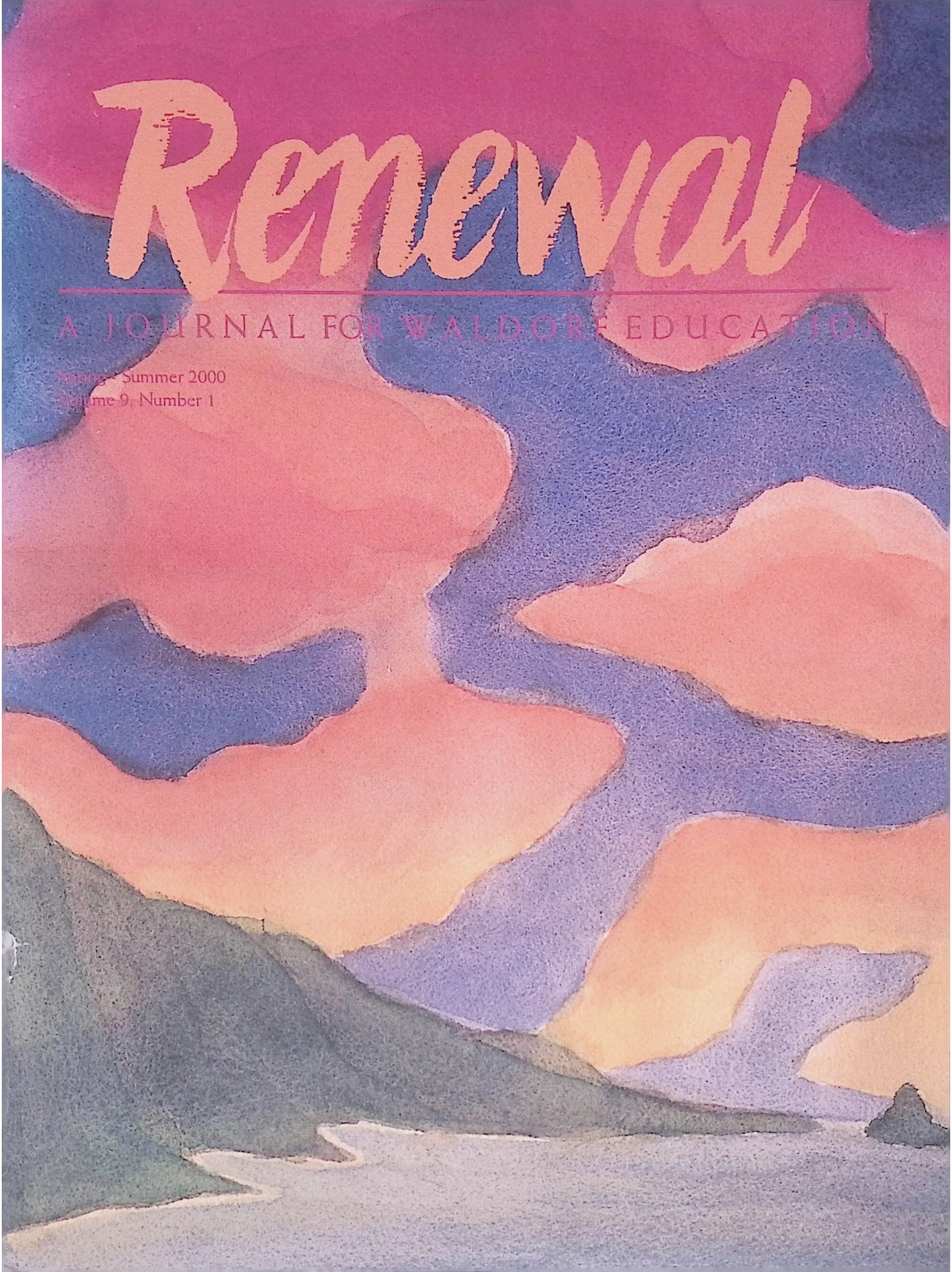
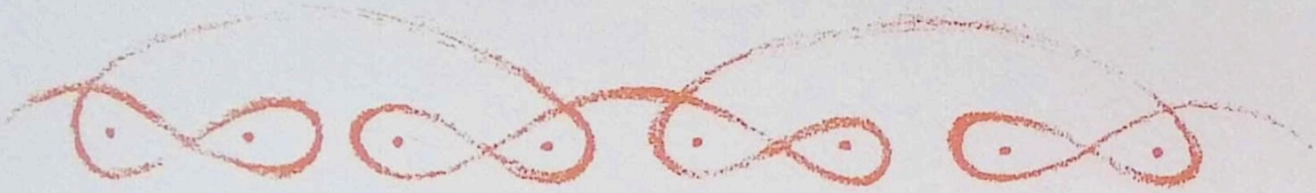
Renewal

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

Summer 2000
Volume 9, Number 1





The capacities by which we gain insights into higher worlds lie dormant within each of us. Mystics, gnostics, and theosophists have always spoken of a world of soul and spirit that is as real to them as the world we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands. Listening to them, we can say to ourselves at every moment: "I know that I, too, can experience what they talk about, if only I unfold certain forces within me today that lie dormant there." All we need to know is how to begin to develop these faculties for ourselves.

Only those who have already developed such powers for themselves can help us to do this. From the beginning of the human race a form of schooling has always existed in which persons possessing higher faculties guide those who seek to develop these faculties for themselves. Such schooling is called esoteric or mystery schooling and the instruction one receives there is called esoteric or occult teaching. . . .

. . . In actuality esoteric or inner knowledge is no different from other kinds of human knowledge and ability. It is a mystery for the average person only to the extent that writing is a mystery for those who have not yet learned to write. Just as, given the right teaching methods, anyone can learn to write, so too anyone can become a student of esoteric knowledge and, yes, even a teacher of it, if he or she follows the appropriate path. Ordinary knowledge and ability differ from esoteric knowledge in one respect only. A person may not have the possibility of learning to write because of the cultural conditions or poverty he or she is born into, but no one who seeks sincerely will find any barriers to achieving knowledge and abilities in the higher worlds.

—Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925)

From *How to Know Higher Worlds: A Modern Path of Initiation* by Rudolf Steiner, translated by Christopher Bamford (Hudson N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1994), 13-15.

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Editor's Column

By Ronald E. Koetzsch



A common malady among Waldorf parents is "Waldorf Offspring Envy Syndrome" or "WOES"!

In a word, WOES involves being jealous—in a loving way, of course—of the education one's child is receiving. She (the child) learns to knit and sew, to sing, play a musical instrument, model clay, paint, draw, move with grace (in eurythmy), bind books, act in and put on dramatic productions, even do blacksmithing, and so on. Also, she is exposed to the whole history of humankind, the vast, colorful panorama of world events, literature, art, science, and religion. She (the child) is acquiring what in the not distant past were considered the indispensable basic skills, capacities, and knowledge of a cultured human being.

Meanwhile, he (the parent), however well educated in mainstream terms, has to live with large gaps in his practical, artistic, and academic education. He may be musically illiterate, be unable to sew on a button, be unsure what the Middle Ages were in the middle of, and has not a clue who Paracelsus and Parzifal were. The parent regrets these gaps in his own schooling and secretly wishes there were a Waldorf school for adults, preferably one with no tuition and no fund-raising fairs.

Two cultural myths exacerbate WOES. One is that education is for the young, something that occurs between the ages of seven and roughly twenty-one. Then one graduates and concentrates on establishing a career, raising a family, going to the mall, watching Oprah Winfrey, and so on. The other myth is that learning gets more difficult as you get older and in some areas becomes almost impossible, because, as we learned in physiology, our brain is busy dying—losing brain cells—from the moment we take our first breath.

Both ideas are humbug. Education, in the sense of bringing out what is dormant within the human being, is the business of our whole life. The conscious, even formal, acquisition and development of the abilities and capacities that make us human is a lifelong (and longer) process. And an adult is capable of learning virtually anything a child can learn. In some areas, this learning may be slower, in others quicker, but there is no inherent physiological impediment to it. Researchers at Princeton last year concluded on the basis of primate research that adults produce new brain cells every day, and these are retained and used or destroyed according to whether or not we are engaged in learning activity. In other words, we lose our ability to learn, because we are not learning.

The remedy for WOES is simple. The adult can begin in even a modest way to fill in those lacunae that she feels most acutely. She may learn a craft, take up a musical instrument, join a chorus, take a course in a subject she avoided in college. The resources and opportunities are there: community colleges, adult education centers, craft and art schools, community drama and singing groups, YMCAs, and so on. Many Waldorf schools offer classes and workshops for adults.

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News From AWSNA

By David Alsop, Chairman



Two years ago the AWSNA leadership sat down with Dr. Charles O'Malley, former director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Private Education, to talk about the accreditation of Waldorf schools. Dr. O'Malley, serving as the executive director of the National Council for Private School Accreditation, defined accreditation as "the voluntary peer recognition process that documents that you are doing what you say you are doing." Feeling that this process is an appropriate one for the Waldorf community, and bearing in mind that our focus is always the developing and nurturing of excellence rather than certification, we began to develop an accreditation program for Waldorf schools.

The process involves a self-study by the candidate school, focusing on a number of areas: purpose; goals and philosophy; educational program; activities and student services; governance; administration; finance and law; personnel; and community of the school. General shared principles have been developed by AWSNA in conjunction with the member schools for each of these areas, and the self-study is required to describe the activity of the candidate school with respect to these shared principles. These principles have been developed to focus on the elements that should be common to all Waldorf schools. To be reviewed periodically, the principles describe the kind of school that AWSNA believes it can serve and that, in turn, can benefit from the AWSNA network and services. Accreditation by the association is assurance to the public that these shared principles have been met and that the school's success in meeting these shared principles is periodically reviewed.

Upon completion and submission of the self-study, a visiting team of peers is formed. That team visits the school and verifies that the self-study is an accurate portrayal of the school. Their task is then to make commendations that acknowledge what is existing in the school and recommendations that suggest possible avenues for development and continued improvement. Their final report is submitted to the Accreditation Review Committee for determination of the school's accreditation status.

Over the years, many Waldorf schools have been accredited by regional accrediting bodies, and in the future many will continue to seek such accreditation. To date, two schools, the Toronto Waldorf School and the Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor, have completed the AWSNA accreditation process. As of this writing, nine more schools are beginning our process, most of them seeking dual accreditation from AWSNA and from a regional accrediting body. AWSNA itself is entering the process of becoming accredited as an accrediting body, by the above mentioned National Council for Private School Accreditation.

The commitment to self-reflection, verification, and collaboration within the Waldorf schools and within the Waldorf movement is powerful evidence of the pursuit of excellence.

PORTRAIT:
Ruth Pusch—1907–1999
In Memoriam

By Ronald E. Koetzsch



Ruth Barnett Pusch, eurythmist, Waldorf teacher, editor, writer, and translator, was born in upstate New York on March 4, 1907. She learned about Anthroposophy as a young woman from her older sister, Gladys Barnett Hahn. Gladys later was instrumental in bringing the Camphill Village movement, the anthroposophical approach to care of the handicapped, to this continent.

In the late 1920s Ruth went to Stuttgart and was one of the first Americans to study eurythmy and to be involved in eurythmy performance and teaching. In Dornach, Switzerland, she met and married Hans Pusch, an actor and speech artist, and a student of Marie Steiner. Later in the United States, Ruth and Hans translated and edited the four mystery dramas written by Rudolf Steiner and were involved in the first productions of these works in this country. They also translated *The Calendar of the Soul*, Steiner's meditative verses on the course of the year.

Ruth taught eurythmy, kindergarten, high school English, and drama in various Waldorf schools, notably at the Rudolf Steiner School of New York. In 1959 she took the editorship of *Education as an Art*, a journal published by the New York school and the first periodical about Waldorf Education in the United States. Ruth held that post until 1979, and later compiled an anthology of articles that had appeared originally in that periodical. This immensely valuable work, published by Mercury Press in 1993, is in two volumes: *Waldorf Schools—Kindergarten and Early Grades* (Vol. I) and *Waldorf Schools—Upper Grades and High School* (Vol.II).

Ruth was a person of strong will (as one eulogist remarked, she was born on "March Forth"); a gently ironic sense of humor; and a lively interest in the events and culture of the times. She was, for example, an early supporter of the environmental movement and a formidable recycler.

Since *Education as an Art* was, in effect, the root from which *Renewal* sprang, Ruth took a motherly interest in this journal over the past nine years. Late last summer I received a letter from her, written in a clear and strong hand:

Dear Ronald Koetzsch,

I haven't bothered you for a long time now, have I?!—so forgive me for sending you this horribly typed article (I'm too old for a laptop) for your consideration. You'll see that I've been concerned with the children's part of the library here at the Fellowship Retirement Community. The poems at the end are in sympathy for my fellow eurythmists who search passionately for material. . . . I have been steadily admiring your course in Renewal *and wish you further good fortune in your article writers and contributors. You probably murmur every day (as I used to), "Blessings on busy Waldorf teachers."*

It is remarkable how even a short note can reveal the soul of a human being. Out of these few lines shine humor, humility, enthusiasm, youthfulness of spirit, joy in life, and a deep sense of gratitude. The image of Ruth, at age 92, pouring over books for children with the intent of writing an article helpful to parents and teachers, is poignant and powerful witness that the concept of "old age" is illusory.

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Let the Children Play

By Thomas Poplawski

"All they do in Waldorf kindergartens is play. The children don't learn anything."

This common if uninformed view of Waldorf kindergartens points to an important characteristic of Waldorf early childhood education: the emphasis on play. While most educational approaches today emphasize so-called "skill development" and "school readiness" in the early years, Waldorf Education considers free, imaginative play as the most important activity of the young child. Behind this is a particular view of the nature and needs of the young child, a view that is steadily gaining support from psychologists and researchers.



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Free play is play in which the child—alone or with other children—using objects in her immediate environment creates imaginary scenes and acts out imaginary scenarios. For example, a line of kindergarten chairs may become a bus on which the children are going for a trip to the country, or a brick may become a bulldozer that is used to create a row of "houses" in a sandbox. Free play is play without prefabricated toys and without adult coaxing or direction.

For some time, psychologists and child educators have understood that through play, the toddler learns a broad range of cognitive, social, physical, and linguistic skills. This learning through play continues for three- to seven-year-olds. But in our culture, the time for free play is being steadily reduced by children's increasingly busy days. It is more and more common that a child is relentlessly scheduled—from preschool to child care to gymnastics or ballet to Suzuki violin classes (to name but a few of the currently popular options for preschoolers). And what free time there is tends to be occupied by television, computer games, videos, and recorded music. According to a study from the University of Michigan, since 1981 the portion of their time that children spend in free play has decreased from 40 to less than 25 percent.

In school and even at home, there has been the unending effort made to give the child every possible advantage by pushing early academic learning and the early development of specific skills. This is in spite of the fact that educational research has found no evidence that such early "enrichment" programming provides any long-term advantage for most children. Only deprived or disabled children, such as those served



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A Waldorf kindergarten class playing a floor circle game.

in the Head Start programs, clearly benefit from such help.

It is interesting that Maria Montessori (1870–1952), founder of the Montessori educational movement, began her work in Italy with just these two groups, first with mentally retarded children, and then with children from the slums of Rome. She found children in these two groups understimulated by their environments and living too much in the realm of fantasy. In her desire to teach these children to "live on the earth" she developed a specific skills-based approach. This features a carefully prepared learning environment in which children play with or manipulate selected educational props such as alphabet boards and strings of counting beads. Montessori's distrust of free play was carried over into the educational method that she recommended for normal children. This bias against free play has continued to this day in one segment of the Montessori movement. In classrooms of schools belonging to American Montessori Internationale one finds no toys and little provision for creative play. In schools belonging to the rival American Montessori Society, however, a break from the founder's direction has been made in this regard, and free play is seen as necessary for the children.

A recent *Psychology Today* article blames the Puritans' view that childhood should be short and should be dedicated to getting children to work as early as possible as one source of the prejudice against free play. The article also cites Freud's condemnation of play as an unacceptable activity in a world that should be dedicated to either work or love.

In recent decades, however, researchers have been looking carefully at the role of imaginative play in the preschool years. They are finding more and more evidence to support Rudolf Steiner's insight that play is indeed the most appropriate tool for preschool learning.

What Play Teaches the Child

A pair of psychologists, Jerome and Dorothy Singer, have been studying fantasy play for over twenty years. In addition to carrying out their own research, they reviewed the entire literature on play and concluded that the capacity for imaginative play is directly related to verbal fluency, creative or divergent thinking, and the ability to think in general. Another researcher at Case Western Reserve University, Sandra Russ, found still other beneficial aspects to play. She observed that through play the child is able to

take his passive experiences and work them over and over until they can be assimilated or digested. This is a function of play that is utilized by the child psychotherapist in play therapy or the Jungian sand tray work, in which the child is helped to process traumatic experiences through play. Russ concluded, however, that imaginative play is the tool that every child uses to learn to cope with stress in life. Thus to interfere with the child's learning how to play in a healthy manner imperils the later development of emotional regulation and of coping skills.

Waldorf preschool teacher, Elizabeth Moreland of the Hartsbrook School in Massachusetts, speaking out of her experience, echoes some of the findings of these experts. She explains that the ability to play wholeheartedly and with undivided attention is in itself a skill and that a child who develops it will, in later life, have the ability to mentally focus and concentrate deeply. Free play also helps develop the imagination and the will, because in such play the child develops vivid pictorial images and then brings these pictures into the world through activity. The content of play comes from the child's environment and the gestures, physical activity, and work of the adults and older children the young child observes. What the child experiences and sees she then incorporates into her play. The child also attempts in play to imitate the feelings that she senses in the joy, anger, and other emotional expressions of parents and other adults. This is an important first step toward understanding and managing emotional life. Thus, it is important that the child have sufficient time, place, and safety to create a space for play in her life.

The Child Who Could Not Play

Because free play is so crucial to the healthy development of the child, it is disturbing how this archetypal aspect of childhood is being disrupted and neglected. Overscheduling of children and the attendant driving to and fro have deprived children of the time to play. There are, however, other pressures as well.

The Waldorf preschool teacher tends to become rather a connoisseur of children's play. The teacher is able to evaluate the general well-being of a child new to the class through observing his ability to play independently. Over the years, teachers have noted an increase in the number of children who have difficulty playing on their own for any amount of time. In some instances, teachers have even encountered four- and five-year-olds who cannot play on their own. Imagine that, a child who cannot play!

The findings of physician Stuart Brown are especially sobering in this regard. Brown was asked to investigate the background of a young man who some years ago shot and killed nineteen people from a tower at the University of Texas in Austin. He found that the man had a history of not playing in his childhood and adolescence. When Brown went on to examine the lives of other killers, he found a similar deprivation in their early years. On the other hand, when he made a study of individuals who had been



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Riding the rocking horse is a favorite pastime in this kindergarten.

awarded the famous MacArthur Foundation "genius" awards, Brown found almost without exception a rich background of play from childhood to adulthood. He went on to help found The Institute for Play in Carmel, California, because of his conviction that play is essential for the development of healthy individuals.



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In imaginative play a wheelbarrow easily becomes a chariot

Identifying Hindrances to Play

The Waldorf teacher works therapeutically to support, encourage, and protect the delicate unfolding of play in young children so that the many developmental skills arising from play and playfulness become available to them. The teachers also work with the parents to help them to understand those influences that interfere with play. The main culprits include:

1. Electronic media.

These prevent young children from developing their capacity to create their own inner pictures. Instead they fill the child with artificial, and not infrequently, warped images of fantasy. The child's later creativity depends on the early development of her own imaginative ability. In one study, children's play with "superhero" videos was observed and seen to be much less original and to be almost exclusively concerned with violence. Also, electronic images—so different from what the child sees and experiences in her immediate, concrete environment—are difficult for the child to assimilate and work into her understanding of everyday life. Obviously, commercial television, video games, and movies are particularly harmful in this regard, but preschool computer training and educational television also prevent children from developing their full mental and soul capacities. Fortunately, often just removing electronic media from a child's life is sufficient to restore healthy play.



Electronic toys are also problematic for the young child. They too can overwhelm. Also, because they are quite fixed rather than open-ended, they limit the child's use of his imagination. In this respect, simple toys and even the common objects in the environment are preferable. For the child at play, a stick can become almost anything, a prop in myriad scenarios, but an electronic robot is always just an electronic robot.

2. The adultification of the child.

This is especially likely to occur in one-child families in which the parents are college educated. A child is by nature nonlogical and feeling-

oriented, and in a household with a dominant intellectual ethos, the child's need simply to be a child may not be met. When there are several children in a family, the parents are more likely to surrender the adult orientation in the home and to try to enter the very different consciousness of the children and to meet their real needs. This of course is not always the case.

In an adult-oriented environment the child is treated as another adult. She is asked many questions, particularly about what she wants. This gives the child too much responsibility too early for making decisions, decisions for which she lacks the reason or moral sense to make. Also the small child, in fact a dreamy little being, is given too many intellectual or scientific explanations about how things work. This burdens the child with many facts and concepts that are not part of her world and which she cannot digest. For example, it is much more appropriate to explain the phases of the moon to a small child by a fairy tale depicting the swallowing of the moon by a great whale than to give a scientific explanation of how it "really" occurs. The fairy tale enlivens and encourages the picture-making facility. (See psychologist David Elkind's book *The Hurried Child* for discussion of other aspects of the issue of adultification.)

3. Emotional trauma.

In some traditional cultures, the custom was that parents not fight in front of the children. The wisdom in this lay in the fact that a child needs to feel safe and be able to relax in order to play in a healthy way. In an environment that is charged with negative energy children are overwhelmed. Some will mimic the shouting and fighting, while others (the more sensitive) will withdraw and become passive. In both cases the ability for healthy imaginative play diminishes and may even disappear.

More extreme situations such as parental divorce and childhood abuse also can radically interfere with the ability to play. In some cases, a child seems to play, but in fact he just repeats the same scenarios over and over, and the play never evolves or metamorphoses in the way healthy play should. Sometimes these stresses on children cannot be avoided, but the strains that are imposed on a child should be recognized for what they are.

Imaginative play is the most important thing that a preschool child can do to develop the tools she needs for later life. Our modern lifestyle, hostage to the speed of the machines and technology that support it, seems inadvertently to be endangering many of the rhythms and traditions that make for a healthy childhood. We can hope that the Waldorf approach and the growing interest that it seems to be generating outside its immediate circles may help restore the realization that sometimes the simple things work best. The experience in our schools as well as an increasing body of research seem to indicate that a simple thing like children's play may be difficult to improve upon. ❊

***Thomas Poplawski**, a regular and popular contributor to* Renewal, *is a psychotherapist and trained eurythmist who lives and works in western Massachusetts. His wife, Valerie, also a eurythmist, teaches at the Hartsbrook School in Hadley, Massachusetts. Thomas and Valerie have two young sons.*



On an adventure, all dressed up.

The Importance of Handwork in the Waldorf School

By Patricia Livingston

Handwork is an important element in Waldorf Education, being understood as critical to the intellectual, emotional, and volitional development of the child. In the first grade the children learn knitting, and in the course of their schooling will learn to crochet, to sew by hand, knit with five needles, to cross-stitch, do wood carving, and to make clothing using a sewing machine. The following article is an excerpt from a newly published book called Will-Developed Intelligence: Handwork and Practical Arts in the Waldorf School *by David Mitchell and Patricia Livingston. While addressed to and written primarily for teachers, the piece will be of interest to anyone concerned about education and the development of the child.* Will-Developed Intelligence *is published by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, is 210 pages long and costs $22.00, plus $4.50 shipping. It can be ordered from AWSNA at (916) 961-0927 or via the online bookstore at www.awsna.org.*

R.E.K.

The hands are a unique and beautiful part of the human being, and they bring us important, far-reaching experiences. Therefore as teachers we must try to help the children become aware of their hands and of the great gifts they bestow on themselves and on others. Their hands need to become skillful, sensitive, and strong so that they can accomplish many wonderful deeds. Blind people get to know the world through their hands, but most people are unaware of the knowledge that can be gained when the hands are used in useful and sensitive ways. Think of art and music! Think of what physical work and daily tasks teach us. Think of a handshake and what it tells us about another person.

Handwork and crafts should be imaginatively and artistically taught, so that the children are encouraged to make original designs that are colorful and creative in form. The children should learn new ways to use color and to make designs that indicate the practical use of the project. Rudolf Steiner gave several indications of how this can be done. The painting and form drawing the children do in all their lessons are extremely important. Working with color and experiencing how colors flow into one another in painting affects everything the children do in and beyond handwork lessons, and fosters artistic, imaginative growth in their thinking as well.

We want the children to make things they love and enjoy and to work skillfully, always increasing their artistry. Handwork should be relaxing and fun, and at the same time productive, involving strong will activity. Nothing happens if you don't use your hands and get to work!



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Handwork projects created by Waldorf students in the elementary grades.

Working to transform the materials of the earth fosters inner growth and a sense of well-being in the children. These lessons support and complement other subjects in the school, helping to bring balance and wholeness to the education.

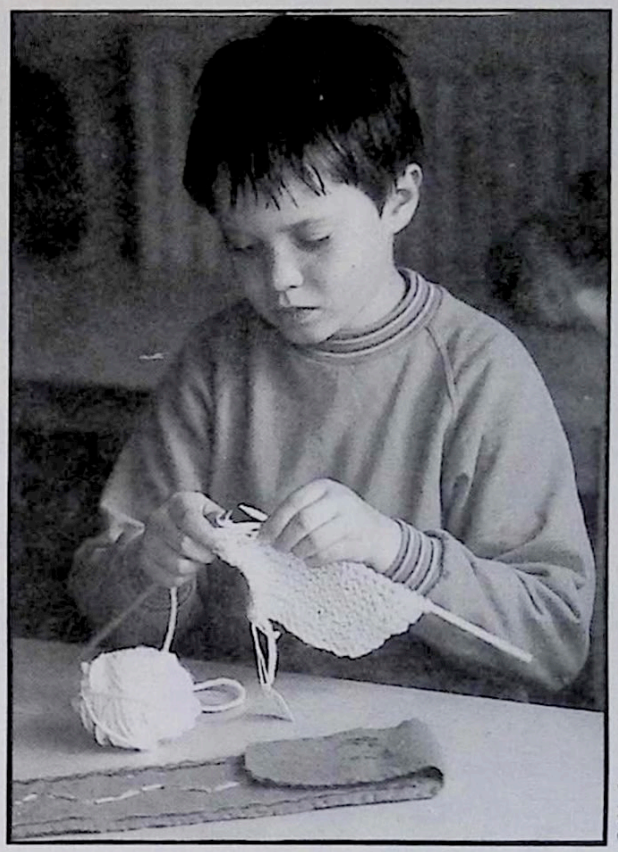
In the mature artist, handwork and crafts become a balanced activity of thinking, feeling, and willing. The will is the part of us that is most asleep. Handwork can gently wake up and educate the will starting at an early age. Why is this so important?

The will is ultimately connected to the thinking. It is really the task of every Waldorf teacher to help the children become clear, imaginative thinkers, human beings who can go into any profession or any area of work with new, creative ideas—ideas that will be urgently needed as we meet the twenty-first century. The whole Waldorf curriculum guides the children in this direction, beginning in the kindergarten where the creative play of the young child stimulates the inner forces that later become active in the creative thinking of the adult.

Through beauty, color, and form, handwork and crafts help to lead the children from play to imaginative thinking as adults, forming a kind of bridge between the two. The hands play an important part in this awakening. The activity of the fingers stirs the senses that connect the child to the world, and his whole life of thought begins to move.

Handwork and crafts have been taught in all the grades since the founding of the first Waldorf school. Rudolf Steiner wanted the boys and girls to work together in these classes. In this he was way ahead of his time. It was unheard of to have boys doing handwork in 1919. Rudolf Steiner insisted on this radical innovation because, he said, handwork and crafts lead to the enhancement of judgment. Judgment comes out of the imaginative forces, working through the heart. It is not the head alone but the whole human being that forms a judgment. Many of the senses are used in handwork—sight, touch, movement, balance, and so on. The senses take in different impressions of the world and join them together to form a judgment. Our hands bring us into a deeper, closer relationship to the world and, therefore, to a greater understanding of humanity.

Much of handwork has to do with waking up, seeing things, and noticing details. Recent



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Learning to knit takes concentration and patience.

brain research has found that using the hands opens up neurological pathways that would otherwise atrophy. In other words, the interrelationship of the hand and eye working together allow more neurological pathways to function. So one could say that handwork with young children is a training ground for thinking, and the more one includes beauty and feeling, the more creative will the thinking become.

Many things are happening simultaneously in the handwork classes. First, of course, one wants the children to learn practical skills, to learn how to use the tools, to respect and care for the tools and other materials involved. Also, one wants the children to form ideas about what they wish to make, to create their own designs, and then actually carry out a project that results in a beautiful, well-made piece of work. It is a most satisfying experience to make something and see the practical results. This is true confidence building. Therefore, we must see to it that all the projects the children make are things they can learn to do by themselves, that there are no hidden steps done by the teacher, and that the work is finished on time.

Some children need more help and encouragement than others in order to achieve such goals, but the wise teacher will know how to guide them without destroying their confidence and sense of achievement. Confidence in one subject is carried over into another. Activating the will strengthens ability in all subjects.

There are immense therapeutic possibilities in handwork teaching. Waldorf teachers must study and strive to understand Rudolf Steiner's view of the developing child—an ongoing work for all of us. The teacher must learn to work in a way that is appropriate for each age group, must study the different types of children (small- and large-headed, and so on), and understand and work with the different temperaments. We must know the children so well that we begin to see exactly what each child needs. How much help will move someone forward? Who needs to slow down and perhaps redo work that is poorly and thoughtlessly done? How do you handle a melancholic perfectionist? With the older children it is important that they begin to develop some self-awareness about the way they work.

Resourcefulness is developed as the children see how much they can achieve with a few simple materials. Many simple tasks are no longer experienced in the home. Children today often have no idea how to sew on a button. When a young child learns the "magic trick" of putting a cord in a drawstring bag, he is thrilled. He then becomes more interested and resourceful in solving other problems.

The gifts of nature fill our handwork lessons and create an opportunity to involve the children in the world of ecology and social interaction. The children experience wool, cotton, and many other fibers through using these materials. They learn of the sources of these materials, about the natural dyes used to color them, and how human beings have contributed to their development and to their use. Respect and reverence are fostered for all we receive and for how humankind and nature work together. We should use only natural fibers in our classes, if possible. Touching silk or wool is an experience very different from that of handling synthetic materials. Our Waldorf kindergarten children know that well!

In a first grade, as the children use their beautiful wool, one can talk about the sheep. Near the Rudolf Steiner School in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, there is a sheep farm. Many children pass the farm daily and watch the sheep gradually grow heavy with wool. Then suddenly one day they see the sheep shorn—a rather shocking experience, but an opportunity to discuss how generously the sheep give their wool for our scarves, and also to talk about the craftsmen who spin it into yarn for us. First-grade children know from the fairy tales how "magical" spinning is and still retain a feeling of wonder about spinning straw into gold. One can also speak about the trees from which our wooden needles are made. The children learn to value and not waste



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Doing handwork with a friend is fun. Here two students compare their progress.



On a sunny day, students in this Waldorf high school weaving class work outside on inkle looms to make woven belts.

these gifts. Conversations such as these continue into the upper grades, changing according to the age of the children, the crafts they are learning, and the materials they are using. At the appropriate time modern technology will also be discussed.

All this helps the children make a real connection to their surroundings, closing a gap created by a modern world in which everything appears out of stores in a somewhat abstract way, made out of unimaginable materials which seem worthless and easily disposable. The children see so much waste! Through the handwork classes they gain a realistic knowledge of and reverence for the world of nature, and become aware of the ecological problems that arise in our modern world. We need to encourage new perspectives and foster a real social consciousness. ❋

Patricia Livingston *was born in Manhattan and attended the Rudolf Steiner School of New York (the first Waldorf school in North America) for her first five years of schooling. Later, after having trained as a singer and then having married and had children, she returned to the school as a handwork teacher and was privileged to have Arvia Ege, noted artist and teacher of handwork, as her mentor. Patricia was with the New York school for twenty-seven years, serving a term as chairperson of the faculty and taking a special interest in teacher training and in working with parents. In 1984 Patricia left the school and Manhattan and moved to Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Since then she has been active throughout North America advising established schools, training teachers, and helping young schools in their developmental stages. She is a member of the Pedagogical Section Council of North America, which she chaired ten years. She has served on the editorial advisory board of* Renewal *since the magazine was founded nine years ago.*

Face-to-Face:

Creating a Healthy Community in the Classroom and in the School

By Vivian Jones-Schmidt

In today's consumer society, we have each become an object, "a playing piece," which someone wants to turn into "a paying piece." Thus each of us receives, perhaps daily, solicitations by mail and phone that are based only on our zip code, street address, date of birth, or our latest purchase from the neighborhood superstore.

So every morning I observe a custom that is virtually universal in Waldorf schools. As my students line up outside the classroom, I shake the hand of each child and greet each one by name. This is a sacred moment in the day for me, for in this simple act we recognize each other and commit ourselves to work together for yet one more day to create a community. It is a conscious act, on my part, in the struggle against the forces that objectify us, render us anonymous, and threaten to devour us as individuals.

When concerns are brought anonymously, without a human face behind them, the humanity of the person receiving the complaint is denied.

Part of my preparation for teaching is to ask myself the question: "What can I do to help each child to develop and maintain a sense of identity and to become a truly independent adult?" The academic curriculum of the Waldorf school is designed to support this goal. So is the curriculum that underlies the academic: the social curriculum that, for Rudolf Steiner, was the inspiration of this new approach to education. I have Steiner's lectures as well as years of work by wise teachers to help me find my way as I work with the pedagogy. The guidelines that I can follow as I try to develop my class as a living social entity are much less clear.

Here I have of necessity become a student of life, observing, researching, asking others what has worked for them. Just as importantly, I ask what has not worked, and then I try to figure out the reasons why it has not worked. In this very unscientific, inefficient, and sometimes messy way, I have devised social rules that, over time, help knit my students into a strong community.

First of all, I respect each student as a striving human being who brings a unique gift to the class. Also, I insist that each child have this same attitude toward each of his classmates. My own attitude is extremely important. I've found that students follow my lead. One way I know that I've been expecting too much of a child is that the other students begin to be impatient with that person. It is easier to talk in a class about recognizing the dignity of a person and about showing respect than to have the class actually do these things. No matter what parameters are set, someone will fail to realize them. Most children come into school without a clue as to how to work together for the benefit of the group. In fact, most children are far too wrapped up in their own worlds to even recognize the presence of the group, much less to understand its importance.

But the assumption of the dignity of the other and the intention to show respect establishes a solid base on which to operate. When a complaint comes, certain procedures follow quite naturally.

A child's tendency is to dash up to the teacher, report a transgression, and then dash off again. My students soon learn that this doesn't work in our class. Rather, the "reporter" must wait with me until the other child appears. Then we all engage in a process. As a teacher of young children, I bring to bear my authority as the class teacher. For example, I establish the principle that "In our class, we don't hit one another." This



Most children come into school without a clue as to how to work together for the benefit of the group.

simple statement, repeated with conviction over time, can make a deep impression on a child. Quite simply, it becomes the reality that everyone strives to maintain.

With older children, the process relies more on the forces of thinking than on an appeal to the authority of the group. The conversation between the teacher and two children—Abby and Mark—might go something like this:

T: Abby, Mark says that you hit him. Did you hit him?

A: Well, he hit me first.

T: What did you do, Abby?

A: I hit Mark.

T: Mark, Abby says that you hit her. Did you hit her?

M: Well, she wouldn't let me play with her and Sam.

T: What is another way that you could have let her know you weren't happy?

M: I could have used my words.

T: And if she still didn't listen?

M: I could have come to the teacher.

T: Abby, what is another way that you could have let Mark know you didn't want him to hit you?

The conversation continues from here. I always end the encounter by soliciting from the children a statement of intention for the future, such as, "I will try to remember not to do that again," or "Next time, I'll try to remember to come to the teacher instead of hitting," or "Next time, I'll try to remember to use my words."

These statements are important, because they help connect the present with the past and the future. I don't ask for promises, but rather for an intention that they will do their best to act differently. Nor do I ask children to say anything that may, in fact, not be true, for example, "I'm sorry." If the child isn't sorry but is forced to say that she is, she has been forced to lie. Then the child has learned little from her experience except perhaps to tell an untruth on command.

This process can at first be disconcerting and a little unsettling for the children. But they soon learn that it is helpful. Often the act that causes a problem between children is done unconsciously, or without intention to harm. Children learn that many of their conflicts result from just such mistakes that they or others make. And they learn that engaging one another helps clear up misunderstandings and creates plans for "the next time." It is important to face one another and to work together to restore harmony in the class, so we

can move on together. We all know that there will be many "next times." But gradually, because we engage in a process together, we grow into the understanding that, no matter what happens, redemption will occur and we will all emerge stronger in our knowledge of one another and of our group.

An open, frank meeting requires that we with our concern create a space in our heart in which the other person can live and develop. It also requires that we imagine ourselves asking the other person to create a similar space for us.

To summarize, then, the process begins with respect for the other, it reaches fulfillment through a facilitated conversation, and it moves toward the future with statements of intent. What makes this process possible is the acknowledgment by each of the other. If anonymity were acceptable, no process could take place and no evolution in the social sphere would be possible.

Experience has taught me that this process, which works so well in the classroom, can work equally well in the community of adults who support the school. Unscientific, inefficient, messy: all three adjectives apply just as truly to the developing social world of adults as they do to that of a class of children. Nonetheless I believe it is the only approach to conflict that allows issues to be resolved in a dignified, mutually satisfactory manner. When concerns are brought anonymously, without a human face behind them, the humanity of the person receiving the complaint is denied. No process is possible between that person and the complainant or complainants. It is not possible to establish a context for the act in question or to converse about it with understanding. The situation also places a great burden on the intermediary, the person who receives the complaint and must pass it on without revealing its source.

For us as adults, approaching another adult with a complaint or concern requires courage and can be difficult. But, in taking the easier way and remaining anonymous, we not only deny the humanity of the other but we also deny a certain aspect of our own humanity. We do not meet the other as an equal. We do not risk that our concern may not be easily accepted or that we ourselves might be required to change as a result of the meeting. An open, frank meeting requires that we with our concern create a space in our heart in which the other person can live and develop. It also requires that we imagine ourselves asking the other person to create a similar space for us. In this way, we acknowledge that we are all striving, growing human beings. A true process can begin, one which includes everyone involved in the changes that might ensue. We have the possibility of forging stronger understanding among ourselves at the same time that we are modeling a commitment to personal and interpersonal growth for our children. This is surely worth the risk of naming oneself.

At the end of each day, my students again line up at the door. No matter what the day has brought, we look one another in the eye and shake hands. Again, there is the moment of recognition—and this time, we know one another a little better. It is also a moment in which we affirm our relationship and our commitment to continuing the process we began when we gathered for the first time as a first-grade class. Each day begins and ends in harmony, no matter what happens in between. ❋

Vivian Jones-Schmidt *is a native of Virginia. She attended the College of William and Mary and studied government there. She then earned an M. Ed. in early childhood education at the University of Virginia and began to teach in a preschool in Charlottesville. The Crossroads Waldorf School was located in the same building, and Vivian one day went into one of the Waldorf classrooms to bring an item to the lost and found. She felt as if she "had come home" and immediately decided that her own then-small daughter, Rebecca, should attend the Waldorf school. When Rebecca entered Crossroads, Vivian began teaching handwork there. Later she became a class teacher and two years ago graduated her first eighth-grade class. Her new class is now in the second grade. Rebecca is now a freshman at Boston University and an enthusiastic recruiter for Waldorf Education. Vivian recently became a member of the editorial advisory board of* Renewal. *She describes her husband, Frederick, as a "very patient man with a very good sense of humor."*

There's More to Reading Than Meets the Eye

By Barbara Sokolov

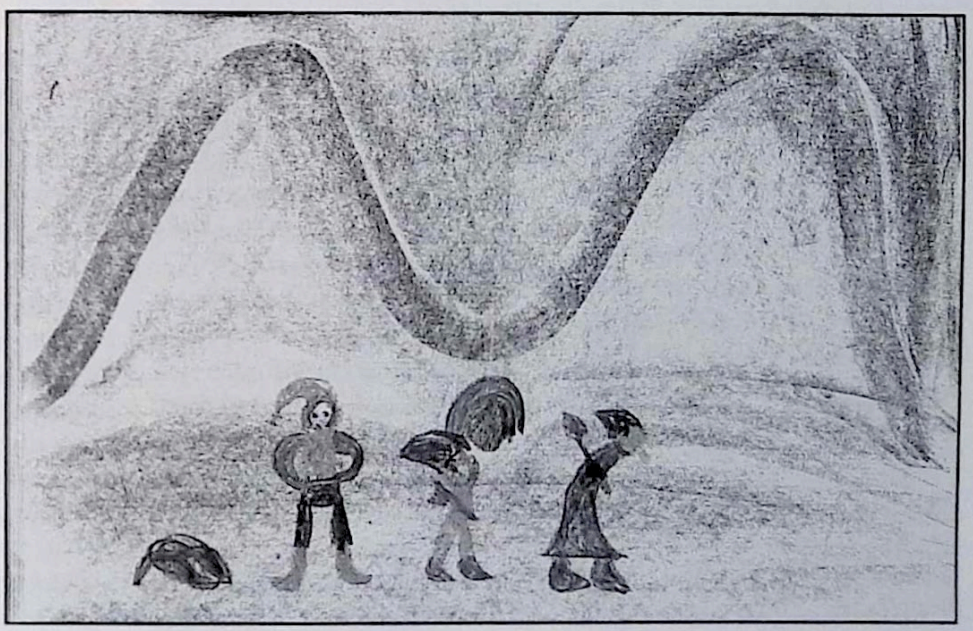
Everyone who comes in contact with Waldorf Education is likely to notice how beautiful everything is, from the enchanting natural toys and the seasonal nature displays in the kindergarten, to the incredible chalkboard drawings in each classroom. Visitors and prospective parents enjoy the amazing array of children's artistic creations—the paintings and drawings, knitted dolls and animals, woven baskets, beeswax figures, and wood carvings, to name just a few. They are impressed by the music that the children play, by their singing, and by the wonderful plays each class performs. Visitors can only admire the main lesson books written and illustrated by the students, books that artistically reflect the rich Waldorf curriculum. And of course they can't help but notice the happy faces of the children in a Waldorf school.

But invariably the question arises of how and when children are taught to read in a Waldorf school. The growing anxiety in our society over declining reading skills is so pervasive that, suddenly, all the wonders and beauty of a Waldorf education can pale in the shadow of the reading issue.

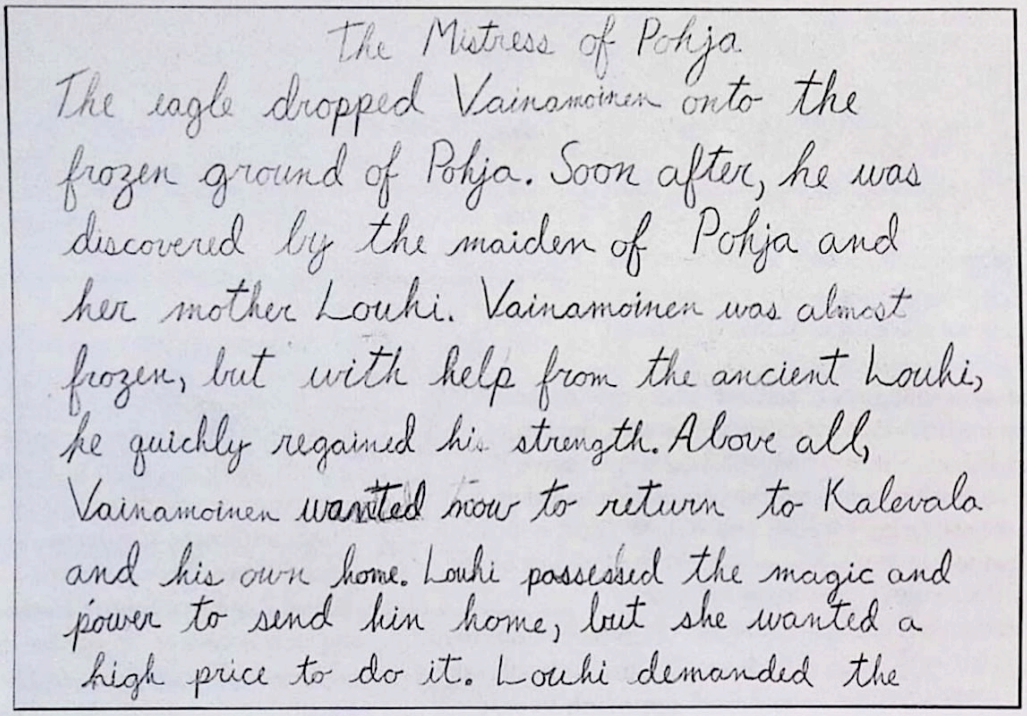
One often hears comments such as, "Waldorf schools take a laid-back approach to reading" and "Waldorf students are not taught to read in first grade like public school students." As a mother of four Waldorf students, I have often heard such remarks, and each time a cry of protest wells up inside of me. "Take a deeper look," I want to shout. "There's more to reading than you may think."

People generally think of reading as the ability to recognize the configuration of letters on a page and to pronounce the words and sentences represented there. This is the mechanical outer activity of reading that is easy to recognize. So, when people talk about teaching children to read, they mean teaching them to decode the symbols that stand for sounds and words.

I have taught for a number of years in public and parochial schools that use this standard approach. In kindergarten, children as young as four years and eight months are required



The letter M pictured as a mountain with friendly gnomes below. From a first-grade main lesson book on letters.



The Mistress of Pohja.

The eagle dropped Vainamoinen onto the frozen ground of Pohja. Soon after, he was discovered by the maiden of Pohja and her mother Louhi. Vainamoinen was almost frozen, but with help from the ancient Louhi, he quickly regained his strength. Above all, Vainamoinen wanted now to return to Kalevala and his own home. Louhi possessed the magic and power to send him home, but she wanted a high price to do it. Louhi demanded the

A fourth grader writes about the Kalevala, the epic of the ancient heroes of Finland.

to memorize the alphabet—a set of abstract symbols—and to learn the sounds that go with them. This process, called "reading readiness," is dry and abstract, foreign to the very nature of small children.

In the primary grades, children continue to work on the outer, mechanical aspect of reading. Students spend long periods of time reading simplistic texts that correspond to the level of their decoding abilities. Readers and textbooks contain stories and information written with restricted vocabularies and simple sentence structure. There is little to ignite young imaginations, to evoke wonder, or to stimulate appreciation for the beauty and complexity of language.

By the time such students reached my fifth- and sixth-grade classroom, they were all capable of decoding the words on a page, with varying degrees of fluency. Some were good readers, but for many of my students, the words and sentences did not come together into a coherent whole. They had difficulty understanding or remembering what they read. On the surface, these children appeared to be reading, but with such limited comprehension, can it really be called reading?

Clearly, there is more to reading than meets the eye. Besides the superficial process of decoding words on a page, there is a corresponding inner activity that must be cultivated for true reading to occur. Waldorf teachers call it "living into the story." When a child is living into a story, she forms imaginative inner pictures in response to the words. Having the ability to form mental images, to understand, gives meaning to the process of reading. Without this ability, a child may well be able to decode the words on a page, but he will remain functionally illiterate.

Of course, non-Waldorf teachers recognize the importance of the inner activity of reading, too. They refer to it as reading comprehension skills. In the middle and upper grades of elementary school, tremendous effort is spent trying to expand students' vocabularies and to somehow work on comprehension. This is an arduous task, largely because reading is being taught in a way that is not appropriate to the children's natural capacities. The teacher in the upper grades must address reading comprehension problems and also deal with the tremendous antipathy that children with difficulties feel toward reading.

It is very difficult to teach fifth or sixth graders who have trouble with reading comprehension how to create mental pictures. This inner capacity seems to have never properly developed in many. In contrast, kindergarten and primary-grade children, left unhindered, are naturally busy creating imaginative inner pictures. They love listening to stories and actually live in the visual realm of imagination. How tragic that, in most schools, kindergarten and primary-grade students are

diverted from developing and strengthening this inner capacity so essential to true reading, in favor of learning dry, abstract symbols and decoding skills.

The same thing can be said for vocabulary enrichment. Everyone knows how effortlessly young children develop a sense for language and how quickly and unconsciously their vocabularies grow. They hear new words in stories and conversations and somehow have a sense for their meaning. They may not be able to give dictionary definitions, but somehow new words fit into the images that flow through a child's mind when she hears stories. How unfortunate it is that in the early grades most children are not exposed to rich, complex language, simply because such language would not be compatible with their limited decoding skills. Just at the time when their minds are most open to language acquisition, they are working with artificially limited vocabularies in school! Of course, vocabulary building is an ongoing process throughout the school years and beyond. But it is much easier for older children to learn new vocabulary if they already have a well-developed sense of language and a large pool of words and mental images to build upon.

It is apparent that the growing illiteracy problem in this country is not caused by the lack of technical decoding skills. For most of the children with reading deficiencies, it is a crisis in comprehension, a crisis largely brought about by the early introduction of abstract decoding skills and by ignoring the powerful tools of imagination and artistic activity that are the natural avenues of learning for young schoolchildren. Ironically, the only cure put forward by the educational establishment is to work harder and earlier on decoding skills, which only exacerbates the problem further.

The conventional method of teaching reading must be turned inside out in order to take advantage of children's naturally developing capacities for learning. And this is precisely what happens in Waldorf schools. On the very first day of kindergarten, children in a Waldorf school begin learning to read. True, it is not the technical, dry, outer aspect of reading that they are asked to work on. Instead they are engaged with the far more important inner aspect of reading.

Working with a real knowledge of the developing child, Waldorf teachers begin teaching reading by cultivating children's sense of language and their inner capacities to form mental images. Vivid verbal pictures and the use of rich language are constantly employed in the classroom. Difficult vocabulary and complex sentence structure are not held back in the telling of tales. Children sing and recite a vast treasury of songs and poems and learn many by heart. Children live into the world of imaginative inner pictures, totally unaware that they are developing the most important capacities needed for reading comprehension, for reading with understanding. They learn naturally and joyfully.

Imaginative stories, songs, and poetry do not end in kindergarten. Rudolf Steiner points out that children between the ages of about seven to fourteen have, above all, the gift of fantasy. So it only makes sense that children learn best if the curriculum is brought in such a way that it captivates their imaginations. In his book *Kingdom of Childhood*, Steiner writes:

We should avoid a direct approach to the conventional letters of the alphabet which are used in the writing and printing of civilized humanity. Rather should we lead the child in a vivid and imaginative way, through the various stages which humanity itself has passed through in the history of civilization.[1]

My own children experienced the joy of learning the letters of the alphabet through imaginative stories and through the painting or drawing that accompanied each one. The letter *K*, for instance, may be introduced by telling a fanciful story about a king. Then the teacher may draw a picture of the king standing in a pose that looks similar to the letter *K*. This process harks back to the picture writing of early humankind, and gives our modern symbols real and living qualities to which children can relate. Although it took the entire year of first grade to present the alphabet in this way, my children were never bored. They were living into their fantasy, living with a wellspring of imaginative pictures. They were, in fact, learning reading comprehension, long before they learned decoding. Amazingly, Waldorf children learn the hard part first without even knowing it! They live into the stories, they create inner pictures, and they understand the words. Then comes the easy part, learning to decode letters

that are no longer so abstract and foreign, and to read the printed word.

So, the first book that my daughter Anna read when she was "finally taught to read" was not a dull primer, but *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White, with its lovely prose. True, she learned to decode later than many of her public school counterparts, but she learned to read fluently, with understanding and enjoyment, much sooner than most. Take a look at the sophisticated novels and poetry that upper-grade Waldorf students are reading. Take in an eighth-grade production of Shakespeare, and you will see the wisdom of the Waldorf approach to reading.

Working with a true knowledge of the human being, a true understanding of the stages of child development, the Waldorf teacher is able to educate children in ways that enable them to blossom forth with joy. As Rudolf Steiner says,

It is indeed so that a true knowledge of the human being loosens and releases the inner life of soul and brings a smile to the face.[2] ✻

ENDNOTES:

1. Rudolf Steiner, *The Kingdom of Childhood: Introductory Talks on Waldorf Education* (Hudson, N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1995), 23.

2. Ibid., 22.

***Barbara Sokolov**, a native of California, studied history at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and received her teaching credentials there. She taught for a number of years in public and parochial schools and is now a second-year student at the San Francisco Waldorf Teacher Training of Rudolf Steiner College. Barbara has five children, four of whom are Waldorf students. She is currently teaching algebra at the San Francisco Waldorf School.*

Soul Ecology: A Summer Experience for Young Adults

Between July 5 and 26, 2000, a three-week program for young people will take place in a wilderness area near Occidental, California (ninety minutes north of San Francisco).

The theme of the program is "Soul Ecology: building inner capacities for sustainable living." The participants will live in tents and cook and eat together. Activities will include:

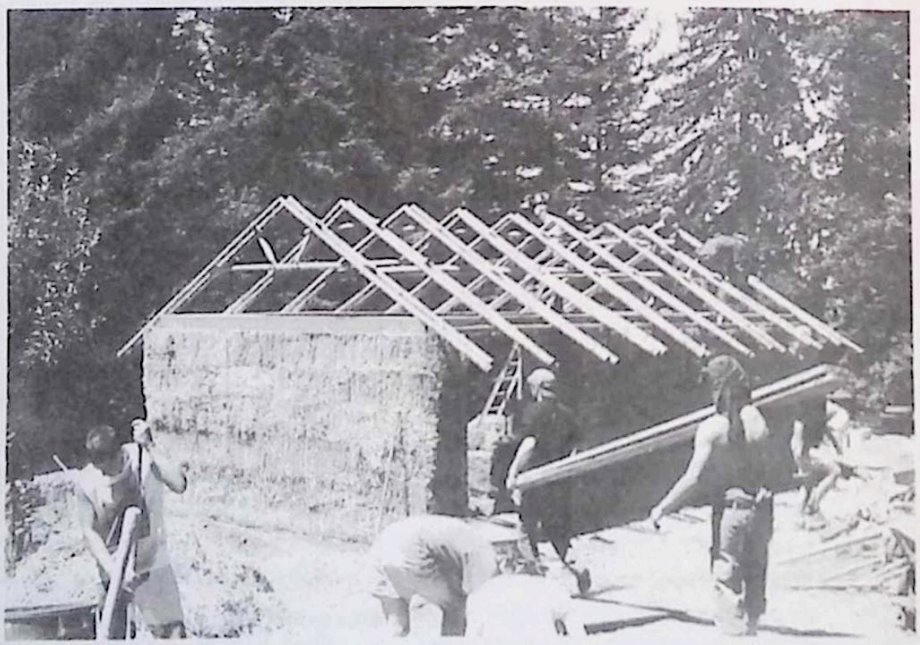
- presentations and discussions on the development of imagination, clear thinking, and self-knowledge,
- the planning and building of a straw-bale cottage;
- drama and dance improvisation; and
- biography work and journal work.

The program is organized by a group of young people who work out of Anthroposophy, many of whom are Waldorf graduates. Recommended reading includes *The Philosophy of Freedom* by Rudolf Steiner.

The conference fee is $800 for registration prior to May 1 ($950 after). Scholarship aid is available, as are travel discounts. The minimum age is eighteen, and there is a limit of fifty participants.

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A straw-bale building under construction.

Developing a Culture of Leadership, Learning, and Service In Waldorf Schools

By Christopher Schaefer, Ph.D.

In my work as a consultant to organizations, I visit and become involved with many Waldorf schools. Most of these use new social and community forms suggested by Rudolf Steiner, forms that are collegial, nonhierarchical, and spiritually based. These forms help to create institutions in which human beings can participate fully, can meet at deeper levels, and can experience that they are brothers and sisters on a shared path of development.[1]

Yet, this rich tradition of new social and community forms does not seem to be adequately sustaining us. I see in many Waldorf school communities—their substantial accomplishments notwithstanding—a lack of energy and direction, an absence of leadership, and a dearth of joy that is worrying.

This situation calls for us to improve our work in three areas: leadership, learning, and service. We need to better understand, value, and support leadership. Also, we must take the time and energy to learn the social and administrative skills necessary to make our nonhierarchical institutions work effectively. And we must strive for a deeper understanding of and commitment to being a service culture, one that supports all the members of our school communities as partners.

Christopher Schaefer *is a faculty member at Sunbridge College in Spring Valley, New York, where he directs the Waldorf School Administration and Community Development Program. He is also an organizational consultant who has worked with many Waldorf schools and other institutions. He is a co-author, with Tÿno Voors, of* Vision in Action: Working with Soul and Spirit in Small Organizations. *Christopher Schaefer's forthcoming book,* Partnership of Hope: Building Waldorf Schools and Other Communities of the Spirit, *will be published by the Anthroposophic Press.*

Encouraging Leadership

To develop a new culture of leadership, we must raise to consciousness our existing image of leadership and then search for a new concept that meets the needs of self-administered schools and communities. Most of us carry old images of leadership—of the charismatic pioneer generation of the school or of the more manipulative "command and control" leaders in the corporate world. Not wanting these, we retreat into an ideology of collegiality—in which everybody needs to be involved in everything—and we fall into a morass of meetings, inadequate decision-making processes, chaos, and conflict. Leadership may be present, but the people exercising leadership functions such as the faculty chair, the board president, and the head of the personnel committee often feel undermined and hesitate to exercise initiative.

By developing a more conscious culture of leadership, learning, and service we can strengthen Waldorf communities and bring the social imagination of Waldorf Education into reality.

We need perhaps to see leadership in a new way—to understand it as service or stewardship. Peter Block, in his book *Stewardship*, writes that the essence of leadership is "to choose service over self-interest."[2] Robert Greenleaf writes:

Servant leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. The best test is: "Do those served grow as persons—do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"[3]

The qualities of the servant leader for both Block and Greenleaf include listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, and stewardship.

Also, we need to delegate leadership responsibilities consciously. This is often not done in our schools. Authority is given to that volunteer who, though overworked like everyone else, is willing to take on yet another responsibility. Leadership then is given to those who are willing to serve on four committees rather than on one. The assumption is an optimistic one, that if the person endures long enough, he or she will gain the experience and the power to be an effective leader. The result is that leadership is not explicit and that often the best people are not asked. The type of leadership desired is not discussed, and people are not freed up from other tasks to provide effective leadership.

The failure to define and to consciously give leadership responsibilities on the basis of competence is a weakness in many Waldorf schools. Perhaps we do not want to limit people or do not want a situation of clear administrative authority. In any case, this lack of clarity undermines leadership and leads to the hidden exercise of the real power in a school by the "workhorses" within the school community.

Toward a Culture of Learning

Our school communities need to become true cultures of learning. Not only the children, but every person involved with the school—each parent, teacher, administrator—should be learning. Our collegial, nonhierarchical institutions require a high level of "practical social understanding," to use Rudolf Steiner's phrase—a high level of social skill. This means learning from experience. It means regularly and carefully reviewing committee forms, decision-making procedures, and the exercise of leadership. It means consciously learning about group process. Each person involved needs to know the function of a chairperson and of a "process coach," needs to know how to work with disagreements, and how to improve listening and communication skills. Community-building, the art of social creation, involves an ongoing commitment to learning from our social experiences. It means weekly and monthly and yearly reviews to assess what is working well and what isn't.

We can also use the many fine psychological insights and community-building methods of other groups. These include the work of M. Scott Peck and the Foundation for Community Encouragement; the approaches to servant leadership developed by the Robert Greenleaf Center; decision making by consensus, stemming from the Quaker tradition; and the many insights of humanistic psychology. We can also learn from the fields of business management and of nonprofit administration, in particular, about the realm of board responsibilities.[4]

Part of developing a service culture is to make sure that each decision-making group has clear criteria for evaluation and a transparent process of review.

Developing this kind of learning and sharing means overcoming our aversion to psychology and being interested in what other groups and institutions have done. It involves also developing a learning network among Waldorf schools, curative communities, community supported farms and gardens, adult education centers, and cooperatively run businesses. This is an exciting challenge for the Waldorf movement at a time when it is entering a new stage of institutional maturity and needs to learn the complex skills necessary to administer complex institutions.

Part of the challenge of learning in our institutions is to encourage conscious personal development. Many conventional organizations ask their employees to meet with their superiors and their peers in quarterly and annual performance reviews. While such practices can be punitive, they do involve a conscious assessment of performance. In our schools each person, after consultation with others, could formulate a personal development plan. In addition to describing that person's particular responsibilities as teacher, receptionist, development staff member, or parent coordinator, it could include three basic aspects:

1. Aims and goals regarding inner development: for example, working with Steiner's six meditative exercises, observing nature on a regular basis, developing a deeper knowledge of the stars, having fifteen minutes of quiet every morning.

2. Aims as social beings: for example, improving facilitation skills, working on listening, working through our difficulties with colleagues, speaking more in co-worker meetings, acquiring mediation skills.

3. Vocational goals: for example, improving presentation skills, enhancing computer literacy, learning more about adolescence, improving time and project management skills.

Such development plans could also include courses or conferences that people plan to attend to acquire particular insights and skills. These plans can be shared with a personnel committee, a care group, or with a smaller group of colleagues. They can be reviewed annually as well as being looked at more briefly during the course of the year. A development plan of this kind can then be the link to a review of how well each person is carrying out his or her particular role or function. It can encourage learning and growth.

Waldorf schools are profound learning communities for children but are seldom conscious learning communities for the adults involved. A school might establish a committee to foster community learning, asking each group within the school to assess their approach to learning and development. Teachers—speaking as individuals or as members of the faculty as a group—parents, members of the board, and administrators could each describe his or her learning activities. A "learning committee" could organize an annual learning festival in which each member of the school community shares what she or he has learned during the past year. Such a festival could be a joyous community celebration and could enhance the knowledge of community-building.

A Culture of Service and Partnership

We can also foster a more conscious service culture in our Waldorf communities.

Part of creating a culture of service involves being more aware of our partners in our activities. A Waldorf community consists of teachers, parents, children, and administrators, all working together. The adults involved are all dedicated to the care and education of the children in the school. But they can and should be interested in serving, helping, and supporting each other as well. A school can act as a community serving all its members. We need to bring the nature of that partnership to consciousness. This is basic to creating a service culture and to building community. Like a business, we need to ask: Who are the people I as an individual and we as a community are serving? How do we serve them better, and how do we explore with them what kind of job we're doing?

Accountability is one aspect of partnership. In most nonprofit organizations it is the board of trustees that is legally responsible, and it is the board that represents the public interest. In collegially run institutions with limited hierarchy, the question of accountability is critical. It must be made clear how each segment of the school—faculty, staff, parents, board—is accountable to the others. To spell out mutual expectations between board, faculty, staff, and parents based on a clear understanding of roles helps greatly in avoiding misunderstanding and conflict.

The powerful imagination of what it means to be a human being—an imagination contained within the Waldorf curriculum—needs to be brought more consciously into our social life, so that our communities can be places where people can fully experience the light and blessings of the spirit.

This explicit statement of mutual expectation can be included in the school handbook. It is more than just a task description, though. It needs to state how the parent association, the board, and the faculty are involved in key decisions, such as the raising of tuition and other matters that affect all or most members of the school community.

Part of developing a service culture is to make sure that each decision-making group has clear criteria for evaluation and a transparent process of review. If the faculty makes all pedagogical decisions and hires, evaluates, and fires teachers, it must be clear exactly how the faculty carries out these tasks. The same applies to the board in fulfillment of its responsibilities. There should be a process for auditing and evaluating

the board every year or two. There should be criteria for board membership that are explicit, consciously shared, and adhered to.

Underlying the notion of service is the valuing of competence. Volunteerism—giving a person a job primarily because that person is willing to do it—has its place in the pioneering phase of a Waldorf initiative. But the need for professional skills and competence grows as a school enters maturity. The filling of every position of responsibility—from the Christmas Fair chairperson to the kindergarten assistant—must be based on a clear understanding of the task and the skills and attitudes needed to carry out that task. There must be a conscious selection of individuals and groups on the basis of competence. This is the essence of republican leadership and of a service culture, for it suggests we have a concern about quality and a gratitude toward people who give generously of their talents and time.

Building Community Consciously

By developing a more conscious culture of leadership, learning, and service we can strengthen Waldorf communities and bring the social imagination of Waldorf Education into reality. Through developing a more conscious culture of learning and of leadership, we deepen our connection to the spirit of the school and the spirit of Waldorf Education by serving higher ideals. In becoming more conscious and skilled in meeting, we enliven the souls of our institutions; and in being more conscious of our partners, of those we serve, and of how we serve them, we expand the culture of service. Developing a stronger culture of leadership, learning, and service asks that we recommit ourselves to community-building, to making our institutions healthier, more joyous places to live and work.

We must meet this social challenge so that our communities may give hope to this new century. The powerful imagination of what it means to be a human being—an imagination contained within the Waldorf curriculum—needs to be brought more consciously into our social life, so that our communities can be places where people can more fully experience the light and blessings of the spirit. ❋

ENDNOTES:

1. For the rich spiritual perspective that Rudolf Steiner brings to social questions of community life, please consult the following:

Rudolf Steiner, *The Inner Aspect of the Social Question* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1974); idem, *Social and Anti-Social Forces in the Human Being* (Spring Valley, N.Y.: Mercury Press, 1984); and idem, "How Can the Social Needs of the Time be Met?" a lecture delivered in Zurich on October 10, 1916.

2. Peter Block, *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Intent* (San Francisco: Berrett Koehler, 1993), 6.

3. In Larry Spears (ed.), *What is Servant Leadership?* (Indianapolis: Robert Greenleaf Center, 1994), 4.

4. For example, Peter Drucker, *Managing the Non-profit Organization* (N.Y.: Harper Collins, 1994). Peter Senghe's book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1990) is an excellent introduction to issues that concern schools. See C. Schaefer's essay "Enhancing the Learning Partnership" in this book. See also the excellent book by Stephen Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990).

Light-Filled Color:

Translucent Colors and their Use in the Waldorf School

By Kevin Hughes

When one enters a Waldorf school for the first time and walks through the halls and looks into a classroom or two, one of the strongest impressions (in addition to the children, of course) might well be the abundance of color. The walls are painted in luminous colors that little resemble the flat, opaque colors that most of us are used to in schools, offices, and homes. Children's paintings in flowing colors are displayed on these walls, and often there are colored transparencies on windows, as well as baskets of dyed woolen yarn for knitting, and displays of colored beeswax that has been modeled. The impression may be intriguing and may raise questions in the viewer's mind about the use of color in a Waldorf school, particularly in the paintings the children do, and in the painting of the classroom walls.

One of the aims of Waldorf Education is the development of students who have exercised a wide range of their inner capacities for thinking, feeling, and willing. The whole curriculum seeks to nurture that development through intellectual study, artistic practice, and practical activity. Artistic activity is closely related to the feeling life, and thus the arts play a central role in a Waldorf school. As tone is the crucial element in music, and form is the foundation of sculpture, color is the essence of painting. The world of color is a world unto itself, critical for the healthy development of the human soul.

Color is something of a mystery because it is both a measurable physical phenomenon and an inner experiential one that is primal and direct. Modern science holds that color is simply different wavelengths of reflected light, and that color is a secondary quality of objects. It considers the inner experience of color to be subjective and gives little consideration to the objective qualities of color.

The view of color that informs Waldorf Education differs from this view. It understands color as having objective, intrinsic qualities and dynamics that deeply affect the inner life of the human being. We respond to color with our feelings. A bright day with a clear blue sky has a much different effect on us than a gray day with muted colors. Walking into a red room affects us differently than walking into a blue room. Our language even describes inner states of being as colors: "I was so angry I saw red," or "I'm feeling blue." Color arouses an inner response from us. It speaks to, refines, expands, and develops our inner life.

Waldorf Education seeks to balance a mechanical view of color by immersing children in the qualities of each color, slowly and patiently, over time.

The approach to color in Waldorf schools is based on Rudolf Steiner's views about color. Steiner himself based his work on the seminal research of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). Goethe is known as an important figure in world literature, but it is interesting that he considered his most important and significant work to be his research in the natural sciences, particularly his research on plants and on color. Not only was Goethe interested in the physical manifestation of color, but he was also interested in the qualitative nature of color—the nonphysical aspect of color that is intimately connected with human inner life. In his theory of color Goethe describes the individual colors and their feeling content. He recommended surrounding oneself with color in order to experience its inner qualities.



Illustration I: Goethe's color circle.

Experience teaches us that the individual colors induce particular moods. . . . In order to experience fully these important individual effects, the eye should be entirely surrounded by one color; we should be in a room of one color, or look through colored glass. We are then identified with the color; it induces both eye and mind to be in unison with it.[1]

Goethe was also interested in the phenomenon of the "afterimage," a physiological response in which the complementary color of any given color is seen as a residual image after the given color has been looked at. If you gaze for a few moments at a red patch of color, then look at a white sheet of paper, a ghostlike image of the patch will appear—but in the color green, the complement to red. Goethe saw in this phenomenon our inner need for a complete and whole color experience. The eye produces the "opposite of the single color thrust upon it, thus forming a satisfying whole."[2]

Wholeness is a theme in Goethe's ideas on color. Instead of conceiving of color as a linear spectral band, Goethe imagined the colors of the spectrum forming a circle, which expresses wholeness and balance, and in which the complementary colors lie across from each other on the circle (Illustration I). One can experience in this circle the inner dynamic of various colors and the relationships between individual colors and between groups of colors. For example, in yellow and blue we can experience a polarity of light and dark mediated by greens and reds that lie between them on the circle. Another polarity can be experienced between the warm side of the circle (reds through yellows) and the cool side (blue greens through blue violets). Further, one might experience the colors of the circle as associated with different inner activities (contemplation, anger, joy, sorrow, the activity of will, and so on), or see relationships between the color circle and the circle of the year with the four seasons. Goethe's contribution to our knowledge of color is in his objectifying the inner dynamics and laws of color. The ability to live into the qualities of a given color and make our inner responses to color conscious was also important to Rudolf Steiner:

We must again make it possible not merely to look at colors and to apply them outwardly, but to live with the color, to share its inner vitality. . . . We can only do it if we immerse ourselves in the flowing life of red or blue, for instance, so that it becomes really living for us.[3]

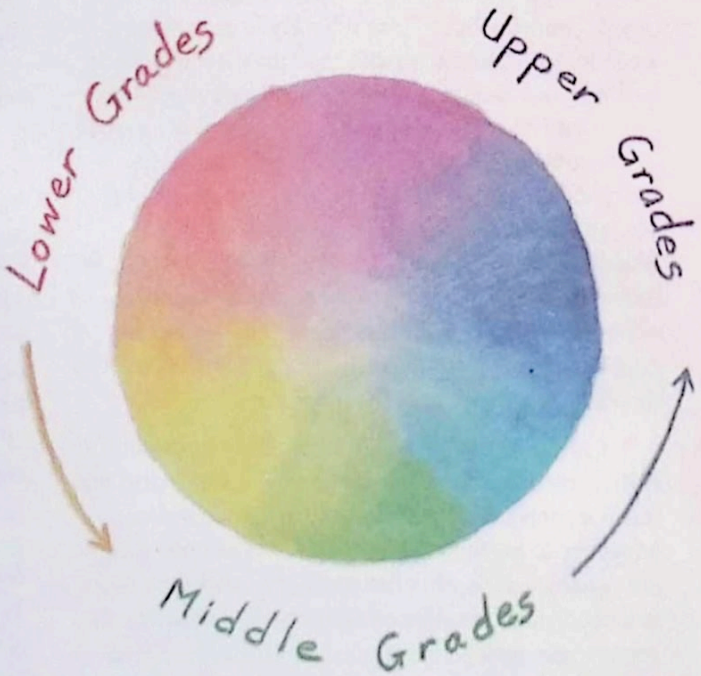
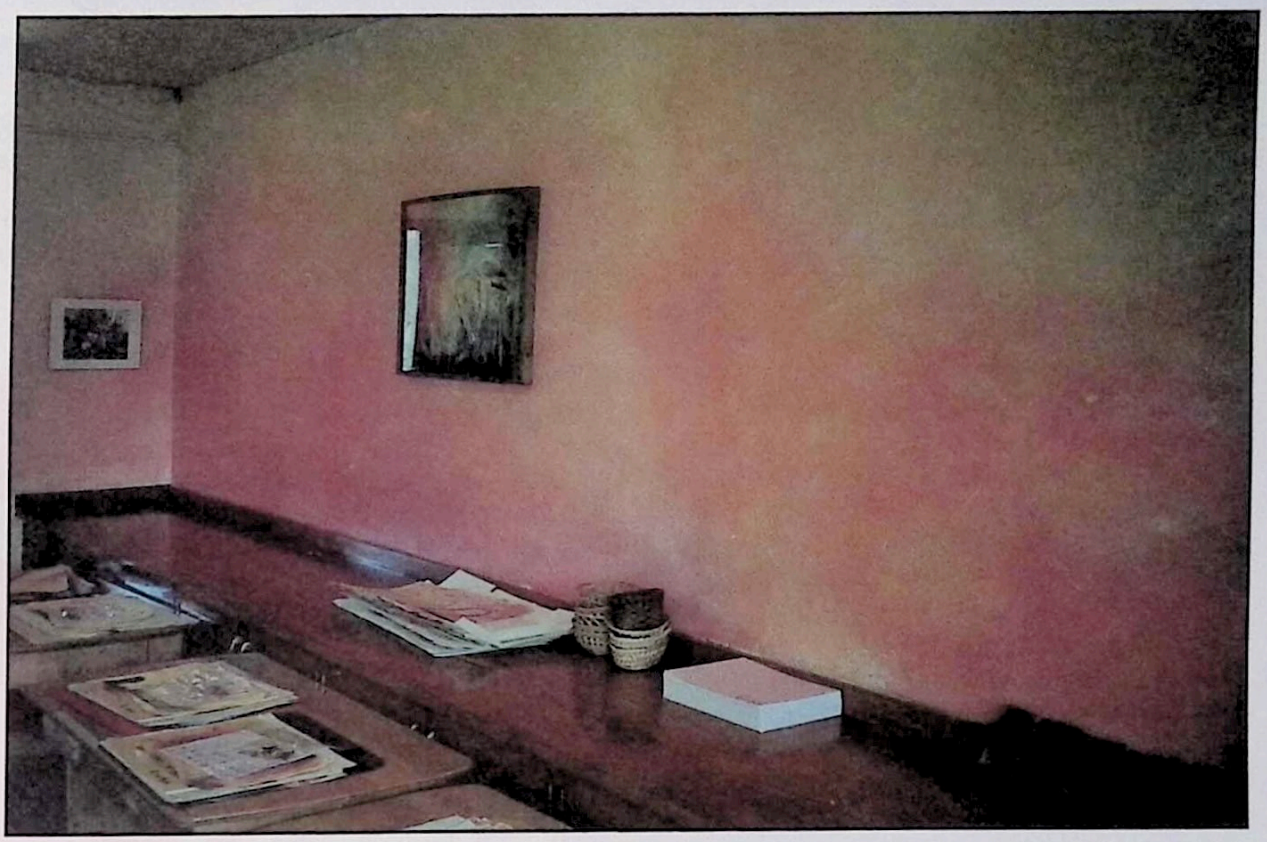


Illustration II: Color circle through the grades.



Lazured classroom wall at the Kimberton Waldorf School.

This advice to steep oneself in color experience is not only meant for painters. Steiner made color experience an important part of the Waldorf school program out of his concern for the development of the healthy inner life of children. He was concerned that a purely mechanical view of color, lacking any sensitivity for the inner qualities of color, would have an unhealthy effect on developing human beings. Humanity would risk being cut off from the living world of color.

Waldorf Education seeks to balance a mechanical view of color by immersing children in the qualities of each color, slowly and patiently, over time. This process is especially pronounced in the painting lessons in the early grades and is supported by the colors of classrooms. From kindergarten through grades two or three, the painting lessons focus on transparent, flowing colors freed from form. The child is able to experience the color in itself, not as a secondary quality of an object or form. Children in the Waldorf school first learn to speak (paint) color "words" (individual colors by themselves) and then color "phrases" (combinations of colors together). A first grader, then, may do a number of paintings using only red, or blue, or yellow, fully experiencing the language of that individual color. Later, the children explore the dynamics and relationships between colors.

All these explorations in the early grades are not approached intellectually, but experientially, and are clothed in lively images from the teacher that may take the form of color stories or conversations between color. These help convey the inner quality of each color and the dynamics of their relationships. The use of transparent, flowing colors allows the children to experience color in its pure state, free from the weight of matter, in a form similar to the colors we experience in the interplay of light and dark in the atmosphere: sunrises, sunsets, rainbows. These atmospheric colors present themselves to our senses, but we experience them as almost immaterial, and they make a strong impression on our inner life.

It follows that the less density a painting medium has, the more closely it will correspond to the essential nature of color. The purest painting would be a kind of painting in light, such as nature continually conjures up before our senses.[4]

Watercolor, then, is the medium that best supports these color studies in the early grades. The methods and materials used in the painting lesson help us to achieve the goal of an intensive experience of color for the children, an experience that helps them to speak the language of color.

In the painting lesson, the child experiences color through his own activity. But activity is not

the only important aspect of the Waldorf program. The environment that the child learns in is also important, and Waldorf teachers often take great care to make the classroom environment supportive of the learning experience. In order to strengthen the possibility for the child to live with color and to share its inner vitality, Waldorf school classrooms are usually painted in translucent water-based colors.

The technique used, called lazure painting, is based on the same principles that underlie the use of translucent watercolor in the painting lesson. The technique was introduced by Steiner for the painting of the first Goetheanum[5] and was adopted for the Waldorf schools and for other types of buildings—homes for the aged, hospitals, homes for the handicapped, private residences, offices, and so on. It involves the layering of translucent washes of color on a white surface (wall or ceiling) until the desired effect is achieved. Because the medium is translucent, light can shine through the colors, and the mixing and weaving of the layers becomes visible. The result is a surface that is no longer dead and flat but one that has an inner glow and movement. Through lazuring, colors regain an inner vitality, and an architectural space can be transformed.

Children in the Waldorf school first learn to speak (paint) color "words" (individual colors by themselves) and then color "phrases" (combinations of colors together).

In most Waldorf schools, each grade level has its own classroom color theme, so that the children have a strong experience of a color, the inner qualities of which meet their particular stage of inner development. Steiner made recommendations on classroom colors for the grades for a few early Waldorf schools. Although each recommendation was particular to the school in question, they all followed a similar pattern in moving through the color circle from red in the first grade through the oranges, yellows, greens, blues, to—by the end of high school—violet. Steiner did not give indications for the kindergarten in these early schools, but typically Waldorf kindergartens are painted in a light rose or peach.

Reds are used in the earliest grades for a definite reason. As mentioned earlier, contained within the color circle are a number of dynamics and polarities. One is the polarity between yellow (light) and blue (dark), with greens and reds as mediators. Another is the polarity between the warm colors (reds) and the cool (blues). In the reds we experience vitality and inner force. Red is not a particularly restful color, but is a color of action, purpose, willfulness, and warmth. These qualities meet the predominance of will-full activity in the inner life of the young child, who learns by doing and imitating, not intellectually or through abstraction.

On the other side of the spectrum, blue, in its quiet, contemplative mood and coolness, forms a polarity to red. Thinking is an inner activity that requires a degree of coolness (detached objectivity) and quiet stillness. The head needs literally to be still to think. Imagine using your head as a tool, as an animal does, and thinking, at the same time. The qualities that live in blue are also the qualities that we need for thinking. It is an ideal color for the period of a child's development from about the twelfth year, when thinking begins to blossom. Here, then, the polarity of red/blue (warm/cool, active/contemplative) corresponds to the polarity of will activity in the earliest grades and thinking in the later grades.[6]

In between this polarity, however, lies a process of mediation, a balancing of opposites and extremes, and a development of the child's middle sphere of feeling. Likewise, during this period, the classroom colors are those that mediate between red and blue, moving from warmth to coolness through the oranges, yellow, and greens. Green, in particular, is a color of balance. It mediates between the polarity of yellow and blue, and it forms the complement to red. It is a good color for the fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms because the ten- and eleven-year-olds are experiencing the coming into balance and harmony of their breathing rate and their heartbeat. It is a moment of balance before the children move into adolescence. We know that in adolescence the development of thinking comes to the fore, but in Waldorf schools we strive to balance the coolness and detachment of thinking, which unchecked can become calculating and cold, with a healthy and engaged feeling

life and with ample opportunity for exercising of the will.

The high school curriculum still strives to balance intellectual activity with artistic and practical activity. The artistic helps to nurture a healthy and refined life of feeling, while the practical allows ideas and ideals to be expressed in action. It is interesting, then, that Steiner's indications for classroom colors for the adolescent do not end in the relative coolness and darkness of blue. Rather, they move into shades of violet with some red added to blue to bring a touch of warmth and vigor back into the color experience. This reflects the educational goal of a thinking warmed by the heart and fired by the will.

The journey from kindergarten through twelfth grade is an epic journey toward wholeness that is fostered by the curriculum and supported by the color experiences of the painting lessons and the classroom colors. On this journey toward wholeness the child travels full circle through the color wheel (Illustration II), experiencing the individuality of each color as it relates to his or her stage of inner development. Over time, the child thus experiences the wholeness and balance of the color circle. This is a reflection of the wholeness and balance of the human being that we strive to nurture and protect through Waldorf Education. ❊

ENDNOTES:

1. Hilde Boos-Hamburger, *The Creative Power of Colour* (London: Michael Press, 1976), 3.

2. Ibid., 11.

3. Ibid., 10.

4. Margrit Jünemann and Fritz Weitmann, *Drawing and Painting in Rudolf Steiner Schools* (Stroud, U. K.: Hawthorn Press, 1994), 3.

5. Ibid., 7.

6. Steiner described the physiological effects of red and blue on blood chemistry and circulation and on thinking. See Daniel van Bemmelen, *Rudolf Steiner's New Approach to Color on the Ceiling of the First Goetheanum* (Spring Valley, N.Y.: St. George Publications, 1980), 31.

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Kevin Hughes *was raised in the arts. His mother is a painter, and his father made his life in the theater. Kevin received his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan in environmental science and filmmaking, and did postgraduate work in filmmaking at the University of Colorado. He trained to be a Waldorf teacher at the Waldorf Institute of Sunbridge College and has studied at the Tobias School of Art in England and at Rudolf Steiner College in California. Kevin Hughes has taught for thirteen years at the Kimberton Waldorf School, both as a class teacher and as a drawing and painting teacher in the upper grades. He is a painter and lazure artist. Kevin and his wife, Erin, a drama teacher at Kimberton, have two sons.*

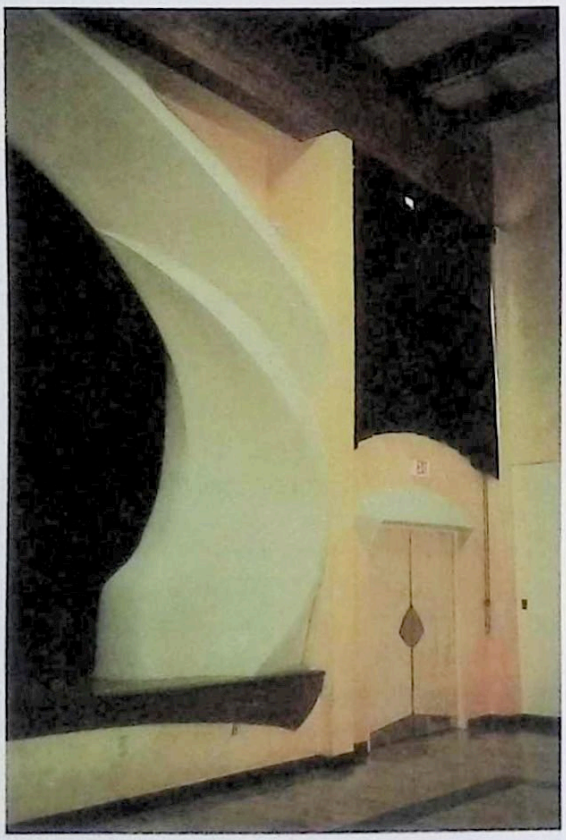
Art, Architecture, and Community Renewal:

The Kimberton Waldorf School Renovates and Lazures its Gymnasium

By Ed Humpal

The Kimberton Waldorf School, founded in 1942, is the second-oldest Waldorf school in North America. Located about an hour north of Philadelphia, it has a forty-acre campus nestled into a four-hundred-acre biodynamic farm. Surrounded by forest and pasture, but close to urban centers, the school has in its early childhood program and its elementary, middle, and high schools a healthy enrollment of over 330 children and young people.

In recent years the college of teachers and board of trustees have worked together to clarify the school's identity and purpose and to bring new spirit to the life of the school community. Working together with a committed administrative team, they have also brought about the repair and renovation of the campus—from the roofs to the boilers to the gardens. During this process money started to be raised for capital investments. At a certain point, the school seemed to be looking for a way to manifest its enriched sense of purpose.

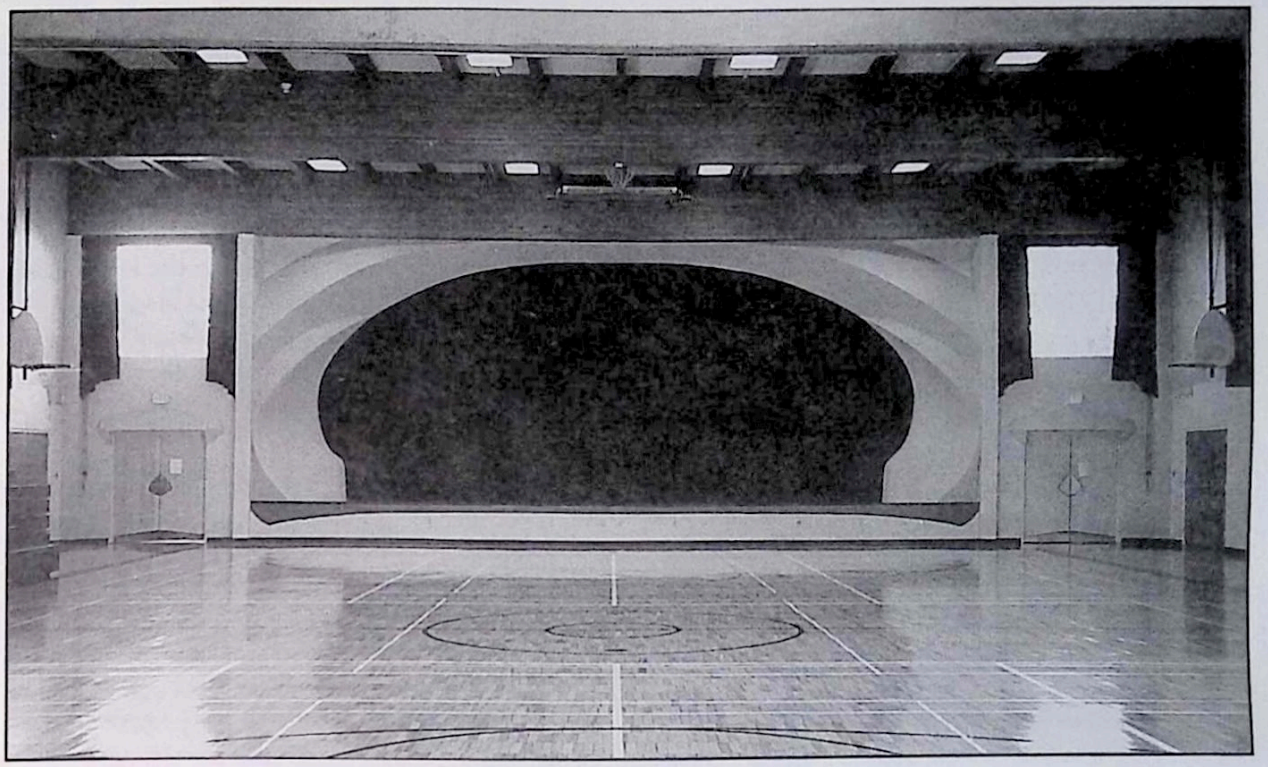


Side detail of the stage.

Two years ago this way was found in the renovation of the school's gymnasium/theatre. The project included the creation of a new stage and the painting of a magnificent 4000-square-foot mural on the inside walls of the building. The school was blessed in this project by the help of many students, alumni, and friends. In the end, the project not only expressed the renewed vitality of the community but also strengthened the school and community. As one person involved observed, "Art isn't just a presentation. It is a way that people get together and work, and it's a catalyst for change."

The school's gymnasium is inside an 18,000-square-foot building and includes a full-size basketball court and a large stage at one end for assemblies and plays. It serves daily also as a cafeteria and is frequently used for public events. In many ways it is the center of the school's activity. Until two years ago, enlivened though it was by the energy of the students, it was just a large impersonal space with towering cinder block walls—a flatly utilitarian, numbing example of expedient, modern construction.

Kevin Hughes, Kimberton's art teacher, proposed to lazure the walls of the gymnasium. Lazure painting, based on indications given by Rudolf Steiner, involves the application of multiple washes (or veils) of extremely dilute, translucent color on a white surface and results in what can be called a "light-filled color." Lazured classrooms, hallways, and offices are usual in a Waldorf school, but a lazured gymnasium, and a large one at that, is something extraordinary. Kevin



Front view of the arch and the stage.

also suggested that a way be found to alter the shape of the stage opening at the north end of the room.

By this time the physical renovation of the campus had attracted a number of graduates, who, either in college or in their working life, had mastered practical skills and were excited about contributing to the work of the school. Rob Williams, class of '93, was already working in our maintenance department as a carpenter and wood sculptor. He had just carved several signs for the school as well as a beautiful free-form bas-relief for the stairway in the middle school. Following the installations of these carvings, several of Rob's old friends stopped by to see his artwork. One of these was Erlend Neumann, a classmate of Rob's from kindergarten through high school.

Erlend had just returned from Europe, where he had been on the welding crew working on the reconstruction of the great hall in the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. The Goetheanum, built in the late 1920s after a design by Rudolf Steiner, is the center for the worldwide anthroposophical movement. In fact a giant sculpture characterized inside and out by curvilinear forms, the building is constructed of reinforced concrete. In the reconstruction of the main auditorium an innovative technology was used to build columns and ornaments by applying sprayed concrete to welded steel cages. Through this process, architectural elements that might otherwise be purely decorative are given tremendous structural integrity. The combination of the tensile strength of steel combined with the compressive strength of concrete gives an architectural designer broad vistas of opportunity.

Erlend was enthusiastic about this technique and ready to utilize it on a project of his own. The school asked him to propose a design for the stage opening in the gymnasium. Erlend retired to his studio and returned a few weeks later with a scale model as well as a watercolor rendering. His proposed design was enthusiastically received by the facilities committee, then by the whole faculty.

Erlend proposed a sweeping curve to the proscenium arch, one that made the stage opening into an oval. The sides would curve and fold into themselves, opening again to form the summit of the arch. He also designed new stage curtains with a valance that curved along with the arch. Above the foyer doors on the sides of the stage would be dynamic forms echoing the larger components. Erlend's concern for detail extended

even to the window curtains, which complemented the larger design. The college of teachers approved the project, indicating that it should include a deepening of the stage and an upgrade of the theater's lighting system. The entire project would have to be completed over the summer. The gym had to be ready for use on the first day of school. Rob set down his chisels and picked up a welding torch to help Erlend with the assemblies.

Meanwhile Kevin had developed his design for the painting. It was to cover the top fourteen feet of the twenty-four-foot-high walls, all along their combined length of 332 feet. Since the space is used primarily for gym classes and for school sports, movement would be its principal theme. The use of color would create movement within the viewer, but, at the same time, its balance and harmony would convey also a sense of rest. Kevin took the orientation of the building into consideration, deciding on predominantly golden colors to create at the eastern end a sunrise and at the western end a sunset. Between the two were to be color transitions that went around the color circle from the reds through violets, blues, and greens back to the anchoring yellows. A natural and satisfying progression of color would draw the observer's eye gently around the huge room.

The summer began with a maintenance/construction crew of over twenty workers, almost all of them current students or graduates of the school. Within two weeks, the eight members of the lazure crew, working from rolling scaffold towers, had applied nearly two hundred bags of plaster to the walls and had covered them with three coats of white paint. This created a continuous, lightly textured surface that covered the monotonous pattern of the cinder block construction.

Then Kevin stepped in to direct the painting. As the scaffold towers moved slowly around the room, crew members on three levels applied the veils or washes of color that distinguish lazure painting. Kevin stood in the center of the room, mixing buckets of paint and calling out instructions. Occasionally he would climb onto the scaffolding to demonstrate a technique or brush in an important transition.

Meanwhile a steel I-beam forty-two feet long and weighing over 5000 pounds had been raised twenty feet into the air and notched into the existing wall, so that it hung across and above the stage. This was to support Erlend's form. Structural engineers had been contracted to assure the safety of the construction. The finished structure would weigh many tons, but the "wet load," the weight of the concrete before it dried, would be much greater. The arch had to be freestanding. If it were even partially attached to the beams and rafters overhead, a substantial snow load above might cause a deflection in the surface of the roof and result in major cracking across the arch. A deflection of as little as half an inch would be enough to cause damage!

When the arduous process of welding the steel and of triple-checking every curve and angle was finally completed, the crew had little time to celebrate. Bags of cement were already arriving by the truckload. Time was running short, and from the beginning of August, all the crews started working longer days and weekends. By an inspiring determination of will the project was completed on time. The empty cavern of the gym had been transformed into an enlivened space, ready to welcome students at the opening assembly on the first day of school.

Celebration and festival are important parts of Waldorf Education. Theater is a form of festival, as are athletic events. In its renovated and painted gymnasium/theatre the Kimberton school now has a stunning venue for its festivals and celebrations. This is a dream realized, a dream helped to be brought into the world through the minds and hands of the school's own teachers, students, and graduates. ❊

Ed Humpal *has been involved in the practical arts for a long time and has worked in many areas of construction. He learned carpentry in a theater shop, worked as a stone mason, and for several years specialized in the repair of buildings damaged by flood or fire. Ed has been plant manager at the Kimberton Waldorf School for ten years.*

A Waldorf Mother Looks Back

By Judy Chaves

The following is the text of a speech delivered by Judy Chaves at the 1999 graduation ceremony of the Lake Champlain Waldorf School in Shelburne, Vermont. Judy is a parent at the school, active in school life, and also a writer. The older of her two daughters was a member of the eighth-grade graduating class.

One way I could describe my years as a parent at the Lake Champlain Waldorf School would be to list a few statistics: the number of cakes and cookies I've baked, the number of newsletters I've typed, the number of children I've ferried in my car, the number of tunics I've sewn.

When Craig and I first enrolled Naomi at the school, we knew next to nothing about Waldorf Education, only that it looked a lot better than what was being offered at our local school, and that its underlying values seemed to be aligned with ours. Still, the decision to enroll our daughter was not an easy one. We spent a long time weighing the affinity we felt with the Waldorf school against the equally strong sense of responsibility we felt toward our local school system. When we did make our decision, it was with enormous relief. "There," we thought, "our soul-searching is over."

In fact, our soul-searching had only begun. The process we had just gone through—the weighing of one important value against another—was one that would accompany all our years at the school. As our daughter grew up and her personality developed and her needs changed, as the social dynamics of the class evolved, as Katherine the class teacher developed as a teacher, as the details of Waldorf Education and of Anthroposophy became known to us, challenges and choices continually came up. These kept us on our toes, figuring out why things were done the way they were, and comparing the school's values, our own values, and those of the outside world. In the process we gained an increasingly clearer understanding of why Naomi was at the school and what it meant to have her there.

. . . I went from weighing what's important to me or my child, to weighing what's important to all of us and all of our children; . . . I went from wanting merely to talk about concerns in order to gain my own peace of mind, to wanting to do something about them so that others might gain as well.

Often, the weighing was easy. In third grade, when there was a solar eclipse, Katherine asked the parents if we'd allow our children to watch the event with special glasses she could order. We had to weigh, in other words, the small risk of damage to the eyes if the sun were watched without the glasses, against what our child would gain from viewing this rare and spectacular event. I knew that under Katherine's watchful eye, no one would dare peek at the sun without those glasses on. I was delighted that my daughter was at a school that valued experience strongly enough, as I did, to countenance a small risk. I later learned that the children at our local school were kept indoors all that day, with the window shades drawn.

There has been only one solar eclipse of such visibility during school hours in the past eight years. But we, as parents, have been tacitly making the same safety-versus-experience choice simply by having our children at the school. The children played daily in the school's woods and along the La Platte River, and on class outings they have crawled through

caves and climbed up rock faces. For some parents, this has not been an easy issue; but for me, for some reason, this is an area of low anxiety. It has been thrilling to have the high value I place on experience affirmed by the school and to see, as a result, my daughter and many of her classmates thrive.

The more difficult choices for me lay elsewhere. One aspect of the school with which I had felt an immediate affinity was its noncompetitive atmosphere and the absence of grades and of standardized tests. "School is a journey," the school's ads read, "not a race." I fervently agreed. Yet when my child reached sixth grade, high school suddenly appeared on the horizon, looking in fact just like the starting gates of a race track. I began to break into cold sweats over things such as whether the children would complete Algebra 2 by the end of eighth grade and the fact that the Johns Hopkins summer institutes were out of the question because PSAT scores were required for attendance. I feared that I was compromising Naomi's future by keeping her at the Waldorf school.



Hearing of the successes of Waldorf graduates helped alleviate my worries to some degree. But most often what would calm me were small things: the look of pleasure on my daughter's face as she sat down with a book; a particular sentence in a piece of her writing that startled me with its insight; a free afternoon she and her classmate spent playing violin duets; or a prayer, hauntingly beautiful, sung by the seventh- and eighth-grade chorus, asking for world peace. These are small things, unquantifiable and intangible. Yet over these years I have learned the importance of such little epiphanies, and—this has been the real challenge—I have learned to put trust in the educational process that creates them.

Also challenging have been the debates that have raged in our household these eight years over the spiritual aspects of Anthroposophy. Craig and I have been uncomfortable with these, particularly when we felt they had made their way into the curriculum. We have delved into religion, the history of science, biblical studies, philosophy, as well as into our own spiritual beliefs in the process of weighing this profound difference—in some ways a chasm—between ourselves and the school. We weighed this against what our daughter was so clearly gaining by being at the school. On the one hand, this has been the most challenging weighing we have done. On the other, dinnertime conversation has never been more interesting.

Parking lot conversation also has never been more interesting. The business of weighing one value against another has been shared by all the parents in this class. Together, we have talked about such things as the challenge of raising strong girls in our society, and whether the school sufficiently addresses this issue. We have shared our frustrations over some of Steiner's indications for adolescents and their lack of congruence about what we know of our own children. We have supported one another in the often difficult task of communicating to Katherine and other teachers the discrepancies between our values and the apparent values of the school.

We have done so much talking that there have been times I've gotten sick and tired

of the whole thing. "That's it," I announced to my family toward the end of sixth grade. "From now on at pickup time, I'm parking in the farthest corner of the parking lot and I'm not getting out of the car." This self-exile lasted about two days.

For it was through our conversations that I came to feel a part of this community; that I went from weighing what's important to me or to my child, to weighing what's important to all of us and all of our children; that I went from wanting merely to talk about concerns in order to gain my own peace of mind, to wanting to do something about them so that others might gain as well.

And in this, I have had excellent role models. I have watched so many of the parents in this class take a particular value of their own, weigh its importance for the school, and then do something to embody that value: organize an annual golf tournament to fund outdoor education; establish the Blue Magoo Van to provide viable transportation for families; create the Rainforest Run, to enable our children to know what it is to be stewards of the land. What other parents did out of their own values and initiative gave me the confidence to muster my own values, skills, and courage and use them for the school's growth.

Thus did I experience what, in these eight years, I have come to appreciate as two of the primary values of Waldorf Education—values that my daughter experienced in the classroom: the strength of community and the potential within each of us to give to that community. Time and again, in all the weighing I did, I always returned to these two things: the community that Katherine helped the children create among themselves—not a perfect one, but a lasting and strong one—and Katherine's devotion to the children's development as creative, responsible, compassionate, and contributing members of that community. These are the things that ultimately outweighed Algebra 2 and Johns Hopkins and even unease with spiritual beliefs

Katherine—indeed all the teachers at the school—have been as interested in what kind of people our children are as in what kind of students. They see the teaching of history or music or eurythmy not only as the passing on of information and skills but as the means for teaching the children what they have in themselves and what they have in one another.

There is a drawing in one of Naomi's chemistry main lesson books that is of Katherine, wearing a pair of turquoise rubber gloves that go up to her elbows. She is demonstrating the oxidation of sugar. She has a slightly crazed expression—probably because there is a three-foot flame shooting out of the crucible—and she stands poised, ready for anything. I have no idea how much the students even now remember about the oxidation of sugar, but I can tell you that they will take with them into high school and beyond something more important. It is the memory of Katherine in those turquoise gloves, the memory of this dedicated woman in her forties engaged with a new, slightly terrifying subject, in order to share its excitement with children she loves, in order to convey to them that learning and risk-taking are lifelong activities, and that if love and the giving to others are your motivations for doing something, then the courage to do it will be there.

Ultimately, then, in addition to baking cookies and typing newsletters, I have been engaged by the school in an eight-year process of asking myself not merely "What do I think is more important than what?" but "What do I think is most important, most lasting in life?" And after eight years, I can tell you that the answers can be found in a group of fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds who are capable of taking on nearly an entire play of Shakespeare and performing it with confidence, artistry, understanding, and palpable delight—delight in the work, delight in one another, and delight in the opportunity to share the fruits of their labor with all of us.

I offer infinite thanks to you, Katherine, to my fellow parents, to specialty teachers, and to staff. And to you graduates, I offer my highest congratulations ❋

The Denver Waldorf School at Twenty-Five

"We see the need for it—we will do it!"

By Joan Condon and Ina Jaehnig



On a crisp, golden Michaelmas season afternoon in the autumn of 1999, hundreds of present and former students, teachers, and parents gathered to celebrate the Denver Waldorf School's twenty-fifth birthday. City officials closed the street in front of the school to accommodate the large crowd that came to see a Michaelmas pageant involving all the school's students. The pageant concluded with a stirring Michaelmas song sung by the whole school and accompanied by the school orchestra. A joyful mood of accomplishment and optimism prevailed.

The Denver school stands on the harsh Colorado soil at a place where the plains and high mountains meet without any transition, where the cold winds from the north and the warm breezes from the south can create sudden turbulence, and where the mediating quality of water is missing. Preparation for the future school on the rough soil of this cowboy country began in 1939 when a small group of spiritual seekers in the Denver area learned about Anthroposophy, committed themselves to it, and started an active working with it that was to continue for decades. This preparation of the soil beckoned the planting of seeds for further development of anthroposophical activity in Denver.

Early in this article the Christian Community is mentioned as having played an important role in the founding and life of the Denver Waldorf School. For readers unfamiliar with the Christian Community it should be explained that it is a movement for religious renewal founded on the work of Rudolf Steiner. It began in the second decade of the twentieth century when Protestant clergy in Germany asked Steiner how they might apply the teachings of Anthroposophy to individual and communal religious life. There are today several hundred Christian Community congregations in the world, most of them in western Europe. There are about fifteen Christian community congregations in North America, served by about twenty priests. The Christian Community is not directly connected with the Anthroposophical Society nor with the Waldorf movement. Many members of the Anthroposophical Society and persons involved in the Waldorf movement belong to the Christian Community, but many, perhaps most, do not.

R.E.K.

First, in 1971, came the Christian Community. Just as the aspen trees are the nursemaids to the seedling pines in the Colorado mountains, the Christian Community fostered, tended, and nurtured the birth of the Denver Waldorf School. From the beginning, the Christian Community and the school have fructified each other in their separate endeavors and social responsibilities.

When the Christian Community work began, the Reverend Diethart Jaehnig's congregation discovered that he had taught for several years in the Stuttgart Waldorf School and that he had earned a diploma in curative education under Karl Koenig, founder of the Camphill movement. A group within the community formed and asked to explore Waldorf Education under Reverend Jaehnig's guidance. The work of this group led to visits during the 1970s by leading anthroposophists from around the world and to many meteoric lectures on Waldorf Education. Diethart and the group realized that these "cosmic showers" were momentarily inspiring, but that ongoing work was needed also. So continuing workshops on Waldorf Education were established. These workshops helped inspire some members of the group to move to where established Waldorf schools existed, and others to enter anthroposophical training centers and then take up anthroposophical professions in different parts of the country.

Perceiving the need, longing, and desire of the parents in this group for their children to experience the reality of Waldorf Education, Diethart, his wife, Ina, and Margot Wilson, the daughter of the leaders of the anthroposophical group in Denver, decided after some months to begin a small preschool. Although the life of each of them was already full and busy and there was no funding for beginning a school, these three responded to the call with an earnest "We see the need for it—we will do it" attitude. The Jaehnigs' living room became the seedbed of the preschool. The Jaehnig children's toys were the school toys. It soon became apparent that the seedling school would need a bigger field in order to grow.

On September 29, 1974, the school secured its first home in the Sunday school rooms of a church across the street from a large and beautiful park. The teachers responded



Children at play on the campus of the Denver Waldorf School

to the longing of the waiting parents and the needs of the waiting children with "We see the need for it—we will do it." Their commitment brought the school into being. There were no salaries during the first year, and only token salaries for the next few years.

The school outgrew several facilities and finally found a permanent home in a dilapidated, drab old school building surrounded by gravel and dirt, where the dandelions had to be pampered to grow. The teachers during the early years were not only teachers but were also the school's administrators, janitors, painters, plumbers, landscapers, groundskeepers, fund-raisers, and chauffeurs. The demands on the teachers were so great that, during one painting session, one of the teachers fell asleep while standing on a ladder painting a ceiling and was awakened only by her fall to the floor!

The stress of the work brought the differences among the teachers to the surface. This led to a polarization of the faculty over the issue of the role of Anthroposophy in the school, and whether we were one school or separate one-room schoolhouses in the same building. Each teacher demanded independence and freedom, some to the point that mutual goals, in service to the school, could never be reached. The struggle resulted in a split-off school being formed by four of the teachers—these being the ones who were not comfortable with the role of Anthroposophy in the school. Some families stayed at the school, some went to the new school, and, sad to say, many turned away from Waldorf Education altogether.

The school went from having some 180 students during the debacle year to thirty-eight in the next. The remaining teachers looked at combining classes, keeping the mortgage payments current, and the myriad other aspects of keeping the school alive and decided, "We see the need for it—we will do it!" Those were hard times. Several teachers rented and lived in unused upstairs classrooms, and the faculty were sometimes paid in part with food rather than money. But slowly a healthy atmosphere was restored in the building, and the school began to heal.

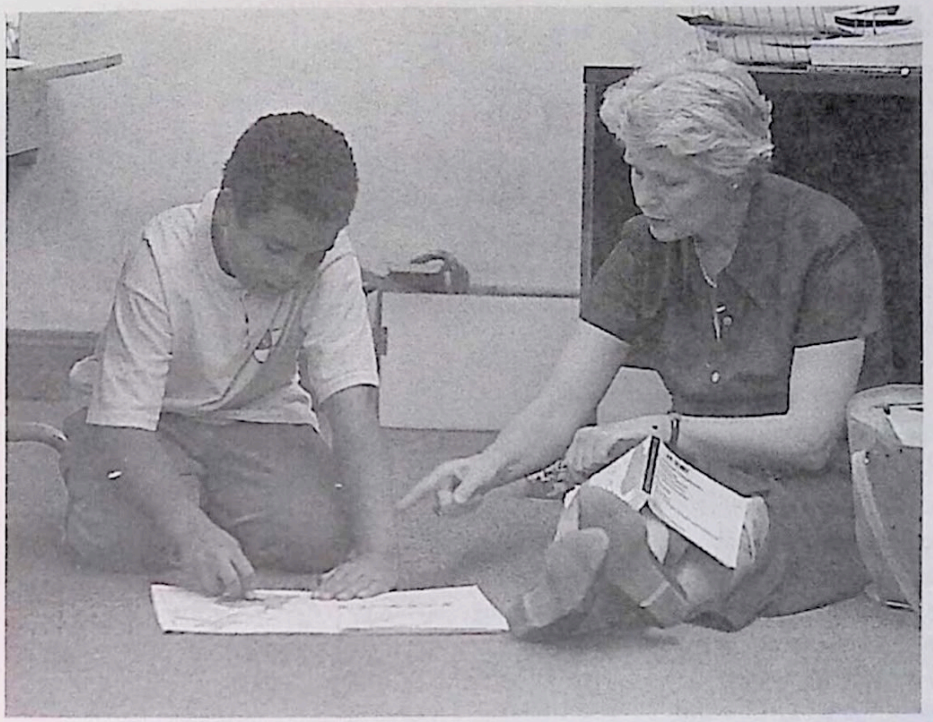
To support the renewal of the school, the Stuttgart Eurythmeum sent outstanding eurythmists Hayo and Isabelle Dekker to Denver for a year and a half. They taught eurythmy and breathed life back into the school community with wonderful artistic performances and festivals. They brought a healing balm that ensured the school's survival. The school has always recognized eurythmy and other artistic activities as the lifeblood for the rest of its work. This being a reality for the teachers results in the students' appreciation and love for eurythmy.

After two-and-a-half years the other school folded at Easter time. To preserve the integrity of Waldorf Education in Denver, the Denver Waldorf School took in students from that school for the rest of the year with no tuition charged. Over the years, the rift began to heal. Some of the teachers and parents came back, and the school community was able to build trust and find new ways of working together. Now there are dedicated teachers in the school who were parents at the split-off school.

The Denver Waldorf School has always chosen to be an inner-city school. This means cramped quarters and the innovative use of space. Ethnic diversity is one of the school's priorities and is slowly becoming a reality. Over the years, many local people have joined the school, becoming loyal and dedicated teachers and administrators. In the early years, many teachers came and left, but the core of founders has remained, even to the present day. The present full-time teachers average more than twelve years of service to the school.

Early in the school's existence, the faculty realized a support system for emergency situations was needed. This led to the creation of the Teachers' Emergency Fund to which teachers contribute voluntarily. A group chosen by the faculty responds to requests from colleagues when a crisis occurs in a teacher's life. This fund has helped in many hardship situations in a truly supportive way.

As graduates of the school (including children of teachers) came back to tell us about their experiences in the huge public high schools, the need for a Waldorf high school became increasingly evident. In 1990 a group of parents from the third-grade class formed the first high school committee, and they were soon joined by other parents and by faculty of the school. Meeting monthly for



Cofounder Ina Jaehnig helps a student after school.

years, this group prepared the way for the opening of the high school. This, despite minimal funding, took place in the autumn of 1995.

A facility had been found within walking distance of the school. But battles with the city over building codes caused the school to be housed in a neighborhood coffeehouse and in the public library. The students were thrilled to be educated in such appropriate places! The fragrance of coffee, sometimes accompanied by music, wafted into the classrooms, and the availability of coffee between classes was immensely appreciated by some students and teachers. Classes in the library offered easy access to research materials. Having a good relationship with the neighborhood has always been important to the school, and our sojourn in the library and coffee shop certainly aided this.

With the help of many part-time teachers, the high school has always offered a full Waldorf curriculum. It has now graduated two classes and has become a well-established part of the whole school. The graduates, present students, and their parents often express their heartfelt thankfulness for the education the students receive and for the harmonious, supportive atmosphere of the high school.

Michaelmas Day—the feast of St. Michael, the courageous slayer of the dragon—which falls on September 29, and the Michaelmas season have always played an important role in the life of the Denver Waldorf School. Throughout the school's history, times of crisis and decision making seem to have presented themselves during Michaelmas. Again and again, just at this time of year, the school has been called upon to step forward with clarity, courage, and certainty to meet the challenges that come toward it on every level. This is one reason that a Michaelmas image was selected for the school's twenty-fifth birthday poster. Taking the school's Michaelmas connection to heart, we at the school hope to be able to move into the future with courage and confidence, seeing the newly arising needs and doing what is called for. ❊

Joan Condon *is a native of Denver. Both her parents were anthroposophists, but because they chose to be reticent with their childen about their beliefs, Joan discovered Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education first as an adult, in 1971. She soon quit her job as a public high school teacher and in 1973-74 attended the Waldorf Teacher Training Institute in Detroit. One of the founding teachers at the Denver Waldorf School, Joan is now in her twenty-sixth year with the school.*

Ina Jaehnig, *a native of Germany, attended the Waldorf School in Stuttgart from grades one through twelve and then trained to be a Waldorf teacher. She came to the United States in 1971 and was active in preparing the way for the Denver Waldorf School. A founding teacher, she has been with the school for twenty-six years.*

Ina *and* ***Joan*** *each have served as kindergarten teacher, class teacher, foreign language teacher, high school teacher, board member, college chair, and AWSNA representative. Ina also teaches summer courses at Rudolf Steiner College and is a member of the AWSNA Board of Trustees and of the Pedagogical Section Council of North America.*

Aspects of Adult Education in the Light of Anthroposophy:

A Former Student's View

By Norman Davidson

More than twenty years ago, when I was a Waldorf teacher in England, Friday nights were sacred. For six years nothing could keep me from walking about a mile to the country railroad station and taking a train to London. There, the subway rattled me to the graceful city gardens and quaint sidewalks of Bloomsbury, where I climbed to the top room of a huge Victorian building where evening classes were held by the Inner London Education Authority. Sometimes I was late and could hear the strong Swiss accent of the maestro booming within. Behind the door, the room was full of points, lines, planes, chalk dust, and a lively crowd of people from all walks of life.

This was my weekly plunge into the exhilarating world of projective geometry, taught with full humanity, intensity, and humor by a master of the subject—the anthroposophist and mathematician Angelo Rovida. I start this article with this picture because these Friday nights contained living examples of at least two important experiences connected with anthroposophical adult education.

Norman Davidson *began his Waldorf career as a teacher trainee at Emerson College, England, thirty years ago. Without warning, a geometry class given there demonstrated that parallel lines intersect at infinity, and he has never been the same since. He then attended the projective geometry classes of the mathematician and artist Angelo Andes Rovida (1908-1998) in Bloomsbury, London, and was a Waldorf teacher in England for sixteen years. He emigrated to the United States in 1986, was director of teacher training at Sunbridge College, Spring Valley, New York, until 1998, and is now semiretired, having more time to write and to solve geometrical problems on restaurant paper napkins.*

Because new students joined the class at the start of the school year, the teacher had to start from the same, or similar, elementary aspects of the subject each September, before expanding it later in a variety of ways. There was a group of us who wanted to experience these expansions, which developed over a number of years, but to link in with these we had to start the subject each year from the beginning. Yet every September, to my surprise, I found myself running to the railroad station just as fast as at any other time, to experience the elementary classes all over again.

This was the first important experience for me as a student in adult education. The teacher was presenting things in such a way that I was moved to open myself without judgment, and mostly in silence, to someone's leadership in elementary things that I already knew well. His mastery of the subject, the aliveness of his approach, brought me to lay down my past knowledge and experience, and voluntarily follow him as my teacher as if it were for the first time.

I might learn, over and again, that (in general) three points in space lie in a plane, or that three planes in space pass through a point. I couldn't have it taught often enough by this person (or by others of similar approach), because it was always taught as something new. The teacher and I were both adults, we were equal in our rights and, in this case, equal in our knowledge of elementary projective geometry. As one might say, we met "ego to ego." Yet I voluntarily handled myself in such a way that I allowed something other than his ego—something to do with the being of a teacher—to step forward and enrich me anew each time out of transformed soul forces: out of soul forces that his ego had raised to a "spiritual self." This, in turn, brought me to raise my own inner life.

This was the first thing that I learned about the psychology of a successful adult education—

that I had first to open myself, laying aside my own subjectivity—and genuinely listen to the other human being: to hear the "spirit" of the other person bringing something new. The inability or failure to do this can be a problem in adult education today. We may not properly listen to or receive the individuality of the other person. And yet, people may not always speak or act in such a way that they can be properly listened to or received.

Instead, an overbearing "democratic" spirit can take too strong a hold within adult education, so that students are considered to be "equal" to each other inwardly, and teachers to be similarly equal to students. Everything is leveled in a realm where the individual should really reign supreme, as student or teacher. The discussion or discussion group can quickly become too dominant an element in a learning process which aims to give people freedom of expression and therefore access to their individuality, but in which something quite different is actually inclining to occur.

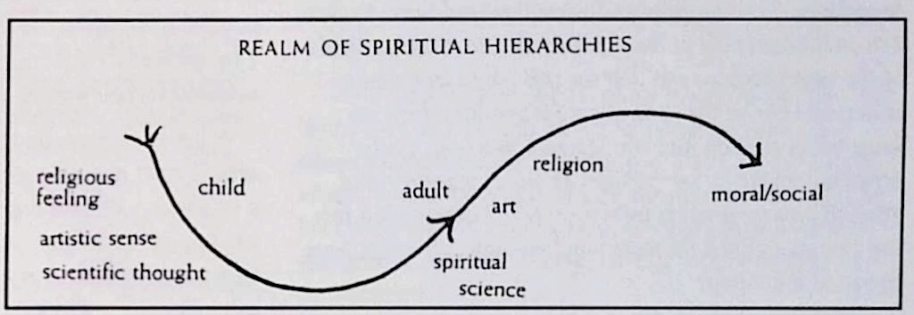
Individuality has a primary place in the psyche of the human being. The world of opinion, of subjective feeling, of past ideas, and the like, which a typical discussion may often arouse, is the very area that the individuality leaves alone. The individuality, which has to do with the whole human being, is nourished by the wholeness of human life, by the mystery of the individuality's oneness, within which multiplicity, paradoxically, resides. The word *discuss*, on the other hand, rightly comes from a Latin word meaning "to shake apart."

Not that one should not discuss. There is a definite place for it. We must be able to express our opinions freely, to analyze in a group, to preview an event, and so on. But the main questions concern learning: how one learns, and what are the different stages of learning.

For the adult, an important aspect of learning is self-education—though the child self-educates too, and self-education does not constitute the difference between these two age groups when they learn. The question then is: What are the best circumstances in which an adult may learn, particularly in a college setting? One could begin to answer this with another question: Why should an adult want to learn, particularly at a college working out of spiritual science or Anthroposophy?

In answering this, one might say that a successful student at an anthroposophical college can be one who—consciously or unconsciously—has experienced, or is experiencing, a change concerning his or her inner life and the outer world. In a sense, the individual comes to outgrow aspects of a conventional social environment, and this has its connection with what Rudolf Steiner called a reversal of the will. A new path, a spiritual direction, in one's relationships and activity, is sought.

This situation brings it about that adult education born out of spiritual science is the opposite to the education of the child. The teacher of children accompanies a descent from the spiritual hierarchies into the world; the teacher of adults, at first, accompanies an ascending mode. The diagram gives an indication of this process, and the quoted text that follows amplifies it.



Firstly, with its innate spiritual/religious feeling, the young child seeks the world. Later, the adult seeks the hierarchies again and out of this can bring spiritual content into life tasks.

In a "free transcription" by the English Waldorf teacher, Jesse Darrell, of an article in German by Helmut Kugelgen, one of the original Waldorf teachers in Stuttgart, it is said:

Today, with the renewal of the Mysteries through the work of Rudolf Steiner—and education is a part of this—the adult must develop himself in the opposite direction from that present in the old Mysteries and active in the growth of the child, art and religion must now be illuminated by spiritual knowledge, if unity once more is to prevail between the three realms of the cultural life.

The article continues:

Rudolf Steiner describes the way of the adult by saying:

"Anthroposophy at every point begins with science, enlivens its mental images artistically, and ends with religious deepening; begins, that is, with what the head can grasp, moves on to what over the widest field the word can form, and finishes with what fills the heart with warmth, with what leads it to certainty, so that the human soul can find itself at all times in its real home, in the spiritual realm. Thus along the way of Anthroposophy we are to learn to take our start from knowledge, raise ourselves up to art, and end in religious inwardness." *

This point is further developed in Steiner's lecture of August 5th, 1923, in Ilkley, England, where he says:

We need a harmony between knowledge, art, religion, and morality. In a new form we need this way which leads from the earth and along which we win our knowledge, passing through Inspiration and through the arts to the direct life in the supersensible, to a taking hold of the supersensible—so that we can again lead down into social life on the earth the supersensible which we have felt in religion and transformed into will. Only when we see the social question as one of morality and religion can we grapple with it in its full depths, and this we cannot do until the moral and religious life arises from spiritual knowledge.

The foregoing gives a picture of the direction that the inner life of the modern, spiritually seeking adult can take when approaching an educational institution—though for each individual's course of study much will depend on what experience, talents, and aspirations he or she brings. However, a certain healthy curricular archetype exists, and there are many instances in which a student's alive new working at something already familiar has been a rewarding experience as well as an extension of the student's capabilities.

Appropriate in this college context would be a foundation period of unspecialized Anthroposophy covering a wide range of subjects taught for their own inherent value—a whole from which specialization can, in its time, healthily and organically emerge. These foundation activities form the spiritual heart of the college, and in them can be found the adult's propensities as indicated in the diagram. A second period of specialization—in teacher training, for example—could arise out of this, and could include practical work in schools, followed by an apprenticeship in a school and the start of a new career.

This threefold process follows the one used by Rudolf Steiner in the main presentation of his own teacher training course in Stuttgart—the lecture course published as *Study of Man* (retranslated and issued as *The Foundations of Human Experience*). Here Steiner divides his course into three parts, the first concentrating on the soul (feeling) aspect of the human being, the second on the spiritual (levels of consciousness) aspect, and the third on the physical aspect. In life, these three aspects, or stages, overlap, and all three can occur, in various forms, simultaneously. However, a recognition of these three stages can be found in a college with an unspecialized foundation period where the heart and mind of the student is first reached out to in a variety of activities; a second period of fully conscious motivation toward a specific area of life; and a third period where practical, external activity is properly entered. The process then continues into work or career activity in life where it finds its fulfillment.

I now return to the opening themes of this article and my encounter with adult education as a student. When the Bloomsbury class was over on Friday evenings, most of the students gathered in a café nearby and continued the subject into ever deeper realms of geometry, covering paper napkins, or whatever came to hand, with lines and points—some of the lines mentally reaching across London and England to infinity and some of the points residing at infinity itself. This activity risked my missing the last train home, but it was worth it, and each of us stood the others a round of drinks until about midnight. One night I went up to the counter for an order, and the waiter leaned over and asked rather shyly: "What is it you people talk about here every Friday? Is it religion or something?"

"Why religion?" I asked.

"Because," he answered, "you are always so enthusiastic and wild over what you discuss."

"It's geometry," I said.

"Never!" he answered, wide-eyed. "I don't believe it."

What causes such enthusiasm and involvement in a subject—any subject? One factor is the student. The student must give the teacher something, ego to ego, as a social equal. Today the

student must learn how to learn, and this involves giving the teacher the opportunity of being allowed to be a teacher in the proper sense—being allowed to be someone who has researched his or her subject in an independent way and has something individual to bring. The student must lay aside past knowledge and allow the teacher to be someone from whom one can learn anew. This means listening out of strength, not weakness. The strong, healthy listener is able to lay aside, when required, personal prejudices, opinions, and attitudes.

Given this situation, the teacher can outwardly speak or work in a way that transcends his or her ordinary, everyday self. Words and actions can take flight in freedom, and the individual spirit of the teacher can find expression. This can have a connection to what Anthroposophy calls the "spirit self." Through self-development in spiritual science, something beyond the merely personal can be active, but not in any superior sense. On the contrary, the nature of the spirit is to lay itself at the service of other human beings. Then students can receive something that leaves intact their own individuality and freedom, and out of this they can make the subject their own. This calls upon the spirit self and the individual initiative of the student, and teacher and student are working together on a mutually inspired level.

This process is usually quite different from formal group work and discussion, which also have their place in the adult educational scene. But before there can be true interchange, there must arise something out of the realm of individual initiative and research, however it is presented—in lecture form, seminar, Socratic exchange, or in some other form. This can be followed, at best, by human conversation and then by the individual taking away inner thoughts and feelings from the educational encounter, living with them, and allowing them to grow.

I choose the term "conversation," the word having originally been associated with people living or "turning about" (Lat., *verse*) with each other, later being applied to talking together. I interpret a conversation as a living, free sharing of thoughts and feelings between people who are all "equal as egos" to each other. Hence the lively "religious" conversations in the Bloomsbury café after an experience of active receiving in class, and followed by a week of personal inner work, often with pencil and paper.

The important thing today is that adult education is an alive and human activity, and a vital aspect of this, among others, is speech. Speech is a living thing, a force, which can work between people whether in quiet exchange or in a presentation. It can work if the person has something original and human to convey, which is allowed to live in the speech, and if the listener is active in listening. There can be shortcomings on both sides, ending up in the abandonment, for example, of formal verbal presentations.

In education today we also often want to make things easy and pleasant, forgetting that education is not simply the acquisition of factual knowledge and skills, but involves the inner development and growth of the human being. Because of this developmental aspect, both educator and educated learn and grow together. The aim should be that the student comes to surpass the teacher—though the student may have already done so in many ways.

As said earlier, we have to learn again how to learn—how to open ourselves and receive the other human being. Learning is work, teaching is work. These two activities, between adults, can be taken up with a common understanding within a spiritual scientific setting, or any other setting for that matter.

No authority is sought by the teacher. He or she seeks only to cultivate a mood of genuine service to, and listening inwardly to, the needs of the student. This results in the student remaining inwardly free and independent, and able to work on a spiritual level equal with the teacher.

Out of this spirit of inner freedom and independence, the student can give the teacher the opportunity of being able to take responsible initiative (out of research and spiritual work) in a new sense—arising out of loving insight into the subject and reverent service to the student. The outcome is that the deeper needs and questions of the student are, in fact, reached in a direct way, and a spiritual event of adult education has taken place. ❋

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* From "The Religious Element in the World School Movement," an article in *Towards the Deepening of Waldorf Education* (Dornach, Switzerland: Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, Goetheanum, 1991)

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The article, "Gnomes, Olms, and other Queer Folk," is as charming and guileless as the letter. It begins:

We parents and teachers, striving to do what is right for our children, are confronted almost daily by challenges, large and small. One such challenge has to do with the elemental beings at work in nature. Until the modern era, people in every culture were aware of and experienced what we, in English, call gnomes, sylphs, undines, and so on. The folk literature of traditional cultures is filled with the doings of these beings—as are, for example, the fairy tales of the Germanic peoples, preserved by the brothers Grimm. But in our time adults, at least, have lost the eyes to see the elemental spirits of nature, these offspring of the angels. Yet, our little children see them, talk to them, sing to them—and ask us questions about them. How can we prepare ourselves to answer questions about these busy but invisible beings, questions our children inevitably ask when we garden or walk in the woods with them?

It is not easy. But each of us can revive our imagination. It was once of course the imagination of a child and can regain some of that lost innocence and clarity. We can look at rocks and trees to see their need for some kind of understanding companionship. We can study birds in flight to appreciate the helpful beings who steer them north or south at the right time, and we can share their joyous love of the air. We can look into streams and brooks to discover what the undines are up to.

Also, there are a number of excellent children's books with stories and illustrations depicting elemental beings. Some of these are illustrated by gifted and even inspired artists. These books, while meant for children, can be of immense help in helping adults rediscover this lost world. [Ruth then comments on a number of children's books about elemental beings. Please see the Recommended Reading for a list of those books she liked and approved of.]

It is wonderful that we have so many fine books with which to nourish our own imagination and sense of beauty and that of our children. But we should also create and tell our own stories to our children and to invent or find our own little verses for them. When we do this, the children will surprise us by bringing their own lively imaginations into play.

Once a first-grade class was playing in a wooded area near the school. While the other children roamed about, one quiet, shy girl sat with the teacher on a log. The two set out acorn cups and leaves for a tea party. "Who will come to our party?" asked the girl. "The fairies," answered the teacher casually. "The real ones or the make-believe ones?" asked the girl.

Young children can have a sublime understanding of the world. It is our privilege and responsibility as adults to share, protect, and nourish this fragile blessing of childhood.

This article is among the last things that Ruth Pusch wrote. She died on Christmas Day, 1999, at the Fellowship Retirement Community in Spring Valley, New York, after a brief illness. ❊

The following verses are from the *Calendar of the Soul* as translated by Hans and Ruth Pusch. The first is for the first week in March, the time of Ruth's entrance into this life. The second is for Christmas week, during which Ruth crossed the threshold back into the spiritual world.

Within the light that out of world-wide heights
Would stream with power toward the soul,
May certainty of cosmic thinking
Arise to solve the soul's enigmas—
And focusing its mighty rays,
Awaken love in human hearts.

The spirit child within my soul
I feel freed of enchantment.
The heart-high gladness has
The holy cosmic Word engendered
The heavenly fruit of hope,
Which grows rejoicing into worlds afar
Out of my being's godly roots.

Recommended Reading:

The following children's books about elemental beings in nature received the Ruth Pusch imprimatur.

Nat-Hat by Gertrude Teutsch (Spring Valley, N.Y.: Mercury Press, 1999)

Pico the Gnome by Martina Mueller (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1998)

Dance of the Elves by A. Linnell and V. Auer (Mercury Press, 1984)

The Little Troll by Ronald Heuninck and Thomas Berger (Floris, 1990)

Side by Side:
A Summer Program for Young People

By Ronald E. Koetzsch



It is not easy to be a young person today. Young people face a complex and ominous world that promises only to become more complex and more ominous. They are subjected to a media system that wishes to shape their thoughts, feelings, and behavior to suit its own purposes. Yet still the impulse for self-knowledge, for community, and for service is alive among today's young people.

Sunbridge College is an anthroposophical college located in Spring Valley, New York, about thirty miles from New York City. The college is largely concerned with the training of Waldorf teachers but has a variety of other programs. One of these, "Side by Side," seeks to help young people in their desire to understand themselves, to live with others, and to make a positive contribution to the world.

Side by Side offers a three-week intensive summer program for young people between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two. Participants come from various ethnic and social backgrounds and from different parts of the country. Typically about half have attended a Waldorf school.

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Portrait: Ruth Pusch *continued*

Story of the Root Children by Sibylle von Olfer [1905] (Floris, 1997)

The Sun Egg, The Flowers' Festival, et al., by Elsa Beskow (Floris)

The Complete Book of Flower Fairies by Cicely Mary Barker [1923] (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1997)

Children of the Earth, et al., by Freddie Langeler (Kabouter, 1996)

The Tomten by Astrid Lundgren (Coward, McCann, Geoghegan, 1968)

Ruth also recommended two books for adults about the elemental spirits: *Nature Spirits* and *Fairy Worlds and Workers,* both by Marjorie Spock and Ingrid Gibb, and published by the Anthroposophic Press (Hudson, N.Y.) in 1975 and 1980, respectively.

Editor's Column

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Where there is a Waldorf school, there is usually a branch of the Anthroposophical Society, and most branches are involved in adult education. There are also two full-time anthroposophical colleges in North America, and a variety of part-time and summer programs. While these are to a large degree concerned with training Waldorf teachers, some of the programs available are concerned primarily with personal enrichment—inner development, artistic skills, and so on—and are not focused on teacher training. These are open to anyone who is interested in personal development.

There is no need to suffer from WOES. We can give to ourselves the same gift we are giving to our children: the possibility of being a person who is consciously and actively involved in our own evolution. ✻

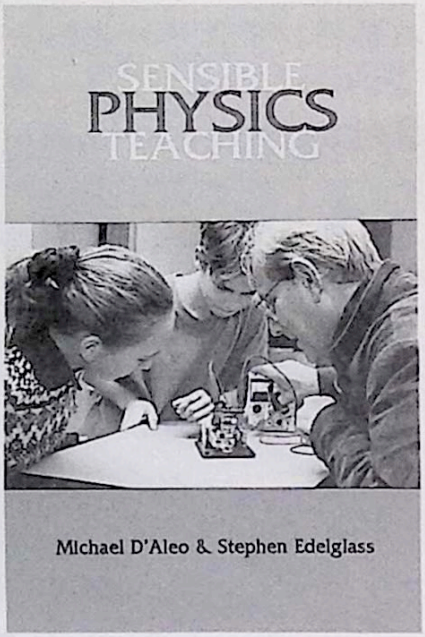
Book Review

Sensible Physics Teaching

By Michael D'Aleo and Stephen Edelglass

Parker Courtney Press
(Chestnut Ridge, N.Y.), 1999
160 pages $16.75

Reviewed by Ronald E. Koetzsch



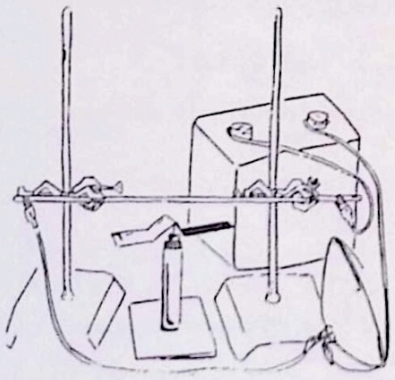
Both authors of this book are experienced teachers of science. Stephen Edelglass, Ph.D., has taught physics at the Green Meadow Waldorf High School in Spring Valley, New York, for many years and also teaches at Sunbridge College in Spring Valley. Michael D'Aleo has been a Waldorf class teacher and currently teaches physics at the Spring Hill Waldorf High School in Saratoga Springs, New York. Their book is a great boon to Waldorf class teachers and will also be of interest to Waldorf parents.

The teaching of science in Waldorf elementary schools is based on the phenomenological or sense-based approach. The basic ideas of this approach were first articulated by the great German man of letters Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832. The method as developed and used by the authors of *Sensible Physics Teaching* incorporates the philosophical traditions of twentieth-century phenomenology (Edmund Husserl, et al.) and takes, as its starting point and foundation, the observation of natural phenomena with the human senses.

Through careful observation, sense-based science describes phenomena, discovers relationships between them, and describes conditions under which a certain event is to be expected. It does not look behind the world of experience for explanations; it does not construct imaginary hypothetical models as does standard science.

Typically, in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades Waldorf students spend about one week each year studying each of the three following topics in physics: thermal physics (cold and warmth); optics; and electricity and magnetism. In addition, sixth graders also do a one-week block on acoustics, seventh graders one on mechanics, and eighth graders one on hydraulics and aeromechanics.

The emphasis throughout is on the experience of and careful observation of phenomena. During the sixth-grade acoustics block, for example, the children observe and describe how sound is experienced with various mediums—air, water, metal, and so on; they work with a monochord, or single, mounted sounding string, to discover the relationships between the musical intervals; and they see how different sounds cause varied patterns to appear in the mixture of sand and powder on a Chladni plate. In the seventh-grade optics block, the children study various reflective phenomena in mirrors, water, and so on. Also they make a *camera obscura*. The classroom is rendered totally dark by putting black paper on the windows, and then one hole the diameter of a pencil is cut into the paper. An inverted image of the outside scene suddenly appears on the wall opposite the hole!



Student drawing of experiment with battery.

The next day each child makes her own small version using a coffee tin or other cylinder. The eighth-grade block in aeromechanics often features the demonstration of the "Magdeburg hemispheres." Students replicate an experiment done first in eighteenth-century Germany, using a hand pump to create a vacuum inside a globe consisting

of two hemispheres. Although the two halves of the globe are not fastened in any way, it is impossible, because of the outer air pressure, to pull them apart.

Through these and many other experiments, students learn about common but sometimes surprising phenomena in nature, and come to discover lawfulness in the phenomena. They also develop certain capacities of body and soul. They learn to use their senses—their sight, hearing, smell, touch, and even taste with attentiveness and with discernment of subtlety and detail. They learn to perceive relationships between phenomena, and they gain confidence in their power to observe and to understand phenomena. On these abilities and confidence rest the capacity to think critically and to make personal judgments, a capacity emerging in the adolescent at this time. Sense-based science also fosters a sensitivity to what is outside oneself, be it a phenomenon of nature, something created by humans, or another human being—a sensitivity that can lead to a mature empathy with "the other." In this way it prepares the student for the more objectifying, abstracting tendency at the heart of standard modern science.

Sensible Physics Teaching is an important aid in the teaching of science in a Waldorf school. It begins with an explanation of the phenomenological approach to science and of its pedagodical value. Then it gives a carefully developed sequence of experiments that covers the whole middle-school physics curriculum. For each physics block in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades it provides a series of demonstrations and experiments with detailed directions. The presentations are clear, practical, and accessible. Also, for each experiment, the book lists apparatus and supplies necessary, as well as sources for these. One of these sources is AWSNA, which has produced three equipment kits, one for each of the middle school years.

This book is a godsend for a Waldorf teacher who is teaching a middle-school class or who will eventually teach a middle-school class. But it is also interesting reading for parents and others who are interested in the phenomena of the natural world, experienced in a manner unburdened by abstract theories and imaginary models. ❋

Side by Side continued from page 45

The first week focuses on leadership training and community-building. The interns live, work, and play together. Working with program director Karin Schaefer, workshop director Eva Nagel, and college faculty, they play games designed to build trust and communication, learn leadership skills; garden; swim; sing; hike; and engage in various artistic workshops. Each receives a large blank notebook to use as a journal and, through a guided journal curriculum, is encouraged to fill it with thoughts, sketches (including a self-portrait), photographs, poetry, and creative writing. The young people share the stories of their pasts and their visions of the future. Also, the interns have an opportunity to meet, listen to, and talk with mentors—social activists, community development leaders, therapists, and others—who share their experience and wisdom.

In the second and third week of the program the interns have responsibility for an arts and environment residential camp for children ages nine to eleven from disadvantaged areas in New York City and elsewhere in the region. Each intern is mentor/counselor to one or two children and has a chance to share what he or she has learned and discovered. Also, through the children the interns experience a world largely unknown to them.

In its first four years Side by Side has served almost sixty young people. For many of these, the experience has been a life-transforming one. One young woman wrote of her time at Side by Side:

The children were our best teachers. I learned the way to braid cornrows and the lyrics to a multitude of rap songs. I heard painful stories, as I expected to, as well as many beautiful and surprising ones. . . . I keep in contact with my camper, who now writes to me from her home in the projects, telling that she misses walking with me and loved drawing leaves together. I write back and I say, I miss you too! Since Side by Side, I've grown more than I ever thought I could. I feel as if I've been awakened to the incomparable beauty of the world. It has become for me a place offering knowledge and experience, not a dark and frightening mystery. I want to keep seeking the beauty in the world and share it with others. I am fascinated with the idea of diversity and exchange.

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