

SPRING/SUMMER 2018 – VOLUME 27, NUMBER 1

Renewal



*Learning from Nature • The Spirit in Waldorf Education
Classrooms of Luminous Color • Waldorf Education's "Sister" Movements
Gardening Classes through the Winter • Computer Science in the Eleventh Grade
The Proper Way to Eat a Hazelnut*

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

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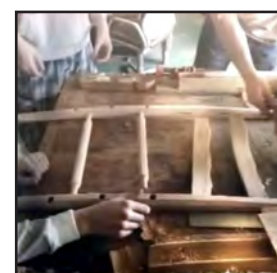
Art and photo by Van James

Lazured high school hallway



Green Meadow Waldorf School fifth grader

Drawing of Ra, ancient Egyptian Sun god



Courtesy of Frank Vargo

Making a wooden chair by hand



Photo by Kim Allsup

The School Sunhouse

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Waldorf Education's "Sisters" around the World

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, was born in 1861 in an area that is now part of Croatia but was, at that time, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Steiner studied at the Vienna Technical University (then and now Austria's MIT) and was later active as a writer and speaker on cultural and philosophical issues of the day. Shortly after the turn of the century, Steiner, as head of the German branch of the Theosophical Society, began to present, in a systematic manner, a particular view of the world and of the origin, nature, and destiny of the human being.



Rudolf Steiner, 1901

In time, Steiner came to call this worldview "Anthroposophy," and when he left the Theosophical Society to form a new group, he called it the Anthroposophical Society. The word *Anthroposophy* is derived from the Greek words

for human being, *anthropos* (literally "the one who looks up"—into the heavens), and wisdom, *sophia*. Thus, it means "wisdom about the human being."

Rudolf Steiner conceived of the human being as ultimately a spiritual being incarnated in a physical body but possessing a divine spark that preexists and survives the physical body. Steiner regretted that the institutions of modern Western civilization were, as they still are, based largely on a materialistic, reductionistic view of the world and the human being. He held that the proper, positive evolution of humanity required that all aspects of human culture, including education, agriculture, and medicine, be recreated based on a spiritual understanding of the human being.

Waldorf Education is the result of Steiner's applying his spiritual anthropology to the education

of children and young people. In the one hundred years since its founding, Waldorf Education has grown so that there are now over 1,200 schools in over sixty countries all over the world. In North America, there are about 150 schools that are members of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), as well as about fifty Waldorf-inspired public and charter schools. However, Waldorf Education is but one of the practical movements Steiner founded. Before his death in 1925, Steiner launched other initiatives in a variety of fields, and each of those initiatives has continued and flourished. These various initiatives, the "daughters" of Anthroposophy, are in effect "sister" movements to Waldorf Education.

Biodynamic agriculture is based on lectures Steiner gave in 1924. An enhanced form of organic agriculture, it regards each farm as a unique, living organism and uses a number of specially formulated preparations to improve the fertility of the soils and the quality of the crops. Today, there are thousands of biodynamic gardens, farms, ranches, orchards, and vineyards around the world.

Rudolf Steiner's work in the field of medicine developed into a comprehensive, natural, non-invasive approach to healing called Anthroposophic medicine. All the physicians who practice



Workers on a biodynamic farm in Canada harvesting dandelion flowers to be used in a special preparation for the healing and fertility of the soil

this medicine are conventionally trained medical doctors. However, in their clinics and hospitals they primarily use alternative therapies, including potentized remedies composed of natural mineral, plant, and animal substances; therapeutic massage; and hydrotherapy. This impulse also has spread to countries all around the world.



Herdecke Community Hospital, a 500-bed, full-service medical facility in Herdecke, Germany, based on anthroposophical principles

such persons led to the creation of the Camphill movement, which consists of therapeutic homes and communities around the world. In the United States and Canada, there are about twenty such anthroposophically based Camphill communities, and there are more than one hundred worldwide.

Steiner gave indications on how a spiritual view of the human being can be applied in other fields, including the visual arts, sculpture, architecture, music, artistic movement, drama and speech, social



A co-worker and villager working together at a Camphill village

Steiner was especially interested in children and adults with developmental and cognitive challenges. He referred to them as “persons in need of special soul-spiritual care.” Steiner’s suggestions on how best to educate and care for

organization, finance, the care of the elderly, and religious life. Today, there are many individuals, groups, and institutions who are working in these areas out of an anthroposophical orientation.

The General Anthroposophical Society, based in Dornach, Switzerland, is an international organization composed of individuals committed to the work and mission of Anthroposophy. The Society seeks to promote and coordinate the work of the various practical sister movements. In addition, many countries,

including the United States, Canada, and Mexico, each have their own national society. The Anthroposophical Society in America is based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and has about 3,000 members.

Each Waldorf school is an entity in itself. Each is connected, though, to all other Waldorf schools. But each also is connected to the myriad institutions and initiatives based on Anthroposophy. Those of us involved in and working for Waldorf Education have many like-minded sisters and brothers around the world. Some have estimated that about three million people are involved daily with some anthroposophically based initiative. Together we comprise a global community based on a spiritual view of the human being, seeking to promote the peace, freedom, and well-being of all humankind.



The second Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland, designed by Rudolf Steiner, is an example of his organic architectural style.

One article in this issue (see page 14) presents Steiner’s view of the human being as the foundation of Waldorf Education. The other articles look at many other aspects of Waldorf Education. We hope that every article that appears in *Renewal* is inspired by Rudolf Steiner’s transcendent view of human nature and destiny. ☉



Ronald E. Koetzsch



The art of eurythmy combines movement, color, music, and speech.

Looking Ahead to the 100th Anniversary of Waldorf Education

BY BEVERLY AMICO

Executive Director, Advancement

The first Waldorf school opened in Stuttgart, Germany, on September 19, 1919, with over 250 students. Hence, the one hundredth birthday of Waldorf Education is just over a year away. Around the world, plans are being made to celebrate the centenary throughout the 2019–2020 academic year. AWSNA and all its member schools in North America are involved in this international enterprise, named “Waldorf100.”



*The first Waldorf school,
Stuttgart, Germany*

Waldorf100 provides an opportunity to celebrate the history of Waldorf Education and its global impact. But, more importantly, it will act as a catalyst to unite the worldwide movement, to deepen our awareness of each other and our connections, and

to strengthen our commitment to our mission and to the future. The one hundred-year anniversary provides us with an opportunity to assess ourselves and our mission, to innovate, to explore new ideas and practices, and to become an even more effective impulse for social and cultural transformation.

The centenary is also an opportunity for AWSNA to reach out into the broader community. The Association has launched a public-relations campaign and philanthropic initiative aimed at transforming education, improving the health and well-being of children, and achieving positive social change. The Association has partnered with Wondros, a creative advertising firm located in Los Angeles. The firm is custom-crafting an ad campaign that will attract individuals, institutions, and businesses who share the values and aims of Waldorf Education.



We hope that these partners and sponsors will work together with the Association in realizing its aims. Those interested in this possibility can contact me at bamico@awsna.org

In addition, each AWSNA member school in Mexico, Canada, and the United States has assigned a Waldorf100 representative to help coordinate local and broader activities. Representatives confer monthly via teleconference to share progress and make plans.

Some initiatives are already under way. Students at Waldorf schools in North America, from Cuernavaca, Mexico, to Anchorage, Alaska, from San Diego to Montreal, are busy sending and receiving postcards to and from the roughly 1,200 Waldorf schools throughout the world. Faculty and community members from many schools are participating in a real-time online study of Rudolf Steiner's *Foundations of Human Experience*.

Planned initiatives include the following:

- Service projects by schools and students to benefit underserved children in their local communities and abroad;
- A Waldorf alumni network that will allow graduates of Waldorf schools in North America to communicate and to coordinate activities;
- “Bees and Trees,” a collaborative relationship with Gunther Hauk from the Spikenard Farm Honeybee Sanctuary, the Children and Nature Network, Green Schoolyards America, and the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood to found a new “continental park system.” This collaboration will create protected green space in backyards, playgrounds, schoolyards, and public places that will provide biodiverse environments for birds, insects, bees, butterflies, and other wildlife;

continued on page 6

Happiness and Hazelnuts

A Waldorf Reminiscence

BY EMILY BRIDGERS, Linden Waldorf School (Nashville), eighth-grade class of 2012

Emily Bridgers attended Linden Waldorf School from kindergarten through eighth grade. For high school, Emily attended University School of Nashville, a private school. Emily appreciated experiencing a new style of education and found that her favorite subjects were advanced math and environmental science. She enjoyed playing several sports, but focused primarily on ultimate Frisbee. Emily is now a sophomore at the University of Vermont, where she studies environmental science. Emily has continued to play ultimate Frisbee and currently is on the competitive A team that travels all over the contiguous United States. She hopes to continue exploring Vermont and finding new and interesting classes in the environmental science field.

—R.E.K.

Most of my earliest memories are from my time at school. Each morning, as we crossed the threshold into the classroom, there was a faint smell of lavender. Our teacher met us at the door, shook our hands one by one, greeted us by name, and made us each feel seen and heard. We would walk to our cubbies and set down our lunchboxes and jackets. I recall the rainy days when we would show up with our full rain gear on; we would be wearing our rain boots with little ladybugs or bees printed on them, rain pants that made a very distinct swishing sound as we moved, and, of course, a hand-me-down raincoat that was either slightly too big or too small.

For me, Linden Waldorf School was a place imbued with an embracing love of and respect for childhood. It was a haven of safety and warmth. When I arrived in the morning, I felt a sense of calm rush over me, as if I had walked into a magic bubble and had instantly been enwrapped in beauty and music that drowned out the outside world. I remember having two recesses a day, snack AND lunch, the soft voices of the teachers. I remember the big field where the May Faire was held and getting to the age where I was allowed to run around the Elves Faire without my parents. I remember happiness, and the feeling of being loved by all. And I remember hazelnuts.

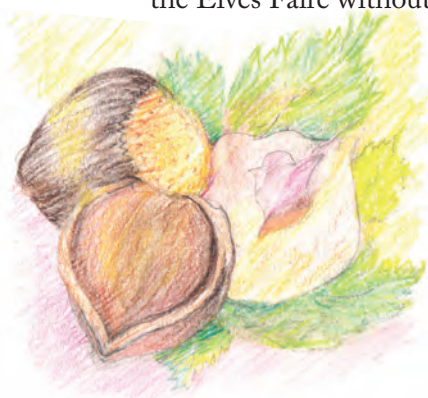
Linden Waldorf School is a small school in the middle of Nashville.

During my years there, the school was located in spaces rented from a local church. The classes were very small. My eighth-grade class had just sixteen students. Our days were filled with art and music, and we were allowed to grow up slowly. Instead of having textbooks for social studies and math, we created our own. We wrote in cursive and illustrated our own books. We had handwork and woodwork where we learned more than just the actual skills. Those classes taught us patience and allowed us to work with our hands. In time, we started having homework and tests, but they were meant to actually help us learn and not just have us do busywork. By the time we finished eighth grade, we were one big family. We went on trips together, learned together, cooked together, and ate together. The ritual of the shared snack, begun in kindergarten, continued, and we prepared, ate, and cleaned up as a group. Homemade bread, vegetable soup, couscous, and hazelnuts were often featured.

One of my strongest, most precious memories is of eating a hazelnut at snack time in kindergarten. I can still experience the feeling that would come over me as we started to set up the small wooden chairs in a circle. I remember the excitement that would bubble up in my chest. I remember that we



*Emily Bridgers,
hazelnut connoisseur*



had to be quiet before the hazelnuts were passed around. I remember trying to hush the other children in the class and becoming annoyed when we made it more noisy than before.

Everything in the room felt warm and safe. The walls were covered in soft paint colors that blended together in a perfect harmony, and there were colorful silks billowing out of their designated baskets. Little wooden stoves and boats lined the wall. Everything was in its place, there was peace, and the hazelnuts were passed out.

While not perhaps the most delicious of snacks, the hazelnuts had a significance and meaning far beyond themselves. They meant it was a time when we could be carefree and sit in a circle while being told magical stories of dragons or fairies. They meant that soon it would be time for recess and we could go out and climb on the wooden playset or run around, living in some elaborate universe that only made sense to us. They meant that we were going to be given our very own nut and that each one of us had the power to choose the speed at which we ate it. The hazelnuts signified childhood and happiness, although at the time I was unaware of that. Often, there would be a silent competition to see who could eat theirs the slowest. We would go bit-by-bit, starting first with the skin and then moving into the sweet middle.

These hazelnuts and my time at Linden have given me an appreciation for difference. This relatively bland nut has shaped me in ways I am still discovering. As I have grown up, the actual object has changed, but the idea of the hazelnut has always

stayed the same. I have learned to notice the weird or different in life and see and appreciate it for what it is, even if I would never have thought to act / dress / draw / or live in such a way. ☺

How to Correctly Eat a Hazelnut in the True Waldorf Kindergarten Fashion

1. Wait patiently in your chair until your hazelnut has been brought to you.
2. Remove the skin of the hazelnut. To best remove the skin without eating too much of the middle, use just your front teeth and scrape ever so gently.
3. Once the skin has been perfectly peeled, and you have stopped to look around at the progress of your classmates at least twice, begin by taking small nibbles of the sweet middle. In order to obtain the greatest amount of flavor and take the most time, let each small nibble rest in your mouth for as long as possible. Once you think you have taken an impressively long amount of time on that one piece, swallow and repeat.
4. Make sure you are not the first to finish, and if you are, I recommend faking it until you see at least one other person putting their hands down into their lap.



Amico, continued from page 4

- Partnership with other anthroposophical organizations, such as the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, the Pedagogical Section Council of North America, and the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, in planning and participating in the broad array of international activities that will take place.

The 2019–2020 school year will be marked by events both at its beginning and at its end. On September 19, 2019, coinciding with the international festival in Berlin, Germany, there will be community gatherings at all AWSNA member schools and institutes.

In June 2020, the annual North American AWSNA conference will be part of the larger *Learn to Change the World: Education INNOVATION* Symposium. The Alliance for Public Waldorf Education and the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America will also take part. The event will be dedicated to envisioning the future of Waldorf Education and will focus on the question: How do we innovate for our times and fulfill the mission of Waldorf Education?

We look forward to an exciting and fruitful one hundred-year celebration! ☺



Beverly Amico

The Afternoon Nap in a Waldorf Kindergarten

An Essential for Healthy Development

BY ANIKO GEREB

The day in a typical Waldorf kindergarten is usually divided into two distinct parts. In the morning, the children engage in free play, have circle time in which they do movement activities and perhaps eurythmy, listen to a story, sing, have a snack, and end the morning with a walk in nature or playtime outside. They are active and engaged throughout.

Around noon, some of the children go home with their parents, some remain, and the afternoon program begins. In my kindergarten, I try to make this a quiet, rest-oriented, intimate time, characterized by a warm, homelike atmosphere, with a quiet lunch together, followed by a nap time—a time in which the children can digest the sensory, physical, social, and emotional experiences of the day. I try to create a reverent and safe space to foster an inner quiet in the children.

My kindergartners typically have the hour or more before lunch as time for outdoor play. My assistant and I bring them in singing our very familiar transition song. The children take off their outdoor clothes and shoes and place them just where they always go, perhaps with a little help. The room has been transformed. The curtains are drawn, the lights are dimmed, the room is warm but freshly aired, and the sleeping mats are set in a circle for rest time. The lunch bags have been placed on the table in their usual place and order. The rest-

ful, orderly environment and the familiar routines allow the children to relax and slow down and encourage a mood of reverence. There are no surprises, choices, or changes.



Washing hands in warm lavender water



The children wash their hands in a basin of warm lavender water and settle into their place at the table. The blessing is sung and a candle is lit. Sometimes we assist the children in unpacking their lunch bags, putting the items in the order in which they should be eaten. Lunchtime can be a pleasant, social time for the children, or it can be kept quiet if that is what the group needs. After lunch is over, the children pack away their lunch bags and then use the bathroom.

As the children return from the bathroom, the afternoon caregiver who has accompanied them washes their hands once again in warm lavender water. Then there is a finger game and a song that calls the children to use their golden, whispering voices. Meanwhile, a teacher is playing the kinderharp to uphold the tone of reverence. Once all the children are gathered at the table, they go one by one to their sleeping mats.

Each child has a special spot in the circle of mats. They lie with their heads toward the center and feet on the periphery. This creates a beautiful image. Each child is a child of the Sun, each a sunbeam, shining from the center to the periphery. The caregiver moves into the center of the circle and approaches each child in turn, tucks each in using the same, well-known, and predictable order, and recites a little verse: "The moon is round, the moon is round, it has two eyes, one nose, but no sound." The verse can be individualized for each child, using the color of their eyes.

After each child has had a moment of special attention, a teacher might sing a lullaby or tell a story. Then the gentle playing of the harp takes over. This can be a simple tune in the mood of the fifth, preferably using the three notes G, A, and B on the G-clef staff, sometimes referred to as a “small musical lemniscate.” According to Rudolf Steiner, the mood of the fifth is appropriate for the young child.

Throughout this process, it is important that the teacher/caregiver feel peaceful and be able to think about each child with interest and warmth. The inner quiet of the adult helps the children fall asleep. Some children may have difficulty falling asleep, but they should rest through the rest time nevertheless. All children, including non-sleepers, benefit from a regular rest time. Being able to stop activities and to be still and quiet is a skill that eludes even many adults, and it is important that children learn how to do this.

When it is time to end the nap, usually around 2:30 p.m., the caregiver opens the curtains or shutters and starts to gently sing the well-known wake-up song. Meanwhile, she may sweep the floor gently or wipe down the tables with slow and gentle movements, humming or singing, smiling and greeting each awakening child with her eyes.

After nap time, the children engage in activities that develop fine motor skills, such as finger knitting, coloring with crayons, and sewing, until all are fully awake again. After a light snack of an apple or crackers, we head outside once more. Outdoors, their energy

levels rise again, and they engage in active, happy play until it is time to go home.

Thus, in the afternoon program, the Waldorf kindergarten teacher devotes much time, energy, and intention to creating a quiet space for the children and then an opportunity for the children to have a restful sleep in the afternoon. The quiet space in itself has great value. According to psychologist Daria M. Brezinski, PhD:

An essential key to creative intelligence is to be allowed to go to quiet places or quiet time and just BE or allow the mind to drift off, staring into space. When a child appears to have a blank stare or the



A quiet corner and a picture book provide an opportunity for after-nap reverie.

gaze seems empty, the blank or “far off” look is the brain synapses getting in touch with creative intelligence, making important connections. It is connecting synapses and discordant thoughts into a whole, putting the puzzle pieces together. . . .¹

The early afternoon nap of thirty to sixty minutes coincides with the child’s natural rhythm of energy. Michaela Glöckler, MD, an internationally known pediatrician, observes:

In school, children tend to be alert in the morning, but then are all tired out between 1:00 and 2:30 p.m. when they experience a sharp decline in their physiologic activity. In the later afternoon, there is a second peak when they are happy and like to be active.²

Rudolf Steiner emphasized the importance of sleep for the young child. According to Steiner, “Before age nine, the most important thing is for children to learn how to properly sleep.”³



After the nap, the children slowly come back to wakefulness and engage in quiet activities until their energy peaks again.

Sleep is important for many reasons. It is during sleep that physical growth takes place. Sleep is the only time that the body restores and renews its forces from the demands of the day. Sleep is the necessary “breathing out” needed to balance the “breathing in” of the hours of activity and external stimulation. During sleep, we are nourished by the cosmos. Sleep is when we process the sense impressions and experiences of our waking hours, when these are impressed upon our soul. In fact, according to Steiner, during sleep the sensory experiences play a key role in forming the physical organs and processes of the growing child. This is why we, as early childhood educators, strive to give children natural, wholesome, and harmonious experiences in terms of what they see, hear, touch, taste, and smell.

In a lecture on rhythm, sleep, and imitation, delivered on August 11, 1923, Rudolf Steiner said:

In our modern civilization, where all eyes concentrate on outer, material things, no attention is given to the state of sleep, although man devotes to it one-third of his daily life. Never should it be thought that man is inactive while he sleeps. He is inactive only insofar as the outer, external world is concerned, but as regards to the health of his body, and more especially in the health of his soul and spirit, sleep is all-important. True education can provide for a right life of sleep, for whatever activities belong to a man’s waking hours are carried over into the condition of sleep. . . .⁴

Recent research supports the importance of an afternoon nap for young children. One study indicates that young children who nap in the afternoon awaken with enhanced cognitive abilities. They also have lower levels of stress hormones and are more alert and more calm. Other studies indicate that young children need at least a total of twelve hours of sleep daily, including naps. Dr. Rebecca Spencer, associate professor of psychology and neuroscience at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, has studied afternoon naps for preschoolers. She writes, “[A] lot is happening in the brain of a slumbering preschooler, including processing and storing memories that are the foundation for learning.”⁵

Part of our role as teachers is to help children learn to breathe, to be quiet and peaceful, to learn to feel comfortable and secure in their physical body, and to feel that the world is a good and safe place where they can relax and open themselves to everything that may come. If we accomplish this, we have well served the children in their process of incarnation. ☺

A longer version of this article is available at: iaswece.org/news-events/resources-iaswece-meetings-sleep



Learning to care for plants in a good and beautiful world

Notes

1. Daria M. Brezinski, PhD, “Toys That Develop Creativity and Intelligence.” http://www.naturalnews.com/042901_childhood_development_play_toys_intelligence.html
2. Lisa Gromicko, “Toward Human Development: The Physiological Basis of Sleep” https://www.waldorflibrary.org/images/stories/Journal_Articles/GW43gromicko
3. Rudolf Steiner, *Understanding Young Children* (Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, 2012).
4. Rudolf Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2004), 105–106.
5. Alice Park, “The Secret to Smarter Kids: Naps,” in *Time Magazine*, September 23, 2013; research by Dr. Rebecca Spencer. <http://healthland.time.com/2013/09/23/the-secret-to-smarter-kids-naps/>



ANIKO GEREB was born in Transylvania, Romania, and lived there until 2004, when she emigrated to Canada with her husband and three children. She first encountered Waldorf Education in 1995 when her firstborn child attended a Waldorf kindergarten. Aniko joined the Halton Waldorf School in Halton, Ontario, in 2007 as a kindergarten assistant and an afternoon lead teacher. Since 2014, she has been a lead kindergarten teacher. Aniko earned a Master’s degree in applied science while still in Romania. In 2012, she completed the Foundation Studies in Anthroposophy at the Rudolf Steiner Centre in Toronto and in 2014 completed the Early Childhood Education teacher training there.

A Waldorf Rainbow

Classrooms of Luminous Color

BY VAN JAMES

Color is the soul of nature and of the entire cosmos; and when we experience color we participate in this soul.

—Rudolf Steiner

In Waldorf schools, the walls of each classroom are beautifully painted in radiant, transparent color, and each classroom has its own particular color scheme. The wall colors are intended to relate to the stage of development of the children using the room. For example, in the nursery, kindergarten, and early grades, a soft, warm, pinkish tone is usually used for walls and curtains. Pink is a “loving” color associated with innocence, femininity, and the maternal impulse. It is gently active and has

a supportive quality. Therefore, pink is an appropriate color for a space where young children are daily embraced, protected, and cared for.¹

The Waldorf classroom colors typically transition from these warm, reddish

tones in the early grades, to energetic orange tones to yellows around third grade, and into the middle spectrum greens for the fourth and fifth grades. Here, at the halfway point in childhood, a kind of

balance—in the color spectrum and in the development of the child—is achieved, at just about the onset of puberty. Green is the balanced color between the light and dark ends of the spectrum and meets this age group in a harmonious way. From sixth grade on into the high school, various shades of blue dominate. For the more inwardly active, thoughtful work of the upper school adolescent, lavender, lilac, and violet tones are often used. Craft rooms are usually painted with active, warm colors and spaces for eating with appetite-sympathetic, golden or orange colors.

This attention to and conscious use of color is based on several ideas. One is that each color has a particular “personality” or set of qualities. Another is that this personality is internalized by human beings when they perceive the color, and the qualities of the color affect how people think, feel, and behave. A third is that at each stage of development, the education and activities of children are best served by a particular color or range of colors. Therefore, each classroom should have a color appropriate to that space, the age of the students, and what generally takes place in it.

A mural in a high school movement room



A first-grade classroom



A mural in a kindergarten hallway

Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, suggested specific colors for the classrooms in the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany.² He gave somewhat different indications for a second school, but most schools today generally follow the initial recommendations. They are:

- Grade 1: pink and red-yellow, orange
- Grade 2: peach and orange
- Grade 3: golden yellow
- Grade 4: light green
- Grade 5: middle green
- Grade 6: turquoise
- Grade 7: indigo blue
- Grade 8: blue-violet
- Grade 9: violet
- Grade 10: lilac
- Grade 11: lavender
- Grade 12: violet

These indications should not be accepted blindly. A school's particular geographic setting and its cultural environment might affect its choices. Each school needs to ask if the recommendations apply to its particular situation and children.

Nevertheless, there is a remarkable fit—a harmony and resonance—between the qualities of the colors suggested for the grade levels and for the children's stages of development. Children in grades one, two, and three are actively learning through the engagement of their will and their concrete experiences. For them, one provides the warm, outwardly stimulating colors. Children in grades

engage in more abstract-conceptual learning, and for them the cool blue colors are most suitable. For high school students, the deeper end of the spectrum, where red and blue mingle in violet and lilac, seems appropriate.



A second-grade classroom

Rudolf Steiner also indicated the appropriate color for specialty classrooms and other spaces in a school: the gymnasium in reddish lilac, hallways in yellow, the choir practice room in indigo or lilac, the eurythmy room in mauve, the physics lab in blue or green, and the school doctor's room in a reddish color.³

Another important aspect to the color environment of a Waldorf school is the use of transparent color, rather than flat, opaque color. This is created by a painting technique known as “lazure,” recommended by Rudolf Steiner. In lazure, a white undercoat is applied to the carefully prepared wall. Then several layers or veils of watercolor-like paint are applied over each other to create subtle hue variations and a misty, translucent effect. Finally a sealant is applied to the entire surface.

This technique was developed to create a wall surface that is not experienced as an abrupt and impenetrable boundary. With a lazured wall, it is as though the wall breathes beyond the surface of the actual wall. One does not feel as constrained or bound-in by the room's physical masonry. One does not feel trapped but instead has an experience of space for one's soul.



A mural in a grade school auditorium

four, five, and six are awakening to and learning through their feeling life, and one serves them with the more balanced color range of greens. Older students in classes seven and eight begin to



A fifth-grade classroom

The notion of breathing is central to Waldorf Education. According to Rudolf Steiner, “teaching the children to breathe” (in a broad sense) is a key aim of a Waldorf schooling. It has to do in part with physical breathing—the taking-in and breathing-out of air. Daily singing, recitation, eurythmy, and other aspects of the curriculum support wholesome breathing habits. This breathing also has to do with the alternating rhythm of expansive and contractive activities during the school day—outdoor play activities and concentrated desk work, artistic activities and academic studies. Even sleeping and waking are a form of breathing that is connected to the educational process. Classroom walls of translucent color promote the proper physical and soul breathing of the children.

Rudolf Steiner also recommended that plant-based pigments be used in the lazuring process. Just at the time, about one hundred years ago, when petroleum-based acrylic pigments and the



A sixth-grade classroom

manufacturing of toxic lead-based paints were being developed, Steiner proposed and developed natural and healthy paint products for schools. He pointed out that the plant nature of the

colors combined with the transparency achieved through the lazure technique created a special luminosity, an experience of a lighted space. After describing this luminescence of color to a chemist, Steiner was disappointed that the scientist in return cited the recent invention of fluorescent colors by industrial paint manufacturers. He had failed to see the nature of the luminosity to which Steiner was pointing—not an electric, DayGlo effect, but a subtle luster of radiant color.

The exact formula for the plant colors developed by Steiner was lost, but several likely matches have been developed. Artemis and Stockmar, anthroposophical companies in Europe, make and sell



A high school mathematics room

plant-based paints, and many Waldorf schools use them. A less expensive alternative is acrylic paint.

Applying an undercoat and a final glazing to achieve rich color values in the fine arts is a technique that goes back to the Renaissance. Rudolf Steiner pioneered the use of the technique to create interior environments in which walls can show their radiance in broad, sweeping, translucent color. Walls lazured with plant-based paints of transparent color open the entire room and create an experience of spaciousness rather than confinement. Transparent color allows walls to disappear, to lose their character of enforcing a fixed boundary and a spatial limitation. Such colored surfaces allow the soul to expand beyond the restricting surface set by the physical wall. Steiner felt that transparent, plant-based colors promote vitality and the rejuvenation of one’s formative life forces, just as does a walk in nature. Thus, walls of transparent, radiant color can have a therapeutic, healing effect. Such walls can also be used for figurative and free-form murals.⁴



Front office at the Honolulu Waldorf School

Transparently colored interiors and exteriors create harmonious spaces that allow people (adults as well as children) to breathe and to access their higher selves and full capacities. When walls breathe with color, people likewise breathe. Wall surfaces then become windows of transparent color that foster relaxation, communication, learning, and the experience of freedom from matter.

For this reason, not only Waldorf schools but also many other institutions connected to Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy—hospitals and clinics, retirement homes and therapeutic communities, restaurants and shops, as well as private residences, all around the world—have used this lazure technique. It helps create a healthy space for living, working, and learning, for apprehending the soul of nature and of the entire cosmos. ☉

Notes

Epigraph: Rudolf Steiner, *Colour* (London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing, 1935), 146.

1. The use of this color in prison holding rooms has been shown to neutralize aggressive behavior and relax inmates. Pinks and reddish colors are the first hues infants perceive, and it is believed that these are the first colors, after black and white, that humanity was able to experience as the organs of sight were developed.
2. Karl Stockmeyer, *Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for Waldorf Schools* (London: The Steiner Schools Fellowship, 1969), 239.
3. Ibid.
4. Rudolf Steiner, "Occult Features of the Stuttgart House," lecture referenced in John Fletcher, *Art Inspired by Rudolf Steiner* (London: Mercury Arts Publications, 1987).



A private residence



A community center



VAN JAMES is a Hawai'i-based artist, author, and educator. He teaches visual arts at the Honolulu Waldorf High School and is a regular guest instructor at colleges and teacher training centers throughout Asia and America. James is chair of the Anthroposophical Society in Hawai'i, editor of *Pacifica Journal*, and author of numerous books on art and culture including *Spirit and Art: Pictures of the Transformation of Humanity*; *The Secret Language of Form: Visual Meaning in Art and Nature*; and *Drawing with Hand, Head and Heart: Learning the Natural Way to Draw*.

Schooling Body, Soul, and Spirit in Waldorf Education

BY JOHN WULSIN

Most schools seek to develop and strengthen their students, both in body and mind, as fully and as early as possible. They typically focus on the soul faculties of will and thought. This can lead to an academic version of calisthenics, a rigorous exercising of body and mind, meant to strengthen (*sthen*—Greek for “strength”) these capacities in the students. The German word for “school,” *Gymnasium*, may reflect this emphasis.

This focus reflects the fact that our modern culture has long forgotten the human spirit as distinct from the human soul or mind. The ancient Greeks named the soul *psyche*, the root of our words “psychology” and “psychiatry.” They named the spirit—what is eternal and immortal in the human being—*pneuma*, a word that also means “breath.” Thus, this one word meant for them what gives us life from birth to death inside us (breath), what gives life to the world outside us (air), and what is eternally alive, beyond space and time (spirit). The Latin root for spirit (*spiritus*) is in such words as “respiration” and “expire” and “inspire.”

Waldorf schools have, for the past one hundred years, worked with a picture of the threefold human being, consisting of body, soul, and spirit. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, had a very specific understanding of the mystery of body, soul, and spirit. In fact, the theory and practice of Waldorf Education is based upon that understanding. During my almost fifty years of involvement with Waldorf schools, this view has become for me more and more real and relevant.

Rudolf Steiner gave us several ways to understand the relationship between body, soul, and spirit. One is to imagine the body as equivalent to darkness, the soul as equivalent to colors, and the spirit as equivalent to light. These designations are not moral or judgmental, just terms related to perception. The colors live as an interplay between the poles of darkness and light. The soul lives in an interplay between physical and spiritual experiences.

Also, the physical body can be seen as the vessel, the instrument for the life of the soul and spirit. In

the soul are the three capacities of thinking, feeling, and willing. The soul experiences both darkness and light, physical and spiritual, in all their beauty, pain, and many dimensions. During life, the soul has experienced the beauties, the organic cycles, and the limitations of the physical body. When the physical body dies at the end of life, the soul’s concerns with the physical world fade and are discarded, like old clothes. At that point, the soul experiences the illumination of the spirit. At death, whatever in the soul has been permeated with spiritual insight is distilled into spirit and accompanies the individuality in its further evolution.

The threefold understanding of the human soul is reflected in the Waldorf curriculum. In Waldorf schools, activities of the head, heart, and hands (thinking, feeling, and willing) are of equal value; the Platonic virtues of Goodness, Beauty, and Truth are of equal value; and the study of religions, the practice of the arts, and the understanding of the sciences are of equal value.

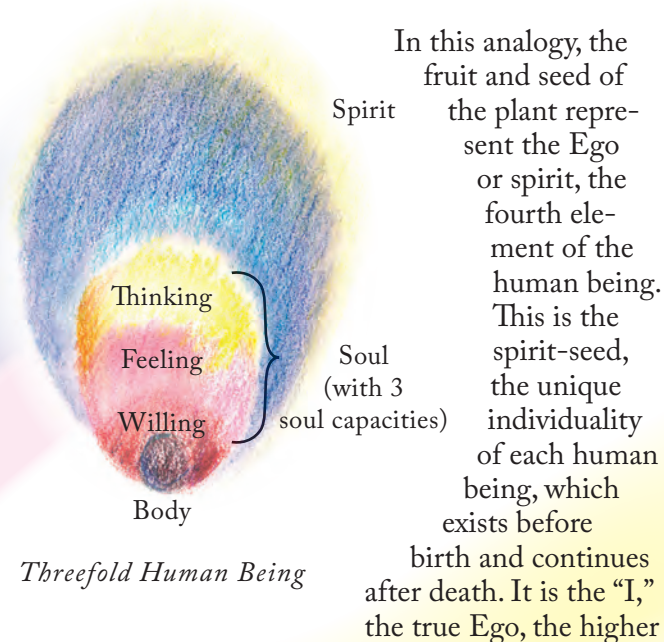


Symbolic drawing of the Platonic Ideals of (from top) Truth, Beauty, and Goodness

Rudolf Steiner also spoke of the human being as being composed of four distinct elements: three “bodies”—physical, etheric, and astral—plus an Ego or higher Self (spirit). Our physical bodies are composed of matter, like the mineral kingdom. The physical body is enlivened and given form by the etheric or life body. Like us, plants also

have an etheric body in addition to a physical body. The astral body is the site of our instincts, desires, and emotions. Animals also have an astral body, hence the predominance of animal figures in the constellations of the zodiac—what the Germans

call *Tierkreis* or “circle of animals.” For centuries, we human beings have intuited and experienced that our inner life is closely connected to the zodiac and the stars. Hence, the term “astral body” also can be applied to our life of soul. Whereas the physical body is like the roots of a plant, and the life body is like the trunk and leaves of a plant, the soul is like the flower of a plant, with its strong and delicate variety of colors. Unlike roots and leaves, blossoms often create interior spaces in their form. Correspondingly, the emerging soul life in adolescence often allows the inner life to become as strong as the outer life.



Self, of which every human being has his or her own version. In life on earth, the I inhabits the physical body, the life body, and the astral body. The eternal I assumes a particular personality in a particular lifetime, almost like a role in a play. According to Rudolf Steiner and to some of the world’s great religious traditions, the eternal I reincarnates numerous times, always evolving and developing and helping others to do the same.

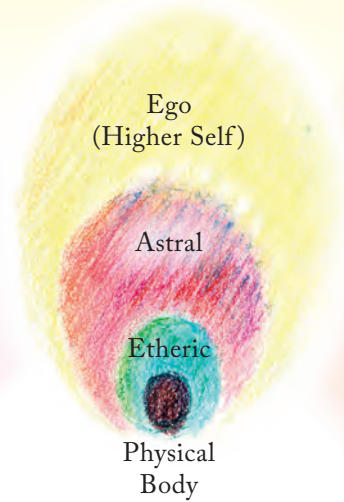
These views of the human being have implications for Waldorf teachers. In both Steiner’s threefold and fourfold descriptions of the human being, there is an immortal, divine aspect—the spirit or Ego. For Steiner, a deep appreciation of the spiritual nature of every child is the key to becoming an effective Waldorf teacher. Ideally, Waldorf teachers see each child as a being of body and soul, but also of spirit. The spirit is not just that which survives death. The spirit is always present, active, and striving. It permeates, enlivens and illumines the child’s entire being. The spirit helps the child to incarnate, as fully, as

vitaly, as dynamically, and as appropriately as possible. The spirit quickens the child’s interest in every thing, every plant, every creature, every color, every sound, every activity, every subject, every person, every moment, inexhaustibly.

This perspective can and should create in the teacher a deep interest in each student. Ideally, Waldorf teachers are

deeply aware of each child’s physical characteristics, ways of moving (a manifestation of the life body), the unfolding capacities of willing, feeling, and thinking, and of the individual each child is becoming and will be able to continue to become. They seek in all subjects, activities, and situations—even in the school hallways, on the playground, or on a class trip—to nourish and support body, soul, and spirit together as artfully and harmoniously as possible. Teachers strive to bring the vitality of the spirit into the activities of the soul, so that the thinking, feeling, and doing of the child become “inspired.” The I or spirit of the child—it is hoped—will become able, as the I of the adult, to continue to live a healthy, integrated life. The ultimate aim is to help each child become the best instrument possible to fulfill whatever his or her destiny may be.

From this perspective, Waldorf teachers have a great responsibility, but also a great privilege—to work with parents to help each child to grow and develop in a healthy way and to find his or her way in life, for the sake of the world. ☉



Fourfold Human Being



JOHN WULSIN taught high school English and drama for thirty-five years at Green Meadow Waldorf School. He has written three books on language, edited *The Riddle of America*, and coedited *Books for the Journey*. In 2015, he retired with his wife, Jane, to the Texas hill country outside Austin. He enjoys mentoring new teachers at the Austin Waldorf School. He is currently pursuing his own secret senior project and serves on the editorial board of *Renewal*.

Religion in Waldorf Education

BY WINNIE JAMIESON, MA

In first grade, I asked the students to help me finish the following sentence: “The world is ____.” The children raised their hands with excitement and began to contribute: “The world is where we live.” “The world is big.” “The world is called the ‘Earth,’ which happens to be the third planet from the Sun.”

After a number of contributions, we delved deeper. I asked the students how it feels to live in the world, not knowing how big it is or where it is located in space. We acknowledged how special it is that we live in a world where we can wake up and spend each day with friends and family. Then, a student raised her hand and said, “The world is good.” The class agreed that this captured everything they wanted to say. The first graders then wrote “The world is good” as the first full sentence in their main lesson books.

That moment and conclusion came back to me when I began to write this article about the thread of religion through the grades. Why do we take students to visit temples, mosques, and churches? Why do we light candles for Diwali and recall the miracle of Hanukkah, again with candles? Why do we tell stories about saints in second grade, Hebrew stories in third, and stories of the Norse, Greek, and Hindu gods in fourth and fifth grades? Why do we share stories about the lives of Buddha, Muhammad, and Jesus? After all, we say we do not teach religion in Waldorf schools. The

answer to these questions is in that simple revelation from my student in first grade: “The world is good.”

From year to year, we strive to reveal to the students a world that inspires a feeling of its goodness. The stories we bring help students orient themselves to the spiritual ideal of goodness within themselves.



Fifth graders celebrating the Hindu festival of Diwali, the festival of lights



They also help the children see that same ideal of goodness reflected everywhere in the world.

In a lecture given in January of 1923 titled “Truth, Beauty, and Goodness,” Rudolf Steiner speaks about the importance of nourishing goodness—but only the kind of goodness that is beyond the desire to be good for the sake of convention, or out of fear of punishment, or out of fear of losing respect from others. A good human being is not only one that will “do good from sheer love of goodness,” but one who can also “bear [his or her] own soul over into the soul of another.”

An educator could spend years building a curriculum around just these two statements by seeking to answer the question: “What kinds of lessons, stories, and activities would inspire a love of goodness, as well as the desire in the students to bear their souls over into the souls of others?” One would first have to determine exactly what is meant by bearing one’s soul. It must have to do with developing the ability to turn outside of oneself and make an authentic connection with another. In our school, the work toward developing a service-learning curriculum is a step in the right direction.

Steiner indicates that this soul-bearing task is a moral imperative. “Upon this, all true morality depends, and without morality no true social order among earthly humanity can be maintained.” Consider the timing of this lecture and why there may have been a need for Steiner to speak in imperatives. The wounds and



The Matsya Fish, first incarnation of the Hindu deity, Vishnu, who saves the Earth from flood

memories of The Great War were, no doubt, still fresh for the members of the audience. The war had demonstrated the scale and potential of destruction of which humanity is capable. Additionally, only twenty days prior to the lecture, the original Goetheanum, a building to which Steiner himself had devoted much time and effort, had been burned to the ground by arsonists who were strongly against the growing movement of Anthroposophy. Steiner continually forewarned against the growing trend in humanity toward materialism and materialistic desires and called for growth toward true morality. Nevertheless, in less than twenty years after this lecture, the extent to which humans could actively seek out and destroy goodness in the world would become all too apparent.

The eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau—another key figure in the history of philosophy of education—called Plato’s *Republic* “the most beautiful treatise ever written on education.” I agree. It is difficult to find any philosopher since Plato, in speaking or writing about education, who does not also refer back to



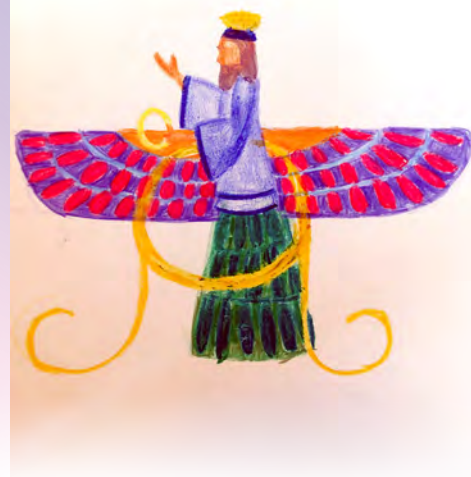
From ancient Babylon: Gilgamesh and Enkidu—ultimately close friends—meet for the first time and prepare to fight.

The Republic to some extent. Plato speaks about two kinds of feelings in the soul: one type, driven by attraction, Plato calls the desiring part of the soul. The other type, driven by repulsion, Plato calls the spirit. In lectures given in 1919, now published as *The Foundations of Human Experience*, Steiner offers an analogous picture of the human soul, which creates

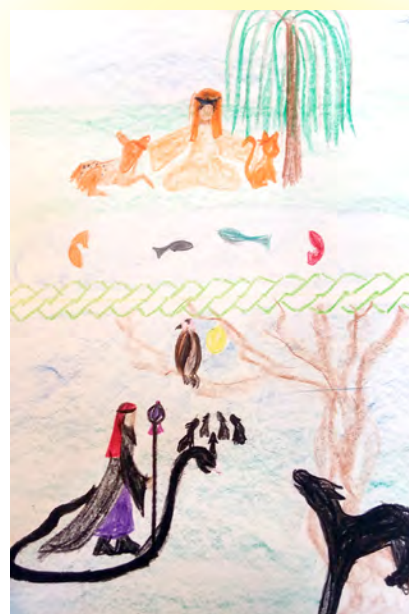
our emotional life by moving between feelings of sympathy and antipathy.

In *The Republic*, Plato, through Socrates, posits that a person of moral character is one whose desire is attracted to all that is good and truly beneficial and whose spirit is repulsed by that which

is bad and truly harmful. The truly beneficial and the truly harmful are judged by reason according to wisdom. Socrates points out that before the faculty of reason is sufficiently developed in each person, it is education that must shape in children the feeling of love for the good—before and in preparation for the work of the development of reason. Music, speech, and poetry should play a role in the education of children, as should stories of the



The Faravahar, symbol of Zoroastrianism, the religion of Persia until the seventh century



From ancient Persia: Ahura Mazda (above), deity of the Sun, and Ahriman (below), being of Darkness

gods. However, Socrates reasons that only certain kinds of stories of the gods should be shared, in order to produce people who are “god-revering and divine insofar as a human being can possibly be.” Stories that portray the gods as deceptive and cruel and arbitrarily meting out punishment do not inspire in children a sense that the world in its foundation is good, structured, and rational.

Stories should

inspire a feeling that the fundamental structure of the universe can be trusted and that the gods are the source of all that is good in the universe.

Unfortunately, this line of unorthodox reasoning ultimately led Socrates to be found guilty and sentenced to death by the state for refusing to “recognize the gods recognized by the state,” as well as



The Buddha attains Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in northern India (sixth century BC).

for “corrupting the youth.” Socrates was not an anomaly. Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and many saints have been martyred or killed for their beliefs and teachings since. These great people made it their moral imperative to try to inspire others to find the goodness in the world and in each other.

It is our imperative to teach children not only to be moved toward goodness, but to recognize goodness in others so that they do not become adults who

seek to destroy what they see as unconventional and different. Our task is to demonstrate that, despite different forms of expression and cultural conventions, goodness lives in every culture and among different peoples. Such differences should challenge and encourage us to question our own norms so that we can ultimately reform and progress in our thinking.

Through becoming aware of different ways of being, we can begin to awaken to a sense of the limitations and conventions placed on our thinking, and we can then expand our thinking to include other worldviews (as appropriate). The first condition is necessary for the second. The ability to recognize goodness in others, and to see the unifying ideal of goodness portrayed in its many different cultural and religious manifestations, breeds a world of adults who can be not only tolerant but good toward each other and who can learn from each other.

This is no small task, and it is a task that, again, must begin with the child’s feelings. For what other way could a child be brought to feel empathy, compassion, and love toward others? Steiner and Plato both indicated that stories must be used in order to inspire the feeling life within each child.

I admit that I was worried when I took my fifth graders on a field trip to a Hindu temple. I wondered if they would feel uncomfortable with the unfamiliar and perhaps even laugh as they entered the temple. However, I learn as much from my students as they learn from me.

Before we walked into the temple, our guide told the story of the broken light fixtures next to the doors of the temple. He explained that when the temple first opened, two teenagers who lived nearby vandalized the temple, breaking windows and other fixtures with baseball bats. The fifth graders were appalled, and they entered the building in quiet reverence as a result. The students then exclaimed how “beautiful” and “amazing” the temple was and they each clamored to ring the bell that marked their entrance into the place of the Hindu gods. Before we left, the fifth graders clamored again to be among the first to receive a blessing from the priest. I heard the priest comment on how the children were “so good.” Their feelings of the goodness of the space had come alive through all the stories our guide had shared and through their experience of being in the space. As we left, one of the students said, “That was one of the best field trips we have ever had!

It was really beautiful, wasn’t it? Can you believe they gave us fruit? Everyone should go there.” I agreed; everyone *should* go there. ☉



The fifth-grade class of the Green Meadow Waldorf School on their visit to the Samaj Hindu Temple in Mahwah, New Jersey



WINNIE JAMIESON is currently a class teacher at the Green Meadow Waldorf School in Chestnut Ridge, NY. The year her current students were born, Ms. Jamieson went back to school to

follow a call to a vocation in education. She soon became interested in exploring the foundations and goals of education through a philosophical lens. While seeking to answer the question, “What kind of education helps to create a happy and healthy human being?” Ms. Jamieson discovered and fell in love with Waldorf Education. She received her MA in philosophy and education at Columbia University’s Teachers College.

Helping Children Deal with the Daily (Bad) News

BY KIM JOHN PAYNE, MEd & DAVINA MUSE, LMHC

Every day, the news media—television, radio, the internet, et alia—convey information about and images of tragic and catastrophic events, natural and man-made, around the nation and the world. We adults are used to living in this morass of reports of human suffering and material destruction—of school shootings, terrorist bombings, earthquakes, floods, wildfires—and we may not be too deeply affected (consciously, at least).

Young children, however, as well as tweens and even teens, do not have our insulation against images of distressing world events. Young children do not really grasp that repeated announcements are about a single event. Each time they hear a news report or overhear an unguarded adult conversation, they experience the event as something terrible but also new. Each exposure sets off a brain-based cascade of fight-or-flight hormones that can intensify their anxiety, stress, and emotional upset.

While tweens and teens can intellectually comprehend that these often sensationalized reports are about the same event, the same “amygdala hijack”—the fight-or-flight response—occurs on a deeper level. A compelling body of research indicates that children who see repeated media images of tragic events can experience PTSD-like symptoms very similar to those experienced by people involved in the incident.

Ideally, the young child should not be exposed at all to news reporting on screen or radio, or to adult conversations about catastrophic events. And tweens and teens, while they should know what is going on in the world, should not be overexposed to news reports and images of tragedies and human suffering.

In our real, day-to-day world, however, young children do learn about regional, national, and world disasters—natural and human made—from direct exposure to media, by overhearing adult conversations, or from other children, at school or in friendship groups. And tweens and teens, wedded to their smartphones, the social media, and the internet, can and do access whatever news they want as often as they want. Fortunately, there is much that parents can do to help children process what they have

vicariously experienced. News of a world tragedy creates a special situation for a family, but it is an opportunity to share warmth and wisdom. And in such a situation, the fundamental strategies for good parenting still apply. While children are dealing with news of far-off, disturbing, perhaps unimaginable events, parents can help them through the process.

First, it is important to determine if, in fact, the child has been exposed to and impacted by whatever is dominating the news. Here, the parental habit of loving and caring observation comes into play. If the child’s mood and behavior seem normal, perhaps he has not heard about the terrible event or has not really taken it in. In that case, it may be best to “let it be” and not bring it up at all. But the parent should be prepared in case the child does learn about the event and wants to talk about it.

It may be, however, that the child has been exposed to news about the event but is unable or unwilling to speak about it. Young children in this situation will often manifest their stress and anxiety in play. If a child seems to be acting out in play what he or she has not been able to integrate, the parent might allow the behavior as long as possible, unless it becomes dangerous. Children can, and do, work things out for themselves according to their own abilities, over time, in the warmth and calmness of adult presence.

Older children typically manifest their inner turmoil in their behavior. Depending on their temperament, children will react in different ways. A more active and extroverted child may act out more and push the usual limits of good behavior within the family. The child may behave in a difficult and challenging way and intentionally provoke parents and siblings. It is tempting to be more permissive at this time, to allow the child some “extra slack.” Very likely, though, the child is



looking to the parent for warm but firm boundaries. Loving boundaries, perhaps applied a little more gently than usual, will help the child feel secure. Boundaries and limits define and give stability to family life.

An introverted child may become even more inward and quiet than usual and perhaps even uncommunicative and stubborn. In this case, simply being a warm and reassuring presence and being ready to answer questions is enough. Our loving company and deep, quiet listening may be more helpful than a lot of explanations.

Regardless of age or temperament, children need warmth and security. They need our reassurance that the world is a good place, that most people are good, and that, even in overwhelming disasters, there are always good people helping others in need.

Transitions in the daily routine—from waking in the morning to getting dressed and ready to go to school, traveling from home to school, or ending after-school play or hanging-out time and coming in to dinner—can be tricky in the best of times. When a child is anxious and stressed, it is wise to allow extra time for these transitions, so that no extra stress is created. Having a clear idea of how you



help the child get the deep sleep needed to process the events of the day. Perhaps, at bedtime, a candle might be lit and prayers and healing energy sent out to the people suffering in the world.

Home Environment

A simple, beautiful, calm home and bedroom will help children to play, relax, and interact more deeply and to be at peace. Play and time outside in nature can be especially healing. Keeping toys, books, and clothes very tidy will help. This gives the child or teen an experience of the orderliness in their world.

Scheduling

If a child is deeply troubled by a world event, the family activities and schedule should be simplified. There should be much non-programmed downtime and opportunities for quiet, shared family time. Children of all ages do not easily process emotional upset when they are kept busy. This idea might seem counterintuitive. However, distracting a child from a source of upset may bring them back to that source and lead into a prolonged cycle of unease and upset.

For tweens and teens, a parent's spending time "hanging out" with them can be helpful. Simply sitting nearby while they do their homework or listen to music is a subtle but important way of being present and available. Taking a break from the turbulent waters of world events and mooring your

Children who see repeated images of tragic events can experience PTSD symptoms similar to those experienced by the persons involved in the actual event.

expect the transition to happen and talking about this with the child can be helpful.

Parents can bring in diverting antidotes to the ambient (bad) news of the day. They can reach into their store of family stories, perhaps telling a familiar and beloved story about Grandpa or Grandma, or about the child herself when she was little. Such old and nostalgia-rich stories provide a child of any age with a sense of warmth and security.

Rhythm

Observing and strengthening the rhythms of family life can give the child a deepened sense of security. Rhythm quietly and invisibly says to a child, "There are things I can count on. All is well here in this family." Honoring bedtimes and bedtime rituals will

canoe alongside your tween or teenager on the calm riverbank of simple and familiar family life—the metaphor is quite fitting.

Questions and Answers

In conversations about unsettling events in the news, as in every conversation with our children, before we speak we should apply the "filtering mantra" and ask four questions:

1. Is it *true*?
2. Is it *kind*?
3. Is it *necessary*?
4. Will it help them feel secure?

A parent's intuition should give a clear "Yes" answer to each question. Thus, simple, truthful answers

without much detail are best when discussing disconcerting events.

In answering questions, parents should use words and ideas that the child will readily understand, so that he or she can easily absorb what is said. The parents should speak in their normal, familiar voices.

For example, should a younger child ask why such an event could take place, an appropriate answer might be: “You will understand this better when you are older. Right now we can send our loving thoughts to those families. We will light a candle for them this evening.”

If a parent is asked a question and is not confident to answer it, it is okay to take some time. One might reply, “That is a big question. I’ll think about that.” As the day goes on, the parent can assess whether the child still needs an answer. Many questions that children have tend to come and go and may not actually require answering. Often just asking the question and knowing that it has been heard is enough for the child. Sometimes the child will find his or her own satisfying answers in play.

A tween or teen may ask why someone, as in a mass shooting or in a suicide bombing, would want to kill innocent people. A simple, honest answer might be: “It is hard for anyone to understand this, but at least we can help by sending our loving thoughts and prayers to those affected.”



Or, if a teen asks what will happen to the people who have lost their homes in a wildfire or mudslide, one might bring up the possibility of doing something to help. Tweens

and teens usually want to do something beyond thinking and praying about those in distress. Some act or gesture, however modest, to ameliorate the situation, can be very satisfying.

If the event is local, the family might donate toys, clothes, and household items to those who have lost everything in a fire, or make bag lunches or

health-care kits for people displaced by a flood. Sometimes there are opportunities for teens to provide volunteer services. Parents should investigate these options and determine what would be appropriate for their child. They can also participate in the volunteer work. To support victims of far-off events, the family can donate to national and international relief organizations. Many faith-based organizations are active in this way.

It is a challenge today for every human being—adult, young child, tween, and teen—to hold to the idea that the world is indeed “good, true, and beautiful.” Yet we can help our children, each other, and ourselves hold to that vision by, above all, being a big, loving, open heart with ears. ☺

KIM JOHN PAYNE *is the author of* *Simplicity Parenting; The Soul of Discipline; Games Children Play; Beyond Winning; and the soon-to-be-released Being at Your Best When Your Kids Are at Their Worst. He works with Waldorf schools around the world with the “Three Care Streams of Healthy School Culture,” which is an approach to support children in extra need of care in regard to behavior, social inclusion, and therapeutic needs. Payne is founding director of The Center for Social Sustainability. For more information, visit: www.simplicityparenting.com*



DAVINA MUSE *is a Licensed Mental Health Practitioner in private practice as a family therapist. She is also the Senior Trainings Director for Simplicity Parenting. She has trained more than 800 Simplicity Parenting Family Life Coaches in sixteen countries. These certified coaches offer group gatherings and workshops for parent support and empowerment in their own communities.*



The authors have a blog, simplicityparenting.com, and also a Facebook page—[simplicityparenting](https://www.facebook.com/simplicityparenting)—which is a forum for parents to share with other parents their children’s questions and the answers given. The page is a place for parents to help each other.

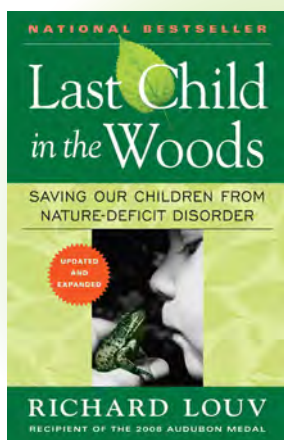
Thanks to grief counselor Jan Bryant for suggestions regarding tweens and teens. Visit www.janbryant.ca

Learning from Nature

BY LUKE BARBEE

A recent study showed that a group of young children could identify hundreds of company logos by memory but fewer than ten plants and animals native to their area. In our industrialized, high-tech, consumer-oriented world, this is perhaps not surprising.

In his book *Last Child in the Woods* (2005), Richard Louv articulately consolidated the research



that reveals the increasing disconnect between nature and modern human beings. He called this phenomenon “Nature-Deficit Disorder” (NDD). Throughout history, human beings have been intimately connected to nature and have been nourished and supported by it. Studies show that this connection to nature or “Vitamin N,” as Louv playfully refers to it, is linked to many aspects of human learning and well-being.

These include heightened sensory and kinesthetic awareness, improved concentration, elevated creativity, anxiety reduction, and growth in intra-personal intelligence. One study even revealed an increase in proofreading ability.

Of course, we don’t need a formal study to tell us that as humans we have a strong need for a connection to nature. Deep in the caverns of our intuition, we are all aware of this, and we sense nature’s curative power. This sense grows as life in modern times looks to further remove us from our direct experience with the natural world. For many, nature has become an abstraction, something encountered in documentaries or in science class, or during a holiday weekend. For those whose daily life involves little or no experience in the outdoors, nature has become something nearly completely foreign. As one prominent environmental educator noted, “We are becoming aliens on our own planet.”

While Nature-Deficit Disorder certainly has increased in recent decades, a century ago Rudolf Steiner already spoke about it. In a lecture to teachers at the first Waldorf school, Rudolf Steiner said:

Still we must understand what is actually happening during today’s sermons, preached by people who are living in abstractions, who are ignorant of the connections in nature, whose thoughts do not contain such connections, who in fact do not even enjoy natural phenomena.¹

In another lecture, Steiner said:

[Loss of environmental awareness], in fact, is the terrible characteristic of our time—that people are living in an environment that is foreign to them. . . . The damages we see in our advanced civilizations are the result of people’s blindness in regard to their environment.²

One of our tasks as Waldorf educators is to help students experience nature and develop an intimate relationship with it. In part, this can be done in the classroom with study blocks that focus



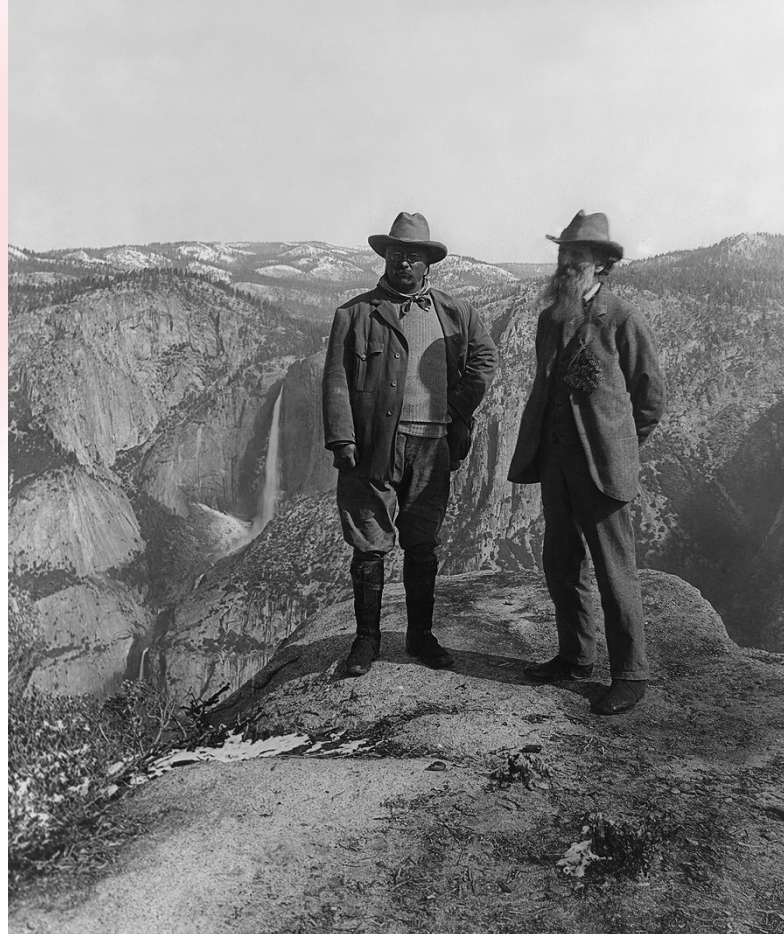
Waldorf kindergartners in Maine on their daily rain-or-shine walk in the forest

on nature and science. But this is not enough. As Steiner pointed out, a one-sided cognitive, intellectual approach to teaching is inadequate. Students must be actively engaged with their will and with their emotions. Features of Waldorf Education, including the outdoor kindergarten, daily walks into nature, excursions for nature observation, and ongoing involvement in a gardening program, promote this meaningful interaction with and connection to nature. Also, many Waldorf schools now include outdoor adventure trips in their curriculums, particularly in the high school.

The Range of Light

In July 2016, my wife and co-leader, Rachel Barbee, and I accompanied twelve San Francisco Waldorf High School students and two recent graduates into the Yosemite Valley for a ten-day mountain adventure and outdoor leadership course.

The trip aimed to help the young people develop backpacking skills as well as capacities for leadership and team building. It also aimed to foster a connection to the magnificent natural environment that we were experiencing. To help this process, we used the writings of John Muir (1838–1914), the great naturalist and environmentalist who was a pioneer in the movement to preserve wilderness. Muir helped shift the American perception of wilderness as a dangerous place to be feared and avoided, or a place to be exploited for its natural resources, to one of wilderness as a source of transcendent spiritual joy. Daily readings of Muir's works informed and shaped our own experience



John Muir with President Teddy Roosevelt on the 1903 camping trip in Yosemite that led to the establishment of the National Park Service

of the wilderness and helped us find a meaningful connection with the natural world.

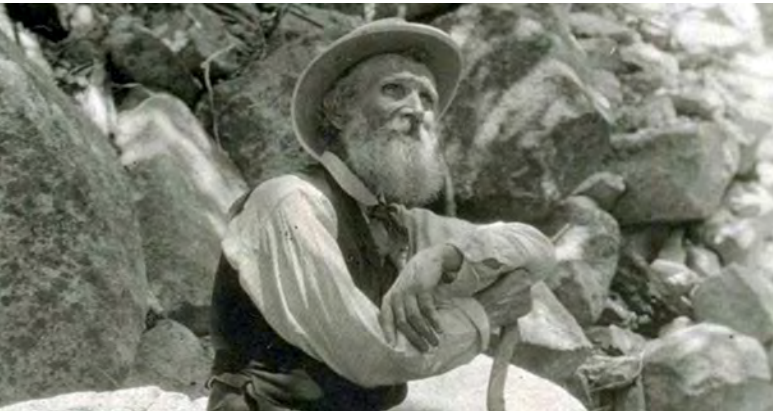
The trip was a primary learning experience in which the students explored a new world and had firsthand experiences of beauty, challenge, and joy. They left their familiar daily existences and discovered grandeur that cannot be captured in photographs, a new relationship to dirt and stones, and a rare and profound sense of community.

We walked through the mountains, bruised, tired, sore, sunburned, and smelling like a combination of Sasquatch, campfire smoke, and musty pine needles. At times, it felt that the mountains had walked through us as their primeval mountain forces worked from the inside out. For every blister on our feet, a new sparkle shone in our spirits. For every dirt stain upon our clothes, we gained a clean newness in our hearts. By our walking, we seemed to have turned the world over, loosening the rivets that held together our old selves, or as John Muir puts it:



Evening circle in the Range of Light with stories, appreciations, games, camaraderie, and central heating!

Then we behold a new heaven and earth and are born again, as if we had gone on a pilgrimage to some far-off holy land and had become new creatures with bodies inverted; the scales fall from our eyes, and in like manner are we made to see when we go on excursions into fields and pastures new. . . .



"Take a course in good water and air; and in the eternal youth of Nature you may renew your own. Go quietly, alone; no harm will befall you." —John Muir

Muir called the Sierra Nevada Mountains the "Range of Light" because of the way sunlight plays upon the stones, plants, and animals, often making it seem that the granite mountains are collecting the rays and radiating them back out with a frequency all their own. After ten days in this wonderland, blessed with clear blue skies and warm July sunshine, we felt a little like those granite boulders, radiating a new frequency all our own.



Leaving a small blessing in the vastness of the wilderness

On the morning of our final day in Yosemite, we decided to celebrate with a 3:00 a.m. hike up Mount Hoffman (10,850 feet above sea level), whose summit was 1,700 feet above our camp. We started out half asleep, stumbling down the trail with our headlamps on. Soon we realized that the

bright third-quarter Moon had come to greet us, lighting our way up the mountain, leaving us with no need for artificial light. Once above the timberline, we were met by an eerie spectacle—pale moonlight spilling over the craggy, white granite slopes—as if we were walking on the Moon itself.

As we approached the summit, the sky began to open, spilling soft light all around us, revealing the thousand-foot sheer precipice that makes up the entire north slope of the mountain. Sensing danger, we became much more alert and aware. Our well-acclimated mountain-feet found steady hold, and we soon safely made the summit. There on the peak, we snuggled into our sleeping bags, turned our faces toward the east, and awaited the show. The Sun and mountain did not let us down, and soon we were flooded with the warm glow of the morning star. The wide rays embraced us, warmed



Mount Hoffman summit . . . waiting for the Sun to rise

our skin, and entered our lungs and bloodstream—it could have been the first morning of all creation.

At the end of the trip, though quite ready for a shower, a home-cooked meal, a night in a bed, and the company of family, we all had mixed feelings about leaving the Range of Light. Our free and simple days in the mountain wilderness had been filled with excitement, challenge, peace, camaraderie, and more beauty than words can describe. The treasured moments—even when faded by the hands of time—will be ever within us, working upon our hearts and minds.

At the end of the course, each student was asked to sum up their Roses (beautiful moments), Thorns (challenging moments), and Buds (takeaway lessons) from the trip. Here are a few of their responses:

Roses:

“Yosemite Park is a beautiful place, but I had never been to the backcountry, and let me tell you it is even more beautiful there. One moment that really stood out for me was my solo hike. Being alone and walking and not seeing any people truly allowed me to enjoy and experience every aspect of the beautiful wilderness that I was in. I stopped once to look at a view and when I looked down there was a little lizard sitting on a log. We made eye contact for a solid amount of time until I needed to keep walking, but that moment of raw connecting with nature was one I will never forget. A feeling of being tiny in the massive world and completely connected to everything that is around me.”

“Getting to know other people better, the satisfaction of having climbed mountains and seeing the very rewarding views.”

Thorns:

“I find that I enjoy to lead and take charge of many situations, and so that was a part of the experience that I didn’t expect to be an issue. But when I was leading the group in the front of the line, I had a lot of stress about leading people wrong. Overcoming that fear and carrying on without checking with the rest of my group members that everything I was doing was right was a valuable lesson. Sometimes I just need to trust my gut.”



Figuring out where you are—without a GPS!

“Finishing the trip and coming home was a challenge as always. Becoming accustomed to life in the wilderness, the quiet, the endless freedom of wandering from place to place, the self-sufficiency, only to have all that torn away . . . big thorn.”



Lending—and receiving—a helping hand

Buds:

“Bonding with people from school that I didn’t really know that well with such a beautiful backdrop. Being out in the wilderness and challenging myself always helps me to learn more about myself and the world around me and this time was no different. I learned a multitude of valuable lessons from Luke and Rachel but also from my fellow students and created memories that will (hopefully) last a lifetime. Especially the leadership lessons, they helped me to be able to work with the people around me by understanding them more, but also understanding myself.”

“When we learned about our leadership types, that changed the game for me. All the parts of me that I was slightly aware of were spelled out and that made it way easier to become aware of what I was doing and how I can alter the negative parts and heighten the positive. It also helped me to see the types of the rest of the group, which made it easier to work with the rest of the group.” ☺

Notes

1. Rudolf Steiner, *Education for Adolescents*, lectures given in Stuttgart, June 1921, lecture 3.
2. Ibid., lecture 5.



LUKE BARBEE has a BS in environmental science (Oregon State University) and a Master’s in teaching (Southern Oregon University). Luke has spent the last twenty years exploring education both in and outside of the classroom. Luke is the Outdoor Education Coordinator at the San Francisco Waldorf High School and has a passion for experiential education, outdoor leadership, and connecting youth to nature.

Book Review

Africa A Teacher's Guide

BY BETTY K. STALEY, MA

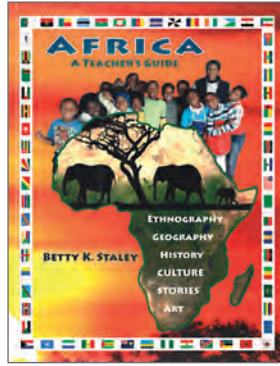
Betty Staley is one of the pioneering figures in Waldorf Education in North America. Having met Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education while still a college student in New York City, she joined the faculty at the Sacramento Waldorf School in 1965 and, in 1976, was one of the founders of nearby Rudolf Steiner College, where she taught and directed the Teacher Education Program for many years. Staley also has been active as an author, lecturer, mentor, and consultant in the national and international Waldorf communities.

In 1992 Staley published *Hear the Cry of the Griot*, a resource for teachers on the history and culture of Africa. Recently “retired,” Staley has just published an updated and greatly expanded edition of that book, titled *Africa—A Teacher's Guide*. The book is almost encyclopedic in scope and size (close to 500 pages) and covers the continent's geography and history, its diverse peoples, and their spiritual lives, fairy tales, myths, art, and music.

“Section One—African Geography” includes chapters that deal with the physical and political geography of the continent, its distinctive vegetation, and its animal life. Chapter four, “Careers with Animals,” brings that topic to life by describing the work of several individuals, including Jane Goodall and David Sheldrake, who dedicated themselves to the welfare of animals in Africa.

Also included are “Suggestions for the Teacher”—activities that help the students creatively engage with the material. For example, after chapter two, which focuses on the baobab and acacia trees, Staley suggests that the children create skits about the two trees, with poetry and music; paint and draw the trees along with the animals that live in them; and research how the trees respond to rainfall and to drought. These practical and helpful “Suggestions for the Teacher” enrich every chapter of the book.

“Section Two—African History” begins with a chapter on Africa in prehistoric times. It includes an inspirational biography of paleontologist Louis Leakey,



whose discoveries established that human origins are traceable to Africa. The section also covers ancient Egypt and Ethiopia, the introduction and spread of Islam (an important factor in understanding contemporary Africa), the slave trade, and the awakening of national consciousness in the twentieth century. The chapters are enriched by the biographies of persons such as Ibn Battuta, the pioneering Muslim traveler; Shaka, the great king of the Zulu people; and Nelson Mandela.

The remaining sections of the book are:

- “Regions of Africa,” which describes the distinctive regions of the continent but also the great variety of ethnic and tribal groups and their languages and cultures
- “Inner Africa,” which deals with several forms of ancient and contemporary spiritual life
- “Fairy Tales, Fables, Myths, and Poems”—a gold mine for the Waldorf class teacher, particularly in the early grades
- “Saints and Other Holy Figures,” which includes Christian, Islamic, and traditional African examples
- “Other Aspects of African Culture,” which deals with African art, sculpture, music, games, and food

In each section there is material that is relevant for students at the different stages of their education—kindergarten, the elementary grades, and high school. Throughout the book, Betty Staley conveys an enthusiasm and joy in discovery and learning, as well as a deep respect, appreciation, and love for the peoples and cultures she is presenting.

This is a very important book that should come into use in Waldorf schools throughout the English-speaking world. Our students will live their lives in a “global village.” It is crucial that they are informed about and appreciate all peoples and all cultures including those of Africa, where today one in five human beings live. This book will help Waldorf educators teach their students about Africa and also, ideally, help instill in them a lively interest in and appreciation of the topic. Ironically, *Africa—A Teachers Guide* may find distribution in Africa as well. Betty Staley has been told by Waldorf teachers in Africa that her book is unique and that no similar resource is available to them. Of course, one need not be a teacher to read and enjoy this book. Anyone wishing to broaden their knowledge about Africa will find it interesting and informative.

Reviewed by Ronald E. Koetzsch

471 pages • \$48.00 • SteinerBooks

From Tree to Chair

BY FRANK VARGO

In a world that is becoming more virtual, and where most objects come into our lives bar-coded and packaged, there is an ever-widening separation between ourselves and the sources of the things we use. Because of urbanization and industrialization, we have little or no connection to the soil that produces our food or to the forest that supplies our shelter and furnishings.

At Spring Garden Waldorf School, the wood-working curriculum includes the “Chair Project.” In this block, the eighth-grade students go through the whole process of making wooden chairs. It begins with the girls and boys using crosscut saws, hammers, wedges, and froes to extract the raw material for their project directly from a log. The Chair Project gives the student a direct, hands-on experience of the close relationship between human beings and the materials that make our lives possible.

The tools and techniques we use, dating back hundreds of years, were once cutting-edge but are now archaic. The students see how we human beings can master a material and capitalize on its properties to form it to our purposes. They learn that this work can be done with hand tools and without the sophisticated technology of today.

The process starts with a massive log, about three feet in diameter. The log is crosscut to 42-inch lengths. These sections or “bolts” are halved and

halved again using hammers and wedges. Most of this reduction occurs outdoors. Teams of two students rhythmically hammer on the wedges, one hammer coming down while the other rises—a study in coordinated motion and efficiency. The members of this two-student team form a machine with their harmony, increasing their effectiveness while having fun. Significant learning is taking place, although the students may not be conscious of it. It is, at the least, a lesson in working in close cooperation with another person.



... use sledgehammers and wedges to split the resulting bolt.

Even this first stage provides opportunities for learning not only basic wood science but also things not usually part of the woodwork-ing curriculum. Students learn that splitting a log using wedges divides wood by *pulling* its fibers apart, while using a saw *severs* the fibers. Splitting results in “riven” (a new vocabulary word) wood. In a piece of riven wood, the fibers run along the long axis. Thus, the piece is much stronger than a sawn piece of the same cross section. The students have learned to use splitting to maximize the strength and usefulness of a material. Also, they have experienced and comprehended a basic engineering concept while using a hammer and wedge. Take that, Google!



Students use a two-person crosscut saw to section a three-foot-diameter red oak log, then . . .

At this stage, the students also learn about the cellular structure of wood and the growth patterns of trees as they compete for light and nutrients. When the log is opened up and reduced, they see how a tree reacts to wounds. They learn, too, about the difference between a “radial” and a “tangential” surface of a log section.

Fabrication of individual chair parts moves indoors. Rungs and legs are octagonal in cross section, made by placing square blanks in V-blocks fixed to benches. The corners are removed with hand planes.



A rear chair leg in a v-block fixture that holds it while it is being shaped into an octagonal cross section

The rungs are placed in a kiln chamber—a wooden box or, sometimes, an empty locker. There, a light bulb heats the improvised kiln, driving off moisture contained in the green wood. The legs are stored in another chamber where they are kept green,

a state where they retain their moisture content. Rear legs are placed in bending forms and cold bent—forced into shape—with an automobile jack.



A human-powered lathe cutting the tenon on the end of a chair rung



A human-powered post drill used to bore holes in chair legs to accept the rung tenon; this drill was manufactured about 1910.

They are then placed in yet another chamber where steam is introduced for approximately ninety minutes. Cold bending eliminates the handling of hot parts by students and the need to work quickly with the bending operation.

In the discussion of what happens in each of these three chambers, we study wood’s relationship with water. At temperatures above 200°F and at 100% humidity, wood becomes plastic rather than rigid and relaxes into the bending form. As it cools and dries, the wood regains its stiffness and retains the desired shape. Meanwhile, in the light-bulb kiln, the rungs give off all their moisture and experience dimensional changes. They become smaller in cross section as they are dried.

These unique properties of the wood–water relationship aid in the construction of the chair. When holes for the shrunk rungs are drilled into the still-green legs and then assembled, the rungs absorb moisture from the legs and swell to lock the joint. As the legs begin to dry, they shrink to further tighten the joint. This process continues until all pieces reach equilibrium with the environment and each other. Meteorology, science, and craft weave together naturally. And by observing the relationship between water and wood, we form a relationship with the material itself.

Drilling the legs to accept the rungs is a particular challenge for eighth graders. Projects in grades five through seven emphasized carving shapes, both convex and concave. Alignment of multiple parts to form a whole was not within the scope of their previous work. The angles and locations of the holes are critical and require a leap in skill

and spatial cognition. The concepts of “data point” and “reference plane” are introduced. The flat surfaces of the octagons present an obvious “zero point” from which to measure angles. The students discover, sometimes ironically, that all parts have a relationship to every other part of the chair.

Relationships are the center around which this project is wound. The last relationship developed is perhaps the greatest. It is the relationship each student has with her/his fellow classmates. As students mass-produce rungs and legs, the parts are stored in a common inventory. When the time comes to assemble a chair, it is composed of parts created by each and every student. Each chair contains a piece of everyone’s effort, and

each one’s effort is in every chair. Our students embrace this; it is a beautiful thing to watch unfold. It also provides the link used to tie our study to the Industrial Revolution.

During that period of American history, chairmaking moved from a cottage industry to factory production. We discuss the rise of the standard of living of factory workers. The counterpoint in this discussion is what was lost during this revolution. Centralizing production and removing it from the source of material isolated the crafter from the resource. Losing control and ownership of the



Examining the completed chair, which awaits only its woven seat

means of production further severed the worker from his material. Once both the material and the craftsman became commodities, the relationship with the material was lost, as well as the intimate knowledge needed to produce a finished product from its source. History and social studies are at play in the woodshop!

As a lifelong craftsman, I am always astonished by how pertinent my trade is to education. The material challenges our will; its physical resistance to our effort fortifies us with self-confidence and self-awareness. In our movements, using some of the earliest implements from our technological history, we learn to experience the tool as an extension of our hand. By studying the properties of the material, we form a relationship to that material. We begin to understand that our physical, intellectual, and spiritual advancements are linked to the relationships we form with our resources. While woodworking offers students the opportunity to willfully shape a piece of the physical world, of greater importance is how that process of working the wood shapes our students. ☺



Putting together the back construct by fixing slats and rungs into the two rear legs

of American history, chairmaking moved from a cottage industry to factory production. We discuss the rise of the standard of living of factory workers. The counterpoint in this discussion is what



Placing rungs to connect the front and back constructs



FRANK VARGO has worked for over thirty years as a traditional craftsman in “forest-to-finish” furniture production, timber framing, and cabinetmaking. He has taught upper-grades woodworking at Spring Garden Waldorf School in Copley, Ohio, for the last thirteen years. Frank has crafted a curriculum that includes tree identification, study of the differences between needle leaf and broad leaf trees, and the natural history of forest ecosystems.

The School Sunhouse

Gardening through the Year in a Four-Season Climate

BY KIM ALLSUP

Fifteen third graders and three middle schoolers line up between mounds of snow at the door of the School Sunhouse at the Waldorf School of Cape Cod. It's a sunny but frigid February day and, as a gardening teacher who wants to preserve warmth in the Sunhouse, I remind them of our routine: "Let's make the line really tight for a winter entry."

The children step closer to each other to make the line shorter. Then I open the door and they scoot in quickly. Once in, they pull off coats that are too warm for the 55-degree temperature that is usual in this gardening classroom, though it is heated only by the Sun.

When we enter, the bright interior looks as white as the snow-covered playground. The garden beds are hidden under large sheets of white Agribon®, a fabric that transmits light and holds heat in the sun-warmed soil. Third graders, with some advice from the middle schoolers, remove the clips that hold the lightweight cloth in place on metal frames. Then their early childhood training comes into play. As they form lines, face each other, and lift the lightweight cloth, it catches air and billows high, and the children recall this same lifting, billowing, and dropping process with sheets of silk in early childhood classrooms several years before.

Beneath the floating Agribon, we see living expanses of green—cedar beds thick with spinach, turnips, kale, and carrots—that seem to defy winter. Once the

Agribon has been tucked to the side of the beds, one group goes to work harvesting outer leaves of spinach plants. These same plants have provided harvests since October and will continue to produce into April or May. Another group pulls carrots, then cuts off the tops and scrubs the orange roots with toothbrushes. A third group fills trays with potting soil and plants lettuce seeds. These trays will be carried into the school building where the lettuce will sprout under grow lights. Each of the three groups is led by an experienced gardener—a middle schooler.



The Sunhouse, recently covered, before the first big freeze of autumn

The children chat while they work. Sometimes the work stops as everyone gathers around to see what has been proclaimed to be "the world's biggest earthworm" or "the funniest carrot ever."

Then, as tubtrugs—circular tubs with handles—fill up with spinach and carrots, the requests to hike up the driveway to the kitchen begin.

"Can I bring the spinach to Chef Peet?"

"Can I go too?"

The School Sunhouse at the Waldorf School of Cape Cod owes its existence, to a large degree, to Chef Creighton Peet. Six years ago, I mentioned to him that, if we had an unheated hoop house, gardening classes could provide fresh food to the lunch program through the whole school year. Before I knew it, he had found a used 24- by 48-foot hoop house, disassembled it, and



Covering the beds with Agribon fabric

hauled the pieces to the school's parking lot. Built in 2013, the Sunhouse has given new life to cold-season gardening classes, making it possible for children to build soil, plant, water, weed, and harvest each week during the school year. Generous donations at the school auction paid for most of the project: cedar for the beds, new end walls, doors, and running water. We were lucky that Pete Hallemeier, an engineer who was a parent in the school, volunteered to take on both



Still filled with summer crops, the early autumn Sunhouse provides work for many hands.

the design and the construction management. We included the children in the design process, and it was their idea to have a sand floor instead of gravel. This soft floor has cushioned their knees and doubled as a sandbox. With the exception of the contractor who buried and hooked up our water line, all work to construct the hoop house was done by parent volunteers. They often labored into the dark of the night, aided by truck headlights. Students of all ages hauled tons of sand and soil for the paths and the beds.

Initially we called the structure the “hoop house,” but soon I thought it needed a name that was both descriptive and educational. The name “School Sunhouse” emphasizes that solar energy is central. Using the word “school” in the name refers to the fact that the Sunhouse is at a school, but also that the interior is specifically designed for a group of up to thirty-five students working and studying. While a farmer uses up to 90 percent of the space in a hoop house for crops, we reserved 50 percent of the floor space in the Sunhouse for children. The layout is set up for ease of traffic flow and includes an open meeting area that can also be used for activities such as washing carrots and planting seed trays. This area is also a year-round, frost-free sandbox.

Seasons in the Sunhouse

The first couple of winters, in spite of my having read about unheated hoop houses, I was incredulous when

I saw plants growing on the coldest days in this simple structure that provided no heat storage beyond the soil itself. I was familiar with partially insulated greenhouses that store solar heat in water tanks, and I had organized the building of such a structure when I taught at Pine Hill Waldorf School in Wilton, New Hampshire. The goal in those more complex (and more expensive) structures is to keep temperatures above freezing.

Unheated hoop houses, including the School Sunhouse, rely on the fact that certain plants can grow well even when their leaves freeze overnight, as long as the soil stays unfrozen. Eliot Coleman, a Maine farmer and writer whose *Winter Harvest Handbook* has been our guidebook for the School Sunhouse project, identified spinach as the ideal crop for an unheated hoop house. And, sure enough, we have seen that a spinach plant that is frozen in early morning will be thawed in the warmth of the Sun and ready for harvest by mid-morning. While heat-loving plants like tomatoes and beans can't survive in the winter in the Sunhouse, cool-season crops such as turnips, leeks, carrots, and kale thrive there.

Spring is a busy time for all gardeners, but it is especially busy in the School Sunhouse, because spring is both a planting season and also a time when longer days quicken growth and greens need frequent harvests. The Sunhouse cover is removed after the last frost. This brings direct sunlight to the soil through the summer months. Hoop houses that remain covered need to have soil replaced every few years and require daily watering when the weather is hot. We reduce labor by removing the cover.



Chef Creighton Peet receives the garlic harvest from third and fourth graders.



Yes, there are still vegetables growing inside!

The summer tending of the garden is a community responsibility. Weekly “Family Gardening Sessions,” organized by grade level, begin with families sharing a potluck meal. Then, parents and children work together in the school’s outdoor garden and in the Sunhouse during the cool of the evening. At dusk everyone gath-



Removing spent spinach plants in early spring

ers in the Sunhouse for a conversation about what they “observed, enjoyed, or accomplished.” The gathering ends with a song and sometimes with a release of the ladybugs that help keep the aphid population under control.

The school year begins with the Sunhouse uncovered. In September,

the grape tomato harvest is at its peak and, in a warm year, we harvest these yummy morsels until November. Grow lights inside the school building help get a start on spinach and kale, which are transplanted as warm-season crops are pulled.

On Cape Cod, Michaelmas week in late September is generally just before the first frost. Pulling the cover over the structure has become a part of the school’s annual Michaelmas Festival. Grade school students gather outside the Sunhouse at the start of the day, and each class recites their lunchtime blessing. Next, the Sunhouse version of “Bless This House” is sung. Then, middle schoolers use ropes and many hands to pull a great plastic sheet over the structure. Finally, everyone lines up and walks through the newly covered structure, experiencing one of the essential aspects of the Michaelmas season—the turning inward that comes with the waning of the light. During the long nights and short days of December and early January, the vibrant plant life hidden under the Agribon in the Sunhouse becomes like the hidden, active inner life that people experience in early winter.

Growing Traditions

The nasturtiums we grew in 2013 self-seeded. Ever since, nasturtiums have popped up each spring like weeds. Older students gleefully introduce each first-grade class to the magic of nasturtium leaves by showing them how a drop of water rolling across these round leaves stays round and dances when the leaf



The Sunhouse just before Michaelmas, waiting for its winter cover

is moved. A few years ago, the children began a fall tradition of using these edible leaves in cupped hands to hold drinking water. Recently this practice was improved by adding a biodegradable straw—a freshly picked spear of chives.

One particular third-grade class was especially enthusiastic about nibbling as they worked. They would enter the Sunhouse and immediately ask, “Can we eat some spinach? How about kale, can we have some of that?” Their enthusiasm inspired me to make a practice of calling a five-minute break in the middle of each gardening class that we call “nibble time.” A typical October announcement before the break is, “You can have lettuce, spinach, peas, one grape tomato, chives, parsley, and kale. And we’ll cut up a carrot to share.” While the list of reasons to invest in a school sunhouse is long, developing enthusiasm for eating freshly harvested vegetables is reason enough to build a sunhouse at every school in a four-season climate.

Sunhouse Academics

Gardening teachers in some public schools are expected to justify gardening classes by using the experience as a math lesson or a science lesson. However, in Waldorf schools, learning to grow food is considered a valuable lesson in itself. Gardening classes, whether in a hoop house or an outdoor garden, are rich grounds for harnessing will forces, for learning teamwork and responsibility, and for laying the groundwork for gardening as an adult.



Nasturtiums, beautiful to look at but also good to eat

Nevertheless, we have found that the School Sunhouse provides many opportunities for hands-on academic explorations. The fall harvest of grape tomatoes is done by the first-grade class. These children, who are exploring the world of numbers, enjoy the task of counting these small tomatoes, and, after the last harvest of green tomatoes, they ripen them in their classroom and deliver them to Chef Peet when ready to eat.

One fifth-grade teacher similarly used the daily strawberry harvest to illustrate a math concept. Her class kept a running tally of the number of strawberries each student picked and then, using their knowledge of fractions and percentages, made a pie chart showing the percentage harvested by each student.

The Sunhouse has also been used for botanical drawing, for a fifth-grade botany experiment testing different soil amendments, for a sandy place to model the creation of a kettle-hole pond, for meditative morning meetings, for sandbox play, and for a peaceful



Grape tomatoes ripening in the first-grade classroom

place for silent reading classes. Many more opportunities for academic explorations await the Sunhouse students of the future.

The School Sunhouse—A Proven Model

Over the past five winters, the School Sunhouse has proven itself to be a valuable addition to our Waldorf school gardening program. In a region of cold winters, children get to have their hands in the soil every week of the school year. They experience firsthand the power of the Sun. They learn about a growing method that will, increasingly, provide food in temperate climates as local agriculture replaces the current energy-wasting and climate-warming system that relies on fossil fuels to transport fresh food thousands of miles. Finally, our students have experienced an ongoing sense of empowerment, self-reliance, and community effort in growing some of the food that they eat at lunch. ☺



The School Sunhouse in midsummer

We end our Sunhouse gardening sessions with this song (sung to the tune of the traditional song, *Bless This House*, with music by May H. Morgan):

Bless This Sunhouse

Bless this house we sing today
 Make it safe by night and day
 Bless these walls both clear and stout
 Keeping wind and hailstorms out
 Bless the beds of wood and soil
 Bless our dedicated toil
 Bless the water may it flow
 So our plants may thrive and grow
 Bless all who worked with skill and grace
 And kindly helped to build this place
 Bless the Sun and Moon and stars
 In sky above and on our doors
 Bless our seeds we plant with care
 May they grow and blossom there
 Bless winter days cold but bright
 Yet here within are warmth and light
 Bless our will to do our part
 Light and warmth live in our heart



KIM ALLSUP came to Waldorf Education from a career in the environmental movement. She was a class teacher at the Waldorf School of Cape Cod and at Pine Hill Waldorf School for a total of twenty-two years and was a gardening teacher for twelve years. Her teaching memoir, *A Gift of Wonder—A True Story Showing School as It Should Be* (SteinerBooks, 2017), shows the importance of wonder, engagement, and spontaneity in learning and teaching. Kim blogs at *Growing Children* (childrengrowing.com).

Computer Science in a Waldorf Eleventh Grade

BY CHARLES WEEMS, PhD

In previous articles,^{1,2,3} we saw how Rudolf Steiner advocated for Waldorf high schools to include technology education, how in ninth grade a computer science class can explore what a computer is, and, in tenth grade, the class can see how computers work. In this article, we follow the developmental progression into eleventh grade, where students discover why the internet carries inherent risks and why software is so hard to write correctly.⁴

By eleventh grade, students are becoming more independent. Many are starting to drive cars, have jobs after school, and organize social events without parental involvement. Even more of their communication moves online, via texting and social media. Adults often tell teenagers to beware of dangers lurking on the internet. But having grown up with it, using it every day, and knowing about all the latest apps, the teenagers may well feel those warnings are uninformed.

Rather than talking about dangers, we can instead take a closer look at how the internet works, why it is hard to establish trust with unknown people online, and why it is easy for unscrupulous people to exploit others via the medium. Students find value in gaining expert knowledge about the functioning of a technology they know they will rely on for the rest of their lives. Out of that knowledge, they can see for themselves where the risks arise.

We begin by considering one of the most common acts we engage in on the internet: a web search. It seems that Google manages to find millions of cute cat pictures on the internet in a fraction of a second (Figure 1). In fact, it doesn't. Google runs programs called web crawlers that constantly scour every web page they can find, looking for new content. The content is then copied and indexed—like a library catalog—so that when we search for a specific set of terms, the list is either already there, or can be quickly created by combining lists.

Web crawlers are constantly active. Once content is posted on the internet, there is a good chance

that a crawler will pick it up and save a copy. Thus, even if one has second thoughts about a public social media post and takes it down shortly after, the post probably has already gained a permanent presence on the internet.

Of course, the list returned from a search isn't in a random order. Its entries are ranked to give us what the search engine has calculated will best fit our interest. Based on their experience, students can quickly identify many of the factors that are considered in a page ranking.

It's just one more step to appreciate that some of those factors can be manipulated. So-called "Google Bombs" are examples of people having tricked the search engine into returning something they wanted others to see in response to a particular search. For example, during the 2012 presidential election, the search "completely wrong" returned a large number of images of one of the candidates (Figure 2). But more subtle manipulations of results can be used to influence the thinking and opinions of users, without overtly appearing as propaganda.

In some cases, when different students do the same search, they get different results. With a little experimentation, they can discover various reasons for search personalization, such as location or recent search history. The search engine is trying to do a better job of giving us information we want.

But what happens if people only get links to sites with content they like? Their view of the world

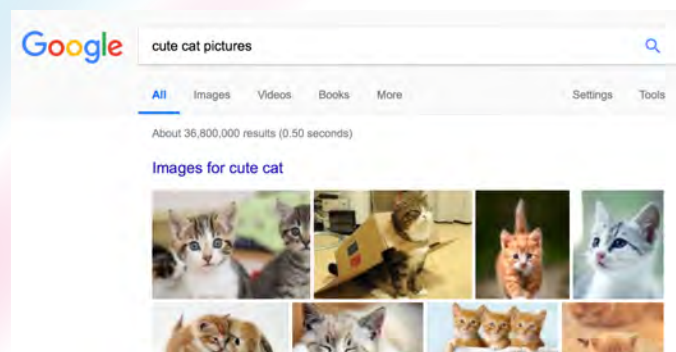


Figure 1. A Google search for "cute cat pictures" returned more than 36 million results in half a second.

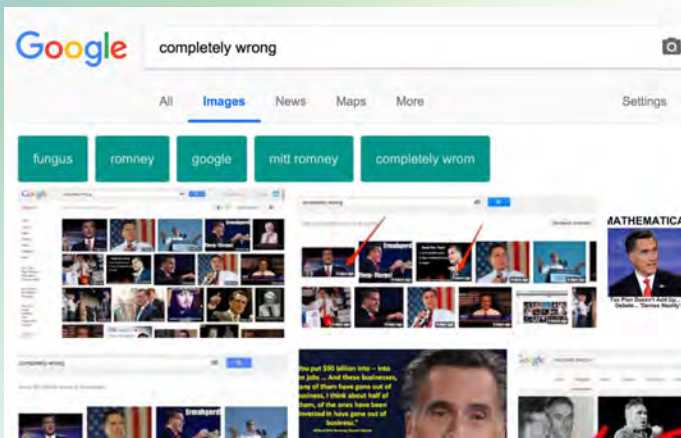


Figure 2. In 2012, a Google search for “completely wrong” brought up multiple images of then presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

narrows, and they are less likely to encounter differing viewpoints. Students can identify examples of where this has affected society and created conflict. The experience of seeing different rankings shows why it is useful to look multiple pages deep in search results for more diverse sources. We can also see how to write advanced search queries that give us more control over the ranking, and how to use specialized searches, such as Google Scholar.

As an exercise to experiment with more extensive searching, students can be asked to find out as much as they can about someone they know. When the type of information they find is listed on the board, it becomes clear just how much of our lives may be exposed on the internet.

That list opens up an opportunity to talk about ways of protecting online information. But even with a good understanding of privacy controls, mistakes happen so that information gets exposed. Or, a company we’ve given information to can be sold to new owners who decide to change the privacy policy. It becomes clear that the only safe rule is to avoid putting anything on the internet that we don’t want to become public.

A tour of the school’s networking equipment shows how many devices our communications pass through (Figure 3). From that we can see the need for a system of addresses to enable delivery of information. We also see that there are many possibilities for our data to be observed en route. Thus, we should be careful to encrypt any sensitive data. But even data we don’t consider sensitive carries information about us and may allow others to observe what sites we visit.

The internet’s domain name system translates a familiar address, such as waldorfeducation.org, into the corresponding numerical address used by the internet (54.88.217.121). However, web links can hide alternate addresses. Knowing this, we can see that there are various opportunities for communications to be hijacked and for us to be directed to sites that try to trick us into revealing valuable information, such as bank account passwords.

Looking at how encryption works reveals that the protection it lends to our data is not absolute, but

merely makes it costly for someone else to discover what we are communicating. There is also the problem of establishing an encrypted communication channel with a site.

The user and the site each have a secret code they use to encrypt their data. To decrypt the data each of them needs the key to the other’s code. How can they send their keys to each other without anyone else seeing them, before they have a secure channel?

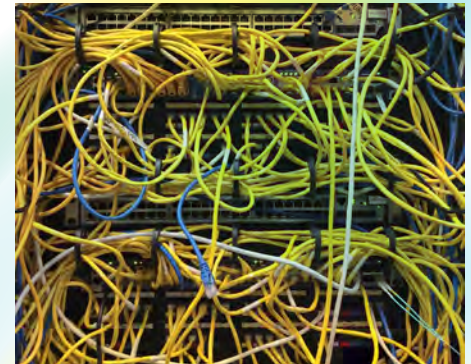


Figure 3. Network routers, used for connecting devices on the internet

As an analogous experience, two students (Anja and Parker) are given a lockable box, and each student is given a padlock with two keys. They need to work out a process for securely exchanging the keys to their locks (which represent the secret codes). Anja puts one of her keys inside the box, locks it with her padlock, and sends it to Parker. Parker places his padlock on the box and returns it. Anja uses her other key to remove her padlock and gives the box back to Parker, with only his lock on it. He then uses his key to remove his lock, opens the box, and takes out Anja’s key. Parker then puts one of his keys in the box, locks it with his padlock, and they repeat the process in reverse. After that, they each have a copy of the other’s key and can send messages back and forth inside the locked box.

But then we run into the question: How can we be sure that the person we’re communicating with is

who we think they are? Even if the person sends us confirming information, how do we know that there isn't someone between us, who tricked us into giving them our keys, and who is passing our communications back and forth while secretly listening in?

From this example, we can see the need for trusted entities on the internet who can vouch for the identities of sites we contact. There are only a few so-called "root certificate authorities." To enable the many identity checks that are necessary every second, they certify many more second-level

authorities, who certify even more third-level authorities, and so on.

The top-level entities owe the viability of their businesses to being

very careful about who they certify, but below that we depend on the care with which each additional level does their checking, and how careful they are to protect their computers from being hacked.

Our exploration of how the internet works has been leading up to this basic truth: Digital data is divorced from reality. It can be manipulated to represent anything or anyone. A web page can be an honest representation of a business. Or it can be a page that comes up at the top of a search due to a manipulated ranking and does an address redirection to a site with a forged identity certification. The site may present the illusion of legitimacy so that it gets someone to give up valuable information, such as the password to the email server for a political campaign (Figure 5).

There is thus no digital solution to the security problem. Encryption is not invulnerable, just costly to break. Identity certificates can be obtained by imposters, and, with enough effort, passwords can be discovered. Security on the internet ultimately depends on people being careful.

At this point, we can survey the various ways that computers can be hacked, what kinds of bad things

may happen when they are, and how to prevent or remediate the situation. Although this portion of the class is mainly about how online traps are set and how to avoid them, it also forms the basis for a more philosophical discussion.

The internet gives us the potential for varying degrees of anonymity and power and tempts us to



Figure 4. *The lockbox, padlocks, and keys used to demonstrate how a secure communication link can be created*

A screenshot of a Bank of America login page. The page has a red header with the Bank of America logo and the text "View Online ID/Create New Passcode". Below the header is a red bar with the text "Your Information". The main content area is white and contains a form with two input fields. The first field is labeled "Your complete card number or account number" and has a small text below it saying "Use your ATM/Debit Card, Credit Card, or any one of your accounts. Numbers only". The second field is labeled "Your complete Social Security number (SSN) or Tax Identification number (TIN)" and has a small text below it saying "Numbers only". At the bottom of the form are two buttons: "Continue" and "Cancel".

Figure 5. *A suspicious site for a bank login*

do things we might not do otherwise. The internet also makes it possible for others to track us and possibly reveal our actions later. We thus need to develop a new level of consciousness around our actions, use care in how we navigate the web, and do our best to thoughtfully act on a moral basis in all of our interactions. If we keep this in mind and strive to achieve it, we can actually become better human beings.

As we've seen, much of internet security depends on software working correctly to prevent hackers from exploiting flaws. But why is it so hard to write programs that are free of errors? To answer this question, we embark on a brief experience of programming. Our goal is not for the students to become fluent in a computer language—although some may choose to do that as an independent project within the course—but simply to get a taste of what programming is like.

Students are given a few lines of text that constitute a program to display a message on the screen and are then shown how to enter it into a programming environment. Such a program is easy to understand, even without knowing much of the programming language. A small change makes it possible to enter some text that gets included in the message.

Now they have enough building blocks to try something fun: writing a program for a Mad Lib. A Mad Lib is a story created by a person inserting nouns, verbs, and other words into a story template that contains blank spaces. When the completed story is read, the results are usually hilarious. Converting the existing program into a Mad Lib is just a matter of copying and pasting different lines and then editing them to form the content of the story.

The key is that the stories are fairly long, so there is ample opportunity to make small mistakes. Spaces may be missing around the inserted words; lines may be wildly different in length; and there may be typographical errors. Each time, it seems as if the program should be fixed, but new errors are discovered when it is run. After much more effort, it may finally reach a usable condition, but it is probably still not perfect.

There are two points that students can take away from this experience. The obvious one is that computer programs require extreme care to make them perfect. The time and effort spent getting a simple Mad Lib to work well is minor in comparison to the time and effort needed to ensure the correctness of the millions of lines of program code in an

operating system. Yet that is what we count on for keeping our information safe.

At the end of the exercise, most of the students are shocked

by how much time has passed while they have been trying to correct their programs. This points to the less obvious lesson—that it is very easy to be drawn into the world of the program and lose touch with reality. Experiencing this aspect of programming helps us to understand why some software ends up designed in ways that seem unnatural for the user.

By the end of the course, students should genuinely appreciate the need for exercising caution

when going online. Whenever we go online, we are trusting that many other people have done their jobs perfectly, which we know, from our programming experience, is essentially impossible. But the students now have the knowledge and tools that enable them to be informed and thoughtful users of this ubiquitous aspect of modern life.

In twelfth grade, we will explore who we are with respect to our technology, as individuals and as a society, and then contrast the nature of human intelligence with artificial intelligence. ☉

Notes

1. Charles Weems, “Computer Education in Waldorf Schools,” *Renewal: A Journal for Waldorf Education* 25, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2016), 22–25.
2. Weems, “Computer Science in a Waldorf Ninth Grade,” *Renewal* 26, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2017), 24–27.
3. Weems, “Computer Science in a Waldorf Tenth Grade,” *Renewal* 26, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2017), 25–27, 30.
4. Those interested in the curricular details and more technical aspects of the eleventh-grade computer course should consult the following article: Weems, “Computer Science for Eleventh Grade,” *Research Bulletin of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education* 22, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2017), 45–54.



Figure 6. Students working on programs



CHARLES (CHIP) WEEMS is an associate professor in the College of Information and Computer Sciences at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and a teacher of earth science and computer science at the Hartsbrook (Waldorf) High School. He has been teaching at the college level for thirty-nine years and at the high school since it began fifteen years ago. Chip is a member of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the Anthroposophical Society, and the Pedagogical Section of the School for Spiritual Science.

Writing a Personal Essay

An Eleventh-Grade Exercise in Self-Expression

BY CAROL BÄRTGES, MA, MPhil

During eleventh grade, my Waldorf high school students study the personal essay as a literary form. I teach this unit in eleventh grade quite specifically, because it is the year in which students read literature whose theme is the journey to selfhood. It is the year in which they read Virginia Woolf, Maya Angelou, *Hamlet*, and *Parzival*. It is also the year in which the validity of the individual imagination is studied in the works of the Romantic poets, who saw literature as a dissident activity.

By junior year, students can stand squarely in the dizzying and sometimes uncomfortable space created by multiple perspectives on a single issue: Is Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* a racist book? Let's discuss, read secondary criticism, and evaluate!

Learning the rhetorical strategies employed by accomplished writers allows students to model their own personal essays after one of these diverse literary forms. Will they wish to write their own, ironic "modest proposal" à la Swift? Will they gravitate to the humorous approach of Robert Benchley as used in his essay "The Tooth, the Whole Tooth and Nothing But the Tooth," a depiction of the stages of procrastination in visiting the dentist? Will they encapsulate experience through the use of a recurring analogy as Maya Angelou does so powerfully in her Nobel Prize speech, "The Bird Is in Your Hands," or as Jean-Paul Sartre does in his essay "Jazz in America"? Will they rage against conformity like Malcom X in his rueful autobiographical recollection of conking his hair or like Sandra Cisneros in her musings on identity in "My Name"?

The personal essay: a short work of creative autobiographical nonfiction characterized by a sense of intimacy and a conversational manner.

Is the Arthurian knight Parzival just a victim of bad luck and circumstance? Or is he responsible for the unintended consequences of his deeds? And are they, the students, and we adults also responsible for what happens to us?

Given what is unfolding on the social and political stage these days, these questions carry enormous importance. The schooling of thought is a slow, evolving process, and in the literature classes I have found that the study of the personal essay helps the students construct an architecture in which they will house their individual, developing powers of perception.

The juniors read a number of essays by authors whose time period, style, and content differ widely: from Ian Frazier's "Taking the F Train," to Albert Camus's impressionistic and musing "The Rains of New York"; from Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," a biting satire on English imperialism, to the biologist Lewis Thomas's "The Music of this Sphere," a conjectural piece on our human and animal drive to communicate.

The following are examples of the stylistically and thematically diverse writing students submitted at the end of the block. From the lyrical to the witty to the rhapsodic, the students captured in prose who they are and what they believe.

My year and a half at Juilliard has taught me what struggle and suffering actually means. I cannot remember how many times I became depressed because I had not accomplished the goals that I wished to achieve; I cannot remember how many times I became overwhelmed after I saw some accomplished performance from other students at Juilliard; I cannot remember how many times my mother tried to soften the calluses on my fingers when they became painful.

—Yanguang Zhang
[in photo, back row, far right]

(Note Yanguang's use of "anaphora," a rhetorical device that uses repetition as a means of emphasis.)

It would appear that in recorded human history, no event, being, or product of the mind is more petrifying than when some poor individual's bare hand, having finished turning pages for the night, creeps out of the bedsheets to place the hefty volume on the night table and turns off the socket switch underneath the nearby lampshade, making the startling discovery of some elongated insect the length of one's thumb, hanging on the wall overhead. The person shrieks and throws the book, struggling in his or her bedsheets. "Wow!"

—Julien Guelton
[back row, second from right]

(Note Julien's employment of "hyperbole" as an agent of humor.)

Yes, New York is the city that awakens and enlightens me like no other, but my heart yearns to be on the other side of the world. It is a place where I did not grow up. Why does this place yet have my heart? Why does my heart tug when I see a coconut tree or hear my native language? Why do I long to be there when I have everything I need here? What is this place, anyway? The answer is long and never-ending, a love letter to the place that has a piece of my heart—Manado. [Manado is a city in Indonesia.]

—Amalia Monintja
[front row, second from left]

(Amalia's rhetorical strategy of questioning leads the reader to do the same.)

An assignment is given to you during your second class of the day; the deadline is almost two weeks away. You are thinking, "Psht! I have this totally under control. . . ."

It is now past 10:30 p.m., there are close to eleven hours to finish the essay, do all your other work and somehow manage to get some sleep. As you are writing the conclusion of the essay, you consider the extent of your irresponsibility, laziness and procrastination. Judging from past experience it is unlikely that you will actually learn from this experience, but at least there has been a thought, a reflection about it; this has to mean something, does it not?

—Noor Elwakil
[back row, third from right]

(Note the unifying, democratizing effect of the second person singular, "you.")

As I sit in the middle of the street, I gaze up at a splatter of white paint across a black canvas. The stars glow and wink at me as I sit on folded legs, straining my neck back to keep eye contact with the heavens. . . . There is something I feel for the stars. Love? Adoration? Jealousy? I cannot tell.

—Ava Bent
[middle row, far left]

(Ava's use of analogy and personification create mood and presence.)



English teacher Carol Bärtges in Central Park, New York City, with her eleventh-grade class of budding essayists

There is a stigma around the entire teenage existence. We're "reckless, selfish, only concerned with our own tiny bubble, unable to be self-aware, obsessed with the most trivial forms of life." The oft-used excuse is that our brains are not fully formed, accounting for why we make the daring decisions that personify our stage in life. . . . We must remember these times with fondness, as one would remember a dear friend. Do not let go the lingering wisps of shrill screams, beating hearts and clammy hands. Remember what it was like to have your whole world revolve around whatever came next that night. I beg you not to let those times fade until they are only distant vague notions. Remember, and when your child, grandchild, sibling, or niece reaches this point, remember and empathize with what it was like to be young and free.

—Grace Friedman
[front row, far right]

(Elegiac and exhortative, Grace's prose taps into the past, the present, and the future—the intersection of all true education!)

The Twelfth-Grade Transcendentalist Block

Looking into Self and Nature

BY JUDY WACHLER, MA



"There are bound to be precious things in the casket. He searched but could not find a keyhole. Then, finally, he noticed one, but it was so small that he could barely see it. He tried the key, and fortunately it fit."

— The Brothers Grimm, "The Golden Key"

A central aim in Waldorf teaching is to create a learning environment that supports the unfolding of some fundamental human capacities. One of them is the ability to attend quietly to the wisdom of the natural world. It is often in those peaceful moments that we most easily hear the voice of intuition; we know that being able to discern that voice is part of a true education.

Understanding that this sort of attention is the Golden Key (the same Golden Key that so often figures in the first-grade fairy tales) came to me most clearly after having taught the Transcendentalist block to twelfth graders for the past five years. The block focuses on five of the most well-known and influential figures: Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Fuller, and Dickinson.

These authors were writing as a new nation—the United States of America—was emerging. Until then (the early and mid-1800s), the standards and culture of Europe had dominated. These writers helped create a new and unique American perspective appropriate to this vast, untamed continent. They gave voice to a people's readiness to strike out on their own and define themselves by their own special genius.

Our seniors recognize themselves in this scenario. They are only several months from leaving family and classmates to go off to college or to gap-year experiences. Soon they will be attempting to define themselves and to make decisions based on what feels true to them—in the face of outside voices and pressures to

conform. They are at an exhilarating and, at times, frightening point in their lives. The Transcendentalist block needs to build on this enthusiasm and counteract the fear. To that end, we present them with the Transcendentalists' counsel of self-reliance, trust, and the power of intuition, and we offer them the opportunity to engage in a daily practice of deep, peaceful attention in the woods surrounding our school.

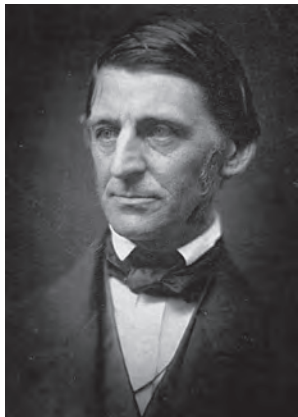
More traditional classroom activities in the block include reading Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance," Thoreau's *Walden* and *Civil Disobedience*, as well as Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. The texts are challenging. They include the language of philosophy, mythological and biblical references, and unfamiliar literary devices. Making sense of them requires patience and a keenly focused attention. For homework, the students are asked to choose a line, a thought, or an idea that has sparked their interest and to write about it. The next day's class is shaped by what has spoken to them, what they have loved, what they have disliked, and what has rung true for them.



A New England autumnal woods and an opportunity to sit, observe, think, and write

A second, more experiential component of the class involves spending time alone in nature. Our school is fortunate in that the small campus is surrounded by lovely and deep woods. We ask our students to follow Thoreau's practice of keeping a journal of nature observations. As a class, we walk out into the woods in silence, and then students choose individual spots to which they will return daily to sit quietly, observe, and write.

While we ask them, in fact free them, to simply observe the natural world and write, we also know that, as they enter the woods, their souls ring with the inspiration they find in the texts and in the many passionate classroom conversations. These ideas encourage them to distill the truths they can discern within—truths that have grown over the past twelve years of learning through our inspiring curriculum and living in the world.



"Nature always wears the colors of spirit."

"Adopt the pace of nature—her secret is patience."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson
1803–1882

But it takes time. In the early days of the block, it is not uncommon for students to write journal entries that express how difficult it is for them to sit quietly in one spot for a period of time and to simply attend to what is around them. One girl wrote:

Sadly, in nature, I tend to not notice things. I'm always the person to miss the shooting star or not see the beautiful bird flying above. . . . I have been working harder to keep my mind open and observe all my surroundings.

Several entries later, she expresses with brutal honesty the situation many adolescents find themselves in:

I, myself, am not fully awake. I go throughout my day, only to make it through to the next. I live for sleep. . . . Our attention is centered on our phone, computer, the internet, video games. . . . We live for technology and we strive to have materialistic things.



After a solitary session, a sharing

Another student reveals the mental state of many of our seniors in the autumn:

Senior year, college, life . . . I feel so lost and stressed and even when I am sitting down, looking at nature surrounding me, I can't fully relax. . . . I know where I am physically, but mentally I am out. Gone. It is so hard to just sit.

The practice of sitting in nature and writing for thirty minutes every day, along with hearing inspiring stories of Emerson and Thoreau's faithfulness to their journals, works magic with these young people. This same girl, who couldn't relax, writes the following after one week of spending thirty minutes a day in the woods, simply observing:

The light in the forest is so special, so delicate. It makes the pattern of a leaf live and the shadows it creates are so singular. It also makes the colors come out stronger. Down here I feel so simple compared to the fine details found on the forest's soil and in every branch, rock or leaflet. Fall brings such a diverse palette of colors. The nuances of the colors found here are so warm. Looking at this golden tree, losing its coins on the ground, is just beautiful. It is like the wind wakes the tree up and like a thief, the wind takes the golden coins.

I am moved when I realize what this opportunity—to simply attend to the natural world—means to my students. One young woman, in the delightful tone of a cheeky adolescent, writes:

I think that this is the most peaceful I've been in a long time. Sometimes mandatory reflection is needed very much. . . . I'm sure as I leave this forced "chill out" time I'll be scrambling again, but for now, I'm happy.

Over and over, I read words that convey the students' gratitude for this gift of quiet time in nature. "I feel very safe and content where I am," writes a young man. The words "safe" and "content" are not frequently used by today's teens to describe their feelings about themselves and their lives. All too often we teachers hear "stressed," "lonely," and "anxious."



"Very early, I knew that the purpose of life was to grow."

"The especial genius of women I believe to be electrical in movement, intuitive in function, spiritual in tendency."

—Margaret Fuller
1810–1850

Another student also wrote in early entries about being unable to quiet her mind and simply look. Later she wrote about the heightened sense of self and about the inspiration she experienced when observing beauty in nature:

It is easy to feel alone in the forest. It is easy to look at something and feel like you are the first to acknowledge its beauty. The feeling of finding out something first is empowering. We feel special about ourselves. We want to prove to ourselves that we are better than we believe to be true.

While some find a heightened sense of self, others write about feeling themselves to be a part of something greater. The boy who had previously written about feeling safe and content in his spot in the woods writes further:

Without even thinking about it the muscles in my eyes relax as I take in more than what's just right in front of me. I seem to be seeing everything as one thing and not seeing everything as separate.

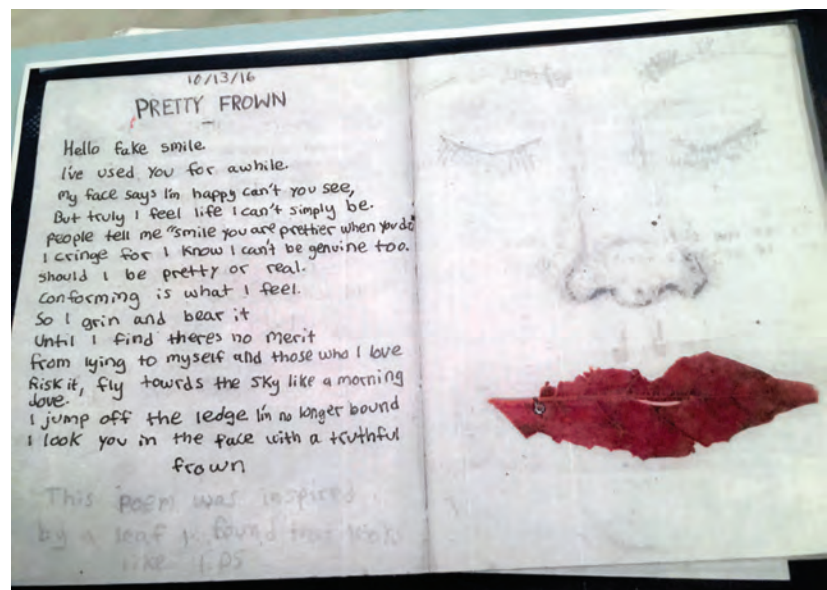
There may be no higher, more important capacity than being able to look at the world with this type of vision—a vision that dissolves barriers and separation and allows one to see the great unity, the great interconnectedness. With a practice of quiet observation that heightens our vision, our awareness oscillates between self and cosmos, independence and interdependence.

For another girl, an autumn leaf at her feet leads to a moment of self-revelation. In the leaf she sees the shape of human lips. That image leads her back to the ideas of authenticity and self-trust that we have been discussing in our study of "Self-Reliance." From this place of attention and imagination, she writes a poem about the pressure

she often feels to smile and "look pretty" rather than letting her true feelings show. "Pretty Frown" emerges—a lovely synthesis of thought, attention, and imagination.

According to Rudolf Steiner, our highest sense as human beings is the "sense of Ego," or the ability to perceive the higher Self of another person. If the highest sense we can educate is

this sense of the Other, then this block can indeed be a pinnacle experience for our twelfth-grade students. We hope that they leave our school and go out into the world with the ability to not only trust themselves and to trust others, but also to intuit the mystery and sacredness of every human being. Writing about Emerson's insistence that wisdom can emerge from moments of solitude, in which we allow ourselves to truly listen to what our soul wants to teach us, a young girl concludes, "Maybe there is something profound in humans that we need to slow down and listen to. . . ."



An introspective poem inspired by a fallen leaf

Developing the ability to attend leads us all to love: to love our world and our fellow human beings, and to love the wisdom that resides within us and, as Emerson would say, envelops us. Achieving these three loves may in itself constitute a life well lived. Developing this ability might help eliminate the depression, loneliness, and alienation that are prevalent in our young people's world. Many adults spend decades reading the works of the most sacred and inspired authors, undertaking self-development programs and practices, trying to find the peace and fulfillment that this kind of love brings. Perhaps the answer is simple (though not easy) and hidden (yet right in front of us). Perhaps it is simply a matter of quiet, undisturbed attention.

This, to me, is reassuring. Many years ago, when I taught very young children, I delighted in their ability to be present, to notice the fairies under leaves, and to listen with rapt attention to stories of golden keys. It is reassuring to realize that we meet our students as small children in their inherent state of oneness with the world, and then we guide them through the years of standing apart from that world, analyzing and interpreting data and examining the "facts" as they have materialized and shifted through the ages. Finally, when they have weighed and measured and learned and developed and are ready to leave us, it is especially reassuring to know that we can help them



"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined."

"I find it wholesome to be alone.... We need the tonic of wilderness."

—Henry David Thoreau
1817–1862

rediscover the immeasurable power of attention to self and to nature. That, in fact, is the Golden Key. ◉



JUDY WACHLER, a native of Chicago, has been teaching English, humanities, drama, and French in Waldorf high schools since 2006. Prior to that, she was a class teacher, taking a class through grades one to eight from 1992 to 2000. She holds a BA in French and elementary education, as well as an MA in French literature and pedagogy. She received her Waldorf teacher training in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and at the Center for Anthroposophy in Wilton, New Hampshire. This article references her many years teaching the Transcendentalist block at High Mowing School in Wilton. She is currently residing in Michigan and working with schools as a consultant, evaluator, and guest teacher for humanities blocks.

Bärtges, continued from page 39

English teachers who take note of Rudolf Steiner's careful indications about the inner life of the adolescent have the joy of choosing the topics that bring to the students what T.S. Eliot calls the "objective correlatives" of literature. Those are the images that will reverberate most deeply in the soul of the student at his or her particular age. I am pleased to see that the essays of my eleventh-grade students reveal not only their strongly emerging identities and their capacity for moral judgment but also a growing security in the art of language, a play with rhetoric, and the knowledge that the forms into which we place our words can represent the deepest truths. ◉



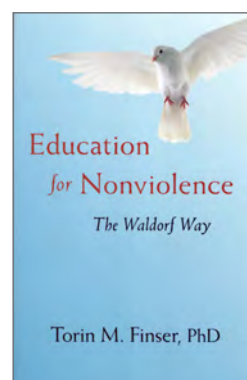
CAROL BÄRTGES teaches English and drama in the high school of the Rudolf Steiner School of New York City. She has spent her life at the school, being a graduate herself and having two children who attended as well. For many years, Carol served as the AWSNA representative for the Mid-Atlantic region and continues to mentor and consult with schools across the country. This summer, she will return to Seattle, where she will be teaching speech at the Sound Circle Waldorf teacher training program. Carol has a BA in English from Williams College, an MA in English, and an MPhil in comparative literature.

Book Review

Education for Nonviolence The Waldorf Way

146 pages • \$16.00 • SteinerBooks

BY TORIN M. FINSER, PhD Reviewed by Ronald E. Koetzsch



Almost one hundred years ago, a few months after the end of World War I, Emil Molt, a factory director in Stuttgart, Germany, asked Rudolf Steiner a question: “Is there a form of education that will create human beings who will not make war?” Steiner answered in the affirmative. Molt then asked, “Will you help me create a school based on such an education?” Steiner again answered in the affirmative. Just months later, in September 1919, the first Waldorf school was opened and Waldorf Education was born.

Torin Finser has served Waldorf Education for over forty years, first as a class teacher, then as director of the Waldorf Teacher Education Program at Antioch University New England, and later as chair of Antioch’s Education Department. He is a widely known lecturer and consultant and the author of nine other books.

In this very personal book, Finser circles back to the original intent in the founding of Waldorf Education. Troubled by the morass of senseless violence into which humanity seems to be descending, Finser asks several very basic questions: What are the qualities of character that make a person nonviolent? How can we cultivate these qualities in our children and young people? What are the ways in which Waldorf Education helps develop these qualities?

The book is far-ranging, and Finser touches on many profound subjects. One chapter, titled “Evil,” asks and seeks to answer the question: What can we do to overcome evil? Another, simply titled “Boys,” deals in depth with the special challenges boys face in our society. It gives much valuable, practical advice to mothers, fathers, and teachers about how to help boys develop in a wholesome and moral way. There is also a chapter titled “Sustainability,” which deals with the difficulties Waldorf class teachers face today, fulfilling the awesome task they have taken on—educating a group of children from grade one through grade eight.

But the book’s underlying theme has to do with Waldorf Education and the aspects of Waldorf Education that help children and young people become well-rounded, empathetic, compassionate, tolerant, kind, hospitable, self-sacrificing, and respectful adults. Along the way, Finser focuses on many of the distinctive aspects of life in a Waldorf school. In the chapter “Character Education in Waldorf Education,” he cites factors that can help cultivate character in children and young people. These include:

- a sense of community
- a culture of collaboration and cooperation
- an age-appropriate curriculum
- daily exposure to nature
- limitation of the use of electronic media
- crafts and practical skills that develop self-confidence
- individual attention—the treatment of each child as a unique “miracle”
- involvement in the arts, music, and drama as forms of self-expression
- exposure to the stories and traditions of many different cultures
- parental involvement
- an emotional intelligence and social curriculum through the grades

Two later chapters in the book focus on other key elements of Waldorf pedagogy: “Education of the Senses” and “Inclusive Recreation: Play.”

Finser’s conclusion is clear. Education—and, in particular, Waldorf Education—is the best hope for creating nonviolent individuals and societies. But that is not enough. Finser also advocates political activism regarding education and our responsibility toward children. At the very end, he presents “A Bill of Rights for Children,” which, ideally, would serve as a complement to the Bill of Rights, contained in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Rudolf Steiner Live On Stage!

This spring, LightWeight Theater company has been touring North America with a production of *This War is Not Inevitable*. The play portrays Rudolf Steiner in the last years of World War I as he tries to institute his idea of the Threefold Society—according to which economic life should be ruled by cooperation and mutual concern. Steiner's disappointment in this effort to effect social and economic change led to the founding of the first Waldorf school just after the war. The play is a two-person production. Michael Burton, dramatist, actor, and speech artist, wrote the play and acts the part of Rudolf Steiner. The other performer is Christian Peterson, a Waldorf alumnus and trained actor.

LightWeight Theater will be touring again in the United States and Canada from September to

November of this year. There is a fifty-minute version of the play specifically for Waldorf high school audiences. It requires no special lighting or staging and has proved to be very effective with students.



Individuals, schools, or other organizations wishing to sponsor a full adult performance or the high school version should contact Michael Burton at michaelburton999@yahoo.com.au

A YouTube video of *This War is Not Inevitable* can be viewed at <https://youtube/MsKb4jAS44I>

The World We Live In

The following was written by a Waldorf kindergarten teacher for the benefit of parents at her school. We are not mentioning her name or school, lest one Waldorf school be particularly connected to a phenomenon that is probably present in most.

—R.E.K.

Every day at 10:30 a.m., my class finishes snack and goes outside for free play. As we wait for all the children to put on their jackets and shoes, the ones who are ready sit on the bench outside my classroom. One day, three children were sitting on the bench when they began to talk about their home digital companions, Siri and Alexa.

"I love asking questions to Alexa, and having her tell me jokes!" said one of the children. "She is more fun than my mom and dad."

"Yes!" responded another child. "She never nags me. Besides, Alexa knows everything."

The other child added, "I don't need to look outside to know the weather—Alexa always tells me everything about it."

My jaw dropped in amazement. In my naïve world, I never thought my dear Waldorf kindergartners

would enjoy the company of an electronic device more than the company of their parents. I began to do some research on the topic and found out many other people are troubled by the interactions of young children with the digital world. I began to ponder the repercussions of these types of interactions.

Direct, human-to-human spoken communication is the foundation of family life and life in a school. Through such interactions, children become articulate and polite. They learn how to communicate with and connect to their family, teachers, and fellow students, both in heart and mind.

Interaction with digital devices undermines this healthy, normal development of the child. Alexa and Siri require the use of simple sentences without polite words such as "thank you" and "please." Brief statements and to-the-point information make the device work best. Such interactions are devoid of human warmth and love.

By having these digital devices in our homes and allowing them to replace human-to-human interactions in our daily lives, we are abdicating our responsibility as parents and failing to provide a tremendous positive influence on our children and on their future. We should all take a moment to consider this disquieting reality.

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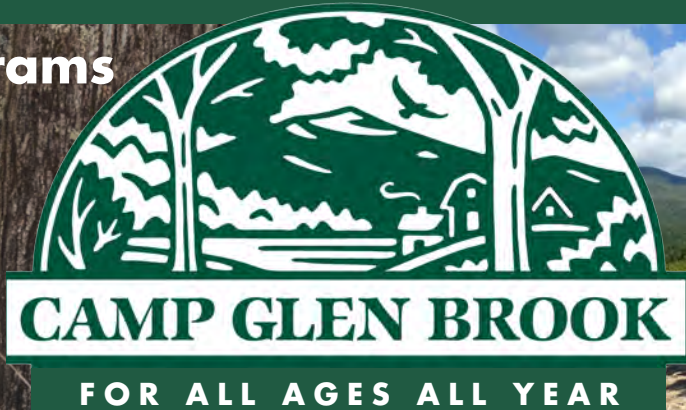
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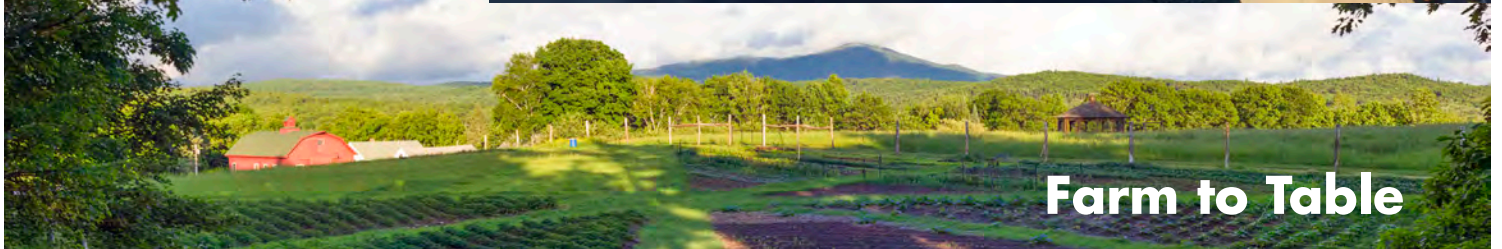


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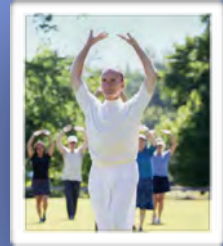
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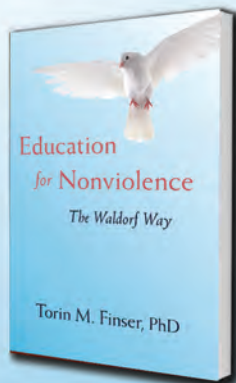
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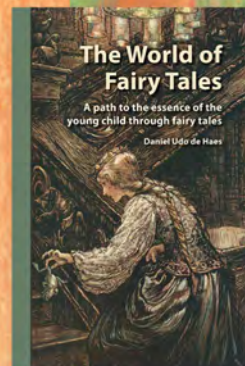
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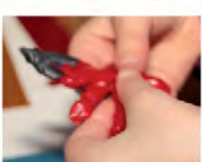
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With Christof Wiechert

*Grade 1: Once Upon a
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With Regine Shemroske

Grade 2: Noble Knights are We!
With Robert Lanier

*Grade 3: Living and Growing on the
Earth: Transforming Guests into Hosts*
With Shannon Wiley

*Grade 4: What are We Now?
Gods, Goddesses, Giants,
Gnomes, Human, or Animal*
With Christopher Sblendorio

*Grade 5: The Turning Point...
the Final Glory of Childhood: The
Youngster as Self-Learner at Last!*
With Patrice Maynard

*Grade 6: The World as Seen by a
Roman, Experienced by a Knight*
With Lynn Thurrell

*Grade 7: In the Face of
Indifference...discover Wonder!*
With Alison Henry

*Grade 8: Revolutions,
Discoveries, and Justice*
With Helena Niiva

*Imaging The Feminine: Veil Painting
the Beauty & Mystery of Love*
With Charles Andrade

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With Elizabeth Auer (weeks 1 & 2)

Eurythmy With Cezary Ciaglo (weeks 1 & 2)

Daily Morning Lectures

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Science With Roberto Trostli (week 1)

Singing and Recorder

With David Gable (week 1)

Movement With Julianna Lichatz (week 1)

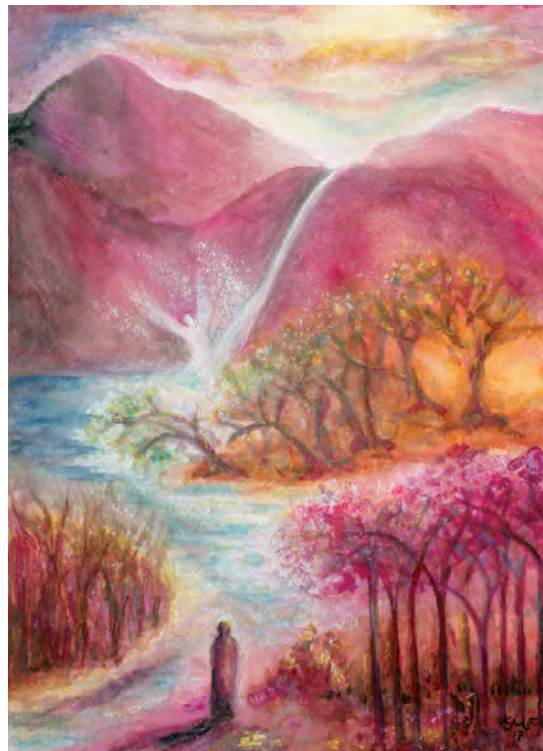
Singing With Meg Chittenden (week 2)

Movement With Connie Helms (week 2)



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July 1st to July 6th

*Our Sensitive Children on the Autism
Spectrum: Spiritual and Practical
Approaches*

With Lakshmi Prasanna, MD

*School of Elemental Beings:
Learning to Speak with Nature*
With Karsten Massei

*Exploring Star Wisdom:
Cosmic Evolution, Biography,
and Birth Charts*
With Brian Gray

*Fundamentals of Anthroposophy:
Observation, Contemplation, and
Self Development*
With Signe Motter and the Faculty of CfA

*The Roadmap to Literacy: Creating an
Artistic and Effective Language Arts
Curriculum in the Lower Grades*
With Janet Langley

*Strengthening the Whole Class:
Foundations for Academic Progress*
With Jeff Tunkey

*The Art of Teaching Mixed and
Combined Grades: A Focus on the
Lower Grades*
With Scott Springer

*The Art of Teaching Mixed and
Combined Grades: A Focus on the
Upper Grades*
With Ian Chittenden

Projective Geometry
With Jamie York

Living Thinking
With Michael D'Aleo

*Communication and
Dispute Resolution*
With John Cunningham, Cat Gilliam,
and Leonore Russell

*Working with Polarities in Copper
and Iron: Experiencing Empathy
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With Daniel and Colleen O'Connors

*Painting out of the Color: Pastel
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