

Renewal

SPRING/SUMMER 2008 – VOLUME 17, NUMBER 1



*Schooling Character in the Wilderness
Gardening and Education
To Homework or Not to Homework?*

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

Waldorf Alumni Forum

Rebecca Schmidt

CHARLOTTESVILLE WALDORF SCHOOL



Rebecca with her mother, Vivian Jones-Schmidt

I was privileged to have a Waldorf education, an education in which the arts live and flourish, and where both the community and the individual are celebrated and nourished. It is difficult to summarize the gifts of the Waldorf experience, partly because they expand and deepen with age. Yet there are some core legacies—perspective, awareness, and connectedness—that have absolutely guided my heart and steadied my path.

In a Waldorf school, children learn about the histories and cultures of the world in a direct, experiential way. By exposing children to the heroic deeds of individuals and the great strides of human cultures, Waldorf Education instills the realization that we are but tiny figures in the history of the world but also the empowering knowledge that we are in fact all creators.

In a time of struggle or ambition, of indebtedness or failure, the Waldorf student may recall the story of Gilgamesh and how this ancient hero overcame adversity; or how we as fifth graders rose to the challenges of our Olympiad. Or, we may meditate

on the life of a seed, to be reassured by the triumph of the forces of life and growth.

Waldorf students learn not only success but also failure, both personal and historical. Constantly encouraged to participate in activities in which they feel inferior, to confront fear of failure, students learn to focus on the action rather than the fear. They learn that “success” and “failure” are only terms, a matter of perspective.

There is no better training for diplomacy, for the appreciation of diversity, and for learning to forgive than to share your fears with your classmates for eight years, to support each other, to blame and choose to let blame go, in order to grow as human beings.

[The Waldorf experience] leads to an awareness of our connectedness, to the great responsibility of relating to nature and to each other.

A Waldorf education is an investment in and of the heart. It is an investment in the security of balance against extremism, in human connectedness, and in the health of our Earth and its future. There is no more pertinent investment than in “an education through which people can learn, once again, how to live with one another” (Rudolf Steiner).

Rebecca Schmidt grew up in Charlottesville, Virginia, and attended the Charlottesville Waldorf School from kindergarten through the eighth grade. Rebecca’s mother, Vivian Jones-Schmidt, was a class teacher at the school during that time, though not Rebecca’s teacher. After graduating in 1995, Rebecca attended Charlottesville High School and then Boston University. She majored in theatre arts and social work and graduated summa cum laude/Phi Beta Kappa. Her senior thesis, “Homeland Security,” a one-act play and accompanying paper on domestic violence, received an award.

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From the Editor

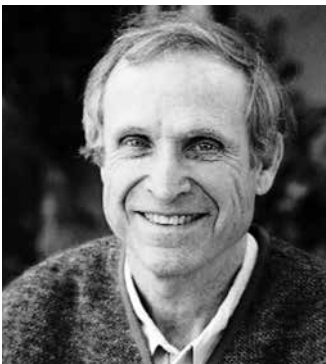
“iPod, therefore I am.” Or am I?

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

Recently, I spent some time in one of the most active shrines of the current electronic/digital culture—an Apple retail store. What one finds there is mind-boggling. What was once science fiction is new today and old hat tomorrow. Oh, Dick Tracy! In what museum are you and your radio wrist-watch now?

Today, with an iPhone, a device smaller than a pack of cigarettes, you can instantly phone or text message all your friends, relatives, and colleagues—the living ones, at least. (Communication with those who have crossed the threshold is still a technological advance or two in the future.) Also, you have constant access to the Internet and to your e-mail. On the same device you can store several thousand songs, as well as photographs, videos, television programs, and movies, and enjoy them anytime, anywhere.

The sweet-natured but pallid young salesman at the Apple store pulled out his own iPhone and scrolled through, for my benefit, the scores of record albums he carries around with him. This was to him no more remarkable than my carrying a pocket edition of Hemingway was to me four decades ago.



We are thus able, with a few finger taps, to receive information about virtually anything, to communicate with almost anyone, and to draw on a vast world of acoustical and visual entertainment. We seem to be moving toward a state of being informed, connected, and, in particular, entertained, 24/7. The

obsession with unremitting access to one's favorite music, movies, and sitcoms may be leading us into an age whose guiding motto is “I am entertained, therefore I am.”

In days of yore, our ancestors were treated once in a while to an itinerant storyteller or to a traveling

circus or stage group. For the most part, though, our forebears had to keep themselves entertained and amused. To this end, they played music, sang songs together, told each other stories, put on plays, knitted, carved wood, and engaged in the other artistic and creative activities that comprise an important part of human culture. They even read books.

Also, our ancestors had moments in which they sat and looked quietly out at the world—at a wheat field in the midday sun, or at the moon on a starry night—and pondered where this wide, astounding, mysterious creation came from. They had moments of silence, wonder, and reverence into which the gods could speak.

If, however, I have the entire oeuvre of my favorite television sitcom or favorite musical group at my constant beck and call, if I spend most of my day plugged into a pair of earphones, when is there a moment for silence, for wonder at the world, an opening for inspirations and epiphanies?

The burgeoning culture of 24/7 entertainment is difficult to resist and will become more so. It is seductive and powerful and, as a kind of digital Atlantean Deluge, is affecting the entire global culture. There are and will be people who choose to resist, who believe there is more to life than being constantly entertained. And if there are Waldorf graduates among those resisters, they will be especially well prepared. They, perhaps as much as anyone, will have the necessary tools and skills for survival stored in their hearts, hands, and minds. The typical Waldorf graduate has been blessed with the opportunity to learn to sing, play a musical instrument, knit a scarf, carve a spoon, recite a poem, put on a play.

In this digital flood, both enticing and destructive, Waldorf Education may prove to be a little Noah's Ark for the interests, skills, and activities that for centuries were assumed to be basic to the human experience. ☺

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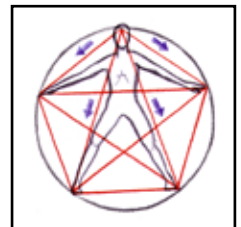
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Renewal: A Journal for Waldorf Education is published by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America. Founded in 1991, the magazine is intended primarily as a resource for Waldorf parents and teachers. It features articles about child development,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

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From the Association

New Services and Opportunities on the Association Web Site

The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) comprises 175 Waldorf schools and teacher education institutes. Founded in 1968, it seeks to promote Waldorf Education in Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

The guiding principle of the Association is “strength through collaboration,” and the organization strives to do for Waldorf schools and for the Waldorf movement what individual schools could not do alone. Its activities include representing Waldorf Education in the broader society, supporting and overseeing teacher education, protecting the integrity of the Waldorf and Steiner brand names, organizing conferences, and helping schools present the Waldorf message to their communities in an accessible and consistent way.

Recently, the Association has received a donation to expand and improve its Web site: www.WhyWaldorfWorks.org. The site now provides a directory of schools, information on opportunities for teacher training, news articles connected to Waldorf Education, and a calendar of coming events, such as the “Winning With Waldorf” golf tournament in June, and more. It is possible to sign up for a monthly e-update and to register online for upcoming conferences such as the Association’s summer teachers’ conference in Minneapolis. The online store offers books on Waldorf Education and related topics as well as past issues of *Renewal*.

A brand new feature of the Web site is the option to donate to the Association online, making it easier than ever to support the work that supports Waldorf Education. www.WhyWaldorfWorks.org also has new opportunities for sponsorships, advertising, and directory listings.

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

What Young Children Really Need

The Essentials of Waldorf Early Childhood Education

BY SUSAN HOWARD

Is there a Waldorf early childhood curriculum?

Are there specific activities—puppet plays, circle games, watercolor painting, for example—that are essential to a Waldorf program?

Are there certain materials and furnishings—lazed, soft-colored walls, handmade dolls, beeswax crayons, silk and other natural materials—that are necessary ingredients in a Waldorf setting?

What makes Waldorf early childhood education “Waldorf”?



A clean, orderly environment with beautiful objects, large and small, nourishes the child through her or his senses.

Rudolf Steiner spoke on a number of occasions about the experiences that are essential for the healthy development of the young child. These include:

- love and warmth
- an environment that nourishes the senses
- creative and artistic experiences
- meaningful adult activity to be imitated
- free, imaginative play
- protection for the forces of childhood
- gratitude, reverence, and wonder
- joy, humor, and happiness
- adult caregivers pursuing a path of inner development

Love and Warmth

Children who live in an atmosphere of love and warmth, and who have around them truly good examples to imitate, are living in their proper element.

—Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

Love and emotional warmth, rather than any particular early childhood program, create the basis for the child's healthy development. These qualities should live between the adult caregiver and the child, in the children's behavior toward one another, and among the adults in the early childhood center. When Rudolf Steiner visited the classes of the first Waldorf school, he often asked the children, “Do you love your teacher?”

Children are also served if this love and warmth exist in the relationships between the teachers and the parents, between the early childhood teachers and the rest of the school, and in the surrounding community.

An Environment that Nourishes the Senses

The essential task of the kindergarten teacher is to create the proper physical environment around the

children.

“Physical environment” must be understood in the widest sense imaginable. It includes not just what happens around the children in the material sense, but everything that occurs in their environment, everything that can be perceived by their senses, that can work on the inner powers of the children from the surrounding physical space.

—Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

Early learning is profoundly connected to the child’s own physical body and sensory experience. Everything the young child sees, hears, and touches has an effect. Thus a clean, orderly, beautiful, quiet setting is essential.

The physical environment, both indoors and outdoors, should provide varied and nourishing opportunities for self-education—experiences in touch, balance, lively and joyful movement, and also inward listening. The children should experience large-group, small-group, and solitary activities.

The teacher, in integrating diverse elements into a harmonious and meaningful environment, provides surroundings that are accessible to the child’s understanding, feeling, and active will. The care, love, and intention expressed through the outer materials and furnishings of the classes are experienced unconsciously by the child. The child experiences the immediate environment as ensouled and nurturing.

The adult shapes the temporal environment as well as the spatial. Through a rhythmic schedule, in which the same thing happens at the same time on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, the child gains a sense of security and confidence in the world. Also, the different activities of the day should take place in a comfortable flow with smooth transitions.

Creative, Artistic Experience

In order to become true educators, we must be able to see the truly aesthetic element in the work, to bring an artistic quality into our tasks. . . . [I]f we bring this aesthetic element, then we begin to come closer to what the child wills out of its own nature.

—Rudolf Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*



Stories told to children enliven and enrich their imaginations. Here children listen to the story of “Mouskin.”

In the early childhood class, the art of education is the art of living. The teacher is an artist in how she perceives and relates to the children and to the activities of daily life. She orchestrates and choreographs the rhythms of each day, each week, and each season in such a way that the children can breathe freely in a living structure.

In addition, the teacher offers the children opportunities for artistic experiences in singing and music, in movement and gesture—through eurythmy and rhythmic games—and in creative speech and language—through verses, poetry, and stories. The children model with beeswax, draw, and do water-color painting. Puppet and marionette shows put on by the teacher are an important element in the life of the kindergarten.

Meaningful Adult Activity to be Imitated

The task of the kindergarten teacher is to adapt the practical activities of daily life so that they are suitable for the child’s imitation through play. . . . The activities of children in kindergarten must be derived directly from life itself rather than being “thought out” by the intellectualized culture of adults. In the kindergarten, the most important thing is to give children the opportunity to directly imitate life itself.

—Rudolf Steiner, *The Child's Changing Consciousness*

Real, meaningful work with a purpose, adjusted to the needs of the child, is in accordance with the child's natural and inborn need for movement and is an enormously significant educational activity. The teacher focuses on the meaningful activities that nurture life in the classroom "home," such as cooking and baking, gardening, doing laundry and cleaning, creating and caring for the materials in the immediate environment, and taking care of the bodily needs of the children.

This directed attention of the teacher creates an atmosphere of freedom in which the individuality of each child can be active. It is not intended just that the children copy the outer movements and actions of the adult, but that they experience also the inner attitude—the devotion, care, sense of purpose, focus, and creative spirit of the adult.

Free, Imaginative Play

In the child's play activity, we can only provide the conditions for education. What is gained through play, through everything that cannot be determined by fixed rules, stems fundamentally from the self-activity of the child. The real educational value of play lives in the fact that we ignore our rules and regulations, our educational theory, and allow the child free rein.

—Rudolf Steiner, "Self-Education in the Light of Spiritual Science," lecture March 14, 1912

Little children learn through play. They approach play in an entirely individual way, out of their unique configuration of soul and spirit, and out of their unique experiences of the world in which they live. The manner in which a child plays may offer a picture of how she will take up her destiny as an adult.

The task of the teacher is to create an environment that supports the possibility of healthy play. This environment includes the physical surroundings, fur-

nishings, and play materials; the social environment of activities and social interactions; and the inner/spiritual environment of thoughts, intentions, and imaginations held by the adults.

Protection for the Forces of Childhood

Although it is highly necessary that each person should be fully awake in later life, the child must be allowed to remain as long as possible in the peaceful, dreamlike condition of pictorial imagination in which his early years of life are passed. For if we allow his organism to grow strong in this nonintellectual way, he will rightly develop in later life the intellectuality needed in the world today.

—Rudolf Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*

The lively, waking dream of the little child's consciousness must be allowed to thrive in the early childhood group. This means that the teacher refrains as much as possible from verbal instruction. Instead, her gestures and actions provide a model for the child's imitation. Familiar daily rhythms and activities provide a context in which the need for verbal instruction is reduced. Simple, archetypal imagery in stories, songs, and games provides experiences that the children can internalize but that do not require intellectual or critical reflection or explanation.

Gratitude, Reverence, and Wonder

If, during the first period of life, we create an atmosphere of gratitude around the children, then out of this gratitude toward the world, toward the entire universe, and also out of thankfulness for being able to be in this world, a profound and warm sense of devotion will arise ... upright, honest, and true.

—Rudolf Steiner, *The Child's Changing Consciousness*

Early experience of gratitude is the basis for what will become a capacity for deep, intimate love and commitment in later life, for dedication and loyalty, for true admiration of others, for fervent spiritual or a



Free, imaginative play, such as this little girl playing "mother" with her doll, is an important activity for the young child.

devotion, and for placing oneself wholeheartedly in the service of the world.

Joy, Humor, and Happiness

If you make a surly face so that a child gets the impression you are a grumpy person, this harms the child for the rest of his life. What kind of school plan you make is neither here nor there; what matters is what sort of person you are.

—Rudolf Steiner, *The Kingdom of Childhood*

The teacher's earnestness about her work and her serious striving must be balanced with humor and a demeanor that bespeaks happiness. There must be moments of humor and delight in the classroom every day.

Adult Caregivers on a Path of Inner Development

For the small child before the change of teeth, the most important thing in education is the teacher's own being.

—Rudolf Steiner, *Essentials of Education*

Just think what feelings arise in the soul of the early childhood educator who realizes: What I accomplish with this child, I accomplish for the grown-up person in his twenties. What matters is not so much a knowledge of abstract educational principles or pedagogical rules. . . . [W]hat does matter is that a deep sense of responsibility develops in our hearts and minds and affects our worldview and the way we stand in life.

—Rudolf Steiner, "Education in the Face of the Present-day World Situation," lecture June 10, 1920

Here we come to the spiritual environment of the early childhood setting: the thoughts, attitudes, and imaginations living in the adult who cares for the children. This invisible realm that lies behind the outer actions of the teacher has a profound influence on the child's development.

The spiritual environment includes recognition of the child as a threefold being—of body, soul, and spirit—on a path of evolutionary development through repeated Earth lives. This recognition provides a foundation for the daily activities in the kindergarten, and for the relationship between adult and child.

Such an understanding of the nature and destiny of the human being comes out of the inner life of the adult, the life of the individual Ego. This is a realm that is largely hidden, and hence is difficult to observe directly and to evaluate objectively. Yet ultimately this realm may affect the development of the children most profoundly. It is not merely our outer activity that influences the growing child. What lies behind and is expressed through this outer activity also is crucial. Ultimately, the most profound influence on the child is who we are as human beings—and who we are becoming and how.

Conclusion

The "essentials" described here are qualitative in nature. For the most part, they are not part of a body of concrete "best practices." Instead, they concern inner qualities and attributes of the teacher that foster healthy development in young children. These qualities can come to expression in a wide variety of ways, according to

- the age range of the children in the group and their individual characteristics;
- the nature of the particular program—a kindergarten, playgroup, or extended care program; and



Small children need time in nature to experience wonder and joy there.

- the environment and surroundings—urban or rural, home or school or child care center.

Many practices that have come to be associated with Waldorf/Steiner early childhood education—certain daily rhythms and rituals, play materials, songs, stories, even the colors of the walls, the dress of the adults, and the menu for snack—may be mistakenly taken as essentials. The results of such assumptions can be surprising, even disturbing—a “King Winter” nature table appearing in a tropical climate in “wintertime,” or dolls with pink skin and yellow hair in a kindergarten where all the children are brown-skinned and black-haired. Such practices may express a tendency toward a doctrinal or dogmatic approach that is out of touch with the realities of the immediate situation and instead imposes something from “outside.”

There is a parallel concern at the other end of the spectrum from the doctrinal or dogmatic. The freedom that Waldorf Education offers each individual teacher to determine the practices of her early childhood program can be misinterpreted to mean that “anything goes,” according to personal preference and style. Here too, there is the danger that the developmental realities and needs of the children are not sufficiently taken into consideration.

Each of these one-sided approaches may be injurious to the development of the children. As Waldorf early childhood educators, we are constantly seeking a middle, universally human path between polarities.

Rudolf Steiner’s advice to the first Waldorf kindergarten teacher, Elizabeth Grunelius, in the early 1920s, can be paraphrased as follows:

- Observe the children.
- Actively meditate.
- Follow your intuitions.
- Work so that all your actions are worthy of imitation.

Today, those of us who work with young children in a Waldorf environment are challenged to engage in a constant process of renewal. We must actively observe the children in our care, carry them in our meditations, and seek to work consciously and artistically to create the experiences that will serve their development. Our devotion to this task awakens us to the importance of self-education and transformation in the context of community. Our ongoing study of child and human development, our own artistic and meditative practices, and our work with



Imitating common, everyday tasks done by adults is important for healthy development.

Anthroposophy, independently and together with others, become essential elements for the practice of Waldorf early childhood education. Here we can come to experience that we are not alone on this journey. We are supported through our encounters with one another and through our sharing of insights, experience, and knowledge. We are helped also by those spiritual beings who are committed to our continued development and to the renewal of culture that Waldorf Education seeks to serve. ☺



SUSAN HOWARD is the coordinator of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN). She also directs the part-time Waldorf Early Childhood Training Program at Sunbridge College and is active as a mentor and

advisor to Waldorf kindergartens. Co-coordinator of the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education, based in Stockholm (see www.iaswece.org), Susan lives in Amherst, Massachusetts, with her husband, Michael, an artist, writer, and adult educator.

This article appears as a chapter in *Mentoring in Waldorf Early Childhood Education*, written by the WECAN Mentoring Task Force and available through WECAN Books at www.waldorfearychildhood.org

Drawings by Yumiko East

Finding Reality, Learning, and Joy in the School Garden

BY LINDA JOLLY / TRANSLATED BY ANNIKEN MITCHELL

Gardening has been a central element in the Waldorf curriculum since Rudolf Steiner founded the first school in 1919. Today, most Waldorf schools have a garden, in which vegetables, fruits, grains, and flowers are grown. Many schools also have farm animals such as cows, chickens, goats, sheep, and even llamas. The children begin their experience in the early grades. Major gardening blocks continue right through the high school years. The students work with compost, prepare beds, plant seeds, take out weeds, watch the plants germinate, sprout, and grow to maturity. Then they harvest, cook, and eat what they have grown, typically bringing home some of the bounty to share with their families. Here, Linda Jolly, a Waldorf teacher in Norway, considers the value of gardening for children today.

—R. E. K.

School in itself needs to be a friendly place. Outside there needs to be provided not only an area for running and play, but also a garden where one can in-between send the students so they can take joy in the sight of trees, flowers, and grass.

—Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670),
Czech scientist, theologian, and educator

A garden can be the beautiful, living heart of a school. It can be a source of wisdom, inspiration, and nourishment to children, teachers, parents, staff, and visitors.

In our hurried times, a school garden can seem an anachronism, something left over from an age when people had plenty of time, when they could take joy in producing their own food products, and when the only entertainment that came through the air was the song of a bird. But a school garden is about more than nostalgia.

For adults, work in nature is a good balance to time-pressured living and a help in regaining a slower pace of life. A garden has to do with things that take time. While we can get a lot of facts about something via the Internet in a few seconds, we cannot really get to know a plant until we have followed it through at

least one cycle of growth. A garden also has to do with experience permeated with feeling. A garden gives us the opportunity to connect our inner lives with the outer natural world. When I smell a rose today, I can still experience that moment in my childhood when I had my nose buried in the soft, delicate flower petals in my mother's garden. For our children, growing up in a restless world, this contact with nature is even more important than it was in earlier times.

My own involvement with the school garden began with my frustration as a biology teacher. The children were distanced from nature, and it was hard to keep their attention when teaching about natural phenomena. They seemed to have little experience of real, out-of-doors nature. From television and books, they knew a lot about the giraffe but nothing about the little porcupine in their own gardens. It was not just knowledge that fell short, but experience. Since experience of and participation in something is the basis for real interest, I soon realized that the students needed to get out of the classroom. Therefore my life as a biology teacher started with one foot in the garden and one foot in the classroom. It is inconceivable now for me to teach without access to a school garden.



What these two Norwegian girls experience in their school garden may stay with them for a lifetime.

To be outside with the children in the school garden requires a lot of extra time and much responsibility but also brings great joy. One gets to experience wonder together with the students over the peculiar and the beautiful phenomena that nature brings forth. I feel I was as deeply nourished by the experience as the children. One also gets to know the children in a different way than when they are inside a classroom. Everyone works together, shoulder-to-shoulder, to create a beautiful and bountiful area on the school grounds, a place that can become the heart of the school. There are many benefits for the children from the experiences in the school garden. They include the following.

Awareness of the Source of Food

The origin of our daily bread has disappeared from our children's curious gaze. According to a British study, about one-fourth of the children between eight and eleven do not know that wheat is a main ingredient in bread. They think that bread is made of rice, potatoes, and perhaps yeast. Only one in five knows that apples ripen and are picked in the autumn.

Food grows in the store—that is the experience children have today. In one gardening lesson, we were talking about where we get our food, and one child said, “I will always buy food at the supermarket, teacher.” In tenth grade we take our students to a farm and get milk straight from the cows in clear glass mugs. Often some students do not want to taste this real cow's milk, which is something quite different from the processed milk in a carton or plastic jug that one buys in a store.

This experience and understanding of the origins of food is not only a matter of knowledge. It also affects our experience of being in the world. The more we are surrounded by things that we do not fully understand, the harder it is to develop a sense of belonging and safety. When children do not know where their food comes from, there is a feeling of rootlessness and uncertainty. School should be a place where children grow comfortable with the world around them by gaining an understanding of the foundations of daily life. In the garden they experience how earth, sun, wind, and rain, plus human activity, create the food that appears on the table. Knowing where their nourishment comes from will help the children feel more at home in the world. At another time, learning how a light switch or a computer works will further help them to feel at ease in our contemporary environment.



Even in colder climates, garden work begins in the early spring. Here students prepare the soil in a cold frame.

Nutritional Awareness

The work in the garden also educates children about nutrition and healthy eating habits. There are a host of issues that surround food and eating today—the poor quality of denatured and overprocessed food; the ubiquity of junk and fast food; food allergies; excessive use of stimulants such as caffeine and white sugar; eating disorders; and epidemic obesity. Gardening and related experiences with food at school can make nutrition less abstract and help the children develop a sensible and balanced relationship to food and to eating.

Typically, at the end of a gardening block, the class makes a meal of foods they themselves have planted, tended, and harvested. To create a meal themselves, from sowing the seeds to setting the table, gives the students an experience of what good food is. The joy and pride in what they have produced themselves help them to understand and value wholesome, nutritious food. Even the children who have proclaimed that they do not like vegetables proudly display their own harvest and eat it with great appreciation.

Wholesome Physical Activity

Today young children spend more time indoors than outdoors and more time physically inactive—watching television, playing computer games, doing academic work—than physically active. As a result, many children have undeveloped gross motor skills. They are more clumsy and less capable of controlling their limbs. Doctors and physiotherapists in Denmark have determined that the knee muscles in about 75 percent of ten-year-old boys today are underdeveloped, a condition that can lead to back problems in later life. Also, too much sitting leads



Children and young people of all ages can find digging, planting, and other garden activities satisfying and fun.

to restlessness and an inability to concentrate. It is clear that children need to move much more in the course of a school day.

The physical movements involved in gardening—in digging, raking, hoeing, shoveling, and weeding—provide opportunities to develop motor skills through meaningful tasks. Improved physical coordination and new abilities in turn can help a child develop self-confidence and a positive self-image.

Rich Sensory Experiences

Active contact with nature in the school garden also brings a rich array of experiences through the senses. The children's senses of touch, sight, taste, smell, balance, and hearing are all stimulated. The feel of the moist earth after a rain; the many insects, birds, and small animals that can be seen; the taste of a freshly harvested carrot; the scent of the different flowers and blossoms—such firsthand experiences penetrate deeply into the being and memory of the children and enlarge and make more subtle their sensory capacities.

This awakening of the senses through real experiences can help the lessons that typically happen indoors. Teachers at my school have reported how, for example, language and mathematics lessons go more smoothly and are more effective when they are combined with sessions in the garden. The garden work can provide both material and inspiration for many of the lessons that normally take place in the classroom.

The younger and the older students experience things in the garden in different ways. The youngest

students meet the world of nature with great wonder, reverence, and respect. When they are immersed in watching an earthworm bury down into the soil or when they discover the first little shoots of their newly sown peas, they are at one with the world of nature. There is no distinction between self and the world, and, in the experience, they make the world their own. It is important to give the young child time in the garden simply for exploration and observation, as well as for work.

Older students have more distance between themselves and the natural environment. They can be helped to wakeful observations through drawing and through writing careful descriptions of the cycle of growth. Too much intellectualizing increases the distance from nature. As the Norwegian poet Nordahl Grieg (1902–1943) said, “Botany is the worst experience for the plants.” The older students, too, need time to take in and digest the many diverse sensory experiences that the world of the garden provides.

Opportunities for Silent Learning

In earlier times, children learned the practical skills of life at home from their parents. Attending school was a privilege that provided a respite from practical work and an opportunity for intellectual learning. Now all of life, at home and in school, is dominated by the intellect and intellectual learning. Children no longer learn at home how to garden or to weave cloth or to carve a spoon. The practical work in the school garden gives children an opportunity for non-intellectual, imitative, silent learning in practical work.

In the garden, the child learns by working alongside and by observing experienced, skilled workers. The way the gardening teacher (or an older child) holds and handles a tool, works in a particular rhythm, and carries a certain self-assurance—all are observed, imitated, and internalized. I have often seen children in the school garden in these moments of silent working. They look intently at the teacher or at the older students who are becoming really good at doing something. They try to imitate the way the tool is held and used.

This silent, imitative way of learning is especially important to some students. According to Howard Gardner's theory of the seven intelligences, there are various types of talents, skills, and ways of learning. The mathematical/logical and the verbal intelligences dominate normal, academic classroom learning. The student who tends by nature to kinesthetic, body-based learning can easily get lost in the traditional school setting. The school garden, however, is one

place where this child can learn easily and perhaps even excel. I have often had students in the school garden who grow in their own and in their fellow students' estimation through their capacity to easily tackle practical tasks. We can dare to say that this imitative learning of practical tasks is as important as the head-learning that goes on in the classroom. There is an old saying: "What the hand touches fills the heart, and what fills the heart enlightens the spirit."

A Sense of Being Needed

In today's hectic world, in which overburdened parents rush from place to place with children in tow, children can easily get the feeling that they are just "in the way." The practical work in the garden and its beautiful, delicious, and useful end products show the children that they can do something important in the world. It is therefore crucial that the harvest is publicly presented for other students and for parents to see. The children identify with the products. They think, "If my products are needed, that means that the world also needs me." Gardening helps them feel both seen and valued.

Community, the Invisible Harvest

Like any shared task in the school, garden work can strengthen the social life of the class. All involved, students and teacher, get to know each other in a new context and discover new facets in persons they thought they already knew well. And in the garden the students have to cooperate to get a definite task done. If one student is lazy and is just leaning on the shovel while another one is busily digging, a process between the students will take place to resolve the situation. It is usually not necessary for the teacher to get involved. The garden block is an excellent opportunity for learning social skills and cooperation. Also, to experience the teacher as a co-worker gives the students a sense that what they do is important.

The garden work can be a social glue for the whole school. Older students instruct the younger ones in their own acquired skills, strengthening the sense of "we," and contributing to a sense of identity for the school. Parents come to see what the children have created and perhaps work in the garden as well.

Positive Environmental Awareness

In the present atmosphere of environmental crisis, the underlying assumption is that nature is threatened and that the greatest threat is the human



Working together builds a sense of community in a class.

being. At an environmental exhibit in Sweden in the 1980s, the visitors were confronted by a sign reading "The Worst Enemy of the Earth," below which was a mirror in which they saw themselves. This consciousness has been imprinted in our children—that human beings are the destroyers of nature and that we should just leave it alone.

While there is a certain truth in this point of view, part of our cultural history is also creative cooperation with nature. An agricultural open landscape, for example, with its manifold forms of plant, insect, and animal life, shows that the human being can also work in fruitful cooperation with the natural environment. This is also what a school garden is all about. In order to create a garden, we have to listen to nature's needs and to see the possibilities at the specific, local spot. Then we use a cultural treasure that has been developed and passed down through thousands of years—cultivated plants. Vegetables, garden flowers, and fruit trees are all the result of the human being's positive cooperation with nature. In teaching our children to garden, we honor this tradition of work with nature and pass its invaluable legacy on to future generations. ☺

This article first appeared in English in the *Waldorf Journal Project #7*, which is available at www.awsna.org/publications

Photos courtesy of David Mitchell,
AWSNA Publications

School Portrait

Sunfield Farm and School

BY ABBY JORGENSEN

*There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he
became,
And that object became part of him for the day or
a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.*
—Walt Whitman

Since the early 1990s, a group of Waldorf teachers and parents on the Olympic Peninsula in northwestern Washington State have held a vision to create a Waldorf school on a working biodynamic farm. Today this vision has become a vital reality in the Sunfield Farm and School, which includes a school with over seventy children in early childhood classes through grade four, an eighty-acre farm, and a com-

munity education center that serves children, young people, and adults outside the immediate school community.

Inspired by Rudolf Steiner's ideas on education and farming, Sunfield offers an educational program that "nurtures understanding for the connections between the Earth and its inhabitants." The original vision has evolved so that Sunfield now reaches into the community in five main, interconnected realms: Waldorf Education, land stewardship, sustainable agriculture, community service, and rural economic development. In several innovative ways, these activities serve both Sunfield and the surrounding community.

Waldorf Education

The impulse for Sunfield began at Tomten Farm on nearby Marrowstone Island. Helen Curry, a native of South Africa and formerly a Waldorf teacher in New Zealand, ran a home-based Waldorf kindergarten on her small homestead, with extra classes for grade school students and celebrations of the seasonal festivals. In 1998 Helen and two other founders began to seek land for the development of a farm-based Waldorf school. Between 2000 and 2003, the money was raised to buy this land. Community efforts helped the new school to open in rented spaces in 2006, bringing together children from home-based kindergartens and home-school families. Enrollment grew substantially in its second year (2007–2008), with all but one class now housed in buildings on the farm. The intention is to add a grade each year through grade eight and to become an accredited full member of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America.

The rhythmic chores and events of farm life are part of the daily curriculum. Each morning the girls and boys in the kindergarten walk out across the wetlands to woodland trails, often stopping to visit with the farm animals or harvest vegetables for soup. Last spring the early grades sold raffle tickets to buy three Cotswold sheep. The sheep provide opportunities for the children to learn about caring



Students at Sunfield visiting two four-legged members of the community.

Photo on this page by Michael Gesinger

for animals and also will produce wool for hand-work projects. This spring the third and fourth graders will start an egg business as a part of learning business-math skills.

A core value of Sunfield is that the education should be accessible to all area children. To this end, the school follows the “Accessible to All” (ATA) tuition policy as formulated by Bob Monsen and Gary Lamb of the Institute for Social Renewal. ATA guarantees that every child, regardless of the family’s financial situation, is able to attend. (Information on the Institute is available at www.socialrenewal.com)

Sunfield is also an educational center for the wider local community. Children from area public and private schools have initiated projects on the farm—creating a native plant nursery, growing food for the food bank, and planting and harvesting crops. Young men from a local drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility have worked to remove invasive species from the wetland. All who come leave with dirty hands and knees and a stronger connection to the Earth and to the food they eat.

The farm intends to offer farm education to children from other Waldorf schools in the Pacific Northwest. Last spring the first such visits took place when third graders from the Olympia Waldorf School and Tacoma Kinderhaus spent a day on the farm as part of their agriculture block, preparing beds and planting grains. Eventually Sunfield will have accommodations for groups of children to stay overnight and will then be able to provide longer Waldorf-based agricultural and environmental education experiences. There are also plans for a summer camp.

Land Stewardship

In 2000, the eighty-one-acre property, now Sunfield Farm, came onto the market, slated for development into sixteen five-acre home sites. The Sunfield board recognized the need to save this valuable farmland and partnered with the local Jefferson Land Trust to seek grants from local conservation funds and the USDA Ranch and Farmland Protection Grant fund. Grants and grassroots fundraising brought in the \$425,000 used to purchase the farm in 2003. Except for several acres for the school and educational facilities, the land is now under an agricultural conservation easement in perpetuity. The easement protects nineteen acres of forest, seven acres of wetland, and fifty acres of prime soils agricultural



Three generations of members of the Sunfield community watching the Mayday activities.

land. Thus began the land stewardship portion of Sunfield’s mission.

Sustainable Agriculture

After the land was protected, the Sunfield board began to seriously pursue the development of a working biodynamic farm that could serve as a model of this curative method of agriculture for the entire region. The goal of using the farm as an educational facility helped Sunfield secure an additional \$235,000 grant from the US Department of Agriculture. This money is funding some of the start-up costs for the farm and community outreach programs. The grant allowed for the hiring, in 2006, of a full-time farmer and of a community education manager.

Since then, farm programs have begun to blossom. There is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program with forty-three shareholders. For a fixed annual sum, each shareholder receives fresh produce each week through the growing season. Three apprentices are involved in an eight-month biodynamic hands-on training. Sunfield produce is becoming known and loved at the local farmers market and



Teenagers in Sunfield's summer program stand proudly behind the fruits of their labors.

food co-op where over 7,000 pounds of food grown at the farm was sold last year.

A Summer Outdoor Learning (SOL) program on the farm has teenagers working with farm staff and learning sustainable farming practices and entrepreneurial skills, developing leadership qualities, and participating in community service projects. Last summer one of the teenagers in SOL exclaimed, "You mean if I put this tiny little seed in the ground I'll get a carrot?" She is a girl who has spent her entire life in an agricultural county, surrounded by farms to which she had had no direct access. Giving young people a hands-on experience of nature and of farm life today is essential for the future.

Community Service

Sunfield partners with OlyCAP (Olympic Community Action Project) in several projects. The Food

Share Project provides fresh, biodynamically grown food to local low-income families. Parents and children work on the farm several hours each week, learning how to grow food using sustainable practices. The families are provided space to continue growing food for themselves if they don't have yards for their own gardens. Sunfield will also donate 2,000 pounds of food to the local food bank and Senior Feed in 2008.

Rural Economic Development

Jefferson County is an economically depressed county where unemployment is higher than the national average. Sunfield has brought state and federal dollars into the local economy and also money from private donors and grantors. Salaries paid to teachers, administrators, staff, and farm employees, as well as money paid to contractors and other service providers, for the most part stays in Jefferson County and supports the local economy.

Community Partnerships

Sunfield works with other like-minded nonprofits that share its goals of land preservation, sustainable agriculture, food security, and holistic education available to all children. These organizations include the Jefferson Land Trust, Jefferson County Farmers Market Association, the Port Townsend Food Co-op, and Washington State University.

A School Born of Concern about Unhealthy Social Trends and of Hope for the Future

Startling statistics about disease in children—obesity, depression, and attention deficit disorder—have us awakened to the need for a change in education. Concern for food security in a time of global warming, soil depletion, agribusiness, and genetic engineering have us awakened to the need for a change in the way we relate to the land and to the food we eat. The growing trend of isolating and medicating psychological symptoms has us awakened to the need for community and for nurturing food for the soul of mankind. In an attempt to heal ourselves, we look to our children and begin there. It is a logical place to start, as their innocence inspires us to action. We at Sunfield are determined to offer body work, mind work, and spirit work to our children in an attempt to renew a generation and a culture.

—A.J.



A father and daughter working side by side on the farm

Plans for the Future

In the future vision of Sunfield are a full school campus including a hall for community arts, music, and lectures; a retail space for farm produce and Waldorf supplies and books; a commercial kitchen where regional farmers can process their produce for market and where fresh meals can be served to visiting school and community groups; and small workshops where artisans and craftspeople can work on-site—modeling their skills in weaving, blacksmithing, caning, shoemaking, and other crafts. Sunfield is working to become a center of cultural life available to all. ◊



ABBY JORGENSEN, administrator of Sunfield Farm and School, has worked for twenty years in the field of education. She is currently completing the Waldorf School Administration and Community Development Program at Sunbridge

College. Abby will spend the 2008–2009 school year with her family in Tanzania, where they will live and work at a boarding farm school for Maasai girls that she helped to get started in the mid-1990s.

Books in Brief

GARDENING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

by Beatrys Lockie

In these times, when “Nature Deficit Syndrome” in our children has become a hot topic, this charming little book is a godsend. It gives parents and teachers a wealth of practical advice for involving young children in those wonderful interactions with earth, water, sun, wind, plants, and animals that are part of gardening.

Dutch-born Beatrys Lockie has spent the last fifty-five years in Scotland as a Waldorf class teacher, early childhood educator, and avid gardener. She has written this book for anyone working with children between the ages of three and seven.

Gardening with Young Children starts off with advice concerning soil acidity, soil structure, plant selection, weather, and how to find time in a busy schedule to garden. It ends with a gardener’s calendar, a list of important tasks for each time of year.

Four intervening chapters deal in turn with the four seasons, beginning with autumn. Each chapter suggests garden activities, craft and art projects, songs, poems, and games appropriate to the season. In winter, for example, the children might make a simple bird feeder or a nesting box. In spring, they can sing a song that begins,

*A farmer once planted some little brown seeds,
With a little pit pat here and a little pit-pat there. . .*

Summer is a time for making jam and jelly and learning about the insects that inhabit the soil. A chapter entitled “The Town Child” describes how even a child living in the city can have access to a garden.

Gardening with Young Children contains many lovely, simple illustrations of plants, flowers, birds, insects, children, and garden tools. Parents, child care providers, and kindergarten teachers will find this book an invaluable resource.

Hawthorne Press, Stroud, UK, 2007
140 pages, \$20.00

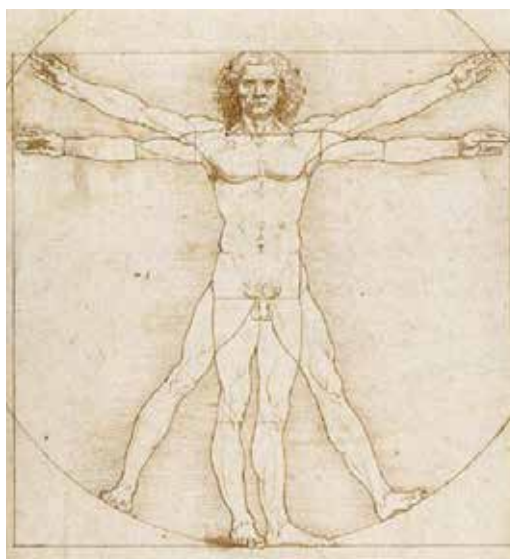
Teachers' Corner

Teaching the Fourth-Grade Block “Man and Animal”

BY MARJORIE SPOCK

Marjorie Spock was a leader within the Waldorf and anthroposophical worlds for some eighty years. She passed away on January 23, 2008. This article first appeared in 1978 in Education as an Art, a magazine published for years by the Rudolf Steiner School of New York, and in a way this magazine's spiritual forebear. The article uses the noun man to denote the human being, both female and male, at a time when the word indeed carried that clear connotation.

Around the age of nine, the child goes through a metamorphosis—known in Waldorf circles as “the nine-year change.” The young child's total openness to the world, the union and communion of inner and outer, gives way to a new sense of individual selfhood and of separation. The inner world of the child and the outer world are no longer one. The rosy glow of early childhood that made the world light-filled and magical is gone forever. The fourth-grade children, in contrast to their third-grade selves, are hence a bit more reserved and may possess an unwonted unease and wariness.



Leonardo da Vinci's Proportions of Man. Leonardo believed that the human body is a microcosm of the universe and that this is manifest in the body's proportions.

the world, his head poised and balanced between Heaven and Earth. The animals, including mammals, fish, birds, and insects, go about with their spinal columns horizontal and their heads thrust straight ahead or dangling close to the earth.

Because of this upright posture, the arms of the human being are free to move in space. And the miraculous five-fingered hand, capable of myriad movements, thus is able to manipulate and transform the world. In contrast, the forepaws of a cat or deer can do little more than support and move their owners from place to place.

At this point, the children need to be reassured that it is a good and wonderful thing to be a human being and that the external world is filled with wonderful things and with meaning. The fourth-grade block “Man and Animal” specifically and consciously addresses this need.

Uprightness and Freedom

The block typically begins with a consideration of the upright stature of the human being. Of all the living creatures on the planet, the human being alone can wrest his head free of the forces of gravity and stand erect. He moves through

To experience vividly the differences between the human being and the animal, the teacher and students might spend a few minutes on the floor of the classroom on their hands and knees. They will soon realize what it is to have one's spine parallel to the earth and one's head hanging to the ground, to have one's “forepaws” needed for locomotion, and to have to use one's mouth as a hand, to bite, gnaw, and tear.

When the children return to their upright, “human” position, how lofty the head seems, and how large and coolly detached its perspective.

Somewhere deep within, the child understands what has made him a thinker. Regaining the free use of his hands, he realizes what makes the human being a creator and an artist. In his hands and head he discovers the basis for human freedom.

The teacher can here make the children aware of another unique human attribute—the gift of speech. Animals do bark, mew, grunt, roar, or whinny to give rough expression to some inner state. But the speech of the human being, formed by yet another miracle, the human larynx, can express emotions, thoughts, and experiences clearly and beautifully, and in a totally individual way.

The students can now look at the human form, their own form, with a new awareness. They see how still the head is, compared with that of an animal. It sits motionless on the shoulders like a sentinel in a watchtower and is carried around like a rider upon a horse. The head is removed from the world, and were it not for the five organs of sense, it would be totally isolated. The head's position makes it an aristocrat. It leaves physical work to the arms and legs of the body. Our legs take us where we want to go, but the head decides where to go. With our hands we transform the world. With them we can serve others—become a helper of our fellow human beings and of the animals.

In contrast, animals use their heads and mouths as human beings use their hands—to grasp, pull, lift, and carry. The animal's head is constantly in movement, reaching out to and interacting with the world.

The Tripartite Human Body

The head and limbs of the human being present a striking contrast in form. The head is formed on the principle of roundness, being almost a perfect sphere. Outside is the bony covering of the skull and inside is the domed, soft mass of the brain. The structure of the limbs is based on an opposite, linear principle of extension. And the long, thin supporting bones are on the inside and the soft flesh and muscle are on the outside. The spine and ribs that form the chest cavity combine the round and linear elements.

Here we see the threefold division of the human body. The head is round and still. The limbs are

extended and active. The chest, located between head and limbs and holding the lungs and heart, is continually expanding and contracting, always in movement, but in a rhythmic, regular manner.

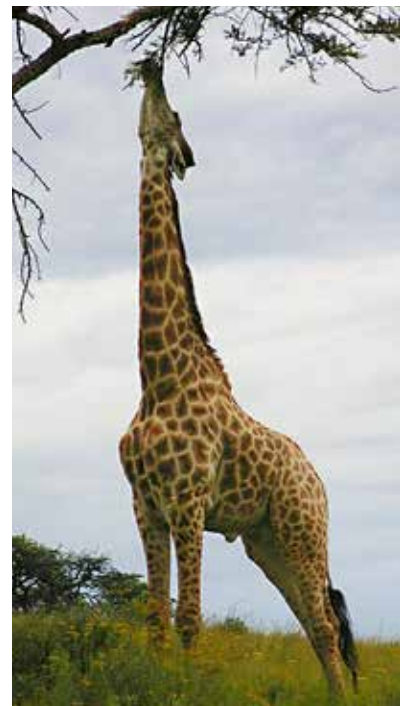
Once the children have grasped the threefold structure of the human body, the teacher can point out that each separate part of the body has the same tripartite form. The roundness and immobility of the head is perfectly manifest only in its domelike upper part. The limbs of the head are the mobile jaw and tongue, and, in between, the area of the nose and eyes is its dilating chest.

The legs and arms, too, have a triple structure. The round, head-like knobs of the upper bones are inserted into the hip and shoulder sockets. At the other end are the agile and mobile hands and feet. And, in between, the somewhat free and flexible elbows and knees manifest the chest principle.

The children can be challenged with finding more examples of this threefold aspect of the human body. They may find it in the foot with its round and rigid heel, its toes capable of at least wriggling, and the curving, flexible arch. In fact, they should be able to find this three-ness in also every part, even in a single finger.

Animals as Specialists

Again it is time to look at the animals, to consider them in comparison to the balanced and harmonious threefold human form. A visit to a zoo at this point can be very helpful. There the children will see that no animal manifests the balance and harmony of the human body. No animal possesses a head that matches the noble roundness of the human head or a hand that has the three elements in heel, palm, and fingers. Even the ape, the human being's closest relative, with its crushed,



The giraffe, able to browse high in the trees, is an example of the specialization manifest in animals.

sloping forehead, heavy thrusting jaw, flattened nose, dangling upper limbs more like legs than arms, and flattened feet, is clearly far from the human archetype. It can be a fruitful exercise, if, back in the classroom, the children imitate the ape's posture, gait, voice, and expression. They will experience the real chasm that exists between themselves and the primates.

Now the children can come to appreciate the animals as specialized beings which have developed one aspect present in the human being to a remarkable degree. The cow, for example, is a creature of digestion and metabolic processes. One stomach is not enough for the cow as she turns green grass into white milk. And the cow's heavy head that looks so hard to lift is more an extension of the digestive system than the seat of consciousness and sense perception, as it is in the human being.

Every animal, familiar or exotic, provides an example of specialization. The giraffe, for example, presents an extraordinary picture of overdevelopment of the neck. Its whole body is fixed in a perpetual gesture of craning and reaching for something, and the spindly legs hardly look

as if they were intended to carry it. The kangaroo manifests the opposite gesture. The kangaroo has gone completely into its legs and is specialized in locomotion of the hopping sort. While its hind legs are mightily developed, its forelegs are grotesquely stunted.

In the elephant and tapir, the upper lip and nose have grown together and become a single organ. The squid or cuttlefish is little more than a head with a plethora of

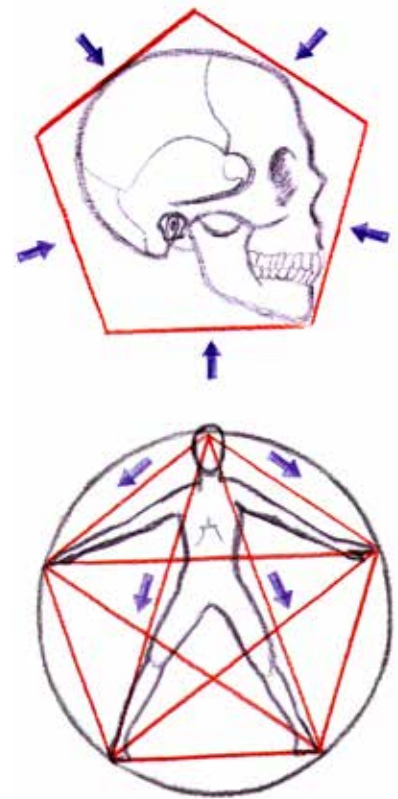
tongues. The jellyfish can be seen as a brain floating around without a skull to protect it. And the bat, which has no legs at all, has claws at the end of its wings on which to hang.

The child's appreciation and understanding of the animal world can be deepened further by the idea that this specialization results in remarkable capacities, abilities in specific areas that are far greater than those of the human being. An eagle has amazing eyesight. It can spot a rabbit a mile below it on the earth. The monkey and the squirrel are agile climbers and leapers who can travel through the trees high above the ground, unfazed by the heights. And the dog has an acute sense of smell, able to perceive odors of which we human beings are unaware. Each animal can be understood as having a special ability inherent in its physical structure.

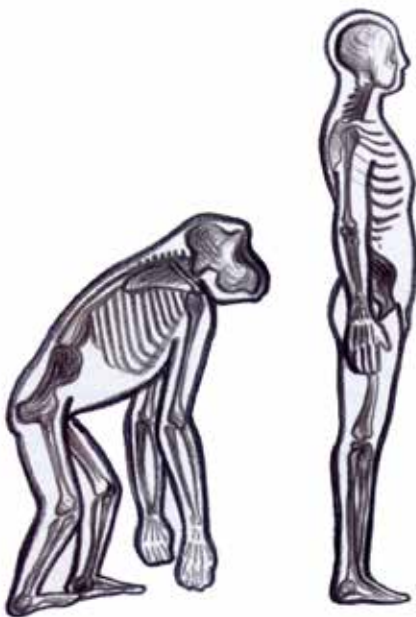
The Human Being as Nonspecialist

From this emerges a picture of the human being as a nonspecialist, but a being then who can adapt to any environment. The special characteristic of the human is his nonspecialization, his adaptability and freedom. Animals are typically able to survive only in a narrow ecological niche. A giraffe is not going to last long in the Siberian tundra. Human beings, though, have been able to survive and thrive in a wide variety of environments all over the world.

The ability to think and to create tools is a special ability of the human being. And these tools allow him in the end to outdo the animals in their special fields. We can in fact travel more swiftly than the horse or kangaroo, fly faster than any bird, and see into spaces that even the eagle's eyes cannot penetrate.



The human skull is a spherical structure shaped from the outside, while the limbs radiate outward.



The human skeleton and the ape skeleton are similar, but the proportions are very different. Also, the human being stands upright, while the ape stoops.



In modeling a whale in clay, this fourth grader is experiencing the mystery of this great mammal in a direct, tactile way.

Throughout this study of the human being and of the animal world, observation is only of external structures. The child of nine is not ready to look under the surface of the skin into the realm of internal organs and denuded skin.

The Man and Animal block offers rich opportunities for the telling of stories and legends, the

memorization of poems, and the drawing and painting of pictures. Modeling with clay or beeswax can play a new and important role. In the first three grades, the children typically create whole scenes consisting of human, animal, and natural forms that are rather roughly made. In the fourth grade, in modeling an animal or a part of the human body that has been closely studied, there is a new concern for accuracy in form and detail. This provides a new experience for the child. As her fingers shape the clay or wax into the rounded head of a man or the elongated head of a horse, the child can experience the hidden forces that have been at work to create these distinct forms.

Reverence and Compassion

The study of the human being and the animal is important in the child's development. Through this study the child can come to see the human being as the crown of creation, encompassing the whole animal kingdom and manifesting it in a single perfect form. And the animal kingdom comes to be seen as an infinitely diverse projection of particular aspects of the archetypal human being. A deep reverence for others and for oneself can issue from this experience, as well as a respect for the world of animals and a sense of compassion and of responsibility toward all living creatures. ☉

In Memoriam

Marjorie Spock

1904–2008

Marjorie Spock, one of the most remarkable individuals to grace the twentieth century, died on January 23, 2008, in her 104th year. Student of Rudolf Steiner and of Anthroposophy, eurythmist, Waldorf teacher, biodynamic gardener, writer, translator, and pioneering environmental activist, Marjorie Spock helped enrich American culture with the fruits of Spiritual Science.

Marjorie was born on September 18, 1904, in New Haven, Connecticut. She had one brother, Benjamin, who was to become a noted pediatrician, outspoken Viet Nam war resister, and author of *Baby and Child Care*, published in 1946, the bible for American mothers for over two decades.

At the age of seventeen, Marjorie heard someone mention a place in Switzerland named Dornach where they were teaching “a new form of movement.” She had an immediate, irresistible impulse to go to “Door Knock,” and a few months later, in October 1922, arrived there. Marjorie attended the last eurythmy performances in the first Goetheanum, witnessed the burning of that building on New Year's Eve, 1922–23, attended the Christmas Conference of 1923, became a serious student of Rudolf Steiner, and was present at his final lecture on September 28, 1924.

Later, Marjorie did a eurythmy training in Stuttgart and then was part of the eurythmy troupe at the Goetheanum under Marie von Sivers, Rudolf Steiner's wife. Marjorie returned to the United States and taught at the Rudolf Steiner School of New York, the first Waldorf school in North America. In her thirties, she earned a BA and MA from Columbia University and later taught at the Waldorf School of Garden City, Long Island.

While on Long Island in the late 1950s, Marjorie became involved in one of the seminal battles of the environmental movement. An avid biodynamic

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To Homework or Not to Homework? That is the Question

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI

The role of homework in the education of the child is a perennial issue that has been exciting educators and parents for a long time. The idea that after-school academic assignments are essential to learning and high achievement has been, and remains, an article of faith in mainstream public and private education in North America. On the other side of the issue, critics have long offered convincing negative assessments of homework. And in the midst of the fray stands Waldorf Education with its own, as usual, somewhat idiosyncratic approach: “no homework, but . . .”

Critics of Homework

The controversy goes back more than a century. In 1900 Edward Bok, editor of the then very influential monthly magazine *The Ladies Home Journal*, launched an anti-homework campaign. Bok argued that homework interferes with a child’s natural development and that play and self-guided exploration much better serve the child’s healthy maturation. He maintained that children under the age of fifteen should have no homework. In response to this campaign, the state of California—ever on the cutting edge—actually banned homework in its public schools for some years.

A contemporary counterpart of Bok is Alfie Kohn, an outspoken critic of current parenting and educational practices. In his recent book, *The Homework Myth*, Kohn argues that not only does homework fail to provide any academic benefit, but it sours children’s attitudes toward school. Homework wastes children’s time, strains the parent-child relationship, damages children’s interest in learning, and undermines curiosity. “Homework . . . may be the single most reliable extinguisher of the flame of curiosity,” he writes. Kohn calls for the abolition of homework except for special activities such as interviewing parents on family history, doing “kitchen chemistry,” and reading at home.

More and More Homework

Despite such critiques, the trend nowadays is to more and more homework. A national survey by the University of Michigan in 2004 found a



A Waldorf fourth grader does her homework . . .

51 percent increase in time spent on homework since 1981. Most of that increase has been with children ages six to eight. Another academic study found that early elementary school students are assigned an average of 128 minutes of homework a week. In some schools, this practice has even extended to the kindergarten. With the “No Child Left Behind” federal education program, the move to more homework is likely to continue to increase.

This push for more homework has led researchers to take a closer look at the effectiveness of out-of-school assignments as an educational tool. In an exhaustive review of the research on the topic, Duke University professor Harris Cooper has concluded that homework does not measurably improve academic performance for grade school children.

Furthermore, he found that more than sixty to ninety minutes of homework for middle school or two hours for high school students is associated with lower scores on standardized tests. Cooper is the author of *The Battle over Homework: Common Ground for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2001).

In several countries, such as Denmark and the Czech Republic, where students routinely outperform American students on achievement tests, there is substantially less homework than in the United States. Even Japan, long the homework “king,” recently has recognized that the stress of excessive homework actually hurts academic performance and has reduced home assignments in its schools.

Despite the research results, Cooper, like many parents, is in favor of homework. He feels that, even if there is no academic benefit, homework helps to build study habits, self-discipline, and time-management skills. Some who share his view add that doing homework is better than the typical free-time activities of today’s children, such as playing video games and watching television. These commentators ignore the wholesome free-time activities like sports, artistic activities, dance classes, and musical instrument practice that children can and do get involved in during after-school hours, as well as the value of free, creative play.

One public school principal, Scott Hartland (quoted in the online journal “Slate,” www.slate.com/id/2149593/), sums up the status quo situation as follows:

It has been drilled into our collective psyche that rigorous schools assign rigorous homework. I recognize that this is a ridiculous thought process . . . but it’s hard to break the thinking on this one. How could we be a high-achieving school and not assign homework?

Homework in Waldorf Schools

One striking feature of Waldorf schools is that the children, certainly those in the lower grades, get little or no homework. This goes back to the founding of Waldorf Education. Rudolf Steiner, in starting the first school in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919, initially stipulated that there should be no homework at all and later commented (with some satisfaction, perhaps) that the school was widely considered to be “stingy” in giving out after-school study tasks for the children.



. . . plays with a friend after school . . .

Nearly all Waldorf school children in the early grades leave academics behind when they go home from school at the end of the day. Home assignments usually begin somewhere in the middle school years and typically are rather light. Waldorf parents, even those totally convinced of the Waldorf approach, can find this disquieting. The idea that homework is essential to learning and to intellectual development is deeply ingrained in our society.

Rudolf Steiner’s attitude toward homework was based on practical considerations and on his understanding of the true needs of the developing child. In excluding homework from the first school, he cited academic assignments after school as not only unnecessary but even harmful. He was concerned that homework can dampen the child’s love of learning and reduce motivation. Steiner’s ideal was that, in the educational context, a child’s freedom must be upheld and that the impulse to learn must be allowed to shine from within, not be imposed from without. Furthermore, he held that the stress that can come with homework is an unrecognized cause of digestive problems for children.

Steiner continued to hold this view regarding younger students—who at that time only started

first grade at age seven—but later said that homework could be useful for older children, especially after middle school. He insisted, however, that the homework not be abstract and that the child should do it out of his desire to learn more. Homework should be related to what the children are learning in school and should excite their interest and enthusiasm. Steiner understood that children learn and absorb material when their enthusiasm is aroused. During a botany block, for example, the children might be asked to collect a plant specimen after school, write a phenomenological description, and, using botanical references, try to identify it.

In a conference with the teachers at the first school on January 1, 1920, Steiner emphasized voluntary motivation, saying: “Homework ought to be set as a voluntary task, not as a duty. Whoever wants to should do it!” (Rudolf Steiner, *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* [Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1998], 62)

In another conference with teachers on September 11, 1921, he explained: “Homework should never be set unless you know that the children are going to be eager to show you their results. The thing must be alive and should be done in a way that makes them more active and not in a way that kills their enthusiasm.” (Ibid., 285)

In another context, Steiner modified this stance a bit. He said that if a child did undertake a home-

work assignment, then it is necessary that it be brought to completion.

Much of the homework assigned in mainstream public and private schools is in the form of “worksheets”—drill exercises related to material to be covered in standardized tests, rather than to classroom topics. Such compulsory, quasi-mechanical work is not what Steiner had in mind when he spoke of homework.

Waldorf’s Secret Weapons

Rudolf Steiner gave Waldorf teachers a number of “secret weapons” to help children with learning and with retaining material. These pedagogical techniques, properly and effectively used, may develop in the child what homework is meant to develop and thus obviate the need for out-of-school academics. Most of these practices are unique to Waldorf schools.

Teaching in Blocks

In Waldorf schools, the major subjects are taught in blocks. A major subject—history, literature, mathematics, science—will be the focus of the ninety-minute to two-hour morning main lesson for two or three weeks. Then it is set aside and another subject becomes the focus of study. Steiner held that allowing a period of consolidation after focusing on a subject intensively for a period helps the child assimilate and retain the material.

Teaching to the Temperament

Steiner also encouraged Waldorf teachers to individualize their instruction by teaching to the temperament of the child. Each child has a dominant temperament—choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic, or melancholic—each with a particular, optimal way of learning. By presenting material in a varied manner that appeals in turn to each temperament, the teacher can stimulate learning and memory in all the students in the class.

Modern educational practice has begun to pay attention to temperament, mainly in terms of recognizing children’s differences. Steiner was much more specific in his recommendations for awakening interest and inspiring individuals in their learning styles by communicating with them through their own temperament-language.



... and practices the violin at home.

In relating the story of Alexander the Great, for example, the teacher can hold the interest of the restless and fiery choleric by including vivid depictions of particular battles. The aesthetically gifted and detail-oriented melancholics will relish elaborate accounts of the art and cultural treasures taken. And the phlegmatic children, always with a lively interest in food, will be held spellbound by descriptions of the lavish victory banquets held. When the teacher makes history alive in this way, appealing to each temperament, the stories become vivid experiences that stay with the children.

Rhythmical Education

According to Rudolf Steiner, the child learns and retains best when within a predictable, rhythmic environment. Thus the Waldorf school day, school week, and even school year is designed so that classes, events, and other elements of the schedule appear and then reappear in a regular manner. (Parents can, with benefit, provide a similar supportive environment at home.) In addition, the Waldorf class teacher—and the specialty teacher as well—works with rhythmical repetition in the presentation of each individual lesson. The guiding pattern is review of the previous day's lesson, presentation, recapitulation, and review. (Please see my article on rhythm in the Fall/Winter 2006 issue of *Renewal*.) This aspect is so central that Waldorf Education could justifiably be renamed "Rhythmical Education."

Freedom of the Teacher

Waldorf class teachers are free, within reasonable limits, to interpret and adapt Rudolf Steiner's indications about homework to the particular needs of their students. My older son's teacher, with the enthusiastic approval of many class parents favoring "rigorous education," began giving regular homework in the fourth grade. Rudolf Steiner did indicate that, developmentally, children become ready to practice drills (like repeating times tables in arithmetic) and even eurythmy exercises at this stage. However, my son, a rather slow and methodical worker who was involved in school sports and practiced the violin every day, was distressed by the assignments and was up very late a number of evenings completing them.

In contrast, my younger son—now in the fifth grade—has rarely been assigned homework. Jealous of his brother's home assignments, he has cajoled his teacher into giving him extra math problems, which he attacks with great enthusiasm.

The Waldorf teacher is concerned with respecting the child's free spirit and creative zest. Nevertheless, there can be compelling reasons for beginning to assign homework. It does foster self-discipline and good study habits. For some students, homework can strengthen deficient academic skills and for others provide challenges that keep interest and enthusiasm alive.

For certain teachers, making homework voluntary and optional is a healthy compromise between form and freedom. Expectations and perceived pressures from parents sometimes play a role in the teacher's decision, especially in Waldorf schools in very competitive academic communities. In most schools, though, by the eighth grade homework is an accepted tool in learning. In Waldorf high schools, of course, the students have daily and substantial homework.

"To homework or not to homework? That is the question." But the answer is not a black or white one. For some children and for certain classes, homework may be appropriate as early as the fourth grade. For other children and groups of children, home assignments should perhaps come much later and be optional. The answer ideally comes through the teacher's recognizing the true needs of the students and helping them achieve a balance between freedom, creativity, and self-exploration on the one hand and structure, academic skills, and self-discipline on the other. ☺



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Photos by Paul Bingaman

Schooling Character in the Wilderness

Outdoor Education and Waldorf Education

BY RONALD KOETZSCH, PhD

- Rappelling off a seventy-five-foot-high, sheer cliff
- Balancing on a pair of shaky ropes thirty feet up in the trees
- Eating oatmeal every morning for a week
- Paddling a canoe against the wind across a remote, pristine lake
- Spending twenty-four hours alone in the woods
- Being brunch for mosquitoes, no-see-ums, and other annoying insects
- Finding one's way in a trackless wilderness using map and compass
- Getting lost in that trackless wilderness using map and compass
- Sleeping on the ground in a more-than-slightly damp sleeping bag

These experiences—not common ones in our protected, urbanized, denatured lives—are becoming a standard part of the educational experience for students in many Waldorf schools. Outdoor adventure education has been discovered and embraced by many Waldorf educators as an appropriate element, in aims and methods, in a Waldorf schooling.

Kurt Hahn and Outward Bound



Kurt Hahn,
founder of
Outward Bound

The scouting movement that began about a hundred years ago had the aims of giving boys and girls outdoor skills and of helping them develop self-esteem and citizenship values. But the main source of the modern outdoor education movement is the work of Kurt Hahn (1886–1974), founder of Outward Bound. Disillusioned with the intellectual, abstract nature of the German educational

system, Hahn founded a school called Schule Schloss Salem in southern Germany in 1920. In addition to

providing a strong academic program, the school taught wilderness rescue skills and emphasized social service, responsibility to the community, compassion and concern for others, and dedication to the pursuit of truth.

Born of Jewish parents but a convert to Christianity, Hahn was forced to leave Germany in 1933 after having publicly spoken out against Adolf Hitler. He went to Scotland and there founded Gordonstoun School. Several years later, in the early stages of World War II, Hahn was asked to develop a survival training course for merchant seamen. Thus was born the first Outward Bound school in Aberdovey, Wales. Its standard twenty-eight-day program included nautical survival skill training; confidence-building exercises including a ropes obstacle course; group expeditions; and a three-day solo experience. The aim was to give the young seamen the practical skills, but more importantly the inner strength, confidence, and willpower to survive and help others survive in extreme circumstances.

After the war, Aberdovey was the model for Outward Bound schools established elsewhere in the United Kingdom and around the world. The first Outward Bound school in the United States was founded in Colorado in 1961, followed a few years later by schools in Minnesota and Maine. Since then, through the Outward Bound schools themselves and through various spinoff organizations and programs (among them Project Adventure and the National Outdoor Leadership School), outdoor adventure education has become an important educational resource in North America. These schools and centers serve boys and girls, and men and women, of all ages through a wide variety of courses.

The various outdoor adventure programs share certain goals and methods. They provide a direct experience of nature and instruction in practical outdoor and survival skills, such as making a fire in various weather conditions, orienteering, foraging

for wild foods, and building a shelter from available materials. These programs also help students develop self-confidence and a positive self-image, the ability to work with others in a group, a concern and compassion for others, and tenacity in the midst of adversity.

These programs typically take place in a challenging, unfamiliar natural environment, such as the high mountains, inland waterways, or the ocean. The students are put in small groups and are taught basic skills, both practical and social. Team-building exercises and cooperative games are an important element. Then there are a number of incremental challenges and problem-solving situations that allow the individuals and the groups to use the skills they have learned. Most programs last between one and three weeks, though some courses take place over a weekend and some last a couple of months.

Rudolf Steiner and Kurt Hahn

There are some interesting points of contact between Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) and Kurt



A group of sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds paddle back to the Northwaters Wilderness Programs base camp on Lake Temigami in Ontario, Canada. They have just completed a three-week, 350-mile canoe expedition north to James Bay, which included long days of paddling, whitewater challenges, and rugged portages.

Hahn (1886–1974). Steiner lived in Berlin in the late 1890s, when Hahn was growing up there; and in the first years of the new century, when Hahn was at Berlin University, Steiner was becoming a well-known figure in the German capital's intellectual and cultural life. Steiner founded the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart in 1919, just one year before Hahn started Salem less than one hundred miles to the south. Both men considered practical, experiential, and moral education very important. Steiner and Hahn each had an optimistic view of human nature and of the moral potential of every human being. They both wanted students to develop into competent, well-informed, independent-minded, creative, and compassionate human beings, capable of acts of altruism.

Outdoor Education and Waldorf Education

Given these correspondences between Rudolf Steiner and Kurt Hahn, it is not surprising that the educational movements they founded would in time discover each other. In recent decades, many people associated with Outward Bound and the broader outdoor education movement in North America have sent their children to Waldorf schools. And more than a few former Outward Bound instructors and outdoor educators have become Waldorf teachers.

A number of Waldorf schools have realized that outdoor adventure education is an excellent, even necessary, part of a Waldorf schooling. The twelve- or thirteen-year-old, emerging from childhood into adolescence, needs and wants to test him- or



Eighth graders from the Kimberton Waldorf School build a shelter while on a course at Hawk Circle Wilderness Education, in Cherry Valley, New York. Executive Director, Ricardo Sierra, is a Waldorf graduate, and the center has worked with many Waldorf groups.



Up, up, and away. A student leaps for a trapeze swing high in the trees on the ropes course at the Hulbert Outdoor Center. Located in Fairlee, Vermont, Hulbert offers various outdoor challenge experiences besides a ropes course.

herself against external challenges. Children at this age need to experience their competence in the new, suddenly larger and more complicated world. “Impelling young people into experience”—a key aim of Outward Bound according to Hahn—through individual and group challenge activities is an effective way to help these budding adolescents gain self-confidence, to realize that they can meet the challenges of the world. Such experiences also help them develop important social skills, such as cooperation and compromise.

Many Waldorf schools in North America and other parts of the world incorporate outdoor adventure activities into their seventh- and eighth-grade and also high school curriculums. These include ropes obstacle courses, team-building initiative exercises, solo experiences, and extended outdoor adventure trips.

The Kimberton Waldorf School in Pennsylvania, for example, has for years incorporated outdoor education into its high school curriculum. The outdoor program there is directly connected to main lesson topics. Each grade has at least one one-week trip when students study in nature. Ninth graders study geology while doing backpacking or rock climbing. Tenth graders work with Homer’s *Odyssey* while on a canoe and backpacking trip. In the eleventh grade, students study *Parzival* and do social service. In the twelfth grade, there are two outdoor trips, one for marine biology and

one for the study of the Transcendentalists. Some schools organize and run their outdoor education activities in-house with their own staff. Many schools, though, turn to established outdoor adventure learning centers, particularly for longer experiences. The eighth-grade trip, the culmination of a class’s eight-year Waldorf journey, readily lends itself to being an outdoor adventure experience. While some Waldorf eighth grades decide to experience London or New York City, others opt for a wilderness adventure. For example, a recent eighth-grade class of the Washington (DC) Waldorf School went on a wilderness trip in Costa Rica organized by the Costa Rica Rain Forest Outward Bound School. And in the spring of 2007, the Charlottesville Waldorf School graduating class spent a week on a trip organized and run by Kroka, an outdoor education center based in New Hampshire. (Please see the article that follows on page 30.)

There are at least a half-dozen outdoor education centers in the United States and Canada that have worked with Waldorf schools or are interested in working with them. Thus standard and customized courses are available in various parts of the country and with different emphases. A list of these centers and their Web site addresses can be found below.

We are in an era when education is becoming increasingly intellectual, abstract, test-oriented, and



Participants in a program at Deer Hill Expeditions help whitewash and plaster the plaza on the Hopi Pueblo’s Second Mesa, near Saupalovi, Arizona, in preparation for a Kachina dance. Such service projects are an important aspect of most outdoor adventure experiences. Deer Hill is based in Mancos, Colorado.

competitive. Waldorf Education, with its concern for the practical, experiential, moral, social, and spiritual education of the child, often finds itself standing alone in this educational landscape. It is reassuring to have, in the outdoor adventure educational movement, colleagues and allies who can enrich our own work of educating young people to become whole human beings. ☺

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Some Outdoor Education Centers in North America

Deer Hill Expeditions, Mancos, Colorado:
www.deerhillexpeditions.com

Hawk Circle Wilderness Education, Cherry Valley, New York:
www.hawkcircle.com

Hulbert Outdoor Center, Fairlee, Vermont:
www.alohafoundation.org/hulbert

Kroka Expeditions, Marlow, New Hampshire:
www.kroka.org

Northwaters Wilderness Program, Westport, New York, and Ontario, Canada:
www.northwaters.com

Outward Bound Canada:
www.outwardbound.ca

Outward Bound USA:
www.outwardboundusa.org

Siskin Ecological Adventures, East Charleston, Vermont:
www.siskinea.org

Books in Brief

DEVELOPMENTAL SIGNATURES: CORE VALUES AND PRACTICES IN WALDORF EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AGES 3–9

by Dr. Rainer Patzlaff and Dr. Wolfgang Sassmanshausen, et al.

In Europe, as in North America, there is increasing pressure from governments to enroll children in school and to start intellectual and academic education at an ever earlier age. In Germany, this pressure has caused Waldorf educators to work with anthroposophical physicians to present and document the Waldorf approach to education in the early years. The result of this collaboration is contained in *Developmental Signatures*.

The central idea is that there are definite stages in the development of the child. Each stage, characterized by certain physical, emotional, and mental signatures, is important in itself, but also is a necessary foundation for the stage to follow. To compress or rush a child through a certain stage undermines later healthy growth and development. Each child goes through this process in his or her own way, but there are certain basic laws of human development that apply.

Part 1 of *Developmental Signatures* presents the Waldorf approach to educating the child from ages three to nine. It deals with:

- the kindergarten child's need for free play, rhythm and repetition, and adults worthy of imitation;
- the transition to elementary school learning—how one can tell that a particular child is ready; and
- the key elements in the early grades—a loving authority figure and a balance between activities of the hands, head, and heart.

Part 2 is a systematic presentation of the educational goals, areas, requirements, and practices of Waldorf Education from ages three to nine. Among the aims stated are: good health; competence in all academic areas—language, math, science, arts, and music; self-reliance; a sense for ethical and moral values; and the ability to take responsibility for one's actions. The role of the Waldorf curriculum and pedagogy in the achievement of these goals is also described.

AWSNA Publications, Ghent, NY, 2007
158 pages, \$20.00

Learning to Live Deliberately

An Eighth-Grade Journey

BY VIVIAN JONES-SCHMIDT

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

The rain fell delicately, hesitantly, as we sat in a big circle emptying our backpacks under the watchful eye of our guides, Misha and Emily. Had anyone packed contraband—cotton leggings, blue jeans, an extra fleece, or other items not recommended or deemed unnecessary? Long johns were found for the one student who hadn't brought any. We stuffed our backpacks again, took a quick tour of the camp, and headed for shelter. The rain hadn't even wet our hair. The students split into groups for chores: fetching water, collecting firewood, grating cheese. They were all busy and safe; I could finally relax.

I went to the woods thinking that I would change. I'm going to pay more attention to the way I effect [sic] the environment because of what I learned.
[This quote and those that follow were written by students after the trip.]

Our group of eight (seven students—three boys and four girls—and myself) had left a mild and sunny early May morning in Virginia. After two plane flights and a van ride, we had arrived at our destination: the base camp of Kroka Expeditions in southeastern Vermont. I sat under the tarp and pondered the enormity of what lay ahead of us. We had planned eight nights in the wilderness: three days of hiking and four days of navigating canoes on the Batten Kill River from its source

in the Green Mountains, west down into New York State. For those eight days we'd have no running water, no hot water except what we heated over the fire, no toilets, and no electricity. Friends had openly questioned my sanity; now I had my own moment of doubt. The rain, no longer shy, was dampening the footpaths beneath the trees.

I went to the woods and came in unsure. Throughout my experience I learned to overcome that and to trust myself more.

As many Waldorf teachers do, I had begun planning for my class's eighth-grade trip in the fall of our seventh-grade year. I gathered brochures, searched Web sites, spoke with colleagues, and kept copious notes. Eighth-grade trips are intended to be journeys of initiation, bringing students into situations that will force them to confront and overcome previously assumed limits. Eighth-grade students are ready to test themselves and to strike out into an unfamiliar and demanding world. Depending on the teacher's view of the needs of the class, these long-awaited trips can focus on community service, for example, or on the challenges of nature. I had long envisioned the trip for this class as one involving an encounter with the natural world and navigating on water. It had to be far enough away that the

students would know they had passed out of the zone of comfort offered by home and family.

I went to the woods to be challenged. I learned how to make important decisions quickly and to look ahead at what other challenges might be coming.

Eventually I chose the company I wanted to work with—Kroka Expeditions in New England—and selected three of their programs to bring to parents and stu-



Charlottesville Waldorf School eighth-grade class of 2007

dents for their responses. Each of the three programs met my requirements, and parents offered no objections to any of them. After the parents and I had discussed the alternatives, I presented them to the class. We studied and discussed all three options, and then each student ranked the three trips in order of preference. In the end, most students preferred the trip involving both hiking and canoeing, and those who preferred other options soon joined in the general enthusiasm. For the next two years, this enthusiasm drove the class to create and engage in activities that would help us meet our fundraising goals. For example, the students prepared and served lunches to students in the lower grades and made craft items—jewelry, felt scarves, ornaments, and origami kits—for the holiday bazaar.

I went to the woods to change my lifestyle. I learned not to waste and that you should appreciate everything. I learned that if you only take what is needed, there will always be enough.



Gourmet Waldorf one-pot cuisine

Wrapped in wool, I sat as close to the cooking fire as I could get, while the rain fell steadily. Students quietly went about their assigned tasks, hurrying to get supper made before hunger and darkness caught up with them. After supper everyone moved into the big yurt for an early bedtime. Hoping that a day's delay would bring an end to the rain, Misha decided to devote the next day to teaching us canoeing skills on a quiet stretch of river nearby.

I went to the woods and drank from a stream and ate food that I would ordinarily hate. I learned

more about everyone else, and a few things about myself. I learned what it's like to wear the same clothes for a week, and to accept that I would be wet all the time. I also learned that if you keep going even if you're tired and wet, you can have fun.

We worked hard on the river the next day, but the rain never stopped. By the following morning, I had gotten sick. I had planned for the possibility that one of the students might come down with something, but it had never occurred to me that I might get a virus. It wasn't in the plan. Our guides, ever resourceful, took the students spelunking in a private cave a couple of hours away. They were familiar with commercial caverns, but a "wild" cave was a new experience. Cold, wet, muddy, dark, and tight, the cave offered its own challenges. The group that returned to base camp that night was quietly triumphant. The rain had never stopped, though, and I was still sick. Misha realized that the trip we had so carefully planned was not going to happen.

Nevertheless, it was time for the students to begin their river trip. The next day they took a large whitewater raft out onto the West River. This normally quiet river flows southeast into the Connecticut River, which forms the border between New Hampshire and Vermont. The water level had risen by now, and the day brought opportunities to practice maneuvering the raft, as well as portaging around a dam.

I went to the woods to calm down when I had a problem. I sort of took [my problem] apart and looked at it in different ways. This calmed me down and worked better than locking it up.

We spent that night in the cramped—but dry—shelter of a state park. Each morning and evening the same routine was followed: some students packed or unpacked while others cooked. At night everyone searched for the driest fallen wood they could find for our fires. Each day Misha gave the students a choice: we could continue our journey downstream, or we could return to base camp where we'd at least have shelter from the unending wet and cold. He pointed out that most adults would not be able to endure the conditions we faced. Each day the students unanimously elected to continue their journey down the river. We rested for only one day, staying by the fire and carving our own wooden spoons, fashioning them as northeastern Native Americans had in times past.

I went to the woods to learn new skills. I learned how to take care of myself and make food. I learned to paddle, to make a spoon, and to help others.

By this time, the adults had realized that we were in the midst of no ordinary rain. Reading news reports of flooding New England towns, anxious parents back home in Virginia had been calling the Kroka headquarters. The West River was indeed much higher than usual, but as the water release was carefully controlled by a series of dams, and as the students were sensible and alert paddlers, the risk was minimal. On the sixth day of our adventure, we floated amongst the treetops in the enchanted, bird-filled lake that had formed behind a dam, and then spent the night in a shelter. The parking lots and trails that normally provide access to this site were under fifty to sixty feet of water, so we had no sense that the shelter was at the top of a steep hill!

I went to the woods and was amazed. All the rain brought millions of new plants to life: ferns and moss and new leaves. I loved watching the streams and rivers running constantly.

Portaging the dam the next morning took hours. Then we continued down the river, looking for a flat, high area for the night. This final night was the climax of the trip. The adults set up their own campsite nearby in the woods, and the students were left on their own. They were to use the skills learned over the previous week and take care of themselves during the night, preparing their own food, and packing and launching the rafts on their own the following morning. Everything proceeded without a hitch. When the rafts appeared at the rendezvous point downstream, the students were singing at the top of their voices and triumphantly waving their paddles aloft. We adults waded out into the mudflats of the Connecticut River and helped pulled the rafts ashore. When everyone had changed out of wet-suits and all the gear had been cleaned and stowed, we drove into Brattleboro for Vermont ice cream.

I went to the woods and discovered complaints will do me no good. Under the starlit sky they shrink in size till they're naught but a buzz in the ear. I discovered that to work hard and to be kind and to



Rafting down the West River on high water

listen to others' words will get me much further in this land of silver and green.

The crew that arrived back in Virginia the next day was tired but confident and poised. The students (and I) had indeed endured conditions that most adults would avoid if at all possible. Most adults, in fact, probably would have balked at the first sign that their plans would have to change. These students left the comforts of modern civilization behind them. They worked through every challenge and learned to live in the natural world. Upon our return, I asked the students to use Thoreau's musings on his quest for meaning in nature—cited at the beginning of this article—as a starting point for writing reflections on their experience. Their responses speak eloquently to the importance of allowing students of this age to experience an appropriately chosen eighth-grade trip.

I went to the woods to try something new. I wanted to make and do everything myself without a pre-made house or equipment. I wanted to be able to take care of myself. I succeeded. ☺

VIVIAN JONES-SCHMIDT was led to Waldorf Education when she wandered into the Charlottesville (Virginia) Waldorf School many years ago trying to find the owner of a pair of mittens. That child was never found, but a new career was launched, and Vivian has been involved in Waldorf Education since 1985. She has taken two classes from grades one through eight, has taught handwork and chorus, and has been very active in the administration of the school. Vivian currently is the enrollment coordinator for the Charlottesville school. She is a longtime member of the editorial advisory board of *Renewal*.

Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior

The Magical Mystery Tour of Adolescence

BY DAVID SLOAN

The Waldorf high school teacher—like the Waldorf class teacher—seeks to reflect the needs of the students in their gradual unfolding. Instead of arbitrarily deciding to teach this science course or that piece of literature, the Waldorf high school teacher takes a cue from the inner requirements of the students themselves, and then shapes the program accordingly. Needed for this is a clear idea of what is in fact going on in the adolescent's mind and heart. The following excerpts from a new book by David Sloan, veteran Waldorf high school teacher, examine the soul life of young people in their freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years.

—R. E. K.

Astral Storm Coming In

The Ninth Grader

Most high school freshmen have already reached puberty. They find themselves in possession of a teeming inner realm that seems to control them more often than they control it. Parents who have raised a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old know that the experience is akin to living in an amusement park, with the roller coaster constantly whirling around the house. Teenagers at this age are by their very nature extremists—swinging from giddiness to depression, from dreamy unawareness to acute attention within the space of seconds. However, it is important to differentiate between boys and girls, since at this age the gap between them is so great that they appear to belong to different species.

For a couple of years at least, it seems as if the gods stack the odds in favor of the girls. As the girls themselves will so readily explain, they are

simply more mature than the boys when they enter high school, and of course they are right. The girls come into ninth grade ready to dive into and share their burgeoning inner world, while the boys seem somewhat bewildered by all the changes they are undergoing.

Rudolf Steiner explains the huge gender gap at this age in spiritual terms. He points out that, at this age, the incipient forces of the Ego—the forces of our mature and higher Self—permeate the feeling life of girls. Steiner termed our feeling, or soul, life the astral body. This absorption of Ego forces into the feeling realm intensifies girls' awareness of the depth and potency of their emotions. So strongly can girls feel their newfound blend of passion, power, and discernment that they can become emboldened to the point of sassiness. Steiner suggests that, in contrast, the Ego forces of boys penetrate less into their feelings and more into their physical natures.

That may help explain that while the girls become so enamored of and so interested in talking about relationships, in writing feverishly in their secret diaries, and in fantasizing about saving all the homeless children in Calcutta, or perhaps about marrying Johnny Depp, the boys are still out on the playing field punching each other and giving one another wedgies.

Ninth-grade boys can appear to be crude dullards when compared to their female counterparts, by whom they are often dwarfed, sometimes in stature as well as in sheer, overpowering emotional intensity. The girls seem very eager to confront life, while the boys would just as soon hide themselves away until they are better equipped. Jaimen McMillan, founder of Spacial Dynamics—the approach to movement



education used in many Waldorf schools—once described this stage of male adolescence by saying that the fourteen-year-old boy might as well wear a sign that says simply, “Under Construction,” like those building sites that are surrounded by a wall of boards with barbed wire strung around the top.

Fortunately, this gap usually closes by eleventh grade. As one of the feistier boys once remarked to a girl who, for the umpteenth time, had just pointed out how much more mature girls were than boys, “Sure, you girls are more mature for a little while, until the boys pass you by as juniors while you stagnate where you are for the rest of your lives!” Despite their differences, both boys and girls at this age live in the polarities of their mood swings.

The Temptations of the World

The Tenth Grader

It is not a hyperbole to say that a dramatic, even radical change takes place between the freshman and sophomore years. Those teachers who deal with adolescents day-to-day and month-to-month will attest to the surprising transformation that can occur in the summer before the sophomore year. Perhaps it has something to do with having a year of high school already under their belts, or perhaps it can be attributed to natural maturation. In either

case, sophomores often return to school in the autumn much fuller of themselves than they were as humbler ninth graders. Instead of seeing them as neophytes flailing about in the aforementioned ninth-grade swamp, we might picture them as the self-assured crew members of a sleek, Greek sailing ship, leaving the protective home harbor, setting out for open water. They seem more comfortable with themselves and more confident than ever of their cognitive abilities.

Yet we teachers have noticed another pattern that often emerges during tenth grade. Perhaps it can be traced to this newfound confidence that can border on brazenness. Whatever the reason, many sophomores go “overboard” sometime during the year. They get themselves in some kind of trouble—with drugs, sex, stealing, lying. In other words, many tenth graders succumb at one point or another during the year to those myriad temptations the world has to offer.

Is this true for all sophomores? Of course not. Some boys and girls “fall” in sixth or seventh grade, some not until much later. But the general tendency is for this to happen, if it happens at all, sometime in the student’s sophomore year.

The Dark Night of the Soul

The Eleventh Grader

What happens to eleventh graders? Why do so many of these ex-sophomores, who were so full of themselves, who just a few months before had exhibited a kind of bluster and swagger and smugness, now in eleventh grade find themselves stricken by a malaise that can be termed a “dark night of the soul”?

Some time ago, a mother of one of my eleventh-grade students met with me and shared her concern that her formerly happy-go-lucky, genial, mountain-biking son had become evasive, burdened, noncommunicative, and reclusive—almost a stranger to his own mother. This was a single mother describing her only son; she was naturally worried that these changes might indicate some deep psychological problem. Was some heretofore hidden hurt from a childhood trauma bubbling to the surface? Was he using drugs? Had something happened at school between him and his classmates?

So I took this student—whom I shall call Matthew—aside and spent lunch period one day talking to him about his experience of being a junior. He is a





wonderful fellow who always appears to have just woken up; in fact, he always looks as if he's just slept in his clothes. But underneath that rumpled exterior is a very astute and articulate young man. Yet when I asked Matthew to describe what he'd been feeling during the fall, he was initially at a loss for words. Is it so surprising that young people can't always express what they're experiencing at the moment? How can we expect them to have much perspective about the very air they breathe, the state of soul that envelops them? As the saying goes, "We don't know who discovered water, but we're pretty sure it wasn't a fish!"

Nevertheless, Matthew was able to describe his recent despondency as "a kind of funk." "I've been in a haze," he said. Then he said something as true of the eleventh-grade experience as any I've heard. He said simply, "I've gone inside." Matthew went on to say that he didn't know if it was a good or bad thing, but that he found himself wandering inwardly. Matthew had begun to discover that he had more inner chambers than he had ever realized before and that he was becoming more and more interested in what makes himself tick.

Douglas Gerwin, widely known Waldorf lecturer and a longtime colleague, once characterized this inner exploration in the following manner. Picture a young person, sixteen- or seventeen-years-old, wandering through a large house. She strolls through familiar rooms, looks out to vistas she has known since childhood. Then she notices and opens a door to a wing of the house she never knew existed. She

walks down a dark and unfamiliar corridor, her breathing quickening. Without warning, the floorboards beneath her give way. She falls and lands painfully in an even darker, dungeon-like basement, surrounded by eerie shadows and strange, chilling noises. This is akin to the inner "soulcape" experienced by so many juniors—a sudden descent into dark, even forbidding chambers that nevertheless beckon to young people, no matter how awful the potential revelations might be.

During this dark night of the soul, it seems clear that eleventh graders suffer. One of the ways this manifests is as a deeply felt crisis of confidence. Early one fall, I had a tearful meeting with a girl in the junior class—she was the one crying—about how hard everything in her life had become. She was certain that she was the only one in the class who took six hours to do her homework and that, for all her efforts, she was the only one rewarded with mediocre marks. However, I had had nearly the exact same conversations with two of her classmates the week previous! I put these girls in touch with one another so that discovering fellow sufferers might provide some consolation. Yet I really tried to resist the impulse to somehow make these students' struggles less difficult and less painful. Cruel as this sounds, all the angst in the eleventh grade may be both inevitable and, in a certain way, even desirable.

At the Grand Threshold *The Twelfth Grader*

I once hosted an evening attended by parents and middle school students. They had come to hear approximately thirty twelfth graders from four different Waldorf high schools speak about their school experiences. The seniors began by recounting their recent, weeklong camping trip to Hermit Island, Maine, where they had studied marine biology, wading in the tide pools of the rocky coast. The students did not simply gather specimens; they examined them under microscopes, sketched the creatures and their environments, wrote poems inspired by Rachel Carson's nature writing, painted seascapes, danced, and sang together.

As the twelfth graders described their activities, a number of them expressed appreciation for the opportunities for hands-on learning. One girl summed up the experience as a reminder that all of nature seems to be quietly urging, "Pay attention"—not only to the spectacular sunsets, but to the understated moments that would otherwise go unnoticed—the skittering of a sand crab across a tide pool floor,



the swaying of
rockweed in the
water; the curving
flight of gulls.

Toward the end
of the evening,
one parent in the
audience com-
mented on the
students' elo-
quence, poise, and
insight. Indeed,
these young
people exuded
an unpretentious
self-assurance
that is character-

istic of many Waldorf twelfth graders. As contracted and broody as eleventh graders can get, seniors often seem to acquire a new dimension, an expanded awareness that wasn't there before. They stand poised on a great threshold, straddling both the world of the school that they are rapidly outgrowing and the larger world they can't wait to take by storm. Their vision seems to broaden as their thinking deepens. These suddenly larger souls grapple daily with profound questions about their life in the world, the challenge, for example, of how both to express their ever-strengthening individuality on the one hand and at the same time to live in community. And they have a passionate yearning for a new brotherhood of humanity that transcends ethnic and national boundaries. ☉

DAVID SLOAN was born and raised in Southern California. He graduated from Harvard College, received a Waldorf teacher training at Emerson College in England, and is currently completing an MFA in Poetry through the Stonecoast Creative Writing Program at the University of Southern Maine. After more than a quarter century of teaching at the Green Meadow Waldorf School in Chestnut Ridge, New York, David and his wife, Christine, have relocated to Brunswick, Maine, where he is helping to launch a high school for the Merriconeag Waldorf School in Freeport. David's latest book, *Life Lessons: Reaching Teenagers Through Literature*, from which the above excerpts are taken, is available from AWSNA Publications at: www.awsna/publications/bookstore

Books in Brief

OCTAVE

by Magda Lissau

In this book of essays, Magda Lissau, director of Arcturus, a Waldorf teacher education center in Chicago, treats various themes, including motivating children and adolescents in the classroom; creating healthy relationships between teachers and parents; and the possibility that moral principles can be taught.

Magda Lissau's views come out of her own long experience as a Waldorf teacher and her deep understanding of Rudolf Steiner's thought. Her insights and suggestions are original and practical. For example, her essay on parent-teacher relationships begins with a description of Steiner's view of the human being as an evolving, eternal being comprised of body, soul, and spirit. She then describes how the different soul orientations—the sentient soul, rational soul, and consciousness soul—influence a person's experience and view of the world, including what goals a person may have for a child. Lissau points out that it is important for a teacher to understand the different perspectives that parents will bring and how to meet each in a mutually satisfactory way.

In this same essay, Lissau then offers practical advice for creating a healthy teacher-parent relationship. Among the things a Waldorf teacher can do are:

- learn and acknowledge the parents' goals for their children
- invite parents for observation experiences in the classroom
- organize events in which parents experience a subject the way their children do
- always speak to parents as equals

While it is intended primarily for teachers, this book will help those parents motivated to penetrate more deeply into the heart of Waldorf Education.

AWSNA Publications, Ghent, NY, 2007
160 pages, \$17.00

From Around the World

Waldorf Education in Russia

The Friends of Waldorf Education (Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners) is an organization based in Germany that supports and promotes Waldorf Education around the world, particularly in countries outside Europe and North America. Its autumn 2007 Rundbrief, or newsletter, contained four reports from Russia about Waldorf Education in that country. This article is a conflation of material taken from those four reports.

—R. E. K.

Though bereft of its Soviet-era empire, Russia is still the largest nation in the world—in territory—and one of the largest in population, with about 200 million citizens. Also, because of Russia's vast energy reserves and military might, it is a global power. This vast land stretches from the borders of eastern Europe across the Eurasian landmass some 6000 miles to the Pacific Ocean. The city of Vladivostok is almost directly north of Seoul, Korea.

The Moscow Waldorf School

The first Waldorf school in Russia was the Moscow Waldorf School, also known as School Number 1060. Its history began in 1989 with the forming of "Aristotel," a tiny preschool initiative founded by people interested in Waldorf Education. Prior to that time, Anthroposophy, as a spiritually based worldview, along with its daughter movements, including Waldorf Education, was emphatically proscribed by the communist regime. In that same year, also in response to the loosening of government controls, a Waldorf teacher training began. Twenty-five persons, most but not all of them teachers, suspended their careers and entered the two-year program.

By autumn 1992, the children and teachers were able to move into a five-story building in the center of Moscow. The building, on a small plot of land, had been transformed from a half-ruin through generous financial aid from Germany. Soon, however, because of skyrocketing expenses, the school was in a fight for survival. It had to decide if it wanted, like most independent schools in Russia, to become an elite school with high tuition rates. The school decided against this, and in 1996 registered as a state school. Since then the Moscow Waldorf School has been supported financially by the central government. School founder and director, Anatoly Pinsky, was able to retain the basic elements of Waldorf Education, develop unencumbered artistic and musical activities, and introduce eurythmy into all classes.

From the beginning, the school worked openly and cooperatively with the broader educational community. The school now is well-known and respected

both in Moscow and throughout Russia. It has successfully used advertising with slogans such as "We are building the school of the future." The school has also developed an effective and widely accepted way of evaluating student performance based on a "school portfolio."

The Moscow school has sought to adapt the curriculum to modern needs without sacrificing the essentials of Waldorf Education. The aspects of its curriculum that distinguish the school from mainstream schools in Russia include:

- Practical, hands-on learning that goes from handwork in the early grades through to the major craft projects of the graduating seniors. These classes stretch the resources of the school but are considered worth it.
- A strong music program beginning in the early



First graders at the Moscow Waldorf School try out their C-flutes.



Second graders taking part in a festival pageant

grades. In addition to regular classes in music, there are afternoon classes in musical theatre, orchestra, ensemble playing, world musical culture, and choir.

- An established tradition of theatrical productions in all grades.
- Specialized instruction. From the eighth grade, the students choose particular topics and projects on which to spend a certain amount of time each week.
- Class trips and working practicums for high school students.

In 2006 the central government invited schools and individual teachers to present their curriculum ideas in a nationwide contest. The Moscow Waldorf School did so and won a prize of one million rubles (about US\$30,000) for its entry.

Today the Moscow school has over 300 students in eleven grades. There is no twelfth grade in Russian high schools. That is a year given over to military service. Despite the sudden death of Anatoly Pinsky in 2006, the Waldorf school enjoys stability and a positive attitude toward the future.

The Broader National Movement

The strong wave of interest, sympathy, and even infatuation with Waldorf Education that began with the founding of the Moscow school continued through the 1990s. A number of other schools were opened, including the school in Saint

Petersburg (in 1994). Today there are about twenty Waldorf schools in Russia. Most of the schools are small, and only one-third of them receive state support. The majority of the roughly 2000 Waldorf students in Russia attend the five largest schools—those in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Samara, Smolensk, and in the Siberian city of Irkutsk.

The early period of optimism and expansion has given way to a period of serious challenges and some contraction. While the larger state-supported schools are doing well, a couple of the smaller, non-state schools have closed down, and others have lost enrollment.

Today certain challenges affect most or all of the Waldorf schools in Russia. These include:

- **Government regulations:** The central government has issued two sets of requirements, which all schools must fulfill. One has to do with the subjects to be covered in the curriculum. The other stipulates how many hours should be allotted to each subject. For example, the hours permitted for handwork and the arts are very small. Waldorf schools have had to work hard and to make compromises in order to fit their curriculums into this Procrustean bed. The trend is toward more stringent rules and tighter controls.
- **High costs:** Rents and other basic expenses are



Ninth graders in a performance of a play by Russian playwright Nikolai Gogol

very high in Russia. Only one of the Waldorf schools owns its own building; the others pay exorbitant and constantly rising rents. Several schools have been forced to move to inconvenient locations and as a result have lost students.

- **High tuition rates:** High expenses result, of course, in high tuition costs for parents, at least in the independent schools. Tuition fees range from about US\$300 a month to US\$800, even the lower amount being beyond the reach of most middle class families.
- **Low teacher salaries:** Teacher salaries range from US\$200 to US\$700 per month, which is not really adequate to support a family. Consequently, almost all the teachers are women—some schools do not have even one male teacher—and most of these women are married to a man with a good job or are supported by their own parents. Some teachers are single mothers who somehow make do at the poverty level. Many Waldorf teachers survive by working outside the school, for example, giving private lessons, doing translating, or making toys or furniture.

Government regulations, high costs, high tuition, low salaries—the Russian schools seem to have the same problems as Waldorf schools in many other countries. The challenges may in fact be particularly severe in Russia: the salaries are so low that teachers sometimes can't even pay their monthly rent.

The Waldorf schools in Russia are located at great distances from one another, and their financial resources are small. They exist under varying conditions and with various special challenges. Nevertheless, the schools are working together to overcome their shared problems. The twenty Waldorf schools and initiatives have organized themselves into an Association of Waldorf Schools of Russia. Recently this group was involved in the drafting of a general Waldorf curriculum that fulfills the requirements of the national educational standards. In addition, administrators from member schools have been working on legal and economic aspects of school administration. They have exchanged experiences related to the preparation of important documents and types of permission required by the government and also discussed questions of development. Two teachers from the member school in Samara are working to produce a CD-ROM on the Waldorf curriculum and pedagogy, which will be made available to all schools. The Association also provides a forum in which



High school students in a performance of eurythmy

important questions can be discussed:

- What are the necessary elements in a Waldorf school?
- What constitutes a Waldorf teacher training?
- How can good teachers be retained?
- What is the role of parents in Waldorf Education?
- What is the relationship of Anthroposophy to Waldorf Education?
- How can a school create a positive relationship to the rest of the community?

In January 2008, the second conference of Waldorf teachers in Russia was held in Saint Petersburg on the theme “Waldorf Education in the Russian Context: From the Idea to the Realization.” Gradually, a group of experienced teachers is emerging who can carry the teacher training work.

The seeds of Waldorf Education have been planted in the not always welcoming Russian soil. The difficult financial and legal situation requires the mobilization of inner forces and also the building of bridges to what is good and rich in the broader educational environment. Waldorf schools in Russia appreciate opportunities for cooperation with Waldorf schools in other parts of the world. ☺

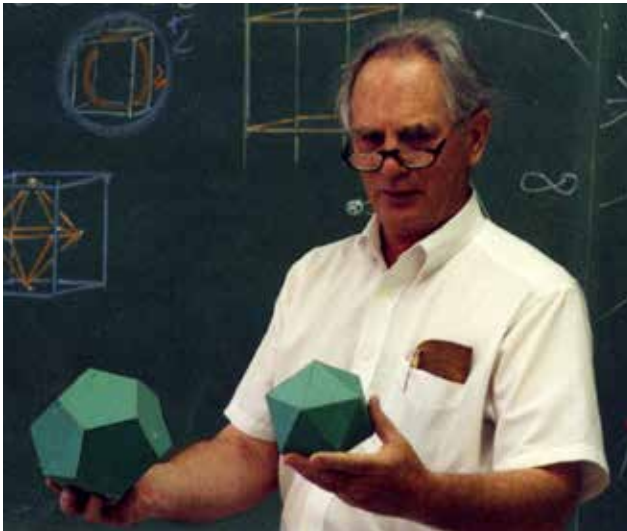
Resources

Persons interested in student and/or teacher exchanges with Russian schools should write to freunde.waldorf@t-online.de Persons interested in volunteer opportunities in Waldorf schools in Russia should write to freundekarlsruhe@t-online.de

In Memoriam

Norman Davidson

1933–2007



Norman Davidson teaching at Sunbridge College in 1999

Norman Davidson, a native of Scotland, a student and teacher of Anthroposophy for some fifty years and, from 1986 to 2005, director of the Waldorf Teacher Education Program at Sunbridge College, Chestnut Ridge, New York, died last spring.

Norman's formal schooling ended when he was sixteen, but he was an extraordinary autodidact, and throughout his life demonstrated a deep hunger for experience, knowledge, and higher insight. In addition to a stint in the Royal Air Force, "protecting the Suez Canal from the Egyptians," Norman worked in turn as a journalist and theatre critic, herring fisherman and chauffeur, and co-worker in a curative home. From a young age, Norman was an avid student of philosophy and religion and a lover of books. In 1967 when he met his second wife, Annelies, while working at Sunfield Children's Homes near Birmingham, England, Norman's few possessions included one orange crate containing a Bible and one book each by Rudolf Steiner, Plato, and Thomas à Kempis.

Norman attended Emerson College, the Waldorf teacher training institute in Sussex, England, and then taught in British Waldorf schools until the mid-

1980s. Two of his great passions were astronomy and projective geometry. Norman wrote two books on celestial matters, *Astronomy and the Imagination: A New Approach to Man's Experience of the Stars* (1986) and *Sky Phenomena: A Guide to Naked-Eye Observation of the Stars* (1993). The latter is widely used by Waldorf class teachers preparing for the sixth-grade astronomy block. Norman also wrote many articles on geometry, astronomy, and other topics, several of which appeared in *Renewal*.

In 1986 Norman and Annelies moved to the United States. Norman had been invited to become co-director of the Waldorf Institute, a teacher training center which was moving to Chestnut Ridge, New York, from Detroit. In time the institute became Sunbridge College, and Norman served the college as director of its Teacher Education Program and as a leading faculty member until his retirement in 2005.

A rigorous searcher for truth and an inspiring teacher, he made his classes shine with enthusiasm and humor. Norman's teaching encompassed a wide range of anthroposophical topics besides Waldorf Education, including the life of Rudolf Steiner, the evolution of consciousness, the nature and destiny of the human being, *Parzival*, early childhood education, as well as his beloved astronomy and projective geometry.

A former student, Elan Leibner, recalls that Norman "[became] the knight charging into battle when he taught *Parzival*, the invisible point at infinity in projective geometry, and Kepler [when he spoke of the history of astronomy]... One often felt that, once he took his place in front of the class, the gates of heaven opened and angels were ascending and descending upon the head of the earthly man. The depth and profundity of his insights were endless. [It was as if] until he was done telling that particular group of students what it needed to hear that day, class could not end. This was living teaching."

In his last years Norman's health declined somewhat. Norman's passing was peaceful. He suffered a

massive cerebral hemorrhage on April 13 and crossed the threshold within a day.

—R. E. K

This account of Norman Davidson's life is based on a longer narrative written by Annelies Davidson and published in *News for Members, The Anthroposophical Society of America*, 2007, Number 2.

Excerpt from the Introduction to *Sky Phenomena* by Norman Davidson

When I was a student in the teacher training course at Emerson College in England, I used to walk about a mile across the local farmland to and from class, morning and evening, and could not help coming under the influence of the sky as it changed its face through the seasons. I remember particularly noticing the Moon and wondering what lay behind the alternations in its shape and position. Before I looked up a book on the subject, I worked on the problem right there under the wide Sussex skies. Previously I had certainly some interest in the stars, but beginning with those field walks, and later after reading my first observational astronomy book from cover to cover (*The Revolving Heavens* by Reginald Waterfield), I developed a love for the sky that has since led me to devote much of my spare time, and professional time, to learning and teaching this fascinating subject. In fact, it led me to write this book in the hope that it might help other people to take up a conscious study of what is our greater environment—the turning sky.

I say “conscious study” very deliberately, because I discovered that only when I had grasped the laws and principles behind the movement of the stars did there grow in me a deep enthusiasm and desire to observe more. When I found the principles behind the Moon's changing appearance, I longed to experience it again and again, and each waxing crescent in the west in the course of the year was a special event. Every crescent was different in its position and visibility, and the character of each one had to be experienced and confirmed firsthand. The Moon had become more than a fetching image: it began to speak a seasonal language.

A Petition for Cultural and Economic Freedom

At the February 2008 Western Waldorf Teachers' Conference at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California, keynote speaker Dr. Michaela Glöckler, head of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, took a portion of her lecture time to address a pressing issue. The issue was freedom of choice in the European Union, particularly in the areas of health and medicine, food and food production, and education. Dr. Glöckler, whose usual mood is one of good-humored equanimity, got a bit excited, one might even say irate, during her presentation. And for good reason.

The European Union (EU), she explained, aims to create a common free economic market among the nations of Europe. To that end, it is passing laws to standardize conditions throughout Europe. These laws adversely affect those who want to do things in a nonmainstream way, including people associated with Anthroposophy and its daughter movements. For example, all baby food in Germany is now required to be vitamin enriched. Hence, the producers of biodynamic, Demeter-quality baby foods, who refuse to add vitamins, cannot sell their product—even though its vitamin content is higher than that of the enriched brands. And patients in the Netherlands who want to use the natural, homeopathic remedies prescribed by their anthroposophical physicians cannot obtain these medicines in their own country. This standardization and the accompanying disregard for diversity is moving into the realm of education and will no doubt affect the Waldorf movement in Europe.

Recently, an organization called Aktion ELIANT—European Alliance of Initiatives for Applied Anthroposophy—was formed to protect cultural and economic freedoms within the EU. Aktion ELIANT has established an office in Brussels to represent alternative approaches and to influence legislation in the EU commission. Aktion ELIANT also began a campaign to gather one million signatures in Europe and also from around the world to establish itself as a significant group within the EU, one that deserves recognition and, if necessary, special treatment. Already, almost 400,000 signatures have been gathered.

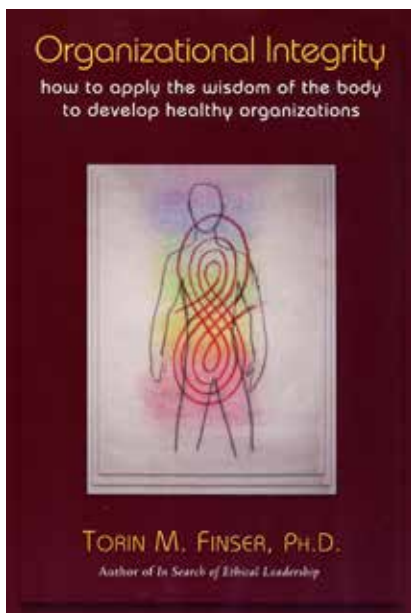
Anyone who supports diversity in health care, agriculture, education, and other areas of cultural and economic activity can sign the ELIANT petition at the organization's Web site: www.eliant.eu Petition cards or sheets are available from Cynthia Hoven at choven@steinercollege.edu Support from outside Europe will strengthen the work for diversity and freedom within the EU.

Out of Anthroposophy

What the Human Body Tells Us about Healthy Organizations

BY RONALD KOETZSCH, PhD

Torin Finser is one of the leading figures in the worldwide Waldorf and anthroposophical movements. His most recent book is called *Organizational Integrity: How to Apply the Wisdom of the Body to Develop Healthy Organizations* and is interesting and valuable in two ways. It presents in a clear, concise manner many of the basic ideas



of Anthroposophy about the human being. Then it applies these ideas to the effort to create healthy organizations, including healthy Waldorf schools. This book is an example of applied Anthroposophy, using the insights of that worldview to solve some of the problems that confront human beings in everyday life.

Finser's exposition of anthroposophical

essentials—such as the fourfold and the sevenfold structure of the human being; karma and reincarnation; the evolution of matter out of spirit; the four temperaments and the seven planetary types of human being; and the twelve senses—is cogent and accessible. Yet it is still challenging reading, especially for persons unfamiliar with the vocabulary and concepts of Anthroposophy. The challenge derives not from the presentation but from the ideas themselves. Steiner's understanding of the human being is based on a spiritual worldview, antithetical to the materialistic point of view that prevails today in Western society and to which most of us, consciously or unconsciously, subscribe. We are not used to looking at the world the way Steiner does.

For example, while we are all familiar with the five physical senses of perception, Steiner describes twelve senses. In addition to sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell, he refers to the life sense, the self-movement sense, balance sense, warmth sense, language or word sense, conceptual or thought sense, and the sense that perceives another person's "I" or essential Self. These last seven senses, responding to more ethereal stimuli, lack a definite physical organ of perception, but for Steiner they are just as real and important as the first five.

The concept of the "I" or "Ego" brings its own difficulties. In common parlance, the ego is usually associated with our narrow and selfish individual identity. In Freudian terms, it has another connotation. But for Steiner, the Ego is the undying spiritual essence of the human being, that higher part of us that moves from incarnation to incarnation, subject to the laws of karma, in a process of individual evolution.

Moreover, Torin Finser delves into aspects of Anthroposophy not necessarily familiar to all Anthroposophists, but which are important to his purposes. He goes deeply into what might be called "esoteric physiology." Rudolf Steiner described three discrete organ systems in the human body: the nerve-sense system, centered in the head and associated with consciousness and thinking; the metabolic system, consisting of the digestive organs and the limbs, concerned with nutrition as well as action and will; and the rhythmic system, including the heart, circulatory system, and lungs, representing the realm of feeling and serving as the mediator between the two other systems.

Finser then describes the function of each major organ and its significance in the soul life of the human being. The liver, for example, is the organ that can transform an idea into action, a thought into a deed. And the lungs, part of the mediating rhythmic system, are related to our consciousness and mood.

Dysfunction in the lungs can result in a dreamy, fantasy-prone, escapist frame of mind or in a fixed, overly rigid way of thinking.

A very interesting chapter discusses the various metals and their relation to different qualities of soul. Iron, for example, is the carrier of strength, energy, and courage, and “gives us presence of mind, the capacity to do things in a practical way.” Copper, malleable and warming, brings people together, encourages communication, and creates shared human warmth. Torin Finser then relates the metals to different types of leadership and organizational patterns. Iron leadership is assertive and important in the building up and consolidation of a school or other community. Iron-poor or anemic leadership can lead to a lack of direction and failure to implement decisions. Copper, in contrast, is associated with a more inclusive, cooperative leadership and organizational pattern. Finser also discusses the special properties of silver, lead, mercury, tin, and gold and the importance of assimilating the positive quality of each of these metals into our individual and collective lives.

These insights into what lies at the basis of human physical and soul health are what Torin Finser uses to analyze human organizations, including the modern Waldorf school. A school community is a human being writ large, with its own heart, lungs, liver, and organ systems. Problems in the organism of the community can be understood, diagnosed, treated, and healed by applying our understanding of the miracle and wonder that is the human body. ☺

Organizational Integrity was published by SteinerBooks, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 2007: www.steinerbooks.org This book will be very helpful to those seeking a deeper understanding of Anthroposophy, especially as it relates to creating healthy organizations and communities.

Interview

Torin Finser on Parenting, Waldorf Teaching, and Anthroposophy

Torin Finser is a graduate of the Green Meadow Waldorf School. He trained to be a Waldorf teacher at Adelphi University and then was a class teacher at the Rudolf Steiner School in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, from 1978 to 1990. His 1994 book, School as a Journey, describes his eight years with his class and is one of the most popular books describing Waldorf Education. The book has been translated into Thai, Korean, and Chinese. Torin Finser has been director of the Waldorf Teacher Education Program at Antioch University New England for the past eighteen years and is a founding member of the Center for Anthroposophy, an organization

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promoting adult education in Anthroposophy. Finser also is a well-regarded consultant to Waldorf schools regarding pedagogical and organizational issues. In 2007 he was selected co-general secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in America.

What is the most valuable advice you can give to parents today?

Listen to your children! We live in a world run by adults who think that education is about making children into adults as quickly as possible. To this end, the government and the educational establishment have designed standards based upon abstract, intellectual constructs and have set up a massive testing system to enforce those standards. Instead of buying into this mindset, parents today need to listen to the voices of their children, observe their play, and enter into their world. If we let go of our adult props once in a while—cell phones, e-mail, and so on—and play with our children, they will tell us more than we can imagine. Even their inappropriate behavior tells us about needs and wishes that we may not always understand at first. We need to stop



Torin Finser, Chairman of the Anthroposophical Society of America

being preoccupied with adulthood, our own and the coming adulthood of our children, and try to understand the mystery of childhood.

My second suggestion may seem to contradict what stands above. Living into the spirit of childhood does not mean parental abdication. Children need to experience authority

and clear boundaries, as this gives them confidence in their later life. Often I see parents asking their children to make choices, throughout the day, on mundane matters—from what to eat to what to wear, and beyond. This makes children anxious and nervous. Here again, children are being asked to become mini-adults. Many parents have had their own struggles and find it hard to be an authority, but children grow up healthier if there are authority figures in their lives, persons whom they respect, persons who have earned authority through life experience.

What is the most valuable advice you can give to Waldorf teachers today?

Waldorf teaching is a tremendous opportunity to help humanity by preparing a generation of new leaders who can renew social life and tackle the many challenges we face as a civilization. I am more impressed today with the curriculum and the developmental model used by Waldorf Education than I was thirty years ago when I started at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School. As director of the Waldorf Teacher Education Program at Antioch, I live daily with the challenge of finding the right advice to pass on. Here are two suggestions:

I. What works for the children in terms of artistic practice—painting, singing, model-

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ing with clay—also works for adults. At the end of his life, Rudolf Steiner asked that we make a 180-degree turn in favor of the arts in the schools, and I feel that today we need Waldorf teachers who are themselves, first and foremost, practitioners of

view of the essential nature of the human being, the development of the child, and the evolution of humanity. These pillars support everything that happens in the classroom. Yet there is another crucial ingredient: the inner life of the teacher. Through

Waldorf teaching is a tremendous opportunity to help humanity by preparing a generation of new leaders who can renew social life and tackle the many challenges we face as a civilization.

the arts. It is not enough just to paint or sing with the children. Teachers need to do artistic work on their own, as part of their class preparation, as part of their weekly rhythm. Many of our challenges in teaching and in interpersonal relationships would be lessened if we brought greater intensity to our artistic practice.

2. Many teachers entering the schools these days are familiar with the curriculum and basic teaching requirements, but few are prepared for the organizational needs of our schools. As long as we put our social and organizational needs last, we will continue to have long meetings, role confusion, and leaders who feel they are not supported. If teachers are to participate in “self-administration” as intended by Rudolf Steiner, they need to acquire the skills and understanding to support organizational development.

Too many hours of sleep are lost when people struggle with things they do not fully grasp. It does not have to be this way. I have devoted several of my books to these issues, and I urge schools to schedule time during professional days not only for artistic and pedagogical development but also for organizational literacy. A healthy classroom cannot survive in a dysfunctional school. When we have raised the level of our group work, leadership, and organizational competence, then success in enrollment, fundraising, and in creating school facilities will follow. Organizational health should be a vital concern for each and every teacher, parent, and administrator.

What should the role of Anthroposophy be in the life of a Waldorf school?

Without Anthroposophy there would be no Waldorf Education. The curriculum is based upon a clear

meditation and personal growth, the Waldorf teacher has a chance to meet the ever-changing needs of her students, as well as achieve new insights that support preparation. Most good Waldorf teachers acknowledge this. Many school staff members and also parents engage in the work for inner development indicated by Rudolf Steiner.

However, one thing is often missing—a connection to the Anthroposophical Society. At the refunding of the Anthroposophical Society in 1923, Rudolf Steiner founded “an association of people whose will it is to nurture the life of the soul on the basis of a true knowledge of the spiritual world” and united his own being with it.

The Society, with its many local branches all over North America—including in many school communities—exists for the purpose of helping individuals, as individuals, but also as members of groups, to realize their full potential as human beings. While recognizing our freedom as human beings, we also need to realize that if we wholeheartedly accept the fruits of Waldorf Education—as a manifestation of applied Anthroposophy—then we should consider doing what Rudolf Steiner did, that is, unite ourselves more directly with others who share our ideals.

On a broader scale, teachers and parents in Waldorf schools need to reach out and to join with others who are committed to social and educational change. We must have the courage to express and promote our views in a wider context. Silence can very easily become complicity, whereas speaking out, no matter how imperfect our own institutions, can awaken courage and inspire others. We can be active participants in creating a new world culture—one that transcends the divisions of the past and unites people across national boundaries in preparing for the universal human that must be the hallmark of the future. ◉

Books in Brief

FUNCTIONAL MORPHOLOGY: THE DYNAMIC WHOLENESS OF THE HUMAN ORGANISM

by Johannes Rohen

Adonis Press, Hillsdale, New York, 2007
430 pages plus an optional CD of illustrations, \$75.00

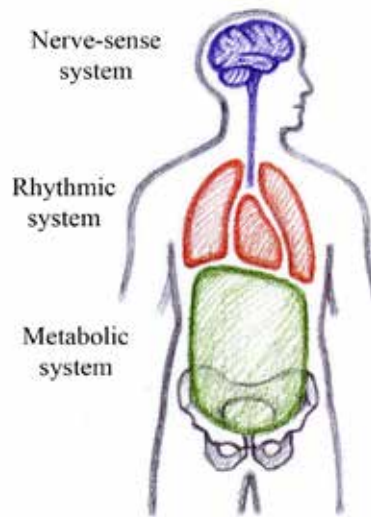
Functional Morphology, with its systematic descriptions of the various organs and organ systems of the human body and its many excellent illustrations, could be taken for a standard medical school anatomy textbook. And, in fact, the author, Dr. Johannes Rohen, is an internationally known author of anatomy textbooks.

But *Functional Morphology* is not just a book about human anatomy; it is a book about the human being. It is the result of Dr. Rohen's striving to combine the analytic and quantitative approach of modern science with a synthetic, qualitative one based on Goethean phenomenology. Rohen presents the human body as something which in every detail manifests a remarkable, even divine, wisdom and beauty. But he also recognizes the independent reality of the human mind and spirit.

The author describes, for example, how a visual image from the eyes is broken down and its component elements are sent to different parts of the brain. What allows us to experience a coherent image is the nonmaterial, integrating "I" or Ego. He also points out that the human body is composed of mineral elements and compounds

which in themselves are dead matter. What gives the human body life, movement, and growth is a spiritual entity that precedes, transcends, and survives it.

Rohen's lifetime of study has convinced him of the validity of orthogenesis. According to this idea, evolution has proceeded in a unilinear, apparently directed, manner due to some internal or external "driving force" to produce the human being. The lower animals are offshoots of this orthogenetic stream. They have adapted to specific environmental conditions and have become highly differentiated, one-sided, and incapable of much further development.



The threefold structure of the human being

The human being alone has maintained its primitive flexibility and adaptability and as such is the only bud on the tree of evolution capable of continued physical and spiritual evolution. Johannes Rohen points out that the brain has many areas that still have not developed. The human race is full of unimagined evolutionary potentials, including the possibility of acting in freedom and out of selfless love for others.

This monumental book, whose original German version is in its third edition, deserves to be studied carefully, so that its content and implications can be thoroughly appreciated. Hence, it would serve well as the basis for a teacher/parent study group in a school. Also, since much of the book describes the threefold

structure of the human organism, it would be useful to class teachers in presenting such blocks as the fourth-grade comparative study of the human being and the animal kingdom.

Rebecca Schmidt, *continued*

After graduation, Rebecca spent a year traveling around Ireland and Scotland, pursuing her interest in Irish music. She is a gifted vocalist and sang in pubs and at fairs throughout Ireland. She then returned to Charlottesville and worked for two years at the local chapter of Planned Parenthood. Rebecca served there as community health educator, conducting prevention programs to improve the health of young people and their families. This experience caused her to decide on a career in public health policy and administration. She is currently pursuing a Masters in Public Administration in Public Policy and Management at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Rebecca enjoys writing songs, playing soccer, and exploring new places.

Rebecca's account of her Waldorf experience is an excerpt from a letter sent last year to members of the Charlottesville Waldorf School community.

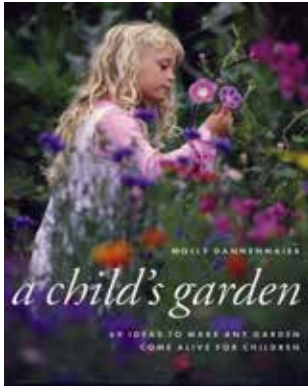
Books in Brief

A CHILD'S GARDEN: 60 IDEAS TO MAKE ANY GARDEN COME ALIVE FOR CHILDREN

by Molly Dannenmaier

Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2007

180 pages, \$19.95



This beautiful and informative book asks the question: How can the healthy development of children be served by a garden—the term *garden* here referring to any natural outdoor space set aside for recreation, not only a place for growing flowers and vegetables.

The answer to this question is contained in 180 pages of insightful text and striking photographs. *A Child's Garden* is based on a clear understanding of what children, especially young children, need, including open spaces for movement and play, structures to climb on, water to watch, beautiful things to look at, fragrant things to smell, and opportunities to do meaningful work.

The book suggests sixty elements that can be incorporated into a garden, things that will attract and delight a child. Some of these are fairly simple and inexpensive and can be part of even a

small-sized garden: a sandbox, swings, a lawn, climbable trees, a place to dig down in the dirt “on the way to China,” flowers that can be picked, and a plot of tall, ornamental grasses.

Other elements are more costly and complex, such as ponds, streams, waterfalls, playhouses, treehouses, topiaries, low level mazes made with grass and cobblestones, and arbor retreats.

Each of the sixty “ideas to make any garden come alive for children” is presented lucidly and with beautiful images. The book also includes a full list of resources.

A tiny outdoor house is an enchanting object for a child. Too small for adults to enter and distanced from a child's real house, it offers children the imaginative possibility of being in a land far, far away from the adult world. A garden playhouse need not be elaborate to meet a child's needs. . . . A child will play happily in a simple hut . . . whose charm derives as much from surrounding plant life as from its simple, rustic architecture. (p. 82)

Most children enjoy caring tenderly for something other than themselves. They can translate to plants their experience of nurture of dolls, pets and one another if their parents provide a model for them to imitate. Parents can offer children of the tenderest ages a few containers on the deck or a small plot of ground in the yard and help them fill it with plants. (p. 136)

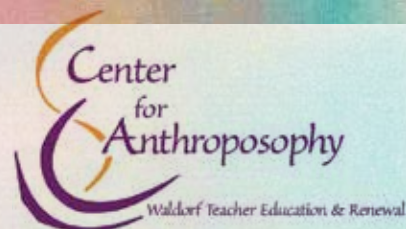
Marjorie Spock, continued

gardener, she was one of a group of activists that sued the government over the aerial spraying of DDT. This suit attracted the attention of Rachel Carson, and she and Marjorie became close collaborators and friends. The case became an inspiration for Carson's influential book *Silent Spring*.

In 1965 Marjorie moved to a farm in Sullivan County, Maine, and lived there until her passing. She gardened, taught eurythmy, conducted a weekly anthroposophical study group in her home, wrote and translated, and received many visitors and guests.

Among her writings are *Eurythmy; Teaching as a Lively Art*; and *Fairy Worlds and Workers: A Natural History of Fairyland*. Among her translations are *Water: The Element of Life*, by Theodor and Wolfram Schwenk, and *Rudolf Steiner on His Book, "The Philosophy of Freedom."*

Marjorie worked in her garden almost until her 100th birthday and at age 102 did a short training film on eurythmy. She remained active and lucid until her passing. In her will, Marjorie requested that no photos of her be published. Her life was and still is a blessing and inspiration to all who recognize the spiritual dimension of the human being and of the world of nature.



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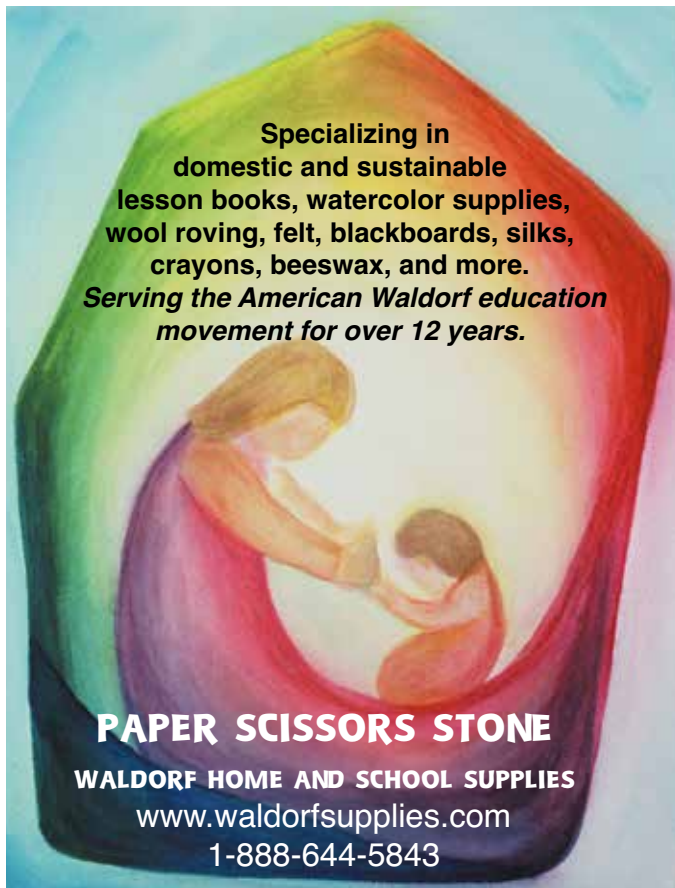
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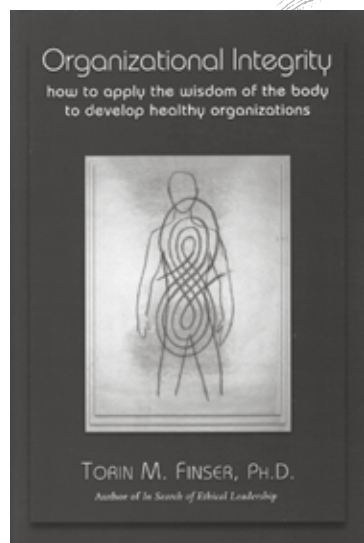


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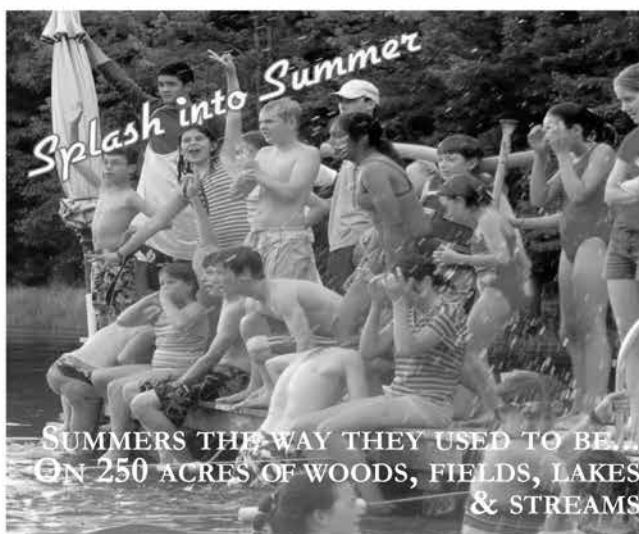
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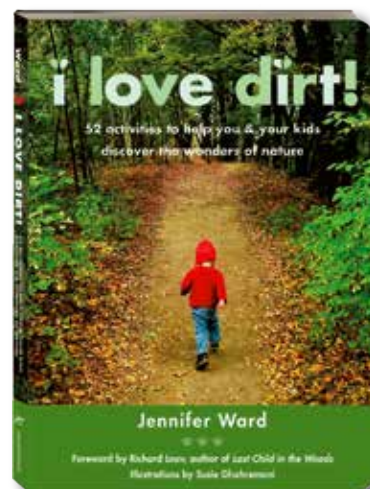
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