

Renewal

SPRING/SUMMER 2004 - VOLUME 13, NUMBER 1



*The Nine-Year Change
Movement Education
On-Site Marine Biology*

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

Nourishing the Imagination

When the child reaches the usual school age—at the time of the development of the new teeth—all teaching must be given in an artistic, pictorial form. This appeals directly to the child's life of heart and feeling, and out of this life everything else develops.

Education can thus be guided into a sphere that embraces the whole human being—the realm of art. This must be the aim of all our teaching to about the age of nine and a half. Pictures, rhythm, meter—these qualities must pervade all our teaching.

The child only begins to realize himself as a being apart from the world between the ninth and tenth year. Before this age, then, [we should not] convey anything to the child in which strong distinctions are made between himself and the outer world. We should speak of plants and clouds as living beings—as communicating with each other and with us—so that the child's view of nature and of the human being is filled with wonder and imagination. We must give him the feeling in an artistic way that just as he himself can speak, so everything that surrounds him also speaks.

If we educate in this manner, the child's life of feeling will be stimulated in a proper way, and the child will develop naturally and strongly both in body and soul.

—Rudolf Steiner
A Modern Art of Education
(Lectures given 1923)

A W S N A

CREDITS:

The cover painting is a watercolor done by Zahra Booth when she was a third grader at the Rudolf Steiner School, New York. This painting and the others on pages 36, 38–40 are from the Rudolf Steiner School exhibit: "75 Student Pieces Honoring the Role of Art in Waldorf Education." *Renewal* also thanks Sam Ritter, Grade 3, Shepherd Valley Waldorf School, Niwot, Colorado, for the image on page 4; Larry Canner and the Waldorf School of Baltimore for the photos on pages 6 and 13; Katrina-Marie Gimbel-Hall, Grade 5, Calgary Waldorf School, for the crayon drawing on page 9; Anne Riegel-Koetzsch for her illustration on page 14; Dianna Normanton for the photos on pages 20–24; Michael Garrett for the photo on page 25; Michael Fredrickson for the photo on page 26; James Henderson for the photos on pages 29–31; Jessica Weinstein for the illustrations on page 32; Ed Edelstein for the photos on pages 33–35; California State Prison in Folsom, Education Department, for the photos on pages 41–43; Eva Jo Meyers for the photos on pages 45 and 46.



From the Editor

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

Waldorf Education for Adults: The Next Frontier

In an article beginning on page 41 of this issue, Dale Hamad, a teacher in the California State prison system, describes how she and some of her colleagues have been using Waldorf methods to teach basic academic skills to prisoners. The image of incarcerated young men experiencing, perhaps for the first time, the world of art, fantasy, music, color, and morality, of convicted criminals learning the alphabet by drawing pictures that incorporate the letters into fairy-tale scenes, is very affecting.

The image is also important in that it points to a possible future application of Waldorf Education—the healing of adults. Rudolf Steiner referred to Waldorf Education as a healing education. Until now, Waldorf Education has been in the service of children. But what adult today, incarcerated or not, diagnosed with some ailment of the soul or not, feels he does not need healing on a deep level?

The education of Waldorf teachers involves, to some degree, such a healing process. Teacher education students are immersed in the arts—painting, drawing, speech, eurythmy, drama, music, singing—and in the handcrafts. Also, they study the inspiring worldview and ideas comprising Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy. After a full-time, two-year training, they are much different people than they were at its beginning.

But there are other ways that Waldorf Education could be used with adults. There could be, for example, a nine-month residential program called, for lack of a better name, "Project Renewal."

In the first month, the adult pupils would be, in effect, kindergartners. They have time each day for fantasy play, listen to stories told by their teacher, play circle games,

learn basic skills such as sweeping, sewing, and baking bread. Maybe they even have a nap each day. The "children" are given wholesome natural foods and are encouraged to go to bed by 7:00 PM each evening. Sounds pretty inviting already, doesn't it? Also, they do not read anything, do not watch television, and have no contact with the mass media.

In the second month, the adults are in first grade and experience the entire Waldorf first-grade curriculum, albeit in a condensed form. They are told fairy tales and draw pictures about them, learn to knit, model with beeswax, do nature observation, and so on. In the third month, with their teacher accompanying them, they enter second grade. They hear fables and legends, learn to write sentences, create main-lesson books, do mirror-image form drawing, paint animal forms, and again experience a year of the curriculum in a four-week period.

This pattern continues until the adult student has experienced the eight-year Waldorf curriculum. It would be interesting to see the effect of nine months of music, art, and crafts, of observing nature and working in a garden, of studying the whole course of human history and development, of learning the rudiments of a foreign language, of relearning patterns of movement through eurythmy and movement education, of learning to crochet, to sew, to model clay and carve wood, of hearing the life stories of extraordinary men and women, of learning about the religions of the world, of eating healthful food, and having wholesome exercise.

This year Waldorf Education celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary of serving children in North America. Perhaps sometime soon it will offer the gift of transformation to adults as well. I suspect there would be many interested.

EDITOR

RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

GRAPHIC DESIGNER & PRODUCTION MANAGER

HALLIE JEAN WOOTAN

ARTISTIC CONSULTANT

ANNE RIEGEL-KOETZSCH

CIRCULATION & ADVERTISING MANAGER

HALLIE JEAN WOOTAN

e-mail: hwootan@awsna.org

COPY EDITOR & PROOFREADER

ANNE RIEGEL-KOETZSCH

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

CHARLES H. BLATCHFORD, PhD

STAFF WRITER

THOMAS POPLAWSKI

PRINTER

SIERRA PRINTING, RANCHO CORDOVA, CA

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For information about Waldorf Education in North America, including a booklet listing all schools and initiatives, please contact:

ASSOCIATION OF WALDORF SCHOOLS
OF NORTH AMERICA

3911 Bannister Road · Fair Oaks, CA 95628-6805

phone: (916) 961-0927 · fax: (916) 961-0715

website: www.awsna.org · e-mail: awsna@awsna.org

Renewal

DEPARTMENTS

1 From the Editor

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

44 School Portrait

Rediscovering Waldorf Education in Thailand: A Waldorf Graduate's Year at the Panyotai School in Bangkok

BY EVA JO MEYERS



Books in Brief

12 *The Islamic Year*

BY NOORAH AL-GAILANI AND CHRIS SMITH

15 *Books for the Journey*

BY PAMELA J. FENNER, ANNE J. GREER, AND JOHN W. WULSIN, JR.

19 *The Healing Art of Eurythmy*

BY TRUUS GERAETS

35 *I Find My Star Curriculum*

BY TAMARA SLAYTON WITH LINDA KNODLE AND ANNE-MARIE FRYER

48 Book Review

Difficult Children—There Is No Such Thing

BY HENNING KÖHLER

49 Contacts Information Opportunities

Journal

A JOURNAL FOR
WALDORF EDUCATION

SPRING/SUMMER 2004 - VOLUME 13, NUMBER 1

ARTICLES

- 4 Paradise Lost
The Nine-Year Change
BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI
- 9 The Gift of No
BY HELENE McGLAUF LIN
- 13 Nobility, Rhythm, and Problem Solving
BY CRISTINA FREDRICKSON
- 16 Media and the Social Contract in the Waldorf School Community
BY SHELDON HIRT
- 20 Waldorf Education and "Physical Education"
BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH
- 21 Movement Education in Waldorf Schools
Recognizing the Unity of Body, Soul, and Spirit
BY JACQUELINE DAVIS
- 25 Children, Movement, Sports, and Competition
An Interview with Jaimen McMillan and Maureen Curran
BY MARC TURTLETAUB
- 29 Studying Nature in Nature
A Week on Hermit Island
BY JAMES HENDERSON
- 32 The Shore and I
BY ARIEL HENDERSON
- 33 Sea Worms, Tide Pools, Mudflats, and Anemones
Waldorf Seniors Study Marine Biology in Maine
BY EDWARD EDELSTEIN
- 36 In Their Own Words
Poetic Windows into Adolescence
BY DAVID SLOAN
- 41 Hope at the Periphery
Waldorf Methods in a Prison Environment
BY DALE HAMAD



Paradise Lost

The Nine-Year Change

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI

Matthew was an angel as a young child—sensitive, well-behaved, affectionate, often joyful, and often dreaming away on another plane. After turning nine, however, he soon changed into quite a different person. He was sometimes rude and critical and often very moody, if not downright wretched. He had definitely come crashing down to earth, but what a rude awakening for those around him!

Child development specialists have long recognized that between ages nine and ten children undergo a marked change. Some experts describe this transition as the crossing of the dividing line between early childhood and full childhood, while

others speak in more romantic terms of a “fall from grace.” The psychologist Louise Bates Ames has written a series of parent guides describing each year of child development. While her book on the eight-year-old bears the subtitle “Lively and Outgoing,” the book on the nine-year-old bears the more somber “Thoughtful and Mysterious” as its subtitle.

Almost a century ago, Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, studied the developmental stages of childhood. He identified three seven-year stages in the child’s passage from birth to adulthood. At birth the child emerges as an independent physical being in the world. But according to Steiner, the unique individuality or Ego of the child incarnates or takes hold of this body only gradually. In each of the seven-year stages the Ego manifests itself more fully.

The first glimmer of this individuality occurs when the child turns two. Taking place partway through the first seven-year period—from birth to age seven—this stage of development is commonly known as “the terrible twos.” What makes this time terrible is that the child is making his first concerted effort to be recognized as a separate person. An important milestone in this process occurs when, usually around the third birthday, the child begins to use the word *I* and to really understand what the word means.

The second seven-year period—age seven through fourteen—is marked by a significant watershed after the second year also. This is “the nine-year change,” or “nine-year crisis,” that Matthew experienced. It is a confusing transition for child and parents and may involve moments of crisis that are a foretaste of things to come during adolescence.

In the third seven-year period—fourteen through twenty-one—there is another important milestone, also at the end of the second year. Around the sixteenth birthday, the adolescent begins to manifest a deeper sense of self and a greater maturity. This fuller incarnation of the Ego is acknowledged in the tradition of “sweet sixteen” celebrations for girls and in giving sixteen-year-olds the right to drive an automobile, to work, and to leave school if they wish.

Prior to age seven or eight, most children are sunny, smiling, exuberant, joyful beings—little angels, for the most part. Around the ninth birthday, however, a tinge of melancholy and self-consciousness begins to creep in. Up to this time, the child has lived and learned through imitation, taking in the world around and echoing its moods and its patterns. Now, though, the harmonious resonance between child and world quickly fades. The child begins to separate from the world and finds herself standing apart and alone.

This shift in the experience of self and world is of course difficult for the child. Rudolf Steiner, in developing Waldorf Education, tried to help children deal with this experience. Thus, in the third grade, Waldorf children learn the story of Adam and Eve and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Also, in most Waldorf schools, during the Christmas season there is a performance by adults in the community of a medieval play—*The Paradise Play*—that vividly depicts this same story of the loss of innocence and the leaving of Paradise. The children are allowed to watch this play only after they have entered the third grade. The story of Adam and Eve is meaningful for the nine-year-olds because they are going through their own inner expulsion from Paradise.

Billy Collins, poet laureate of the United States, poignantly captures the essence of this age in a poem called “On Turning Ten”:

The whole idea makes me feel
like I'm coming down with something,
something worse than any stomach ache
or the headaches I get from reading in bad light—
a kind of measles of the spirit,
a mumps of the psyche,
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

You tell me it is too early to be looking back,
but that is because you have forgotten
the perfect simplicity of being one
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.
At four I was an Arabian wizard.
I could make myself invisible
by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.



But now I am mostly at the window
watching the late afternoon light.
Back then it never fell so solemnly
against the side of my tree house,
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage
as it does today,
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.
This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,
as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.
It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,
time to turn the first big number.
It seems only yesterday I used to believe
there was nothing under my skin but light.
If you cut me I would shine.
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,
I skin my knees. I bleed.©

This is a time of irritability and unsureness, of trepidation and aloneness. The young child's experience of being part of the world vanishes, and she now must learn to stand on her own. The eidetic or photographic memory of early childhood usually disappears, and the child needs to learn to memorize. Emotionally, the child experiences a withdrawal into the self for perhaps the first time, a shutting-out of the outside world.

The nine-year-old child can feel constrained by both space and time. Like the adolescent, the child now wants more independence and privacy. The nine-year-old may begin wanting his own room or private play space if he does not already have that. He especially needs space and time away from siblings to read or just to think—or to stare out at the late afternoon light. This new desire for privacy and solitude can be unsettling for the parent: "My little baby is becoming a

stranger with an inner, private life that I cannot be part of!"

The nine-year-old typically likes to plan her days and to know what is coming ahead of time. She also feels pressured and anxious about getting done all that she has to do. Now there are chores, music practice, homework, after-school lessons, and sports. The parent needs to respect the nine-year-old's continuing need

for non-organized time for play and for daydreaming. Wise parents teach their children, by word and by example, to take one thing at a time and to undertake only what they can comfortably manage. Parents even may take the initiative to limit a child's activities.

The nine-year-old child is yearning for autonomy, but parental warmth, affection, and support continue to be important. Though the child can be irritable and seems to want to push away, he still needs comforting and expressions of affection from the adults around him. A nine-year-old will sometimes hover near a parent, wanting and waiting for a reassuring hug but hesitant to ask for it. A child will sometimes be prickly and hypersensitive with one parent more than with the other, depending on the respective temperaments of child and parents. Sometimes one parent needs to step back and let the other be more involved with the child.

Many children have psychosomatic symptoms around this time. Heart palpitations, breathing problems, and headaches are not unusual. Nine-year-olds tend to be worriers, and some physical symptoms may be related to that. Nightmares—dreams of being chased or being bitten by a snake or even of being murdered—are not uncommon and probably no reason for great concern. Dreams of storms and runaway fires are also frequent.

For the nine-year-old, suddenly cut off from the world, forced to stand on her own, and beset perhaps by physical problems, anxiety is a dominant emotion. Hence, the child depends on the structure and guidance that watchful adults can give to provide stability and a sense of security. The child needs the solid authority of

teachers and a firm parental presence. Otherwise she will be overwhelmed by a sense of insecurity.

The nine-year-old likes to have rules. Adults need to be fair and consistent in enforcing them, however. Fairness is important for the nine-year-old. Though sensitive to being corrected, the child will accept remonstrance and even punishment if it seems just and if blame is shared by all responsible. That is because, along with his greater self-sufficiency, the nine-year-old is developing a conscience—an internal arbiter of what is right and what is wrong. He recognizes when he has failed to do right and even will confess a wrongdoing to adults because of an uneasy conscience. The nine-year-old expects honesty, fairness, and truthfulness from others—and from himself.

Usually during the ninth year, the child begins to reflect on issues like evil and death. The fairy tales heard at an earlier age helped prepare the child for meeting the world and its harsher aspects. But now the dreamy young child has become more awake and conscious, and the realities of life are no longer confined to fairy tales. In grappling with these new serious issues, the child experiences that she has something or someone inside that can stand up to these frightening external realities. Some parents change the bedtime prayer at this point to help with the new challenges the child is encountering. For example, when our two sons were very young, my wife and I used a simple verse that emphasized protection:

When I go to sleep at night,
An angel watches over me,
And fills my soul with flooding light,
And guides me to the stars so bright . . .

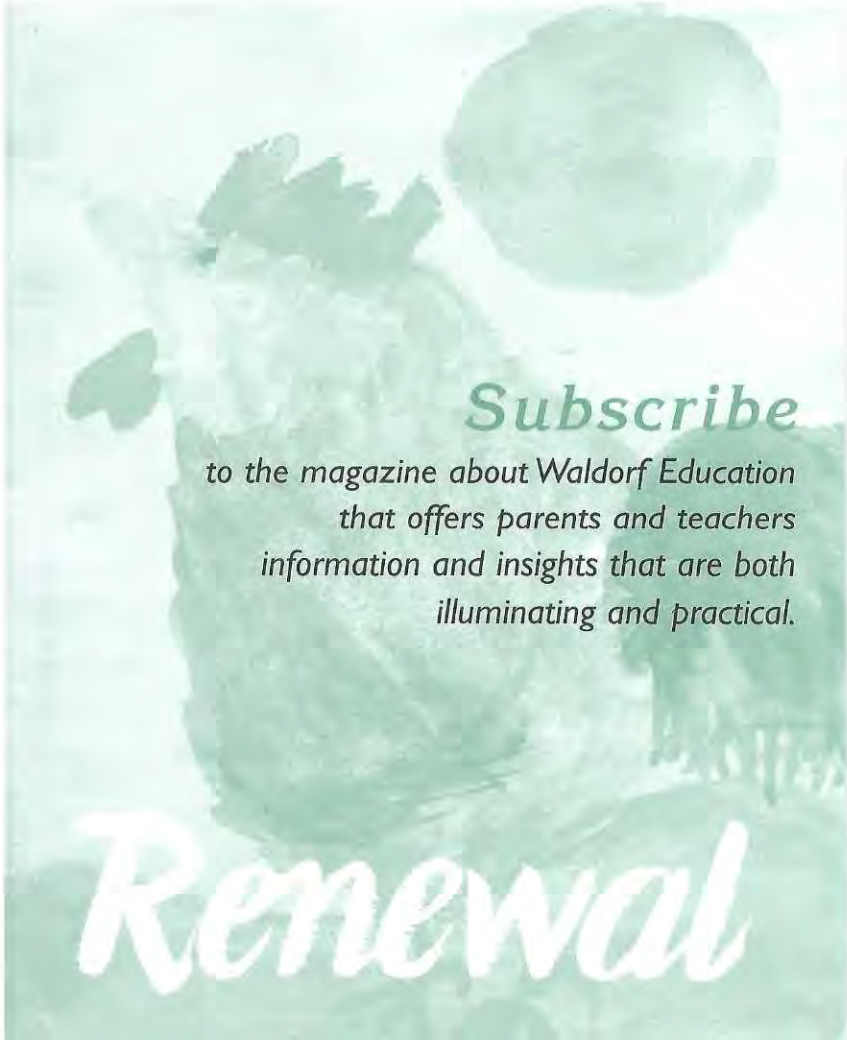
After our older son turned nine, we switched to something more complex, stressing uprightness and connection to others:

From my head to my feet, I am the image of God.
From my heart to my hands, His own breath do I
feel.
When I speak with my mouth, I follow God's will.

When I behold God everywhere, in mother and
father,
In all dear people,
In beast and in flower, in tree and in stone,
Nothing brings fear, but love to all that is around
me . . .

Though many nine-year-olds lose the interest in religion they had as eight-year-olds and may not want to go to church or Sunday school, they will pray.

The Waldorf curriculum seeks to help the child in dealing with these challenges of the nine-year change. In the third grade, when most of the children are in the early stages of the nine-year change and are interested in hearing about people's connection to God, they learn stories from the Old Testament.



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The fourth-grade curriculum provides a quite different experience with the study of the Norse myths. In these, the gods—like the children themselves and also their parents and teachers—have weaknesses, flaws, and moral lapses, and can be criticized. The stories give the children the imagination that they are brave warriors who must struggle against adverse conditions. The children live with images of the mighty Thor battling with his hammer and Vulcan beating iron at his forge. In speech exercises and in eurythmy class, the students stamp their feet to alliterative verses such as, “I war with the wind, with the waves I wrestle . . .” In many schools, the children engage in outdoor adventure activities during the fourth grade, activities that challenge them to overcome fears and limitations. Also, the introduction of

homework indicates to the child that the time has come for more serious things.

The changes that children undergo between ages nine and ten can be confusing and challenging for parents and teachers as well as for the children themselves. We adults need to be aware that these changes represent a necessary stage in the development of the child and that they do not go on forever. Also, we need to provide love, support, and guidance to our children during this transitional time of inwardness and loneliness. And we need to be ready to let go of our “little angels” and accept them as young men and women in the making. In the end, this stage will lead to a new self-assurance and sense of independence and identity in the child.

The fourth-grade children often do a eurythmy figure based on the five-pointed star and accompanied by a verse spoken by the teacher. As the child experiences himself as this star, with his head, two arms, and two legs as the five points, the verse by Rudolf Steiner expresses the self-empowerment that is the ideal for the next stage of childhood:

Steadfast I'll stand in the world,
With certainty I'll tread the path of life,
Love, I'll cherish in the depths of my being,
Hope shall be in all my doing,
Confidence I'll impress into my thinking.

The poem “On Turning Ten” by Billy Collins appeared in his book *Sailing Alone Around the Room* (Random House, 2001). We thank the publisher for permission to reprint it.

THOMAS POPLAWSKI, staff writer for *Renewal*, is a psychotherapist living in Northampton, Massachusetts. Thomas, a trained eurythmist, writes and lectures on parenting, Waldorf Education, and related topics. His wife, Valerie, also a eurythmist, is a kindergarten teacher at the Hartsbrook Waldorf School in Hadley, Massachusetts. Thomas and Valerie's two sons, ages eight and ten, are students in the school.

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The Gift of

No

BY HELENE McGLAUFILIN

The word *no* suggests limits, control, rejection, and finality. It is hard to see how this most simple and powerful expression of the negative can be a gift—an expression of concern and favor, an offer of assistance. But for parents, saying *no*, when done judiciously and appropriately, is a gift that their children need and deserve. It enables them to grow into responsible, balanced adults.

Every child must learn to live with the limitations of life in the world. There are societal rules that must be observed, unsafe acts that should be avoided, types of behavior that cannot be tolerated, chores that eventually must be done. To be a mature and responsible human being means to accept and cope with the natural limits life brings.

This gift of *no* teaches children they cannot have everything they want when they want it. It says, "You must consider other people and your environment before you act." It implies that many decisions are not up to children and that sometimes children must do things they do not wish to do. *No* helps to keep children safe. And, most humbly, this gift gives children a realistic view of life by saying, "You are not in charge of, or the center of, the world."

Nevertheless, saying *no* to our children and consistently following through on limits are among the hardest parenting skills to recognize, learn, and master. It is an art to use *no* wisely, to consciously avoid the danger of being overly restrictive and punitive and to be willing to discipline when necessary. There is an increasing confusion among parents today about the importance of discipline and a consequent reluctance to provide children with the instruction they need in accepting limits. The gift of *no* is becoming more difficult to give, for various reasons.

In North American culture today, choices and the freedom to choose are highly valued. An abundance of choices is apparent everywhere, from the supermarket to the arena of national politics, creating the illusion of limitless bounty and acquisition. Even limit-setting parents who diligently protect their children from exposure to the media and commercialism must contend with this ubiquitous and powerful cultural dynamic.

Some parents reject, on philosophic grounds, the idea that saying *no* to children can be instructive or healthy. They may believe children deserve unlimited choices or that children will learn how to make the right choices in the world without external guidance. They may wish to protect their children from the limits of a harsh world for as long as possible. Or they may adamantly believe saying *no* is mean, since children typically become upset when behaviors are not permitted and wishes are not fulfilled.

Other parents intuitively sense that saying *no* is in the best interest of children but find it difficult, perhaps impossible, to do. Those with gentle personalities do not easily find a firm voice. Some are exhausted by modern life and cannot muster the stamina that limit-setting demands. Other parents are troubled by guilt about not spending enough time with their children and are reluctant to face the struggles inherent in the process of limit-setting. Some are overcome by the anxiety new parents typically face about whether it is the "right" thing to do for a child.

Yet it is the right thing to do. Ultimately it is an act of love when parents teach their children at a young age fundamental messages about the limits of the world. The children learn an indispensable life lesson in the safety and shelter of their home by those who care most about them. These children develop a strong, settled place within themselves that respects *no* and all it means. They can then, without undue protest, accept limits from teachers, other authority figures, and from the world.

Setting limits should be a continuous process that starts soon after birth and continues into young adulthood. Very young children can experience the meaning of *no* in fundamental matters such as behavior toward others (not hitting or hurting), speaking respectfully to playmates and adults, and accepting the rhythm of the day—naps, mealtimes, and so on. If they are lovingly subjected to and learn about limits in these areas at an early age, they will accept them in later childhood as a matter of course.

With older children, parents can address limit-setting in more complex areas, such as completing chores, doing homework, and working cooperatively on teams and in groups. When a solid foundation has been laid in the early years, then the limit-setting during adolescence is simply a continuation of the process and less likely to become a battlefield. Curfews, decisions about what is safe and what is not, and limits on automobile use are approached with teens who fundamentally understand the limitations of the world and the finality of the word *no*. There are inevitably tears and anguish throughout this process for both children and parents, but with an inherent reward: the development of respectful, responsible young people.

Children who are not taught the meaning of *no* from their parents at a young age will inevitably face the difficulty of learning it outside the family. It is not a question of whether they will face it but when they will face it and by whom it will be taught. When this learning process does not take place in a gradual way in the home, it will take place abruptly in the outside

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world and will involve unnecessary stress and unhappiness for the child, for his peers, and for the adults who must impose limits. A child who has not developed the ability to accept a *no*, continues to seek what he wants when he cannot have it, suffers considerably when his wishes are not realized, and may use manipulative behaviors to bypass the finality of a *no*.

Consider two (hypothetical) children, Mary and John, both aged six, in a kindergarten class that is preparing to use percussion instruments to accompany a song. The teacher has given each child an instrument, and both Mary and John, along with other children in the class, do not receive the instrument they want. Both look very sad and seem reluctant to play their instrument.

The teacher says, "I know lots of people are disappointed they did not get the instrument they hoped for, but all the instruments are fun in their own way." John, who is used to accepting limits at home, shrugs and starts to play the maracas. Within a few minutes he is happily singing the song with the rest of the children. Mary, unused to accepting limits set at home, remains disappointed after the teacher has spoken. She pouts, saying, "I don't want to play the drum," then breaks into tears as the teacher continues with the song. Soon everyone is happily engaged, focused on singing and playing, except Mary, who has refused to participate.

The reactions of these two children illustrate the gift of *no*. John has been given this gift in his early years and is familiar with the feeling of not getting what he wants. He knows, from experience, that disappointment passes and that things will be easier for him if he lets go of what he wanted and accepts the reality before him. He says to himself, "Oh, well, I wanted the drum, but the teacher said *no* and she means it. Maybe these maracas will be fun."

Mary has not had the benefit of *no* in her life and is not used to an adult setting limits on what she may have and what she may do. She is not familiar, as John is, with the inner process of being disappointed and moving on. Mary is thinking, "If I stay sad, maybe the teacher will give me the cymbals." Other adults in Mary's life usually give her what she wants if

she waits long enough. But the teacher is different, and it will take many unhappy times and missed opportunities for Mary to learn this process of accepting disappointment and moving on.

It is important to realize how difficult life can be for a child like Mary, who has not had basic training in accepting limits. Whether she is at school, visiting a friend's home, or with relatives, incidents like the one described will occur. Several or many times a day, Mary will miss out on the learning and fun her environment can provide her, because she cannot accept the *no* of the world. She will spend considerable time and energy learning to accept this *no*. If she is fortunate, she will learn it in childhood and adolescence with the help of the world and adults outside her family. If she is unfortunate, she will struggle her whole life with accepting limits, following rules and laws, and respecting authority.

Learning to Give the Gift

Some parents have the good fortune to come naturally to limit-setting with their children and do not find saying *no* difficult or distressing. But for most of us, saying *no* requires a strength of will and a certainty of conviction that we must painfully learn, develop, and maintain. What follows are ideas to help the "most of us" in the latter category as we develop and maintain our ability to set limits:

- Develop a strong conviction that saying *no* is in fact a gift that benefits our children. Although children protest—sometimes vehemently—when we say *no*, they need the safety and protection it offers and are often deeply reassured when we say it. Look beyond the tears and tantrums to the lesson of life being offered.
- Remain calm and abide in that calm when your child protests or throws a tantrum following the establishment of a limit. Develop an image or an idea that can give you strength when you need it. "Limits are like a loving hug" is an image/idea that has helped me tremendously. While my child

Children who are
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parents at a
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the family.

or a child I am working with is protesting my *no*, I visualize a large embrace of love and safety.

- Begin by saying *no* emphatically about small things of importance and do not change your mind or give in. Saying *no* is a muscle that can be exercised and strengthened over time. Keep practicing, and you will find it easier to be firm over increasingly complex matters and issues.
- Develop a repertoire of *no* phrases that are comfortable for you, particularly if you dislike the word itself. "People are not for hitting" works as well as "No hitting." Others include: "We do not do that in our family"; "I cannot let you do that"; "I do not expect you to understand, but I expect you to do what I am asking"; "I wish you wouldn't. . ."
- Find as a support another parent who says *no* and shares your values in limit-setting. When your children are young, this might mean a fellow parent who values an early, consistent bedtime; in middle childhood, someone who does not allow "R" movies; in adolescence, a parent who insists on curfews. Call this parent when faced with a limit-setting challenge to get advice and support.

Giving the gift of *no* takes foresight and maturity. It is a gift that we give our children when they are too young to understand, a gift the value of which they will appreciate only in their adulthood. Children come to understand the gift through the repetition of our giving and their acceptance in receiving it time after time through childhood. When limits are truly received, accepted, and learned, all of society is benefited by the young adults who are prepared to be responsible citizens.

HELENE MCGLAUFLIN, MEd, LCPC, is a counselor and educator and a writer of nonfiction and poetry. She has worked in public education for twenty years as a teacher and counselor and has written numerous articles and booklets about helping children through parenting, education, and counseling. Helene lives with her husband and two teenagers in Bath, Maine.

BOOKS

in Brief

The Islamic Year: Surahs, Stories and Celebrations

BY NOORAH AL-GAILANI AND CHRIS SMITH
ILLUSTRATED BY HELEN WILLIAMS
REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

Hawthorn Press
Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2002
\$26.95 • 215 pages

Human history, including the present time, is full of misunderstandings and conflicts between religious groups. If that is ever to change, the study of the religions of the world must be a part of every child's education.

The Islamic Year is an important, timely, and much-needed book. It is an excellent introduction—meant for children—to the history, beliefs, practices, and traditions of Islam, a religious community that comprises one of six human beings on the earth and that is playing a crucial role in the world today.

After an opening chapter, titled "Before Muhammad," the book follows the career and life of the prophet Muhammad in chapters called "Birth," "Prophethood Begins," "A Miraculous Journey," and so on. In each of these chapters there is:

- a narrative of the events in Muhammad's life during that period;
- a description of the Islamic festivals that derive from those events;
- activity ideas—games, artistic and craft activities, cooking recipes, songs, and music related to the festivals; and
- entertaining and edifying stories connected to a particular theme such as obedience, faith, prayer, justice, and generosity.

The book is profusely illustrated with maps, depictions of Muslim festivals and daily life, Arabic calligraphy (including all of the ninety-nine names of Allah), and renderings of Muslim architecture and art.

The Islamic Year is a useful tool for teachers and for parents who want to give their children an understanding of this global faith and who may want, in the process, to gain a deeper knowledge themselves. The book reveals Islam to be a rich religious tradition that has at its heart the universal human aspiration to understand and experience the divine and to lead a good and righteous life.

Nobility, Rhythm, and Problem Solving



BY CRISTINA FREDRICKSON

Imagine that you, a parent, are meeting your child as an adult. What kind of person would you like to encounter? Probably you would want to find a human being who:

- is cheerful, even-tempered, and thoughtful;
- is flexible and able to adapt to changing circumstances and difficult situations;
- recognizes the value in all persons and things, treats all with respect, and has self-respect;
- is comfortable in his or her body and moves with strength, rhythm, coordination, and confidence;
- has a creative but disciplined mind, can solve problems, and can explain the problem-solving process.

This, of course, is an ideal, and human beings who realize it are rare. We adults struggle to manifest this ideal as well as we can, and no doubt our children will need to struggle also. They may be helped by their Waldorf schooling, however. Talking to Waldorf teachers and to Waldorf parents, one soon sees that these very qualities are cultivated in a concrete and purposeful way in the children's regular class routines and studies.

Some years ago, my daughter was in the first grade at the Orange County Waldorf School in Costa Mesa, California. At a class parent meeting early in the year, the teacher described how she greets each child every morning—with a firm handshake and a direct look into the child's eyes. That handshake and eye-to-eye contact are expressions of respect and concern. Further, they are ways to help the teacher know what the child needs that day. The teacher also described the singing and the circle games through which the children then acknowledge and greet each other every morning. One father exclaimed, "Why, you're teaching the children NOBILITY! This is wonderful."

The teacher explained that one aim of Waldorf Education is to help children experience the nobility that is in themselves, in other people, in all things, and in all tasks. They are encouraged to show respect and reverence for themselves, each other, for nature, and the world at large. They are encouraged to bring this attitude into all their daily activities, whether it is writing a story, picking a flower, or cleaning up after snack break. This daily training in nobility occurs before formal lessons even begin.

At the same meeting, a mother described the changes that the daily jump rope exercises had brought about in her daughter. The girl by nature was not well coordinated. She ran awkwardly and at age seven had still been unable to ride a bike. At jumping rope, she was initially very stiff. She had a poor sense of rhythm and was unable to get even a few jumps in a row. After six weeks of daily practice, however, the stiffness had

changed into looseness and flexibility, the awkwardness changed into rhythmic movement, and the physical reticence changed into confidence and joy. The child was able to jump thirty skips in a row. Since the jumping was done to songs and rhymes, the child had great fun in the process and, in addition, developed her language skills!

But what really impressed the parent was that what appeared to be just a lesson in physical education affected the child's emotional life as well. The girl, who

had been very stubborn, inflexible, and prone to mood swings, was learning through her physical body what it is to be balanced, supple, and rhythmical. She was better able to control her emotions and to be more flexible in her behavior. According to the understanding of child development that underlies Waldorf Education, children need to learn something on a physical, sensory-motor level before it can be experienced emotionally or grasped intellectually.

Another mother shared an experience she had had the previous summer. While shopping for groceries, she and her husband began to compute out loud the sum of 15 and 15. Before they could speak the answer, their seven-year-old son piped up with "30." The mother

asked, "How did you know that?" The son nonchalantly explained that one 10 and one 5 make fifteen. Thus in two 15s there are two 10s and two leftover 5s that make another 10. Therefore there are three 10s, making 30. The mother was surprised that the child knew the answer, but even more so that he was able to clearly explain the process by which he came to it. Besides, he had done it in his head!

The mother then told how during the past two school years, she had worried that her son never brought home the stack of arithmetic worksheets that her neighbor's children, attending a public school, carried home. Yet here was proof, in the middle of the summer—when children tend to forget their school lessons—that her son had developed a lifelong mathematical understanding



and a problem-solving capability that was far beyond simplistic pencil and paper computations. In a time when test scores show that most children can compute but not comprehend, when most schoolchildren spend 85 percent of their math time computing on paper—though 85 percent of life's math problems we do in our heads—here was her son at age seven beating the statistics! He had acquired something more valuable than the ability to do arithmetic computations on paper. The mother attributed this to the experiential way that mathematics is taught in a Waldorf school. She had finally come to understand why the teacher had the children clap and stomp as they counted by fives and why there were no daily worksheets.

These three parents had a realization, respectively, about the emotional, physical, and intellectual results of Waldorf Education. The development of a sense of nobility, of rhythm and coordination in movement, of emotional balance, and of problem-solving ability are all important aspects of the healthy growth of the child. And they are all intertwined: each capacity affects and is affected by the others. Waldorf Education recognizes these diverse and interrelated aspects of the child's developing being. Through its multidimensional curriculum and pedagogy and through the classroom atmosphere and structure, the Waldorf school seeks to strengthen all these capacities in a natural and positive way.

Most Waldorf parents have experiences like those described. And by these experiences they are reassured that Waldorf Education is not only for the whole child, but for the child's whole life, and the person he or she will become. Imagine meeting your child as an adult . . .

CRISTINA FREDRICKSON holds a master's degree in education and was a cofounder of the Waldorf School of Orange County in Costa Mesa, California. Her daughter who attended the school is now a sophomore at the University of California. Cristina is currently enrollment coordinator at the Shepherd Valley Waldorf School in Niwot, Colorado, and serves on the steering committee of the Isis Sophia Branch of the Anthroposophical Society in Boulder.

BOOKS

in Brief

Books for the Journey: A Guide to the World of Reading

COMPILED AND EDITED BY PAMELA J. FENNER,
ANNE J. GREER AND JOHN W. WULSIN, JR.
REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

Michaelmas Press
Amesbury, Mass., 2003
\$19.95 • 343 pages

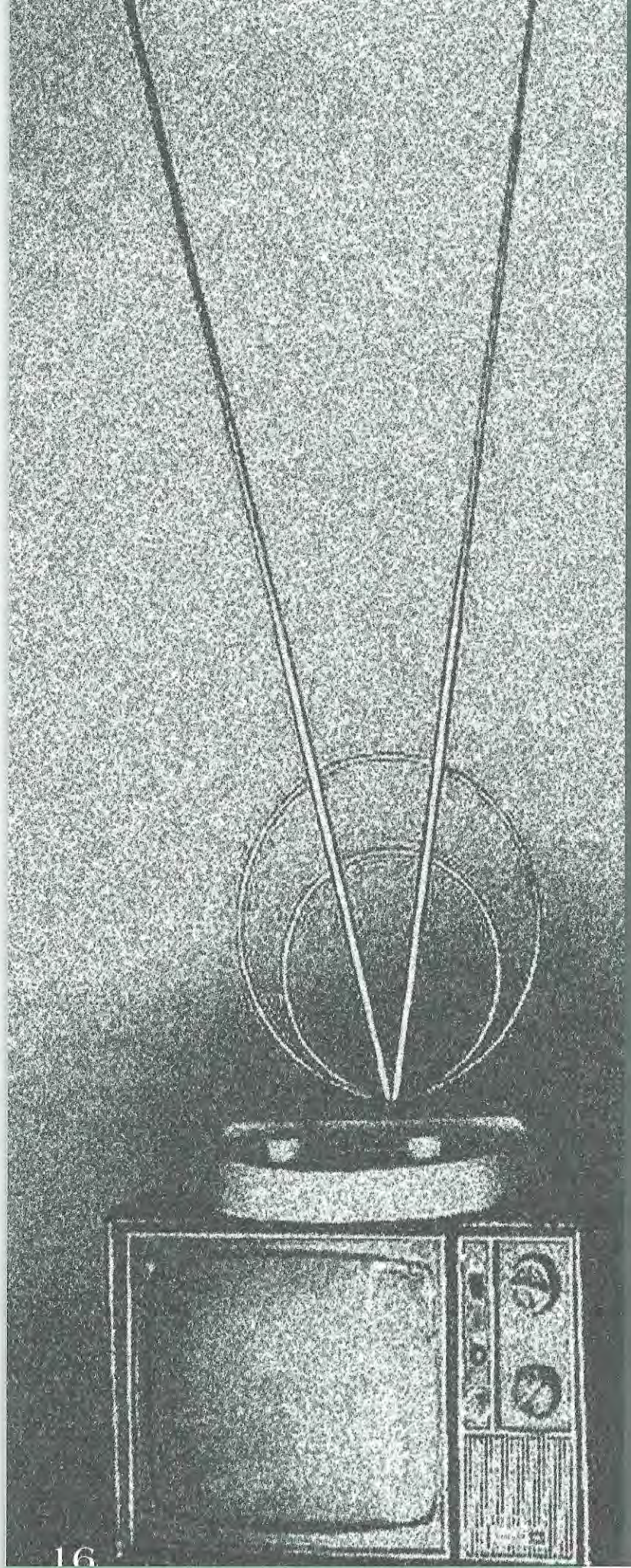
We are all nourished and transformed, for good or ill, by what we read. The words and sentences we read, and the ideas, experiences, and images they convey are a food for the soul and help determine who we are, what we think and feel, and how we will act in the world. Children are especially affected by what they read.

The world today is awash with books, almost two million different titles in print, and more being published every day. We need to find our way amidst this abundance and guide our children to those books that will foster their healthy development as human beings. We need to find books that will truly inform, educate, instruct, guide, and inspire.

Books for the Journey: A Guide to the World of Reading is a valuable tool in this daunting task. It is a comprehensive reading guide meant especially for children and adolescents and is, according to Billy Collins, poet laureate of the United States, "the only reading guide you will ever need."

Compiled and edited by three Waldorf educators who solicited suggestions from a number of Waldorf schools in the United States and Canada, *Books for the Journey* is a treasure trove of advice useful for the adult as well as the young person. The books recommended are divided into categories. The first includes works of "Drama, Mythology, Poetry, and Sacred Writing." The other categories are "Fiction," "Biography and History," and "Nonfiction." A final chapter entitled "Seniors Look Back" lists books recommended by Waldorf high school seniors as especially helpful in their growing up. A two- or three-sentence comment accompanies each of the roughly 1600 works listed.

Books for the Journey is itself a book that is worth reading. It provides an inspiring overview of the cultural wealth that the human mind has created and preserved in print. It is a volume that would enrich every school and home library.



Media

and the Social Contract in the Waldorf School Community

BY SHELDON HIRT

I would describe myself as an average Waldorf parent in that I came to an appreciation of Waldorf Education on an intuitive rather than intellectual level. Also, I am a product of American mass culture, am no deep anthropologist and, though I have read some works by Rudolf Steiner, am not ready to drink deeply from the well of his thought. Like most Waldorf parents, my initial exposure to Waldorf Education produced a visceral reaction that told me that "this is the right thing for my children." I experienced a similar reaction when I began to consider the school's suggestion that I limit my children's exposure to media.

Over the past couple of years, my wife and I—parents at the Green Meadow Waldorf School in Chestnut Ridge, New York—have visited several other Waldorf schools in the Northeast. None of the schools we visited, with one exception, has a media policy as strong and as unequivocal as that at Green Meadow. The policy statement there asks that parents, particularly parents of young children,

eliminate the influence of media from the young child's life. . . . It renders children less capable of healthy initiative, participation, and attentiveness in group settings. . . .

We depend on the integrity of your choice to send your child to this school which takes a stand on media. Parents who are making sacrifices to keep their children at Green Meadow are also depending on your judgment, which is a strong factor in determining the quality of class experiences. . . . Any family unable to make this commitment and maintain it throughout the year may be asked to leave the school.

Some of the schools we visited were struggling with the question of whether it is appropriate even to have a media policy.

For me, a strong media policy is crucially important. It allows children to enjoy the full benefits of a Waldorf education, and it helps to create and to support the school community that provides this education. The willingness of Green Meadow and its community to take a stand on media and thus to help my wife and me protect our young children's unformed minds and souls from the powerful influence of media is one of the most appealing aspects of the school and the education it offers.

In a Waldorf community, parents depend on each other to create an environment that supports and reinforces Waldorf Education.

Creating an environment within which children can be protected from the influence of media requires a commitment from every family. If each family in its home life abides by the school media policy, then such an environment can be created.

Conversely, a family's lack of respect for the policy or failure to abide by it has a negative effect on every other family. The media influence that I let into my children's lives is passed on by them to their peers. It reverberates through the community and shows up in other children's play, attitudes, and language, and at deeper levels as well.

As parents in a community, we must support each other in limiting the media's influence on our children. We owe it to them, to the teachers who work so hard to create the right environment for young minds, and to each other, to take this policy with the utmost seriousness.

In practice, providing a childhood uncluttered and uninterrupted by modern media can be a tremendous challenge and a source of divisiveness within families and the community at large. The media are not merely ubiquitous; they are ever more strident and aggressive in their efforts to force us to pay attention and to hear the messages they are attempting to convey. While there is this blatant external assault, many parents find that within their homes the media's messages also arrive



more subtly, brought by friends, neighbors, and relatives. Also, families must sometimes contend with the fact that although one parent is more or less committed to protecting children from the media's influence, the spouse or close adult relatives may find such a notion incomprehensible and threatening. We need, however, to overcome these challenges for the sake of our own children and of all the children in the school. The stakes are high.

What follows is a review of some of the issues surrounding the presence of media in children's lives. *Media* refers mainly to television—the most powerful, obvious, and intrusive manifestation of popular culture—but the cautions apply also to movies, computers, radio, and recorded sound.

The Assault on the Senses

Probably each of us remembers images and sounds that struck and even horrified us when as a child we saw certain films and programs. Decades later, we are affected by them on conscious and, no doubt, also on unconscious levels.

General television programming today uses various techniques to catch and hold the attention of the viewer: loud sounds, unusual and jarring camera angles, rapidly changing images, scenes of sexuality and violence, and so on. Increasingly, programming for children contains some of these same elements. The senses and the minds of children are extremely sensitive compared to those of adults. An image or sound that we adults barely notice can profoundly affect a child's senses and spirit and in ways that are not yet fully understood.

Passivity and Isolation

The content of most television programs is not appropriate for young eyes and minds. Banality, violence, and sexual innuendo characterize much that is broadcast. Some programs on the Public Broadcasting System, the Discovery Channel, and elsewhere are educational in intent and convey much worthwhile information. The quality of the content is largely beside the point, however. What is important is the effect that the very act of watching television has on us and our children. It makes us passive and separates us from the world and people around us. Besides, the information conveyed by educational programs can be obtained by children and parents reading a book together, by visiting a museum, or taking a walk in nature.

The Assault on the Body and the Imagination

The young child is a being of physical movement. Watching television, an inherently sedentary and passive activity, negatively affects the child's developing body. It also deadens the imagination and fantasy life of the child. Watching programs in which all the details of a story, all the images and sounds, are provided atrophies a child's creative and cognitive abilities and attention span just as effectively as sitting inert for long periods weakens his body.

Television seeks to entertain and to inculcate the appetite for more entertainment. It does not seek to stimulate thought or creativity.

The Homogenization of Experience

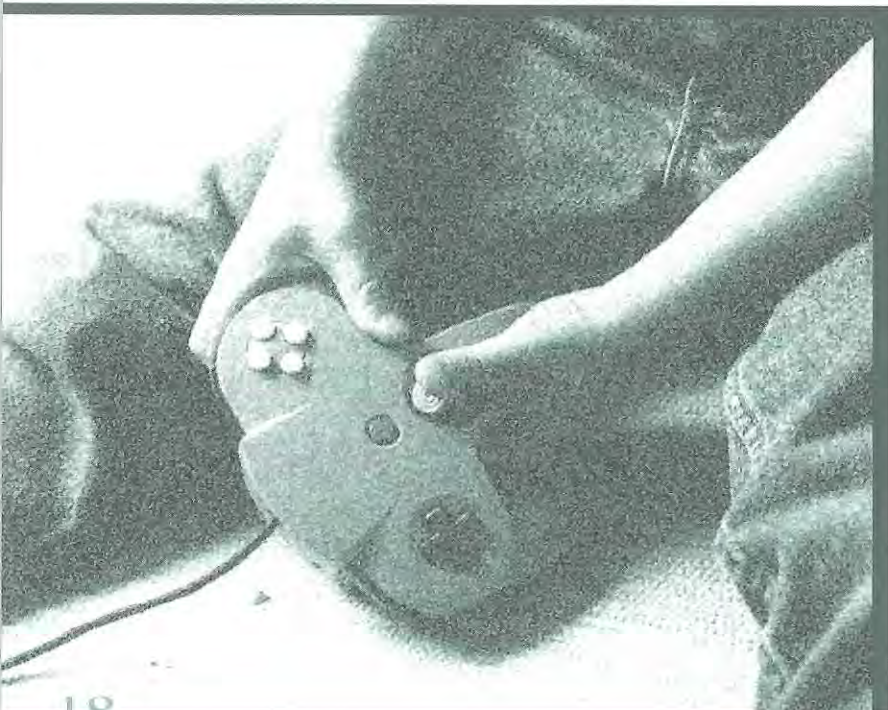
The mass media presents a particular and simplified version of what is real and what is important. It homogenizes the consciousness and experience of all those exposed to it. Thus the media can create and control political consciousness on a mass level. Also, it is able to create "official versions" of the great works of imaginative literature and even of historical events. For example, the Disney version of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" has provided fixed and powerful images of the heroine and of all the characters and events in that fairy tale. Generations of children now have the exact same visual picture of this archetypal story. This ability of the visual media to create a single truth based on the preconceived notions of a particular producer or director undermines the creativity and independent thinking of children.

The Marketing Machine as Houseguest

The most important factor that shapes the media directed at children—and adults—is the desire of advertisers to generate brand awareness and product sales. Thus when parents permit television to be a part of their children's lives, they welcome into their homes a sophisticated and relentless marketing machine. This drives consumption by creating false wants and a sense of dissatisfaction with life as it is. In a marketer's perfect world, every media experience results in a purchase. In a marketer's perfect world, parents permit children total access to the media and allow them to make many purchasing decisions in the household. We should not be exposing our children to the message that their highest role in life is to buy whatever a show's sponsor happens to be selling.

The Devaluation of Reality

The entertaining fantasy world created by television programmers and advertisers separates us from and implicitly devalues the actual world in which we live. The real world, with its hardships and ambiguity, is often anything but entertaining. Time spent with media is time spent away from experiencing other people and the world. The time a child spends in front of a television or computer is time not spent dealing with and experiencing actual people and nature, is time not spent being physically active and having a variety of sensory experiences, is time not spent being human as human beings have been human for generations. Experiencing and profiting from real life requires hard work from each of us. Allowing our children to develop the habit of passivity and the need to be entertained undercuts their ability fully to engage and deal with real life.



We should all be concerned that, at a time when our civilization desperately needs to foster in its children empathy and a deep understanding of their world, the media seeks to draw our children and us ever further away from authentic experience and deeper into a vicarious, mediated, and sterile existence.

As Waldorf parents we are committed to our children getting an education that supports their healthy and full development. For a Waldorf school to be able to provide that education requires not only that we enroll our children and pay our tuition but that we become part of a community of like-minded adults as well. This community creates the conditions and environment that make possible the education we envision for our children. Part of our task as parents and members of this community is to abide by the school's policy on media.

None of us is perfect, as a parent or in our other roles. We can't completely shelter our children from the world at large, and wouldn't want to in any event. Ultimately, however, we have all invested a great deal of time, money, and effort in this enterprise and have to rely on each other to remain true to the ideals that created the school and brought us all together.

SHELDON HIRT and his wife, Stephanie von Stein, have three young children, two of whom attend the Green Meadow Waldorf School in Chestnut Ridge, New York. Sheldon is a corporate lawyer employed as senior counsel in the office of the general counsel of Johnson & Johnson. Mr. Hirt earned a JD from Columbia Law School, an MA from Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, and a BA from Columbia College. Between college and law school, he served for four years as an infantry officer in the United States Marine Corps, including service in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

BOOKS

in Brief

The Healing Art of Eurythmy

BY TRUUS GERAETS

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

The Art of Living
Costa Mesa, Calif., 2003
\$30.00 • 125 pages

Eurythmy is a new art of movement created by Rudolf Steiner in collaboration with his wife, Marie von Sivers. Steiner referred to eurythmy as "visible speech" and "visible music." Eurythmy strengthens, balances, and harmonizes the etheric or life-force body, that invisible body that gives form to the human physical body and enlivens its life processes. Eurythmy also fosters grace, coordination, and suppleness. When Rudolf Steiner started the first Waldorf school in 1919, he made eurythmy part of the curriculum, saying that it was an absolute necessity in the wholesome education of the child. In addition to being an educational tool, eurythmy is a performing art and also a therapeutic technique.

Truus Geraets first witnessed the physical and emotional healing effects of eurythmy over half a century ago at a home for handicapped children in her native Netherlands. Inspired by this experience, she did the four-year basic eurythmy training and the additional work to be able to use eurythmy as a therapeutic method.

Truus has been a curative eurythmist for some forty years and has worked with various populations: the handicapped (both children and adults); persons who have been neglected or abused; the emotionally disturbed; incarcerated men and women; the elderly; persons suffering from a wide range of physical ailments; and, in South Africa, with blacks and whites living under the apartheid system. Throughout her career, Truus has been amazed at and grateful for the healing efficacy of eurythmy.

The Healing Art of Eurythmy explains the principles of therapeutic eurythmy. It also recounts Truus Geraets' many powerful experiences with people in need of healing. At the end of the book is a remarkable series of twenty-seven drawings in colored pencil done by Truus. They present in visible form and color the consonant and vowel sounds of the alphabet.

Most Waldorf schools have a trained teacher of eurythmy. Some schools are fortunate in having a curative eurythmist as well. Some schools, though, have no eurythmy teacher at all. These schools, especially, should acquire and study this book. Its accounts of the pedagogical and therapeutic value of eurythmy may well be an inspiration for them.

To order, please call (949) 574-9475.

Waldorf Education and “Physical Education”

Waldorf Education views each aspect of the child—physical, emotional, artistic, intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual—as important in itself and also crucial to the development of each other aspect and of the child as a whole. Hence the Waldorf curriculum as developed by Rudolf Steiner addresses each dimension of the child's being and seeks to promote a balanced and healthy unfolding of all the child's capacities.

Education of the physical body has from the beginning played an important role in Waldorf schools. In the first school in Stuttgart, founded in 1919, Rudolf Steiner made eurythmy, a new art of movement he had developed in collaboration with his wife, Marie von Sivers, part of the curriculum. Eurythmy helps children develop coordination, grace, balance, and rhythm. Ideally, eurythmy is part of the weekly activities of all children in a Waldorf school from kindergarten through high school.

Soon after the first school's founding, Steiner asked Count Fritz von Bothmer, a former cavalry officer in the German army, to create a physical education curriculum that would support the aims of Waldorf Education. Bothmer devised twenty-seven exercises that help to develop balance, an upright posture, flexibility, and strength. He taught at the Stuttgart school for many years and also trained others to teach what came to be called Bothmer Gymnastics. For decades, physical education or, more properly, movement education in Waldorf schools around the world consisted primarily of eurythmy and Bothmer Gymnastics.

In the 1970s, Jaimen McMillan, a master fencer then teaching physical education in a Waldorf school, began a deep study of movement and of movement education. McMillan drew on the work of Rudolf Steiner and Bothmer. He also studied the spiritual aspects of yoga, karate, aikido, and tai chi, as well as psychology, physiotherapy, and massage. He developed a unique approach to movement education and movement therapy that he named Spatial Dynamics®. McMillan introduced Spatial Dynamics to the Bothmer School of Gymnastics in Stuttgart and served as codirector there for twenty-one years until the school closed in 2000.

In 1987 McMillan began teaching part-time courses in Spatial Dynamics in North America. Around that time he met and began to collaborate with Maureen Curran, a former Olympic gymnast from California and a teacher at the Sacramento Waldorf School.

In 2001 Jaimen McMillan relocated to the United States and now works out of the new Spatial Dynamics Institute (SDI) center in upstate New York. With that as a base of operations, he conducts a five-year in-service training for movement educators from Waldorf schools. Today over 100 graduates from the SDI are working in North American Waldorf schools. Most are movement teachers, but among them are also class teachers, administrators, and specialty teachers. There are also training programs in Hungary, Germany, and England. Spatial Dynamics is being applied in about 150 schools in other parts of the world. Altogether about 300 teachers worldwide are currently in training.

The two articles that follow both deal with movement education and the healthy development of the child. Jacqueline Davis focuses on the movement education curriculum used in Waldorf schools. The interview with Jaimen McMillan and Maureen Curran deals with important issues regarding children, sports, and competition.

—Ronald E. Koetzsch



Movement Education in Waldorf Schools

Recognizing the Unity of Body, Soul, and Spirit

BY JACQUELINE DAVIS

Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, describes the human being as comprising a physical body, a soul, and a higher spiritual self, or Ego. As the human body is the dwelling place of the soul and the Ego, these three entities are deeply interrelated. One's feelings, thoughts, and personality are reflected in one's body and movement, and these in turn deeply influence the soul and Ego. This is true in the child as well as in the adult. A child's developing sense of self is closely related to his body and way of moving. Movement education therefore is essential to the healthy development of the child into a healthy adult.

The key desirable factor in a child's movement experiences is variety. Different kinds of movement activities give more possibilities for expression of the soul and Ego in childhood and later in adulthood. The child needs a wide range of age-appropriate movement experiences that will give him a large vocabulary of possible ways of movement.

Movement education is important also because in the growing child the physical body is being shaped by its movements. The child's particular inherited physical body affects how the child moves, but the movement activities also influence the body. A child who spends lots of time on a couch will develop a body with the posture and musculature needed for lounging on a couch. A child who spends her afternoons climbing trees develops the posture and musculature that serve that activity. A child becomes what she does.

Waldorf Education understands the importance of movement and movement education. Movement education in Waldorf schools typically includes noncompetitive and competitive games, physical education, Bothmer Gymnastics, Spacial Dynamics®, and team sports. The majority of Waldorf schools have movement teachers who have been trained in Spacial Dynamics. The Waldorf movement curriculum seeks to help the child acquire and develop the following:

- a lifelong joy of movement
- a diverse vocabulary of movements
- a sense of well-being and of being at home as an embodied self
- a spatial intelligence that is active in one's relationships to other persons and to the world
- habits of exercise that are integrated into healthy, balanced living
- freedom and spontaneity in movement that allow the physical body to serve the soul and the Ego

Games and the Lower Grades

Children in kindergarten through the fifth grade are taught movement through imaginative play, rhythmic and singing activities, stories and games. Through these, the

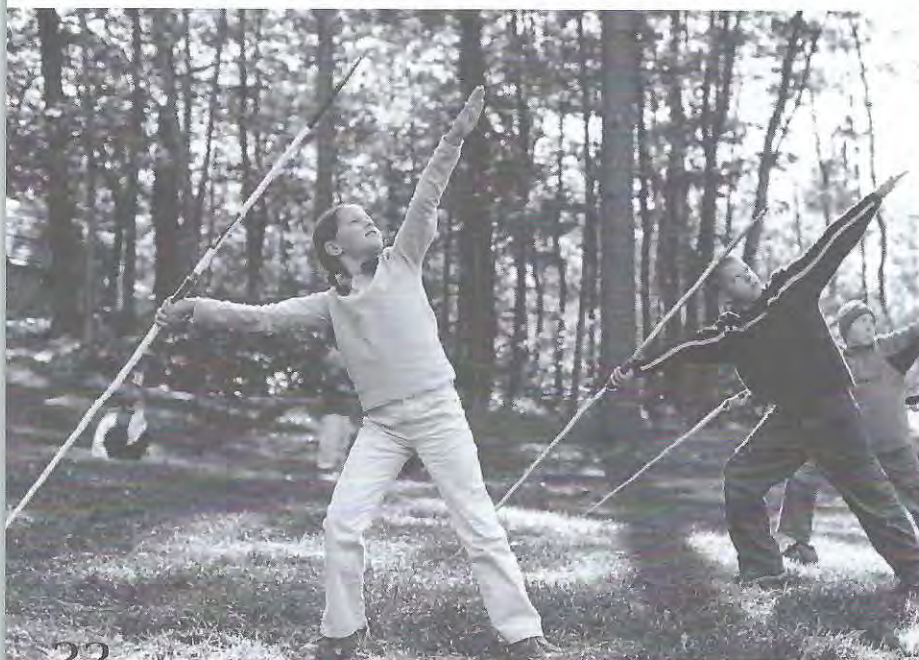
young child, still in a somewhat dreamlike state, gradually awakens to his own body and to his relationship to the space around him and to other children and to the world. Knowing where one is in relation to others is key to harmonious social relationships. As Jaimen McMillan, founder of Spacial Dynamics, has expressed it:

Developing an enhanced awareness of personal space, with clearly defined boundaries, enables young students to move fully, know who they are, and enter into a healthier relationship with the world and its requirements.

Prescribed movements and skills are not taught. Rather the child is helped to experience joy in movement without the self-consciousness that premature physical awareness can bring.

The activities in grades one through five include a wide range of adventures in movement and often reflect what the children are learning in their main lessons. In grades one and two, for example, the games come out of fairy tales and fables, and later on they are connected to Greek mythology and ancient history. The curriculum includes many varied cooperative activities: singing and circle games, handclapping games, roundelays (sequences of movement accompanied by a recited verse), tag, obstacle courses, string games, jump rope, tumbling, balance beam activities, folk dance, and relays.

A key principle is that children should learn to play cooperatively with each other before starting to compete against each other. In the lower grades, the vocabulary of sports—"winner," "loser"—and the related behaviors are avoided, and the joys of cooperative play are fostered. The children are taught that every child should feel included. Before they experience the nonnegotiable environment of sport, the children learn that rules can be adapted to suit the abilities of every



A child who spends lots of time on a couch will develop a body with the posture and musculature needed for lounging on a couch. A child who spends her afternoons climbing trees develops the posture and musculature that serve that activity. A child becomes what she does.

player. Children of this age explore and accomplish a wide range of movements. They should not be subjected to the sports drills that train specialized, limited movements and that can have a premature hardening effect on the child.

The movement curriculum in the lower school culminates in the fifth grade Greek pentathlon. The students train in javelin, discus, Greek wrestling, running, and the long jump, complementing their main lesson work in Greek history and culture. The students learn an approach that simplifies the movements involved in the five disciplines yet emphasizes the noble qualities in each of them. Students learn to honor every individual's effort and to see that the ultimate goal is to improve one's own performance. Each spring, fifth graders from different Waldorf schools gather for a festive Olympiad, designed by Jaimen McMillan and his colleague Thom Schaefer, where the children compete against their personal best. They are judged not only on distance and speed, but on form and grace as well. In each event, every child seeks to realize the ideal in carriage, intention, and movement

Sports in the Middle Grades

During the sixth-grade year, most children will begin puberty and are ready for new challenges. If the proper groundwork has been laid in the early grades, the boys and girls can now begin to deal in a mature way with the physical and emotional rigors of competitive sports.

As the adolescent draws inward, movement education accordingly begins to address the body itself, and physical education formally begins. The children engage in basketball, archery, volleyball, ultimate Frisbee, track and field, baseball, and other activities that have objective regulations and where achieving a certain end is the

"point." Emphasis is placed on techniques and skill development. There is competition, and students are urged to do their best, while teamwork and good sportsmanship are also emphasized.

Many Waldorf schools are developing programs in circus arts, offering adolescents an important alternative experience that balances the model of competitive sports. Performing in a circus generates similar feelings of exhilaration and accomplishment, yet the process is inherently cooperative. As one advocate of circus education in schools has put it, "[Circus] incorporates many facets of movement and doesn't favor one athlete over another as in other traditional sports. No one is trying to block your shot." In circus work, the adolescent meets his craving for risk and challenge by learning skills such as juggling, acrobatics, unicycling, tightwire, rolling globes, and clowning. Once a skill is mastered, the student can join with others to create an act, and the acts can be linked to create a performance. Creating a circus together gives adolescents an opportunity to use their developing abilities in setting and achieving goals and in working collaboratively with others. Circus arts help awaken qualities of higher thinking and willpower that will be called upon in adulthood.

Bothmer Gymnastics

Bothmer Gymnastics was developed by Fritz Graf von Bothmer (1883-1941) at the request of Rudolf Steiner. There are twenty-seven Bothmer exercises, or movement sequences, designed to give children and adolescents age-appropriate experiences of movement. The first exercises, called roundelays, are introduced in the third grade. A roundelay is a sequence of movements accompanied by a verse, recited in a

As the adolescent draws inward, movement education accordingly begins to address the body itself, and physical education formally begins. The children engage in basketball, archery . . . and other activities that have objective regulations and where achieving a certain end is the "point."



rhythmical cadence. Bothmer exercises for older children have names like “fall into space,” “jump to the middle point,” “turn on the inclined plane,” and “the sextant.” A basic ordering element in each exercise is the intersection point of the three spatial planes (horizontal, symmetrical, and frontal) that provides a spatial orientation. The exercises give the students a more conscious relationship with space and help them find a balance between center and periphery, gravity and levity, and the three planes of space.

Each exercise is preceded and followed by a moment of stillness. This training in stillness is a key part of movement education and something essential for today’s hurried children. Bothmer gymnasts observe that “there is strength in stillness—all movement is possible from there.”

High School

The ideal Waldorf high school movement curriculum offers a wide range of human movement experiences in preparation for adulthood. A curriculum that stresses only competitive sports does not serve the whole child. Thus, in addition to basketball, baseball, and other mainstream sports, a school might offer Bothmer Gymnastics, tumbling, swimming, archery, fencing, ballroom dancing, rock climbing, tennis, circus arts, and outdoor education. The roughly forty Waldorf high schools in North America strive to realize this ideal and, in varying degrees, have managed to do so.

Typically, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades, Waldorf students revisit in a conscious and intentional way movement disciplines—discus, for example—that they studied in the earlier years. In the twelfth year, the students with their teacher review and relive the entire

movement education curriculum from first grade all the way up. The teacher explains the underlying consciousness that guided the student on her journey over the years, and the student is able to look back at all the developmental changes of the earlier years and comprehend how the movement curriculum met her along the way. She stands on the threshold of adulthood, poised to move onward.

The maxim “The child is father to the man” speaks truly when it comes to movement education. What the child does, so he becomes. Ultimately, movement education seeks to foster movements that are balanced, harmonious, and true and that are united with right action in the world. It seeks to create a physically upright human being who is also morally upright and who is united in body, soul, and Ego.

Resources

For information about Spacial Dynamics®, please see www.spacialdynamics.com

For information about Bothmer Gymnastics, please see <http://www.bothmergymnastik.com/tagung2002/seiten/infoenglish.html>

JACQUELINE DAVIS is the movement education teacher at the Pine Hill Waldorf School in grades 1–8. She is a graduate of the Spacial Dynamics Institute’s In-Service Training #4 and an instructor in the U.S. Spacial Dynamics trainings. Jackie is the creator of the Hilltop Circus, Pine Hill’s curricular middle school circus arts program and is a champion of circus projects for youth. She thanks Jaimen McMillan, Maureen Curran, Andy Dill, Jim Conlon, Clint Walters, and other colleagues for help in developing the ideas for this article.



A curriculum that stresses only competitive sports does not serve the whole child.

Children, Movement, Sports, and Competition



An Interview with Jaimen McMillan and Maureen Curran

BY MARC TURTLETAUB

In the mid-1980s, two world-class athletes—Jaimen McMillan, a fencer, and Maureen Curran, a gymnast—began discussing their experiences in competitive athletics. The two had in common a connection to Waldorf Education and the work of Rudolf Steiner. Jaimen and Maureen soon discovered that they also shared feelings about the training techniques they had encountered while growing up. Each felt they had succeeded despite the training they had received. They both knew athletes who had struggled and suffered severely because of these training methods. Jaimen and Maureen began to collaborate in the development of a more humane and inclusive approach to movement education for children out of the Spatial Dynamics® that Jaimen had created. Their work has changed the course of movement education in North American Waldorf schools.

Jaimen, was there a defining moment that changed the way you thought about movement?

JM: One day, near the end of my college fencing career as I was practicing lunging over and over again in slow motion, something extraordinary happened. I felt my intention precede my sword like a wave of light. This flow of intention drew my hand, my arm, my back, and my hips after it—my whole body was drawn out in sequence into one timeless, soundless, effortless lunge. I was struck by a deep realization: what had gone in front of my body, and then carried it, was not something foreign, it was part of me. The distance between my body and my opponent vanished. . . . From that moment on, my life became a search to learn how to create this enlivened space at will and to share this joyful experience with other people. Perhaps others too could be touched by this experience.

Maureen, what led you to look for a new approach to movement training?

MC: When I was very little, four or five, I was constantly outdoors in nature. It was there that I found my connection to my body and to movement. I skipped, jumped over logs, splashed through creeks, and climbed or shimmied up anything I could find—trees, telephone poles, supermarket walls. I moved for the sheer joy of it and to see what my body could do. No one was telling me how to move or explaining why I should move.

When I came to organized movement much later, at thirteen or fourteen, I was astonished to see how what had been so joyous could now be so distorted. Up to the age of thirteen, I was instinctively doing what others called gymnastics. I just called it “doing a flip off the doghouse” or “a windmill over the planter box.” When I eventually found gymnastic schools, I was shocked. For the first time, I saw girls moving for reasons other than the joy of movement—they were moving because their parents wanted them to, or because their coaches wanted them to, or for the sake of winning.

I cringed when I saw girls on the balance beam, bandaged up and crying, afraid to move. Their spontaneous joy in movement had been strangled. Years later, after competing internationally, seeing how athletes around the world were trained, teaching children, and

having a child of my own, I knew that I wanted to find a new method to help young people to learn to move in a healthy way. Of course I didn’t know then that we would have to create it.

What was the attitude of teachers and parents when you began working in the American Waldorf schools?

MC: There were two camps. The first group was driving hard for Waldorf schools to offer a traditional, American approach to sports and competition. The second saw mainstream physical education as contradictory to Waldorf principles. There was an impasse.

How did you and Jaimen deal with this?

MC: First of all, we moved together. Then we exchanged our experiences as athletes and as teachers and what had led us to dedicate our lives to movement. We talked about moments where movement was truly transformative and tried to find out why. Finally, we looked at the Waldorf curriculum and considered how movement education could better support what was going on in the rest of the school. We wanted to express principles of the Waldorf curriculum in movement.

We explored traditional games from “Mother May I” and “Steal the Bacon” all the way to “Capture the Flag,” as well as modern individual and team sports. We asked two questions: What do the movements in each game teach the child? and What physical and emotional demands do the games place on the child? With this approach we could judge the age and stage of development that was suited to each game or activity. We created a curriculum that



supports the healthy development of the child from the fantasy world of play in the kindergarten through high school.

What is the relationship between movement education and physical education?

JM: Movement education includes physical education but comprises much more as well. Educating the physical body is of course a very important aspect of teaching movement. The body is the three-dimensional instrument that allows us to be active in the physical world. We need our skeleton, our nerves, our muscles, and our tendons, ligaments, and joints to move. However, the best way to move in a healthy way is not by concentrating on the body alone but rather by freeing the body so that it can enter into healthy movement in the space around the body.

MC: People who move well do not initiate their movements from within the body. Rather, they change the surrounding space first and let that lead the movement.

JM: We teach individuals to bring the space around them into play, including personal space, interpersonal space, social space, public space, and even counterspace. One can learn to enliven space and then follow what has been quickened. Movement education should attempt to address the total, unfolding individual and bring to each person the realization: I am the spaces that I have learned to live in.

Waldorf schools place great emphasis on the importance of age-appropriate education. Can you give an example of an inappropriate activity?

MC: One obvious example would be attempting to teach the shot put in the third grade. The child isn't physically ready yet. The activity places too much strain on the shoulder and arm before the muscles and ligaments have developed. It is also inappropriate from a nonphysical perspective: Nine- and ten-year-olds should not have the weight of the world on their shoulders. They should still be moving freely and lightly. At this age, the experience of the sense of levity should be emphasized.

On the other hand, in adolescence, in the eighth or ninth grade, a natural densification of the body is taking place. The bones are hardening. The ligaments, tendons, joints, and muscles are becoming stronger. Young people can handle the shot put at this age. In fact, at this time they need opportunities to explore the new density, strength, and possibilities of their bodies in a healthy way.

How about children participating in organized sports? What's the right age?

MC: Entering children into serious competitive sports before their teens is problematic. Sports demand learning techniques that require concentrated focus for

long periods of time. Repetitive drills, for example, involve using the same muscles over and over again. The younger child should not be specializing but rather developing coordination of the entire body. From a psychological standpoint, competitive sports push the child to be goal-oriented far too early.

Competitive sports are best introduced in the teenage years. Then both body and soul are ready to be challenged. Through years of cooperative play students will have developed a healthy relationship to others and an ability to empathize. If competitive focus and goal orientation are emphasized in childhood, the child's capacity to engage in a collaborative way is threatened or distorted.

JM: Many children suffer physical injuries when they are put in organized, competitive sports too early. For example, children who play competitive soccer at a young age are more likely to experience structural damage to the growth plates of the tibia and a lifelong weakness in the knees and in the ankle joints than players who wait with rigorous training until the body has matured.

There can also be nonphysical damage. Intense competition at an early age can lead to insensitivity to other children. In the extreme, this can lead to spontaneous, explosive acts of violence for which the child feels no remorse. The training methods, and perhaps the sport itself, may compress the child so forcefully into his/her body that an explosion is inevitable. The child feels no regret, because the act was reflexive and unconscious. He doesn't identify with the act and feels no more responsibility than for sneezing in public.

What about the idea that competition can help the children "grow up" and toughen up? Some parents feel it's important to prepare their children for life's challenges through the pressures of sports.

MC: The pressures involved in serious competition too early can be very damaging. In my years as a competitive gymnast, right up to my experience on the United States national team, I saw countless girls crumble under pressure. Many developed what turned out to be lifelong problems with anorexia, bulimia, and depression. I myself suffered from a stomach ulcer for years. The risks these girls are taking for the sake of winning are too great.

JM: Every day of childhood is precious. There is no hurry. But if you have to think of a race, remember the hare and the tortoise. Training methods that produce the pressure Maureen mentioned can harden children's souls. Tragically, this makes free play very difficult for them. It is nearly impossible for them then to reenter childhood's sanctuary, the world of imagination and fantasy. They may have a winning record in their sport, but they have lost their childhood.

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Many parents are concerned that unless their children get an early start in a sport, they will never catch up and get “good” at it.

JM: We would never tie a caterpillar to a kite in the hopes that early aerial training would help the future butterfly fly better! A caterpillar takes its time—crawls, rests, and transforms. This is the only way it will be able to fly at a later stage. There are a handful of child athletic prodigies who tempt us to think otherwise. But for every prodigy there are millions of others who never get off the ground. In fact, recent studies have shown that a great many children who begin sports at an early age later suffer from burnout and lose all interest in continuing the sport.

What about the old bromide that competition builds character?

JM: Someone once said that competition doesn’t build character, but exposes it. We should clarify, however. We are certainly not against competition. We are just questioning the timing. Children need time to build some character first. Simply put: *Let’s teach the children to play together before we teach them to compete against each other.*

MC: Plenty of preparation through happy, noncompetitive play is needed before a person can be fair when competing. The preparation includes learning to share, learning to be aware of others, and learning to care. These are all prerequisites for being able to compete fairly with another person.

So what is positive about competition?

JM: Let’s play with two words: *compete* and *complete*. They differ by only one letter, but spatially they indicate two different social movements. We compete against an opponent. Two partners can also complete each other. As children grow older they realize that having someone else beside them who is also doing their best can bring out the best in both of them. Then they complete each other. To the extent that we teach the dynamics of completion, competition can be healthy. All participants help each other to move toward excellence—to practice until they have mastered their movements.

Do you have any advice to give parents regarding their children’s movement activities?

MC: A small child progresses healthily toward adulthood by moving slowly from space to space—from the world of random exploration, to creative play, to games with others, to organized sports. Lead your child step by step through each of these spaces. And above all, listen to your children with your hearts. Find activities that give them joy and that most resonate with their real identities.

JM: The media constitute the most powerful force in North America today. Commercialism is trying to sell the adult world of sports to children at ever younger ages. The pressures are great. The stakes are high. Don’t let them get shortchanged. Your children are being pulled in every direction. Don’t be afraid to lead. Many young people suffer from discipline problems simply because they haven’t had the opportunity to practice following someone who could properly lead. Lead your children to the right activities and you will be leading your child through space.

MAUREEN CURRAN has taught movement education for twenty years. For many of those years she was at the Sacramento Waldorf School, which her son attended. She has worked with Jaimen McMillan to bring *Spacial Dynamics* to adults throughout North America and around the world. Maureen is currently doing research into movement, writing, and developing models for centers for individual and cultural renewal.

MARC TURTLETAUB is a parent of a Waldorf school graduate and a longtime supporter of Waldorf Education. He has been a journalist, restaurateur, lawyer, and businessman. He is currently producing feature films that uplift and enlighten and are meant to elevate the level of social dialogue.

JAIME McMILLAN, the creator of *Spacial Dynamics*®, was active in track and field, baseball and football in high school, and in college was on the national championship fencing team. In addition to training movement educators in North America and around the world, Jaimen is codirector of *OlymPeace*. This global organization brings together young people from communities that are in conflict with one another and, through the non-competitive *Spacial Dynamics* pentathlon model and the arts, fosters cooperation and mutual respect.

Marine Biology On-Site: Waldorf High Schoolers Invade Maine!

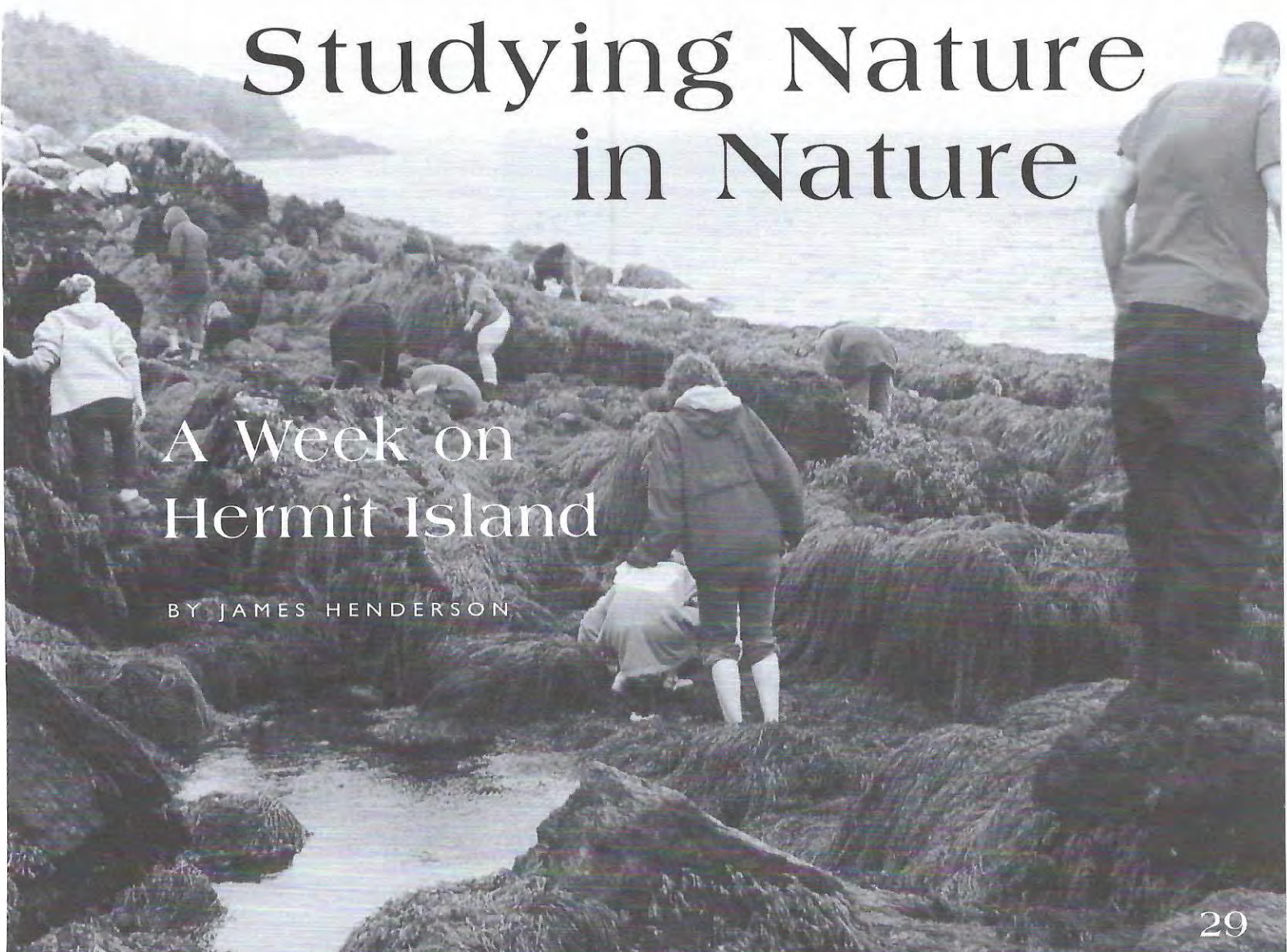
Each autumn, Hermit Island, a small island off the coast of Maine, is "Waldorfized." Two separate groups of Waldorf high school students visit the picturesque island, each for a one-week period.

One group comprises the twelfth-grade class of the Green Meadow Waldorf School in Chestnut Ridge, New York, plus their teachers. The other, much larger, group consists of all the twelfth-grade students of six eastern Waldorf schools, plus their teachers. Both groups come primarily to study the flora and fauna of the Maine coast.

There are differences in how the two approach their task. The Green Meadow students spend much of their time at a shelter on an isolated stretch of beach, collecting, observing, and studying specimens from the environment. The other students have a plenum main-lesson lecture each morning. This is followed by various scientific and artistic activities, which the students in small groups rotate through in the course of the week.

Both trips, though, emphasize the direct, exact observation of real phenomena, which is an important part of the approach to science study in Waldorf schools. Both demonstrate how in Waldorf Education, learning takes place by engaging the head, hands, and heart of the student. Learning is intellectual, experiential, and artistic and involves the student's whole being.

—Ronald E. Koetzsch



Studying Nature in Nature

A Week on Hermit Island

BY JAMES HENDERSON

For twenty years I have been going to Hermit Island, Maine, with the senior class of the Green Meadow Waldorf School for a week of camping, marine zoology, artistic work, communal living, and introspection. What is it that makes the difficulties of such a trip pale in comparison to the benefits? Some years it is rainy and cold; some years the tides are inconvenient for fieldwork; some years the mosquitoes are especially hungry and numerous. Yet whatever the weather, fair or foul, whatever social difficulties arise in working together to prepare meals and clean up afterward, whatever annoyance from native denizens, the students have one of the most memorable experiences of their high school years at Green Meadow. Why do these young people, used to their comforts, find such an outdoor experience so valuable?

It is 6:30 AM, and I step from my tent into the cool air. The fog rolls in across the bay, muting the rhythmic rumble of the surf and the occasional forlorn tolling of a bell buoy. The peepers diminish their chorus and fall silent as the sky lightens and seagulls perch on fence posts. Far off, through the fog, a gull's cry breaks through the mist like an exclamation point at the end of a provocative argument. After putting water on to heat, I begin rousing the sleeping students; another day at Hermit Island begins.

The groggy students are energized by the crisp salt air. Most begin to eat, and the volume of their chatter gradually rises. The lunch crew organizes the task of making sandwiches for their classmates. Within the hour all are ready for the one-mile hike to our outdoor classroom.

The trail leads through woods of evergreens and hardwoods, along cliffs pounded by the surf, up and down boulders, around coves and across beaches, to a shelter set back from the beach and overlooking Casco Bay. Here, rain or shine, we explore tide pools and collect specimens for observation, drawing, and study. At our portable laboratory, we press selected algae for incorporation into main-lesson books, write descriptive essays of the coast and fauna we see, and listen to the biography of Rachel Carson.

The students never seem happier than when they are slipping and sliding over rockweed-festooned boulders and outcrops as they scramble along the shore at low tide. They crane their necks to peer into nooks and crannies to find what wonders lurk within, their fear of the unknown having long ago been chased off by the thrill of the unexpected, the bizarre. They laugh and shriek with delight at their discoveries as nature touches the strings of their souls like Apollo touches those on his lyre.



After collecting specimens, the students return to our outdoor laboratory and deposit their treasures in an aquarium, to be observed there or taken out later for closer examination and for drawing. At the end of the day, the specimens are returned to their tidal homes. More will be collected for study on subsequent days.

The value of working in the outdoor shelter cannot be overestimated. Rather than being isolated from nature, the students are within it. They collect and study specimens in varying conditions brought about by a warming sun or a cool breeze before a drizzle of rain. The occasional discomfort distracts, but it also deepens the experience for the students and makes what is being learned immediate and real. After all, the creatures being studied cannot retreat to a heated shelter; and the students develop an affinity for the natural world around them.

In addition to studying marine zoology in this formal way, the students keep daily nature journals. Here they record observations and descriptions of natural phenomena that may or may not be related to their work in zoology. Creating

such a record is an old and grand tradition among naturalists, Henry David Thoreau, Charles Darwin, and John Muir all having kept journals. The observation and then the description in word and sketch further draw the students into an active relationship with nature.

Each year the life story of Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring* and one of the founders of the modern environmental movement, is told. Carson, who had a summer home near Hermit Island, began life as a naturalist and did not suspect where that would lead her. Learning about Carson's life and the circumstances that led to her writing of *Silent Spring*, the students see how nature study can lead to ecological activism.

The students also enjoy examples of Carson's nature writing and do their own writing assignments. They write essays describing the Maine coast, the tide pools, and the marine life in the pools. Many of these compositions are quite compelling, and some are developed into essays for college admission.

Artistic work also plays an important role in the Hermit Island experience. Students sketch specimens they have collected. They also make a detailed landscape drawing that depicts the tide zones along the coastline. Thus their engagement with the environment includes on-site observation, formal laboratory study, drawing, and descriptive writing. Their various capacities—intellectual, artistic, physical, and social—are called upon and strengthened.

Toward the end of the week, the students are placed along the coastline in isolated spots where they remain alone for several hours. They are encouraged to write, draw, or just sit quietly. This opportunity for quiet reflection is often one of the more valuable experiences they have, because alone, with no one to impress, they are thrown back on their own resources.

The students, organized into crews, make the meals and clean up afterward. This working together combined with the communal meals, the shared daily trek to and from the classroom, and the time each evening for reflecting together on the day helps to bond the class as they go into their final year at Green Meadow.

The shelter where we spend our days working and learning records the passage of past classes in inscriptions carved into the walls and posts. Students have left messages to their siblings, their friends, and to the world at large. These give a sense of continuity and tradition.



Each year's students feel a bond with those who have gone before, even though they may not know the inscribers personally.

Every year as the twelfth graders prepare to graduate, they reflect on their experiences at Green Meadow. Invariably, they vow to have a reunion at Hermit Island. To my knowledge, this has yet to take place. But in a sense the reunion is ongoing. It is not a literal gathering on Hermit Island, but rather an ongoing reunion with something from which we all have become alienated—the natural world. If the week at Hermit Island does nothing else, it creates, I hope, a healing of the rift between us and nature. May this healing be a living force that continues to grow in the souls of the students.

JAMES HENDERSON has a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University of Missouri at Kansas City and a master's degree in biology from Eastern Michigan University. He studied Anthroposophy at Emerson College in England and trained to be a Waldorf teacher at Mercy College (now Sunbridge College). James served for four years in the United States Navy, including a two-year tour of duty in Vietnam. He has been teaching at Green Meadow Waldorf School for twenty-four years. James and his wife, Leah, have been married for thirty-three years and have two daughters, Ariel, 23, and Naomi, 21, both Waldorf graduates.

The Shore and I

BY ARIEL HENDERSON

Green Meadow Waldorf School, Class of 1999

Slick, seaweed-covered rocks along the shore form an oval-shaped, stone-scattered basin. It is shallowly filled with glistening, sky blue water; barnacle clusters protrude from the sharp rocks of this basin and cause the water around them to ripple with each puff of the wind. As the tide rises, it creeps slowly into the tranquil aquatic paradise until it is rushing and swirling around the once dry rocks in the middle of the pool. When these intruding surges are sucked back out to sea, the calm is restored—for a moment.

Glimpses of red orange, bryozoan-covered stones, sparkling white shell bits, and pearly purple mussels can be caught, if you're quick, for not a second after the long, olive green rockweed around the edge of the pool has stopped swaying with the retreating water, another incoming surge disturbs the peace. With each incoming crest new creatures are tossed in, while others rush out. The clinging brown and gray snails, however, never budge an inch unless it is by their own will. A newcomer sea star floats, pinkish gray, on the surface, and sinks slowly in a spiral to rest on the bottom of the basin, safe from the turbulence above.

For several hours a day this peaceful ocean community is bombarded with noisy newcomers and bullying waves, but it is the more enriched when the commotion stops, leaving it almost as it was. This pool is a Mecca of the sea: all its creatures make a pilgrimage here at least once.

I've always had a strong attraction to the sea. I remember the first time I saw an anemone. This all happened in one summer long ago, this introduction to the vast wonders of the maritime. I felt so a part of the windblown crags, the spray, the salt air that I've always longed to return.

Here I am. The vastness of the experience several years ago has been condensed into a six- to eight-foot microworld. The crags, the waves, they're all still there, but tiny, intricate, requiring closer examination than its mirror world beyond the pool.

Years ago the sheer immensity and drama of the landscape filled my young eyes with awe. I was part of the big picture, not an individual, objective observer as I am now.

Now I see that we are all in our own microworlds, like the creatures of this tide pool: interacting, sharing food and space. The anemone, the urchin, the mussels and snails live harmoniously beneath all the turbulence above. We could learn a lot from them about living beneath the turbulence, rather than drowning in it as we do now. We are all anemones who contract and hide their beauty when disturbed. We are all urchins—with spikes ready to protect ourselves at every hint of potential harm. We are mussels, hidden away in our shells of solitude; lonesome hermits closely quartered among many just like ourselves. But we are unlike these animals in that we have individuality and free will. If only we could put away our spikes, learn to bloom fearlessly and cast off the shells restricting our individuality, we could rise above the mollusk in us.

ARIEL HENDERSON graduated from the Green Meadow Waldorf School in 1999. She then attended Haverford College, studying anthropology there and receiving a BA with honors in 2002. She is now a teacher for the Linda Mood Bell organization and lives in Los Angeles.

Sea Worms, Tide Pools, Mudflats, and Anemones



Waldorf Seniors Study Marine Biology in Maine

BY EDWARD EDELSTEIN

It is a sunny September morning on Hermit Island, just off the Maine coast. Seniors from six North American Waldorf high schools are packed into the Kelp Shed, a simple wooden structure that serves as a snack bar during the busy summer camping season. One hundred and twenty-five people—113 students and 12 high school teachers—sit on picnic tables and stacking chairs, talking and laughing before main lesson begins. A fresh sea breeze wafts through a row of windows facing out to the dunes. The sound of waves mixes with the quiet drone of an aquarium pump. This makeshift classroom is complete with a portable blackboard perched on an old boat transom at the front of the shed.

Gary Shemroske, biology teacher at New York's Hawthorne Valley School, begins main lesson with a confession; hands in his pockets, head down, in a penitent voice, Gary admits that since the age of nine, when he began going on fishing trips with his father, he has been a worm addict. Gary writes the word *annelid* on the blackboard and begins the morning lecture on marine worms.

Eight years ago I sent a letter to my fellow biology teachers at Waldorf high schools east of the Rockies and suggested we share a weeklong marine biology field trip on the Maine coast. This unique experiment would join Waldorf high schools in collaborative academic work and share the broad expertise brought by teachers from different schools in North America. It would combine phenomenological study of invertebrate zoology—part of the twelfth-grade Waldorf curriculum—with marine-based science labs and artistic activities. Also, it would provide opportunity for Waldorf seniors to prepare for the annual fall senior conference. I received one positive response, from Andy Dill, biology teacher at Kimberton in Pennsylvania. That was enough to begin.

In preparation for the initial trip, I visited the island and began exploring its coastal habitats. Using a plankton net, I found live sea star larvae and studied them with a binocular microscope. Totally unlike the adult sea star, the larvae are

bilaterally symmetrical. It was exciting to observe them moving; the students had to see this. Ronnie Kamphausen, the resident naturalist, shared her love of the island and its organisms with me during that first visit, and she continues to share her knowledge and enthusiasm with each year's seniors.

The first trip, in September 1996, involved two schools—Toronto, where I was teaching, and Kimberton. We began Sunday evening with a ritual-like story about the four elements—the earth, air, water, and fire—around the island. The academic work began in earnest early Monday morning. The days were divided into three parts: main lesson, artistic workshops or science labs, and tide pool observation. Each evening we had a campfire. At night that first year, the bay glowed with blue green phosphorescent plankton. Some students went swimming, their arms like angels' wings in the iridescent sea. The students were awed by the beauty of the place and by the marine life they held in their hands. They loved getting to know another group of teenagers with whom they could share their experiences as Waldorf students.

Andy and I encouraged other schools to join us, and the trip has steadily grown. This year, the entire senior classes from the Waldorf schools in Chicago, Ann Arbor, Toronto, Kimberton, Lexington (Massachusetts), and Hawthorne Valley—and their teachers—studied together on Hermit Island. The expanded format included tide pool work, main lessons, and six different artistic and science lab sessions. Surprisingly, main lesson for 113 works very well in the Kelp Shed. We appreciate the kind support of the island's owners and of the campground manager, Donny Wallace, for allowing us to work there each year.

By the week's end each student completed a seascape painting or pastel, composed poetry about the sea, and participated in a geology lab. They all sketched living organisms seen under the microscopes, learned botany or beach and dune ecology, and studied

life in the mudflats. With the help of Ronnie and other area naturalists, and aided by the nine-foot "spring tides," the students identified more than fifty tide pool organisms. On Friday, the students were given an opportunity to reflect upon the week, each spending the two-hour main-lesson period in nature in solitude. Afterward, they met in the Kelp Shed to conclude with the annual "Hermit Island Student Art Show and Poetry Reading." Here is one student's poem :

The Moon, the Ocean, and Me

I stood on the rocks watching the ocean
Saw the waves try to take over the rocks in an unbroken motion

The waves came as regularly as the tic-tocks of clocks
But the patient giants would not move from their spots
The moon shone its light on the ground
So it could reflect all around

That night was the loudest quiet I have ever seen.

—Stephen Swisher
Chicago Waldorf School

Each year the students respond with phrases such as "the best ever," or "this hands-on is the most meaningful kind of learning for me." This year one student, Celeste Thom of Chicago, wrote :

I stood with a classmate out on one of the heads and watched my first Maine sunset and we were blown away by the beauty. . . . I got to see my first wild sea star and my first wild living crab. I heard the sound of the tide coming in, crashing on the rock as my nightly lullaby. . . . I surprised myself by realizing that I was able to just exist here. I was able to just be.

This trip has grown to full capacity; the experiment in collaboration is working well. If other schools were to join, we would initiate an additional week. The experience successfully integrates phenomenological science and artistic activities in a beautiful setting, while creating a healthy social atmosphere for our seniors and faculty. Teachers from six schools enjoy working and learning together and have coalesced into a core faculty. Andy Dill has been especially important in helping to create and form the experience.

This collaborative, field-based academic trip meets the needs of today's adolescents in a way that no classroom study can. The students' experiences are often profound and spiritual in nature.



The students were
awed by the beauty of
the place and by the
marine life they held in
their hands.

The students' experiences are often profound and spiritual in nature.



My hope is that shared academic trips can be created in other disciplines in Waldorf schools. Meanwhile, I have written some colleagues on the West Coast to explore the possibility of organizing a similar trip to Baja California at the time of the gray whale migration. So far, I have one positive response ...

EDWARD EDELSTEIN has taught high school biology and woodworking in Waldorf schools for twenty-five years. He earned a BS in biology from the University of California at Berkeley and also completed an MA in Waldorf Education. Mr. Edelstein currently teaches, mentors, and consults in Waldorf high schools throughout North America. He owns North-Woods Inc., a company that manufactures quality wooden school furniture. Mr. Edelstein is married and has three sons, all of whom are Waldorf educated. Ed Edelstein cofounded the Independent Schools Association of Ontario and initiated the AWSNA accreditation process. He negotiated direct acceptance into the University of Toronto for Waldorf graduates without standardized testing or government accreditation.

BOOKS *in Brief*

I Find My Star Curriculum: An Art-Filled and Community-Building Approach to the Inner and Outer Changes of Puberty and Adolescence

BY TAMARA SLAYTON WITH LINDA KNODLE AND ANNE-MARIE FRYER

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

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One great challenge for every human culture is to help its children understand the physiological and other changes that they experience at puberty. A related task is to help these almost-adults be integrated into the social fabric. Traditional cultures had, and have, clear and specific ways of helping the child become an adult. Rites of initiation that include instruction, physical and mental testing, and a concluding ritual are universal among premodern peoples.

Our own postmodern secular culture has largely lost these processes and mileposts. The media and the Internet have preempted education about sexuality and reproduction, and the transition from child to adult often goes unmarked and uncelebrated.

Tamara Slayton, a Waldorf educator, spent many years teaching and working with children and adolescents. She developed ways to help young people make the passage to adulthood that are based on a spiritual understanding of the human being. Tamara, who died in June 2003, created a "Coming of Age" curriculum that can be used for a main-lesson block in the seventh and eighth grades and in high school.

I Find My Star includes an overview by Tamara Slayton of her approach. It includes also a detailed plan—developed by two of Tamara's colleagues, Anne-Marie Fryer and Linda Knodle—for presenting the curriculum as a main-lesson block. The curriculum includes the study of puberty and adolescence in the past and in the present; the study of human reproductive physiology; essays; artistic work; conversations about specific issues (gender roles, sexual behavior, and so on). It also comprises interviews with teachers and parents about their own experiences of adolescence. Parents are informed about the curriculum block before it begins and are encouraged to take an active interest and to participate when possible. The block concludes with the students designing and organizing their own rite of initiation.

I Find My Star presents a way of helping today's adolescents meet the special challenges that face them. It is an approach that is based on the philosophy and pedagogical techniques that underlie Waldorf Education. It should be seriously considered by every Waldorf school.

Orders can be placed at <http://www.cethsol.com> or (206) 366-8262.

In Their Own Words

Poetic Windows into Adolescence

BY DAVID SLOAN

Teenagers are, by their very nature, usually hard to “read.” They develop extraordinarily effective techniques for hiding themselves behind an array of false fronts, evasive maneuvers, and deep freezes. They do this partly for protection, no doubt, because most adolescents go through a phase when they believe that nobody understands or appreciates who they really are.

The fact is that we parents and teachers who have raised these young people generally don’t understand or appreciate who they are becoming. How can we, when almost daily they are metamorphosing into young people further and further removed from the children we have adored? How can we, when they hide themselves away from us, as if they know intuitively that they are a work in progress at a most delicate stage of the creative process? The irony of this withdrawal is that teenagers desperately want to unmask themselves before the world, if only they could be assured that the world would be tender in its response.

Poetry offers an opportunity for adolescents to find their voices and for us to listen attentively. The sixteenth-century German mystic and philosopher Jakob Boehme wrote, “Whatever the self describes, describes the self.” Young people, consciously or not, usually write about themselves, and they do so especially in poetry. Teenagers’ writing, then, can shed light on this elusive phase of life that adults struggle, often vainly, to understand.

On the following page is a telling example, a poetic essay by a ninth grader, written in conjunction with the reading of *The Education of Little Tree* by Forrest Carter. In one chapter, the young orphan, who is being raised now by his Cherokee grandparents in the backwoods of Tennessee, finds himself a secret place, a small enclosure near a stream, surrounded by sweet gum and fern, where he can go to be with himself. I asked the students to describe a secret place of their own.

Eric's Secret Place

I found it on a biting cold raw fall day. It was beyond the field where we stole the apples in the fall, and over several stone walls and barbed wire fences. It had everything that I was drawn to—tall, grand and dark pine trees, a small pond with a duck family, tall stiff cattails, and a thicket of brambles encircling its edge.

The first time I saw it I was young, and I had not been there for a long time since. On a chilled day, cloudy and windy, I returned there to the secret place, amidst the tall pines, the wind ravaging and tearing at them.

It was so different from the way I remembered it. On this day it was so barren, cold, and dead. No ducks, no nothing. With the darkened clouds making ominous shapes above me I returned home like a small child who had just lost his bosom friend. That night I sat a long time, remorseful and saddened, now that the secret place, my secret place, had lost its magic.

—Eric Shurtleff '96

The two visits have much in common. Each time, the weather is harsh—biting, cold, raw. The same pond is there, surrounded by the same pine trees. In the outer world, the only change is the disappearance of the ducks. A dramatic inner change in the boy is what makes the visits different. The second time, he experiences an almost inexpressible loss. What he has lost becomes perhaps clearer in the poem that follows, written by a tenth-grade girl.

The Hatching

Her splintered world lies in shards around her;
The warm dark sphere where nothing had a name
Has crumbled and she wakes to cold and pain.
Freedom, fear, confusion, all have found her,
In one great sudden rush they try to drown her.
Her life-blood rushes madly through her veins,
Her naked half-formed fragile, ugly frame
No longer has the sheltering walls that bound her.
She struggles to stand on delicate, unformed feet,
To focus on some distant lights—the Angel's eyes;
They look so quiet, calm, clear-minded, sweet;
She reaches her fingers towards the sky.
Gently her new heart begins to beat;
She spreads her airy wings, begins to fly.

—Frances Pharr '98

In this poem, as in the first selection, we have a vivid portrait of initial loss and the accompanying pain. The poem also makes reference to a kind of shelter that has

been destroyed, with the resulting mood of uncertainty and vulnerability. What better image to describe this teenage awakening to a new inner state, one that in their poetry adolescents again and again liken to a death? It is perhaps the death of childhood they are mourning, that time of innocence with its sheltering and comforting embrace, that timeless time when the world was alive with animals that could speak and with angels that watched over them.

Surprisingly, "The Hatching" contains a reference to an angel. This constitutes a radical departure from the ninth grader's poetic reflection on his secret place. The angel's appearance heralds a dramatic change in the direction and atmosphere of the poem. The poem does not end in darkness and despair, but rather on a note of hopefulness, of new life, of expansiveness: "She spreads her airy wings, begins to fly."

"The Hatching" may point to a developmental step that occurs between ninth and tenth grades. The ninth-grade boy experiences a sense of loss; however, he seems but dimly aware of the causes. Also, he doesn't have the perspective to offer a counterimage promising a brighter tomorrow. The tenth-grade girl portrays a profound polarity, not only a kind of death, but a birth as well.

In the following poem, an eleventh grader embraces this polarity and takes it further.

The Plum

Like the pit of a dying plum
I am wrapped in pulp—
Pulp thought, pulp dream, (prison pulp)
Sour-sweet, red and soft.
I offer my dream to you;
I pass the plum around,
Hoping from the middle,
From that small, wood-encrusted bone,
To be scraped clean of meat ...
To be eaten.
Inside the pit there is a seed—
Just a hint of greatness.
But still you hold the fruit of me
And squeeze the dream
And praise me for my juiciness
And never touch the pit
And never find the seed
And only lick the purple skin.

—Laura Fisher '85

Here we can recognize the archetypal teenage themes. The poet touches on the polarity of death and birth with the remarkable image of the dying plum and the seed inside the pit—"just a hint of greatness." But she

adds a dimension in this poem that was absent in the other two—the relational aspect—the *you* who holds the fruit, squeezes, praises, but never discovers or appreciates that true inner self. We will come back to this all-important *you*, but first must ask: What is this seed, this hint of greatness? What is being born to take the place of the death of childhood?

Rudolf Steiner often alluded to three births or transformations that characterize early adolescence. The most obvious, of course, occurs on the physical level with the onset of puberty. Teenagers metamorphose shockingly quickly from being children to becoming capable of conceiving children themselves. This sexual maturation is often cited as the defining change of this phase of life.

Steiner, however, perceived other perhaps more profound changes in the developing adolescent. He pointed to a second, subtler birth, in the adolescent's development of capacities for critical and abstract thinking. These new cognitive faculties, however, are a two-edged sword. A sword divides, cleaves, severs. Our thinking separates us from the world so we can see it ever more clearly. Rightly developed, this capacity for

abstract thought becomes the means for apprehending the loftiest of ideas; turned inward or turned too coldly intellectual, it can isolate teenagers in a state of painful self-consciousness or aching loneliness. That is where the *you* of the "Plum" poem becomes so important.

Adolescents experience a third birth, one that arises out of their feeling life. They begin to develop the capacity for real love. This does not mean that younger children don't love their parents or their pet turtles. But instead of having a largely unconscious sympathy for the things in their world, teenagers become acutely aware of their own incompleteness, and feel the first stirrings of love as a way of entering consciously into a communion with another human being.

Until they experience this communion—and afterward as well—teenagers suffer. There is no way to lessen the pain, the isolation, the sometimes crippling doubt that plagues adolescents. All we parents and teachers can hope for is that they will recognize the value of suffering and look beyond the suffering to the possibilities life offers. Here below is a poem by a tenth grader who has found that larger view:



The Hunger

Please don't wipe my tears away.
I need them
For I must learn their taste.
Salty rain hindered my eyes from the garden gate,
Butterfly-fluttering eyelashes searching for approval,
Unveiling my dignity like rose petals,
Fretting that no one would touch me fearing my thorns
I tried to be a daisy, but they said I was average
I tried to be a weed, but they said I was evil
I tried to be a sunflower, but they said I was artificial
I tried to be a buttercup, but they said I was naïve
I tried to be a lilac, but they said I was depressed
I tried to be a daffodil, but they said I was superficial
I tried to be a root, but they said I was ugly
I tried to be a vine, but they said I was creepy
I tried to be a baby's breath, but they said I was weak

Coveted soul, swallowed whole,
Everlasting hunger—
ENOUGH
I stopped trying to please them.
Then the rain came
Louder than the criticism
Blending my tears.
Letting the water drip, drip
Down to the soil
Eventually helped me grow
Toward the sunshine.
Thank you for not wiping my tears away.

It is of course crucial that adolescents make this healthy step. The Waldorf high school curriculum can help students find the strength of character, the depth of soul, and the clarity of thought to meet these challenges of adolescence. The tenth-grade block on poetry is one example of a course that can smooth the passage from death to new births, ease the grieving, and fortify the seeking.

The study block, called “The Art of Poetry,” is usually divided into three one-week segments. One week we look at the poet as painter, discovering how poets look closely at the world and use images, similes, and metaphors to convey what they see. The teacher’s goal is to open our young poets’ outer and inner eyes. The observation and imagination developed here is not to be confused with fantasy or whimsy. The faculty of imagination does not lead to an escape from reality. Rather it seeks to plumb another reality, one grounded in the material world but stretching towards, and sometimes even touching, a higher realm.

Another week we consider the poet as musician, and the class studies the rhythms, meters, and sound

devices of poetry. The aim is that the students begin to hear the music of the word and of the world. This involves a capacity that Rudolf Steiner called inspiration, a kind of “breathing in,” a higher knowing through a heightened hearing.

The final week we usually focus on the poet as priest, on the poet as an intermediary who can rekindle a reverence in us for the things of this world, seen and unseen. Sometimes, we also consider the poet as seer, one who intuitively apprehends truths beyond the reach of everyday consciousness. Bashō, the seventeenth-century Japanese master of haiku, described this intuitive act:

Poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object
have become one, when you have plunged deep enough
into the object to see something like a hidden
glimmering there.

These three capacities of imagination, inspiration, and intuition, beginning to develop in the students, can work in surprisingly subtle and profound ways. Some years ago a sophomore boy at Green Meadow wrote the following poem:

The Boy and the Dove

With the morning sun comes the dove,
Her white wings glistening yellow and gold,
She rests herself on a branch of the lone tree.
Across the cold lot comes the boy,
His black boots scraping the black tar;
He reaches the tree and stops.
The world is quiet and the boy gazes at the dove.
The dove transfixes the boy
And the boy is unable to go on.
As the dove flies from the tree,
His curling lips rise.

—Shadrach Woods '88



Six years later, during his senior year at Bowdoin College, at age twenty-one, Shadrach Woods was involved in a skiing accident in Vermont. He lost control and collided with a tree; he died instantaneously.

When one rereads "The Boy and the Dove," aware of Shadrach's fate, the poem becomes eerily prescient. The fifteen-year-old poet seems to have had a premonition of the future. This is the most dramatic example I've encountered of poetry being a window, not only into the souls of young people, but into their destinies.

Thus poetry can reveal much of the hidden world of the teenager. We who live and work with teenagers need to be ever mindful of its revelatory potential.

We parents and teachers also need to cultivate our own faculties of imagination, inspiration, and intuition. These will help us perceive the hidden gifts our children are carrying within them. We need imagination to see not only who our teenagers are at any particular moment, but who they are becoming. We need inspiration to

listen not only to what they say but to hear, beneath the criticizing and complaining, their innermost, unexpressed longings. We need intuition to bridge the gulf between us and them, to align ourselves with their sufferings and strivings, so that we might truly experience, in Bashō's words, their "hidden glimmerings."

DAVID SLOAN, a native of southern California, graduated from Harvard College and the Waldorf Teacher Training Program at Emerson College in Sussex, England. David has taught at the Green Meadow Waldorf School for the past twenty-four years. He and his wife, Christine, have four children, all of whom have either graduated from or presently attend Green Meadow. In addition to being a member of the faculty of the New England High School Teacher Training Program, David has written a book entitled *Stages of Imagination: Working Dramatically with Adolescents*, a chapter in *More Lifeways on children and sports*, and has contributed several previous articles to *Renewal*.

The Door

A big door stands between us
it has for many years
I can't remember the last time it was opened
or how it got shut

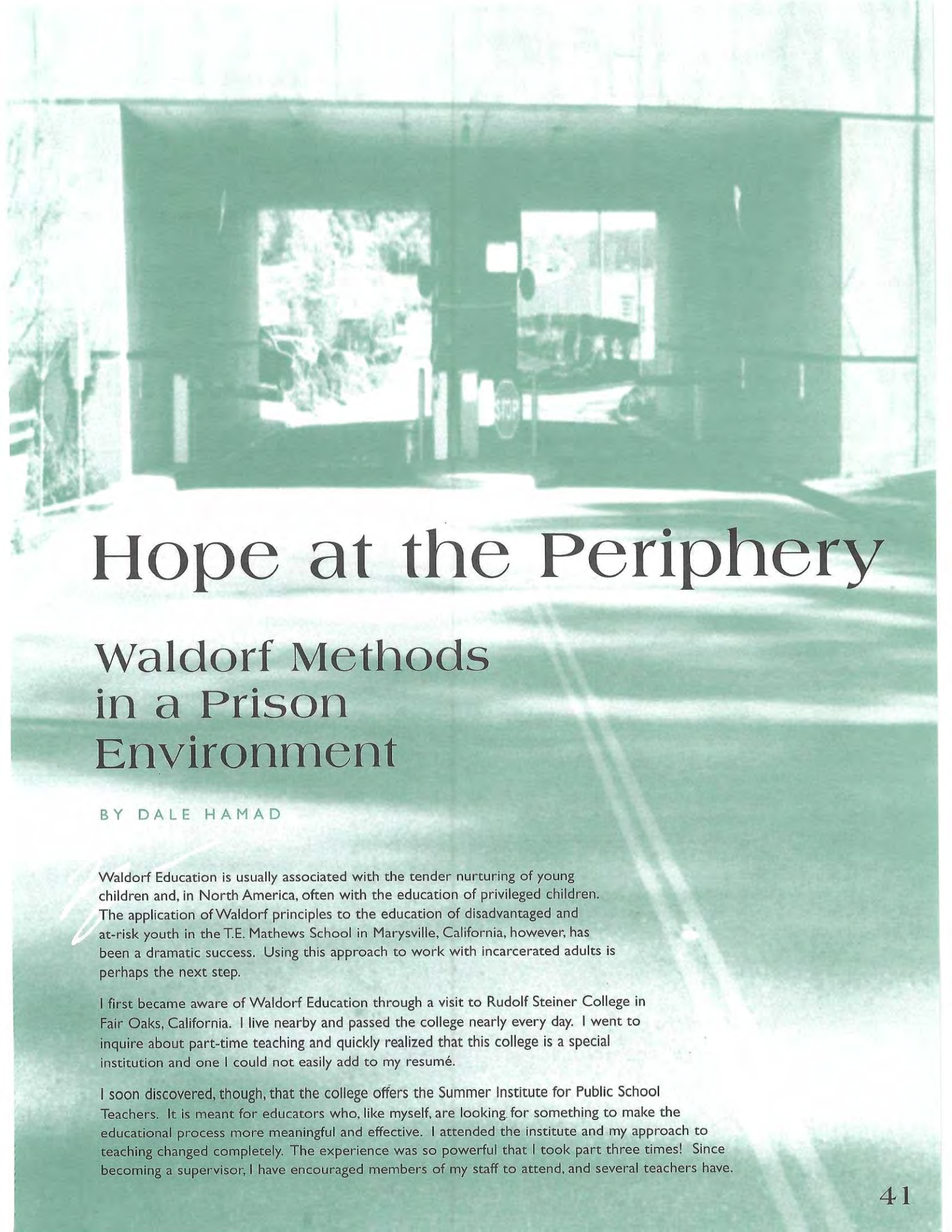
The gray paint has begun to fade
and is peeling along the sides
There is a cobweb a spider just made
around the insides

The door is heavy
I feel the weight on me
suspended across my back
Just a small movement
could cause it to crack

So all these days
peering through the keyhole
I wait for you to come
Turn the knob
and set me free.

—Laurie Newmark '91



A photograph of a prison entrance. In the center is a guardhouse with two large windows. Through the windows, a car is visible in the parking lot. A stop sign is mounted on the wall in front of the guardhouse. The scene is captured in a slightly desaturated, greenish-blue color palette.

Hope at the Periphery

Waldorf Methods in a Prison Environment

BY DALE HAMAD

Waldorf Education is usually associated with the tender nurturing of young children and, in North America, often with the education of privileged children. The application of Waldorf principles to the education of disadvantaged and at-risk youth in the T.E. Mathews School in Marysville, California, however, has been a dramatic success. Using this approach to work with incarcerated adults is perhaps the next step.

I first became aware of Waldorf Education through a visit to Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California. I live nearby and passed the college nearly every day. I went to inquire about part-time teaching and quickly realized that this college is a special institution and one I could not easily add to my resumé.

I soon discovered, though, that the college offers the Summer Institute for Public School Teachers. It is meant for educators who, like myself, are looking for something to make the educational process more meaningful and effective. I attended the institute and my approach to teaching changed completely. The experience was so powerful that I took part three times! Since becoming a supervisor, I have encouraged members of my staff to attend, and several teachers have.



Handcuffs and shackles are a part of daily life at California State Prison, Sacramento (CSP-SAC).

Sometime later I began teaching adult basic education at Folsom State Prison near Sacramento. I was assigned to teach twenty-seven illiterate adult felons in a self-contained classroom for eight-and-one-half hours a day. These men were assigned to this program against their will. This challenge sent me scurrying to develop ways to create a meaningful learning environment, maintain order, make the time pass quickly, and graduate men from the California Department of Corrections competency-based curriculum. I thought of Waldorf Education and its founder, Rudolf Steiner. He had established the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, to serve the children of factory workers, a population whose socioeconomic origins had more in common with my students at Folsom State Prison than with most of the children in North American Waldorf schools today.

I developed a one-year multicultural curriculum that studied six cultural groups, each for two months at a time. These cultural groups—African-American, Mexican-American, Native American, Southeast Asian, East Asian, and European—represented the inmate population, and our study of each in turn gave us the opportunity to look at every area of the world. For each culture I developed lessons on geography, history, literature, music, arithmetic, science, and art that corre-

sponded to the competency-based curriculum outline we are required to follow. In this way I transformed the linear, step-by-step reading/language/arithmetic curriculum outline into an integrated, active, ever changing series of activities designed to teach basic literacy skills.

At first there was resistance from the students. "This is kindergarten stuff," they protested.

"Yes, you are right," I said. "Your reading level is somewhere between kindergarten and the fourth grade, but you seem smarter than any five- or seven-year-old I know, so let's get to work and then you can move on."

Gradually with some humor, lots of pressure, and with activities that took advantage of my students' considerable verbal, manual, and motor skills, we transformed our classroom to a center of activity and a focus of interest for the entire school. We made Chinese lanterns that hung from the ceiling, painted a traditional African mural chronicling a hunt that covered the walls, and made maps of the various regions of the world we were studying. We wrote plays and skits based on traditional stories we read, enacted them in class, recited poetry, and measured our heartbeats after exercising. These activities took place in full view of all the other classes, arousing curiosity and perhaps even a little jealousy.

I left Folsom State Prison to take the position of supervisor of academic education at Deuel Vocational Institution, a medium security prison in Tracy, California, south of Stockton. This provided a further opportunity to pursue my interest in applying Waldorf principles in a correctional setting. While I worked at DVI, three of the academic teachers attended the Summer Institute for Public School Teachers held at Rudolf Steiner College. The results were interesting.

One teacher in the entry-level adult basic education classroom, Mary Graham, started a program we called "Literacy through Art." Totally illiterate inmate-students began to learn to read in the same way that first graders in Waldorf schools do—by drawing pictures that incorporate the letters of the alphabet. As they drew, they

Totally illiterate inmate-students began to learn to read in the same way that first graders in Waldorf schools do—by drawing pictures that incorporate the letters of the alphabet.

gradually added words to better define the content of their pieces. Their drawings gradually shifted into writing. The projects they developed became so successful that the whole school looked forward to the changing displays of their work on a bulletin board at the school entrance. The prison administration and other departments within the institution asked for samples of student work from the class to display in their areas, and even requested that we do projects to enhance their programs.

Another teacher who had attended the summer institute utilized art in her literature and writing program. She worked with more advanced learners. They were able to improve their writing and utilize artistic skills in preparing to take the exam for the General Education Diploma. A third teacher, Leone Heskett, incorporated drama and oral reading into her extensive literature program. The tenor of these classrooms changed. Students achieved more academically, received fewer disciplinary reports, and became more positive in their attitudes toward their academic education assignment.

At present I work at California State Prison, Sacramento, as the supervisor of academic instruction. CSP-SAC is a "level IV" high security prison to which very violent and mentally disturbed inmates are assigned. The education department offers classes to emotionally disturbed inmates in mental health programs. Some of the inmates are also physically disabled. The enhanced outpatient program has an academic education component.

In one of our classes, the teacher, Dennis Cronk, in association with the arts-in-corrections manager, Jim Carlson, and inmate-artists has developed a music program. The inmates who have severe problems interacting with others have developed a choral singing program that has put on concerts for teachers from outside the prison attending a conference. These performances have been such a success that one concert, complete with costumes and choreography, was videotaped for showing on the institutional television station.



When prisoners use books from the Law Library at CSP-SAC, they must do so in adjoining secure cubicles.

In the other academic class, Doris Nash, another graduate of Rudolf Steiner College's summer institute, has incorporated arts into the curriculum. Because of repeated requests from mental health staff and the inmate-students, a choral program is also planned for this class.

The Waldorf approach to education has a place in a level IV adult correctional facility. In an environment where security concerns are high and there is much inmate violence, education programs offer one of the few means of self-transformation. If we can change the attitudes and practices of those who develop curriculum and administer programs, we can help the inmates develop the artistic, moral, and intellectual capacities that are latent in every human being. Then, we can do a great service to the prisoners and in turn to society.

DALE HAMAD is a graduate of the doctoral program in sociology at the University of California at Davis. She has taught at the college and university levels and has done extensive research and written in the fields of criminology, education, and family studies. Dale Hamad has worked for the Department of Corrections for the past ten years. She has been a classroom teacher and a supervisor of education programs in minimum, medium, and high security prisons. She is currently also teaching a course in race relations at Folsom Lake College in Folsom, California.

**In an environment where security concerns are high
and there is much inmate violence, education
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of self-transformation.**

Rediscovering Waldorf Education in Thailand



A Waldorf Graduate's Year at the Panyotai School in Bangkok

BY EVA JO MEYERS

I had always dreamed of teaching, fascinated by the possibility of sharing what I know with others. When, after graduating from college, I became a teacher in a New York City public school, however, it was not the meaningful experience I had hoped for. After two years of worksheets, textbooks, and tests, I was thoroughly disillusioned. Everyone agreed that the whole system is failing, and various remedies were offered. But no one addressed what I

saw as the real cause of failure—a lack of attention to the *inside* of the children, to any kind of artistic, emotional, social, or spiritual growth that is so essential to being human.

My thirteen years as a Waldorf student had given me a love and respect for education, for all students and teachers, and for the world. I graduated from high school with a love of art, a passion for learning, and a curiosity about the world. I went into teaching wanting to share what my own education had given me. The public school system, though, left no time or space for the discovery or development of these sensibilities, and I longed to escape.

But where could I find a teaching situation that was the exact opposite from the one I was in? The answer was simple—on the other side of the world in a school dedicated to a learning that is not based on answers to test questions. And so, a year after I left New York, I found myself at the Panyotai Waldorf School in Bangkok, Thailand. Amid the heat and traffic, and in a culture and language that were new to me, I hoped to find something to identify with, a truth that would inspire me and rekindle my imagination.

Thai education is based on the centuries-old Asian tradition that emphasizes respect for one's teachers, rote memorization of the wisdom of the past, and conformity in behavior, ideas, and even appearance. Elementary school student uniform codes include specifications on how hair may be cut and worn. In a typical Thai classroom the students sit in rows, dutifully write down what the teacher says, and do not dare to question or challenge. This structure and rigidity extends even into the universities.

In recent years, though, discontent with and criticism of this system has been growing. Dr. Porn Panosot and his wife, Janpen, have done much to raise public awareness of the deficiencies in the Thai educational model and about alternatives. Dr. Panosot has organized lectures and courses sponsored and led by Waldorf educators from abroad, developed a Waldorf teacher training program, and worked tirelessly to educate parents. Mrs. Panosot has translated several books on Waldorf Education. Dr. Panosot's efforts in the broader educational and political domain helped alternative education become legal in Thailand in 1997.

The Panyotai Waldorf School, founded by the Panosots about six years ago, is one of three Waldorf schools in Bangkok. At first, the school was in a private home. Today, housed in a concrete building built by parents and teachers, it has about eighty students. The school is a quiet haven set amidst trees and jasmine on the outskirts of one of the world's most crowded cities. Its cool stone floors and a gazebo—built by the third graders and open to the breezes—give respite from the heat.



Kindergarten children at the Panyotai Waldorf School in Bangkok



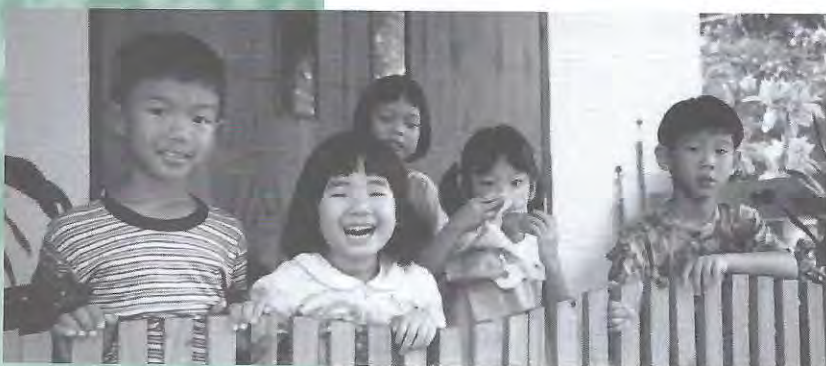
Eva Jo Meyers with students



School founder and teacher Dr. Panosot with fourth and fifth graders playing an Indonesian instrument that has a distinctive sound—caused by bamboo slats striking metal bars. Each student holds one or two notes, as in the playing of bells.



First-grade dramatic production



Kindergarten children



Fifth graders performing

I was at the school for one year and taught English, music, and singing to the first through fifth graders at the school. Each day I sat in that gazebo and I watched the students, despite the noontime sun, play marbles and tag during recess.

I had come to Thailand to rediscover the meaning, joy, and excitement in education that I had experienced as a Waldorf student. The teachers and parents at Panyotai were also seekers, and I talked to many of them about what had drawn them there.

I asked questions on many topics, from childhood memories of school to the integration of Buddhism into the Waldorf curriculum. The answers were as diverse as the people who provided them, but there was a simple, common thread—in the idea that education is more than academics, in the belief that not only the intellect but the whole human being must be developed. The new first-grade teacher, “Kru” Tai, smiled as she explained that Waldorf Education had brought to Thailand the wonderful idea that there is more to education than thinking.

Khun Tik, the mother of a kindergarten child in the school, told me, “Thai parents, especially the upper middle class, dislike the traditional Thai educational style. They went through it but want something different for their children.” Khun Tik has noticed remarkable, positive changes in her four-year-old daughter since the girl began spending her days playing, painting, and singing in the kindergarten at Panyotai.

“It’s hard to teach children about feelings between one another,” Khun Tik adds. “It is as important as science and math but is harder to teach these things to children.” I understand exactly what she means. Back in New York while teaching the science curriculum, I had given my children much information about the natural environment and the effect of human beings on it. But I hadn’t fostered any feelings in them about the topic. When I read to them about the extinction of the dodo bird, something that moved me almost to tears, it had had no effect on them.

Kru King, the kindergarten teacher, recalled, “I wanted a different track for my children. I wanted it to be more about experience instead of just study, study, study.” As if to illustrate the point, the children in her class are busy around her, grinding rice, sewing, and painting. From other parts of the school are heard peals of laughter, bits of recorder tunes, and snatches of recited poems.

“I try to get the children ready for the first grade, to strengthen their will,” she continues. “They have to learn responsibility. Even when they complain about not

wanting to do something, they need to do it and do it well."

I too learn a lesson about doing things well. Another kindergarten teacher, Kru Ning, invites me to visit her kindergarten class for a week. She gives me the task of winding a ball of yarn while I watch the children play. Having learned to knit in first grade, I have the ball wound in under two minutes and bring it to her, proud of my achievement and ready for the next assignment. She smiles at me and says softly, "You have all morning to do this task. It is not the work, but the gesture." Her words sink deep into my consciousness. By the end of the week I have mastered the art of using a full half-hour to slowly wind the yarn as the children sit by me and watch my careful work. How different is this conscious slowing down from the frantic information gathering, the pressure, and competition that characterize most classrooms today.

Khun Oi took me into her family the moment I arrived in Thailand. Her daughter had been attending Waldorf school for five years and was then in the third grade at Panyotai. She said, "If you talk about the original Thai culture, it is about having a simple life, not being materialistic. But in modern times, it has become the opposite. Most people go for a materialistic lifestyle and will do anything for money. This is what most parents who send their children to Panyotai want for their children—that they won't be materialistic."

This is a striking statement. In Thailand, economic pressures are tremendous. Much of the population struggles against abject poverty. Those who do have access to education generally go into fields such as medicine or business where they are guaranteed an adequate salary. And yet, many families at Panyotai expressed the same sentiment: "We don't have expectations for them such as wanting them to become a doctor. We just want them to be happy, to understand themselves, and understand other people." As one parent put it, "Our job is to guide our children, not to pressure them. We want to give them freedom."



Waldorf Education is still a small dot in the landscape of Thai education. But interest is strong and growing. The Waldorf teacher training has found advocates in the country's top university; in 2002, a conference on Waldorf Education sponsored by a group of Dutch teachers attracted over a hundred participants; and performances by European-based eurythmy groups fill large theaters.

It is September, shortly before my return to the United States, and heavy rains have caused flooding in parts of Bangkok. I am wading through knee-deep water down the street to my house. I cover my nose with my hand to avoid breathing in the rain. There are fish swimming

alongside of me, and there other, nameless things I am glad I cannot see through the muddy flow. It has been a challenging year. I have eaten rice three times a day, learned to communicate in Thai and to live with the heat and traffic, and have shared my life with people whose tradition and culture are much different from my own. But amidst the chaos I have found something I can understand.

The mere existence of the Panyotai Waldorf School, tucked away in the tangle of Bangkok, steadily growing like a flower through a crack in the pavement, is a seed of hope that has reinspired the teacher in me. Panyotai has reconnected me to the love and respect I feel for all students, teachers, and for the

world. But most importantly, it has reconnected me to myself and my place in this world.

EVA JO MEYERS attended the Hawthorne Valley School in Harlemville, New York, from kindergarten through high school. She received a degree from Oberlin College in visual art with a concentration in social activism. She is currently the media program manager for the San Francisco Conservation Corps, a youth development program that combines art, environmental education, and community service.



Book Review

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Difficult Children—There is No Such Thing An Appeal for the Transformation of Educational Thinking

BY HENNING KÖHLER

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

Today “difficult children”—children with attention deficit disorder, high levels of anxiety, restlessness, aggressiveness, and other emotional and behavioral problems—are a major challenge for parents, educators, and therapists. Once the child has been diagnosed and labeled as having ADD or autism or some other condition, the standard approach is to use psychotherapy and/or psychotropic drugs to change behavior. Millions of children today, for example, take the drug Ritalin for attention deficit disorder and hyperactivity.

Henning Köhler is a therapist working with children with special needs in a clinic near Stuttgart, Germany. In *Difficult Children—There is no Such Thing*, Köhler presents

an approach to dealing with difficult children that is radically different in theory and practice from the generally accepted ones.



Köhler's approach is founded on Rudolf Steiner's view of the child, the same view that is the foundation of Waldorf Education. According to this view, the child is the incarnation into a physical body of a preexisting spiritual being. This individuality has chosen to leave the spiritual world and to come to earth to continue its

evolution—to “work on something”—and also to contribute to the evolution of humanity as a whole. The child has willed himself into earthly existence for a particular purpose and destiny and has chosen parents and other adults who will help him fulfill it.

With this understanding as a basis, Köhler says that the role of parents and educators is to help the child discover who and what she is and will be. Their work is not to form the child into a new version of themselves, to impose their own capacities and behaviors. Each child brings love and warmth into the world, and perhaps even a new evolutionary impulse, a possibility for positive change. Adults must encourage, protect, and nurture the child so that she can realize her freedom and destiny.

According to Köhler, the cause of difficult behaviors in children lies largely in the world into which they come. It is a world in which family life and child rearing practices

have lost the warmth, love, and trust of former times; in which education assesses, evaluates, and dehumanizes children and destroys imagination and soul; in which children are viewed as commodities to be trained to suit the purposes of the economy and the state; and it is a world in which children are abused and exploited and subjected, through the media, to violence and crass sexuality. Difficult behaviors result from a closing down in the face of the modern world and the death of love, of true thought, feeling, and action.

Köhler offers much practical advice on dealing with so-called difficult children and in effect with all children:

- Realize that we adults are our children's chosen companions and are privileged to be initiated into their individual futures and into the future of humanity.
- Give up the idea that we have the right and the ability to make a child into this or that type of person.
- Protect children from the forces of death in the society that attack childhood.
- Give affirmation, encouragement, trust, social support, and esteem.
- Give children the space and freedom to become what they wish to become.
- Weave social skills into the child's peculiarities—i.e., do not adopt a laissez-faire approach.
- Be a role model. Exhibit tolerance, adaptability, acceptance so that the child can develop these same capacities.
- Do not submit children to evaluations and assessments that will result in a label of dysfunction.
- Do not be intimidated by pedagogues and therapists who live by assessment and therapy.
- Discern and respect the value of the child's special characteristics and behaviors.

Köhler also presents interesting and thought-provoking case studies that illustrate how his approach works in practice.

Difficult Children—There is No Such Thing calls for a major shift in how adults think about and relate to difficult children and, in fact, all children. It deserves the careful study of parents, teachers, and therapists.