real, non-virtual environment. It is only after age seven that children begin to think abstractly enough to benefit from certain well-planned and well-supervised computer activities. However, from the evidence Healy compiles in her book, it seems ill-advised to introduce computers before children have gained the reasoning abilities and perspective that come with puberty. Nowhere in her book is there compelling evidence that computers improve education.

Yet the problem in most cases, according to Healy, is not with the computers, but with educators, who don't know how properly, in an age-appropriate manner, to incorporate mandated

technology into their classrooms. In America's schools, children spend far too much time using "edutainment" software and tedious drill and practice programs, all of it scientifically untested.

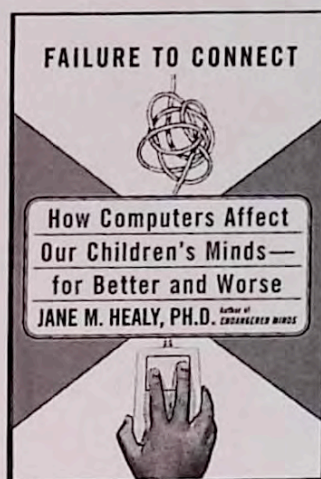
Healy urges that leaders in education and technology begin to think more critically about the effects of computers on the young. As physical, emotional, and mental problems increase among children, one would hope that the debate surrounding computers in schools would be "less polarized and non-productive" (292). Healy adds:

Ironically, this simplistic dialogue is symptomatic of electronic-visual culture, as emotional sound bites and instant opinion drown out the nuanced argument of intelligent discourse (292).

Much of this discussion centers around what we consider to be the purpose of education. Healy hopes its purpose is "not to make kids

economically valuable, but rather to enable them to develop intellectual and personal worth as well as practical skills" (106). Creativity is another important goal for education in Healy's mind. This capacity, which is so dependent on the imagination, the mind's free picture-forming ability, is "notably lacking in the computer mentality" (90). Indeed, Healy relates that in some cases of excessive computer use among children, pediatric neurologists have noticed even autistic-like behavior in their patients.

Though much of Healy's research reveals an educational system in disarray, she maintains a positive and objective perspective throughout. Her book is full of practical advice drawing on her years of child development research. She is more than clear in insisting that a healthy relationship between a child and an adult is the foundation of all good education. While much of Healy's perspective is brain-bound and intellectually based, she realizes that one of the gravest errors committed in the name of "progress" is to expand young people's heads at the expense of their hearts. We tend to forget that the digital intellect is a mentally impoverished companion for human dreams, emotions, and imagination (318). *



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