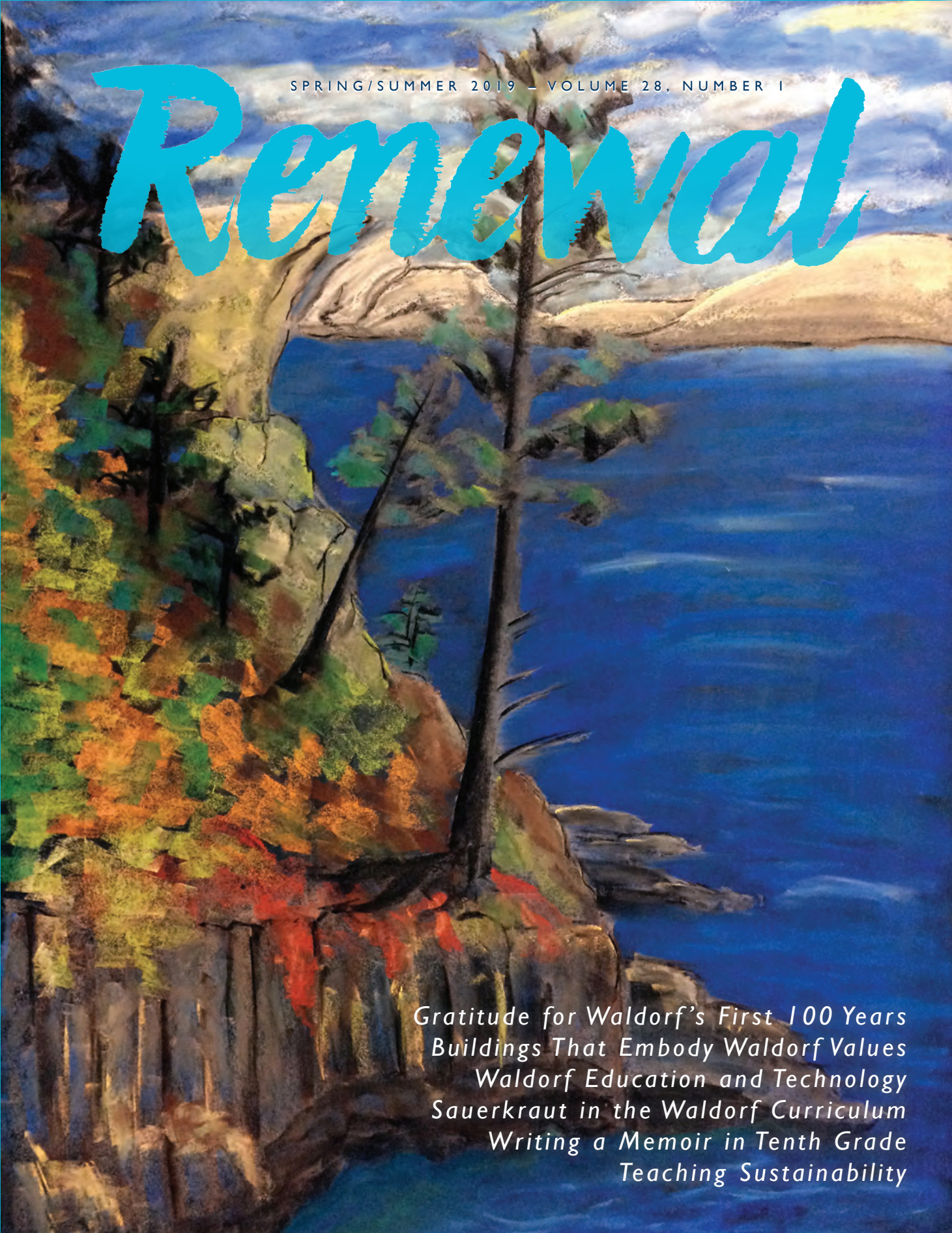




SPRING/SUMMER 2019 – VOLUME 28, NUMBER 1

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Buildings That Embody Waldorf Values  
Waldorf Education and Technology  
Sauerkraut in the Waldorf Curriculum  
Writing a Memoir in Tenth Grade  
Teaching Sustainability*

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

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# A New Five-Year AWSNA Strategic Plan

The celebration of a century of Waldorf Education begins this fall. The best way for us, as an association of Waldorf schools and institutes, to prepare for the next one hundred years is to have a vision and a strategy for the strengthening and advancement of Waldorf Education in North America. To that end, AWSNA will launch a new five-year strategic plan in the summer of 2019. The previous strategic plan was implemented from 2014 to 2018. The strategic planning process is being led by the Executive Team of AWSNA with affirmation by the Leadership Council and approval by the Board of Trustees.



One of the core values of the Association is collaboration in leadership and decision-making. Thus, the process for developing the new plan has and will continue to involve input from all key individuals and groups in the Association. The process actually began in the fall of 2017 with the identification by the Executive Team

of some of the strategic priorities for the Association. In January 2018, the Board of Trustees and Leadership Council of AWSNA completed a SWOT analysis—strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats—for the identified priorities. During the remainder of 2018, input was gathered from all stakeholders in the Association: school and institute delegates, the administrative network of AWSNA, the Leadership Council, and the Board of Trustees.

Along with developing the strategic priorities, objectives, and goals, the leadership has focused on “innovating for the next 100 years” as an overarching theme for the strategic plan. The stability and growth of our schools, institutes, and Association is predicated on our collective ability to address real issues facing our communities, acting from an impulse appropriate for the time and place. We need to respond to the new and ever-changing conditions in classrooms and in school communities and, through research and collaboration, bring forth new impulses in Waldorf Education.

At present, four strategic priorities have been identified for the next several years. They are:

### **1. Enhance and strengthen teacher quality**

Many factors contribute to student achievement, but research indicates that among school-related factors, teachers have the greatest influence on student learning. Thus, it is critical that we take steps to ensure that talented, creative, and committed educators enter the Waldorf teaching profession, that they are well prepared for the classroom, and that they receive ongoing professional development.

### **2. Strengthen school and institute capacities for increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)**

Waldorf Education is founded on the absolute dignity of each human being. It is intended to be relevant for all children. Our schools value diversity, including, but not limited to, diversity in race, religion, social and economic class, and sexual identity. Schools strive for all members in the community to feel that they are full, equal, and important members of that community, and that the curriculum, pedagogy, and festival life of the school are relevant to them.

### **3. Strengthen skills and capacities of school leaders**

In a Waldorf school, the faculty, administrative staff, and board of trustees work collaboratively in administering and leading the school. The decision-making, social, and leadership skills of all involved are crucial for the healthy, synergistic, and effective governance of the school.

### **4. Celebrate 100 years of Waldorf Education and look forward to the next 100 years**

Waldorf100 provides us with an exciting and fun opportunity to celebrate the history and impact of Waldorf Education throughout the world and to enhance its visibility and reach. The Association is planning various events to mark the anniversary. Also, member schools have been encouraged to mark the centennial in some way, either on their own, or in cooperation with other Waldorf schools. The Association will also support and participate in celebratory events in other parts of the world. The centennial will help deepen our awareness of and connection to the worldwide Waldorf movement. It is a significant opportunity to recommit to Waldorf Education and its goal of social and cultural transformation. ☉

—Stephanie Rynas, MBA  
AWSNA, Executive Director, Operations and  
Member Resources

## An Exercise in Gratitude

We are about to celebrate the centennial of Waldorf Education. Begun in Stuttgart, Germany, shortly after World War I, Waldorf Education today is a thriving international movement. We can look ahead with confidence and optimism to the future. And we can also look to the past and present—with deep gratitude to the countless individuals and groups who have been and who are part of the movement. They have helped create and sustain an important educational, social, and cultural initiative. They include:

♦ Rudolf Steiner, who formed the core idea of a new approach to education early in his career as a spiritual teacher and cultural visionary and waited patiently—for over ten years—until he could incarnate those ideas in an actual school for children.

♦ Emil Molt, factory owner in Stuttgart, who asked Rudolf Steiner if there were an education that could help children become adults who would not make war, and then helped Steiner establish just such a school.

♦ The teachers at the first school in Stuttgart, most of whom were established and successful professionals and intellectuals, who abandoned their careers to teach at the pioneer school.

♦ The committed pioneers who spread Waldorf Education, first to the other European countries, then to North America (New York, 1928), and ultimately around the world, so that today there are 1092 schools in sixty-four countries, including China, Brazil, Russia, Australia, India, and Kenya.

♦ The founders of each of those schools around the world. Some were Waldorf educators from elsewhere, but most have been local parents and teachers with a desire and a will to create a Waldorf school.

♦ The Pedagogical Section of the School for Spiritual Science, which has guided and supported the worldwide Waldorf movement from its home at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland.

♦ The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA), based in Longmont, Colorado, which guides and supports Waldorf Education in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

♦ The teachers—early childhood, grades, high school, and specialty—who have devoted themselves to the full, healthy development—in head, hands, and heart—of their students.

♦ School administrative and maintenance staff, who have helped keep schools efficient, well-organized, solvent, and clean.

♦ The teacher training institutes and the faculty in those institutes, who have strived to prepare aspiring Waldorf teachers for a unique, challenging, and satisfying vocation.

♦ The board members of schools and institutes, who have volunteered their time and talents in support of the schools and teacher training institutes.

♦ The parents who have entrusted their children to a Waldorf school and have selflessly given time, energy, and financial resources to support the school. Also, those grandparents and other family members who have shared this commitment.

♦ The children who attended a Waldorf school and, in addition to learning to read, write, do math, and observe and study nature, also learned to knit, do eurythmy, sing, play an instrument, perform on stage, paint, sculpt, garden, and see the beauty in the world, thereby brightening their own lives and ours.

♦ The educators and public officials who have made the education available in the Public Waldorf movement.

♦ The businesses that have produced and made available the necessary accessories to Waldorf Education, including beeswax crayons, wooden toys, silk fabrics, and natural dyes. Many of those businesses have financially supported AWSNA and/or individual schools.

♦ The writers, editors, and publishers who have produced books and magazines about Waldorf Education, including all the people who have made the publication of *Renewal* possible for the past twenty-seven years.

♦ Whatever sublime, benevolent, invisible beings and powers who may exist beyond our perception and who support, protect, and inspire what is good, true, and beautiful. o



Thank you! Spasibo! Arigatō! Gracias! Danke Schön!  
Merci! Xièxiè!

Shuukran Jazilaan! Asante! Dhyanawaad!

—Ronald E. Koetzsch, PhD

## Alumni Forum

# Preserving the Art of Basketry

BY LEAH ROSE HUNT



*Leah Rose Hunt was born into a Waldorf family. She attended a Waldorf-inspired preschool that her mother created in their home. She then went to the Portland Waldorf School where her mother taught kindergarten and her father taught Spacial Dynamics. At age ten, she moved to Northern California with her mother and attended Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm. After graduating from Summerfield in 2001, she spent a gap year in Italy and then attended Santa Rosa Junior College, where she studied art history and environmental economics. Waldorf Education imbued her with a passion for preserving endangered traditional folk arts such as basketry. Today, she lives in a tiny home on the coast in Washington State with her husband and two dogs, and works as a health and environmental consultant.*

—R.E.K.

Before the Industrial Revolution, the practical handcrafts played a central role in daily life in North America and Europe. Gathering the necessary materials and tools, making the craft object—be it a basket, eating utensil, farm implement, or article of clothing—and using the finished product in daily life were important activities that held the community together. Today, this once-central part of human life and creativity has all but disappeared in the so-called developed world. It is also under serious threat among indigenous peoples around the world.

My interest in handcrafts began when I was a child. Both my parents were Waldorf teachers, and my first experience of working with my hands was finger knitting in the Waldorf kindergarten. Throughout my childhood, both at my home and in school, the arts and crafts—and the life of the imagination—were cultivated as much as

reading and other academic skills.

Allowed to dream and imagine as a child, I was able to go through my developmental stages at my own pace. I learned to play the recorder, flute, violin, and guitar, learned woodworking, and did clay modeling, watercolor painting, basketry,

knitting, and crocheting before the age of fifteen. I sometimes longed for a more “mainstream” experience. However, in my adulthood, those skills and experiences have greatly enriched my life. My growing up was also blessed with much oral lore—creation myths, fairy tales, and legends from many cultures—and their primordial imaginations and wisdom have lived and grown within me since then.

My family life, imbued with the values and practices of Waldorf Education, was a key factor. As C.W. Sullivan III writes, “The family is the first folk group within which children learn traditional materials.” Routines, family practices, habits, and customs were first introduced to me through my family and my early education. Imaginative play, ceremonies to celebrate the seasons, and the experience of nature were key elements in our home life. According to Rudolf Steiner, “We can find nature outside us only if we have first learned to know her within us.”

Rudolf Steiner taught that thinking, feeling, and willing are the three central activities of the human soul and that, in the developing child, each must be fostered and exercised. I was fortunate in that I was encouraged to seek knowledge, my feelings were honored, and I had opportunities to do what my mother calls, to this day, “will work.” “Willing” means our desire to achieve that which we set our minds to—to realize in activity and practice what we imagine. For me as a child, this included cross-country skiing, collecting sticks for a fire, using a bucket to move dirt, and making sandcastles. In the garden at school, a student having a difficult time would be tasked with double-digging a garden bed. This allowed the expression of will through



*A peck basket (left) and a harvest basket, both made from willow, using the twining technique*

manual labor, and the strenuous, repetitive work calmed the mind. This lesson became useful to me as I grew and had hard days of my own.

I believe that my love for working with my hands has enabled me to appreciate cultural practices of the past. Until recently, civilizations have depended upon the creation and use of handmade objects. Today, the ancient crafts seem obsolete and anachronistic. I believe they are of great importance to us individually and to our cultural life. I hope to continue to develop these skills, and teach them to others as well.

Recently I interviewed my mother, Ronni Sands, about the art of basket weaving. She was once my teacher, and she has both a deep appreciation of her craft and a unique understanding of it. One term she uses in her class is “Finger Intelligence.” She explains that there are many nerve endings in our fingers, and, as signals are sent to the brain, new neural pathways are formed. Repetition and improvement in dexterity develop those highways of information. Through this highly tactile work, “the fingers begin to hear the materials speak.” Adjustments in the material are communicated to the brain and indications come from the brain on how to proceed. In weaving a basket, the basic pattern—*over, under, over, under*—creates a pattern in the brain and an inner sense of balance, beauty, and well-being.



*An egg basket, made of honeysuckle, cedar roots, and iris leaves*

My mother teaches basketry to middle and high school students, who often struggle with identity issues. She holds that learning to make a basket can help strengthen the adolescent's sense of self. The construction of a basket resembles the student's own incar-

nation into the physical body. The forming of rim and ribs, spokes and sides, is an analog of the human body coming into form. Also, the basket has an inner space and an outer space. This corresponds to the student's own inner space or self as distinct from what lies outside. Thus, the basket is a kind of mirror for the student.

Basket making also can school sensitivity to “the other.” The materials resist being shaped, and the student must work to create a form that is both functional and pleasing. He/she must be sensitive to and respond to

what is outside and learn to relate to “the other” in a positive and creative way.

Basket weaving has been an important activity in almost every civilization in history. The Pomo tribe, an indigenous people in Northern California, had over one hundred different uses, both ceremonial and practical, for baskets. Baskets were used for storing personal items, transporting foraged food, carrying burdens, storing seeds, hunting, fishing, winnowing grain, carrying water, carrying babies, building homes and fences, cooking, and in performing religious ceremonies. A similar dependence on handwoven baskets can be found in civilizations throughout history and around the world. In many cultures, making baskets was a social event. Members of the community gathered, sat in a circle, and, as they wove their baskets, told stories, shared experiences, and exchanged bits of news. In this activity, useful products were created and the social fabric was strengthened.

These skills and traditions, completely lost to the peoples of the First World, are in danger of disappearing among indigenous peoples as well. As native peoples have assimilated into modern society, the ceremonies and arts of the community have diminished in practice. One can buy an industrially produced basket, rather than go through the trouble of making one by hand. But the art of basketry, like other traditional crafts and arts, still has a substantial value for all people. As we become more and more distanced from nature, we are also less nurtured by the arts associated with the natural world around us. Basket weaving can help us regain the creativity and the ability to work with our hands that have been compromised by technology and modern life.

Without committed teachers and interested students, basketry and other folk crafts and arts—passed down for generations—will be lost forever. It is up to the current generation to cultivate and perpetuate that which came before us. True ambassadors of the crafts and new individuals carrying them on are needed to preserve these arts. As I begin to see both the natural world and the spirit world through the eyes of a weaver, I see that these elements of traditional culture are extremely valuable, and I am determined to help ensure that they are preserved and passed on to future generations. ☺



*Leah Rose Hunt in Amsterdam*

# Sauerkraut in the Waldorf Curriculum

BY JESSICA CRAWFORD, MA

The work of the Waldorf class teacher is based on an understanding of the natural development of the child. Applying this understanding pedagogically, the teacher seeks to engage the students in a manner appropriate to their stage of development. Children, particularly children in the early grades, learn best through direct, hands-on, creative activities. Through such experiences, they feel a meaningful connection between themselves and the outer world.

Part of the third-grade curriculum focuses on how human beings in different parts of the world traditionally built their homes and clothed and fed themselves, relying upon what was available in their environment. We explore gardening and farming, animal husbandry, and food preservation—key aspects of human survival and of present-day life on our planet. To involve the children in a practical, experiential way, we start by planting a garden.

For about one week in the spring of my class's second-grade year, my twenty-eight students and I walked daily from the school to a house two blocks away. The owner had generously donated part of her yard for our use. The students carried shovels, rakes, and hoes, and pulled a wagon filled with bags of compost and mulch. First, we removed a thick layer of wood chips from the

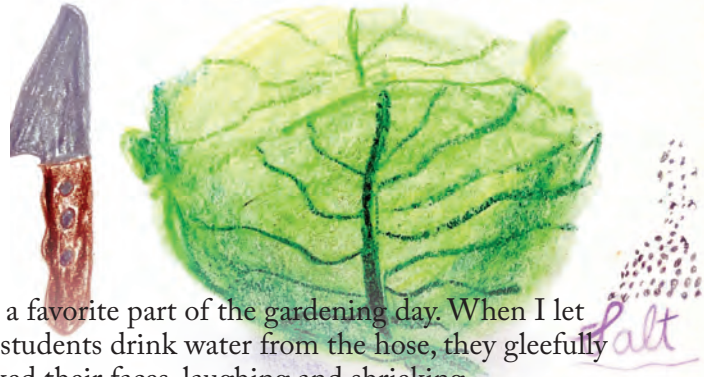


*The writer's students, as second graders, plant in the spring a garden whose bounty they will harvest months later as third graders.*

ground. Next, we pulled up lots of prickly, stubborn thistles, turned over the soil, and worked in bags and bags of compost. Then, after all that hard work and sweat, came the exciting moment—the planting of the seeds and

seedlings. We planted herbs in a spiral. We set tomato and pepper plants and carrot and cabbage seeds in the soil in rows. We also planted marigolds to discourage marauding rabbits. Washing up with the garden hose

Cabbage, salt, and Time =  
Sauerkraut!



was a favorite part of the gardening day. When I let the students drink water from the hose, they gleefully soaked their faces, laughing and shrieking.

We watered, weeded, and inspected the garden a few times over the next weeks until school ended for the year, each time looking for the first tender sprouts with great anticipation. During the summer, the families



*A refreshing drink and splash after hard work in the garden*

and I took turns tending the growing plants. In the fall, the students—now third graders—and I returned to the garden and marveled at how it had completely transformed in just a few months of sunshine and water. We harvested everything and ate most of the vegetables raw, right there in the classroom, as fresh and delicious additions to our lunches. We tied sprigs of oregano, thyme, and mint together for drying in the classroom. These the children took home to share with their families.

On a table at the back of the classroom, we created an “altar” to farming and food preservation. On it sat a dehydrator, in which we dried cranberries flavored with orange zest. At each end of the table perched a hand-powered grain mill. The students used the mills to grind into flour the grains—wheat and barley—grown in the school's tiny garden. We used the wheat flour

to make cinnamon buns and the barley flour to make traditional, unyeasted flat bread.

The cabbages from the garden had a special destiny: they were to become sauerkraut. The students cut the cabbages into small pieces, put the pieces into bowls, liberally salted the chopped leaves, and massaged them by hand. We observed how the tough and rubbery leaves became much softer, and how, magically, a pool of liquid appeared at the bottom of the bowl, even though we had added no water! We tasted the leaves, which were very salty and not at all fermented yet. Next, we packed the leaves tightly inside jars, poured in the natural brine, placed stone weights on top of the mixtures, and tightened the lids. Finally, we placed the jars on the altar table at the back of the room. Over the next days, we watched bubbles form in the brine and “burped” the jars a few times, by loosening the lids to release excess air.

At last, after three days of waiting, the cabbage was ready to taste again. We opened the jars, and the room was filled with a pickley, wonderfully stinky smell. The raw cabbage had transformed into tangy sauerkraut!



*The autumn harvest included carrots, peppers, beets, and cabbages.*

the world who feed themselves with the bounty of the earth, even through the cold, hard winter.

There was an artistic element in this block, as well. The students drew pictures of and wrote about cabbages and making sauerkraut, as well as other forms of food preservation, such as drying and canning.

The gardening and sauerkraut-making gave the children a real experience of the world—how people have lived for centuries and how many people all over the world *still* live. They saw how planning, cooperation, and hard work are necessary to create the food on

which our lives depend. Also, they saw that cabbage has water hidden in it, that salt has a transformative power, that fermentation changes the way foods taste and makes them lasting and storable, and that the interaction of two ingredients (salt and cabbage) can create something entirely new.



*The cabbages, transformed into tangy, healthy sauerkraut*

Later in their school careers, the students probably will study the chemistry behind what they experienced as third graders. They may also learn that fermented foods are digested differently than non-fermented foods, that the microbes causing the fermentation process have health benefits, and that the eating of traditional fermented foods may be related to increased life expectancy.

Meaningful, enjoyable, soul-nourishing experiences such as growing cabbage and making sauerkraut are an opportunity for the children to engage with the world around them and to contribute to that world with their own activity and work. These experiences also provide fertile soil in which critical, independent, and creative thinking—essential capacities for making wise and moral choices as young adults—may grow and bloom. o



JESSICA CRAWFORD is a grades teacher at City of Lakes Waldorf School in Minneapolis, where she has been teaching since 2003. Her current class is in the sixth grade. She has a BA in anthropology from St. Olaf College and an MA in fine arts from the University of Oregon, Eugene. She taught photography and design at the college level before discovering Waldorf Education and the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. She completed the Waldorf teaching certificate program at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California. Jessica's three adult children are all graduates of City of Lakes Waldorf School. She lives in Minneapolis and enjoys spending time in nature, writing poetry, and fermenting all kinds of food and drink.

# Revisiting Waldorf Traditions in the Teaching of Art

BY VAN JAMES



*Since Waldorf Education was founded one hundred years ago, many distinctive pedagogical practices have become standard in Waldorf schools. Most of these are based on specific indications or general principles expressed by Rudolf Steiner in the founding of the original school in Stuttgart, Germany. Some, however, have a less clear origin. Even after a hundred years, it is necessary and important to examine and review these practices. Here, a veteran Waldorf art teacher examines two cherished and longstanding traditions in the teaching of art in Waldorf schools. One is the teacher's chalkboard drawings, a familiar element in all classrooms, at least through grade eight. The other is the emphasis on amorphous watercolor exercises in the early grades.*

—R.E.K.

## Chalkboard Drawings

In first grade, the teacher seeks to guide the unfolding and refinement of the child's learning skills, including those of drawing and painting. The teacher's chalkboard drawings, seen by the child every day at the front of the classroom, are meant to contribute to this process. These colorful visual images complement the teacher's storytelling and other oral presentations. In this way, an oral and visual teaching—what Rudolf Steiner referred to as a musical (audible) and sculptural (pictorial) approach—is practiced.

Out of this has grown the tradition of the Waldorf class teacher spending time in the classroom after school or on the weekend, drawing a beautiful, finished picture on the blackboard for the students to see the next school day. Many hours are often spent on these renderings of fairy tales, legends, historical events, and natural phenomena.

However valuable these drawings are, there is a place in Waldorf Education for chalkboard drawings created in another way—drawings created as the children look on.

In a lecture in 1923, Rudolf Steiner, who often made chalkboard drawings during his talks to illustrate an important concept, said:



*Chalk drawings can evoke the magic of a fairy tale, such as "Star Money" (left) or of a fable, such as "The Fox and the Grapes" (below) . . .*



I have made drawings before your eyes that arose wholly out of each moment. You could see what I meant by every stroke. You could think along with me without any mediation. This is another thing to be included in the teaching of children today. As far as possible avoid finished drawings. As much as possible allow the children to see the drawing proceeding from the moment—allow them to see each stroke as it is born. In this way, the child becomes inwardly involved in the work and we encourage them to become inwardly active. . . . What matters is to lead the children to independence.<sup>1</sup>

So, for Steiner, creating chalkboard drawings in class and in front of the children is pedagogically important. The children are engaged and have a



*. . . or of an historical period—here, the Age of Exploration, studied in the seventh grade . . .*

learning experience when they observe the drawing gradually unfolding, coming into being step by step. Showing the children the steps taken in creating the drawing can be the most helpful way to lead them into drawing or painting a picture. Math, reading, writing, and other subjects are taught by this same step-by-step method.



*. . . or a wonder of nature—here, the reef trigger fish (humuhumunukunukuapua'a) of Hawaii that can be studied as part of the human and animal block in the fourth grade.*



*As part of the astronomy block, the sixth-grade teacher creates, in class, striking images of some of the planets.*

In ancient times, the myths, legends, and historic tales of the community were shared around the magical setting of a campfire, under a dark, star-strewn night sky. In the Waldorf classroom, those same archetypal stories are depicted in visual, pictorial form by chalkboard drawings. These drawings can emerge gradually from the mysterious, night-like darkness of the blackboard as colorful, radiant, starlike pictures shining into the classroom. The drawn picture, like a well-told story, can be experienced by the child as manifesting stage by stage over time with a beginning, middle, and conclusion. Thus, while there is perhaps a place in the Waldorf classroom for the elaborate, finished chalkboard drawing done by the teacher in solitude, there is certainly a need for the in-class drawing done with the students attentively watching.

### Painting in the Early Grades

Starting from kindergarten, Waldorf students are introduced to and learn to use watercolor paints. Much of the painting they do involves color exercises in which the paint is applied and moved by the brush on wet paper without an attempt to form a distinct image or form.

However, in first grade, the exercises in color can gradually move to greater articulation of shape. Proper instruction in blotting wetted paper and wiping the



*A first-grade blue and yellow watercolor study not intended to develop into form*

dipped brush on the edge of the paint jar to get excess fluid out of the bristles are essential factors for this. But the introduction of elementary figurative pictures is also important. These lead the children to an experience and understanding of the letters of the alphabet.

Steiner's indications for painting in the early grades are clear that first-grade painting should be the starting point for pictures that will take on distinct forms:

Right from the start, we give our young pupils the opportunity of working artistically with colors, not only with dry crayons but also with watercolors. In this simple way, we give the child something from which the forms of the letters can be developed.<sup>2</sup>

When introducing writing to the children . . . we must communicate in the form of pictures. This is possible, however, only when we do not begin by introducing the alphabet directly, nor reading as a subject, but when we start with painting. As teachers, we ourselves must be able to live in a world of imagery. . . . First [we work with] a form of drawing with paint (leading the child from color experience to form), out of which writing is evolved. Only then do we introduce reading. . . . One finds that between the second dentition and puberty one has to approach all teaching pictorially and imaginatively, and this is certainly possible.<sup>3</sup>

Painting the letters of the alphabet in first grade can start with a brief story told by the teacher about, for example, a butterfly. Then, with the teacher guiding them, the children bring color to their papers, painting simple forms that grow and change and ultimately become a big, beautifully bright butterfly



*In the wings of this butterfly, a hint of the letter B*

shape, the wings of which suggest the letter B. Then the children draw the butterfly with crayon into a lesson book and write the letter B alongside the drawing as part of the story. Eventually, the children write out the



*After painting the butterfly, the children draw a more formed version with crayons.*



*In the next step, the children write out in words what they have drawn.*

little story and read their own writing aloud. This completes a cycle that goes from oral storytelling to painting, drawing, writing, reading, and retelling of the story.

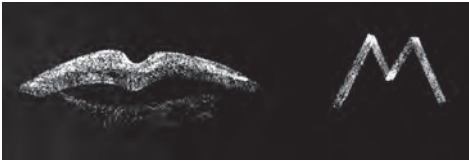
Rudolf Steiner gave several letter-pictures as examples of this process, including B for bear, F for fish, and M for mouth. However, he encouraged teachers to make up their own picture-to-letter figures, adding that these need not be objectively accurate but should be original in order to be fully alive and to engage the children.

Don't rely on what other people have done in the past. Set your own free but controlled imagination to work, and have faith in what you find out for yourself.<sup>4</sup>

It will always give you joy, albeit a quiet joy, to transfer to a letter the shape you have yourself made out of some animal or plant. And your joy will live in what you make out of your pupil.<sup>5</sup>



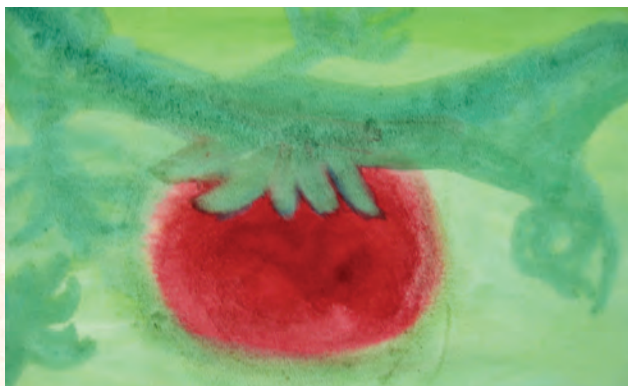
We should not underestimate the powerful effect that the teacher's own pictorial imagination and originality can have on the student.



The point here is that the painting of plants and animals, even if quite simple in shape, is clearly appropriate, beginning in first grade. While water-color paintings without form have a place in the first three grades, the painting of letter-pictures and other forms is very important. Abstract concepts and symbols such as numbers and letters are best brought to the child first by way of practical, concrete learning and an artistic, creative process. Young children learn best when their will and feeling life are engaged, not when we appeal to their undeveloped intellectual capacities. By activating the will, engaging the limbs through rhythmic activity, and stimulating the feeling life through pictorial imaginations and our own enthusiasm, we awaken the child's thinking capacity. Rudolf Steiner said:

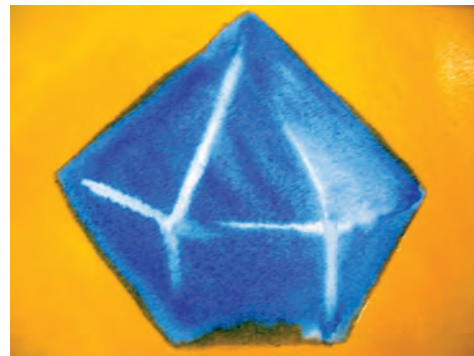
We shall allow writing to arise gradually out of painting and drawing. Step by step the forms of writing will arise out of the forms of our drawings, and then we shall move on to reading.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, we teachers can reconsider perhaps how and when we create our beautiful chalkboard drawings



*Early-grade painting exercises can lead to specific forms, such as these images from the natural world: a tomato plant . . .*

and when we introduce form in painting exercises of the early grades. There are other common practices in the teaching of art in Waldorf schools—and, no doubt, in other disciplines—that need to be reviewed, researched, and evaluated. As we enter into our second century, doing this will keep Waldorf Education alive, relevant, and able to meet the true needs of children. o



*. . . and a crystal.*

## Notes

1. Rudolf Steiner, lecture given June 22, 1922, cited in L. Rinder, ed., *Knowledge of Higher Worlds: Rudolf Steiner's Blackboard Drawings* (Berkeley, CA : University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, 1997), 23.
2. Rudolf Steiner, *What is Waldorf Education?* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2003), 75.
3. Ibid., 111.
4. Rudolf Steiner, *Discussions with Teachers* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1967), 22.
5. Rudolf Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2000), 66.
6. Ibid., 130.



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. He 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 Consciousness*; *The Secret Language of Form: Visual Meaning in Art and Nature*; and *Drawing with Hand, Head, and Heart: A Natural Approach to Learning the Art of Drawing*.

# Preparing Our Children for a Sustainable Future

## Gardening and Nature Education in the Waldorf Curriculum

BY RONNI SANDS

Today, the natural world seems to be on the edge of an abyss. The pollution of the atmosphere, water, and soil, the phenomenon of climate change, and the increasing occurrence of natural disasters—wildfires, hurricanes, and earthquakes—point to a deep, unprecedented crisis. Children and young people look to their parents and teachers for guidance in how to respond to these world conditions. They need the adults and teachers around them to model true love and care of planet Earth.

To help our children develop the deep love of nature that will enable them to participate in solving the current crisis, we adults ourselves need to develop that deep love of nature. We can each find a way to let nature speak to us. By spending time in nature, we can establish a deep relationship to it. Plant observation, sketching a particular plant, flower, or tree, sitting in silence in a certain place every day, or walking in meditation in the woods—these are effective ways of experiencing nature's beauty and wisdom.

One interesting exercise involves the focused experience of nature through each of the senses. Go to a forest or other place in nature—a meadow or an ocean beach, perhaps. First focus on what you see, on the variety of forms and colors. Then close your eyes and just listen. You may hear the songs of birds, the wind rustling the leaves of trees, or crickets and frogs

sounding their songs to their community. Then focus on the scents and smells in the air, and then on the different textures you experience when you touch a plant or a tree or the soil.

This same exercise can be done by children—even very young children—and by adolescents. Taking time to use and pay attention to each sense allows the child to go from self-centeredness to nature-centeredness. Immersed in nature, children can sense the special quality of life that dwells there. A transformation begins to take place in their soul. They can breathe in the beauty and mystery of the natural world and all its life processes. Interest and curiosity are aroused and over time



*A walk in nature is a typical part of life in a Waldorf kindergarten.*

lead to a deeper kind of knowing—an understanding of the interrelatedness of all things and a caring love for the totality of nature. Children who learn to interact with nature from a young age develop lifelong habits of respecting, enjoying, and protecting the natural world.

The Waldorf curriculum and, in particular, the gardening curriculum help children establish a positive relationship with nature. In the Waldorf kindergarten, every day the children are immersed in nature and the elemental world. There is typically a daily walk in nature. Outdoor play is a large part of the day and includes the exploration and utilization of sand, wood, water, soil, rocks, trees, and (little) dams. In the school



*Children and adults both can benefit from sitting quietly and observing nature.*

garden, the children help plant and water, and watch the bees and butterflies. They discover worms and other decomposers in the compost pile. The nature stories, fairy tales, seasonal songs, and circle games that punctuate each day encourage the love and care of nature and of Mother Earth.

A central aim of the first- and second-grade curriculum is to help the children experience that the world is full of goodness, truth, and beauty. Taking the children daily into nature and allowing them to experience all that can be seen, heard, smelled, and touched helps them to experience that the part of the world we call nature is good, true, and beautiful. From this comes care and respect for everything—the ultimate basis of sustainability. The children also take part in the life of the garden. They learn to weed, bring food scraps to the compost pile, and save seeds for the next growing season.

As third graders come to a stronger sense of self, they can be given the real work of caring for the garden. Provided with tools and instruction, they now engage



*Third graders weeding*

their own will to perform important tasks. They loosen the soil, plant seedlings, water the beds, pull weeds, and, at the end of the growing season, harvest and enjoy the bounty of the Earth. They may make bread from the wheat they have grown. The children experience the processes of nature and see that everything has a beginning and a source. They may even ask: Is the source sustainable?

In the fourth-grade geography block, the children explore the local natural environment by getting to know the nearby rivers, creeks, woods, and meadows, as well as the pathways to and from their school. They usually make a map of the local area and thus deepen their sense of place as well as sense of direction. They

study local history and thus gain an understanding of what the area was like in the past. This is a good time for them to become caretakers of the local environment through activities such as removing litter, planting trees, counting birds, and building trails.

The fifth grade is a time to learn about the plants, wild and domesticated, in the local environment. Fifth graders observe and draw plants in the garden and in nearby natural areas. They come to understand that throughout history, changing patterns of vegetation have changed the surface of the Earth.

With a foundation in botany, children of this age can help preserve the diversity that is necessary for the survival of endangered species. Planting certain plants for honeybees, Monarchs, and other butterflies helps the children to understand the need for natural habitats for all creatures. This work gives the fifth grader insight into the processes of nature and a sense of purpose.

For the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, the garden is a neutral place to become less self-conscious and to focus on the work needed. Students learn to use garden tools in an efficient and precise way. Students carry out their tasks, breathe deeply, and touch the Earth. They begin to have solid ground beneath their feet, a sense of



*A fifth grader's drawing of a dandelion*



*Twelfth graders working in the garden at Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm, Santa Rosa, California*

accomplishment, and a true sense of self. The greater the challenge is, the better. Double digging, splitting wood, planting, and harvesting give the students a sense for the life forces around and within them. Growing food at this age teaches sustainability, independence, and



*Learning to take care of the farm animals is an important part of the farming/gardening curriculum.*

self-sufficiency and can lead toward a caring interest in the natural world. Cooking and enjoying the food that they themselves have harvested nourishes their souls as well as their bodies. Food preparation and cooking skills, once mastered, can be used in service to the community, in preparing meals for homeless persons or catering a meal for a schoolwide event.

Once children, particularly adolescents, know that they have the skills to be participants in sustainable daily practices, they have the self-confidence to apply their idealism in practice. They show respect for the Earth's resources and take action to see that those resources are used carefully and then are recycled and reused. They realize that we must take less and use less so that others in the future will have access to needed resources. The students' innate wisdom and their



*A twelfth grader and her two first-grade "buddies" enjoying figs direct from the tree. Seniors and their buddies work together in the garden through the year.*

respect and love for the Earth find expression in the choices they make in their daily lives.

One way that I work with adolescents on sustainability is through a "Green Team." This team is like a club, and students join out of choice and interest. We meet once a week at lunchtime. At the outset, I ask, "What is important to you, and what do you want to do?" The students share their areas of interest and concern. Then we start to put some of their interests together with next steps. Sometimes we bring in a specialist to begin work toward a specific goal. For example, if we want to reduce our waste stream we might call in our garbage hauler and start to consider practical measures. The students initiate and carry out the projects. I am there as a mentor; this gives them more freedom and responsibility. We have taken up many different projects over the years, including a garbage audit, a recycling relay race, replacing paper towels in the bathroom with electric hand dryers, and installing water catchment tanks.



*Members of the high school Green Team clear trash and debris from the banks of Santa Rosa Creek near the school.*

We have a high school Green Team and a seventh/eighth-grade Green Team. Last year, a high school junior helped to lead the seventh/eighth-grade team. She decided to make climate change the focus of her senior project, and during the summer she went to Los Angeles to study with Al Gore and participate in the Climate Reality Project. This year, she has been making presentations to many different groups, including student groups and local city councils, encouraging discussion about and action on climate change. "Climate Literacy" is offered as an elective course in the high school and brings structure to the study of environmental concerns and solutions.

In high school, the students study gardening and farming, nature, and environmental issues from a scientific point of view. They study the carbon cycle, acids and bases, microbiology, the composition of soil, and how to keep the soil vital and life-giving. They learn about



*In an elective course—Earth, Art, Ecology—students use art to focus on environmental concerns. Here, the Earth Mother weeps at how she is being treated.*



*The Earth Mother and all her creatures rejoice when she is treated with care and love.*

statistical data and how to access and analyze it. They study different farming methods—organic, biodynamic, and permaculture—as well as the four methods of plant propagation: seeding, cuttings, layering, and dividing.

The high schoolers also study water and related phenomena and issues. *Watershed, water catchment, water-wise gardening, water table, wetland, water cycle, wastewater, well water, city water, and aquifer* are all terms they learn so as to understand water and its place in nature and in human life.

Tending fruit trees and growing berries, vegetables, and herbs are essential archetypal human skills that give students the possibility of, later in life, raising their own food and being independent, at least in part, of the global food system. The students also study culinary and medicinal herbs, choose several favorites, cultivate those, and do research about them.

Other topics that the students deal with include social justice, hunger, poverty, urban agriculture, eco-economics, forestry, waste streams, and zero waste.



*A student painting depicting the effects of climate change*

An acquaintance with and concern about these issues is part of becoming a true citizen of the world.

With these studies and practical experiences, the twelfth grader is ready to consider the question, “How do I bring all that I have made my own out into the world, and how may I be of service?”

Social and environmental activist Orland Bishop has said:

We are the hosts of a conscious future, a future with the Earth at the center of our hearts, and to which we dedicate our love. The door to this healing future is open.

Today, the environmental crisis calls every person to become a steward and keeper of the Earth, to love and care for the natural world, and to learn how to live with the smallest footprint. We parents and teachers, by providing our children with a model of stewardship, giving them opportunities to learn about and experience nature, and teaching them skills of environmental care, can help this generation become human beings dedicated to the sustainability of nature into the future. ☺



RONNI SANDS *has been a garden teacher at Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm in Santa Rosa, California, for the past 26 years. She teaches biodynamic agriculture, as well as herbal studies, basket weaving, and cooking. She has created a developmentally appropriate garden curriculum for students K–12 and is the coauthor of the book, Growing Sustainable Children, A Garden Teacher's Guide. She and her co-author, Willow Summer, are offering an intensive, three-day garden teacher training at Summerfield this summer, July 6, 7, 8. For more information, please write [figwortrs@gmail.com](mailto:figwortrs@gmail.com)*

## Book Review

# The Adventures of Scoochie Mouse

BY THERESA ROACH MELIA

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARCIA ALLYN NILSSON

This charming children's book features a shy, curious mouse named Scoochie. But it is as much about a young family, their farm, and their idyllic life together. It is also about the spiritual beings who inhabit and enliven their little world.

The day-to-day life of Mom and Dad, older children Tom and Jessica, and baby Lianne is strikingly wholesome. Their day starts with a morning verse/prayer:

*To the Great Lord of Life  
Whose life is our life  
Whose life is all life  
To you we bow and pray.  
To all good helpers  
Of earth, water, fire, and air,  
We bless you for your care  
And give thanks for you  
And for this new day.*

The children spend their days gladly helping with farm chores, swimming in the pond, exploring and observing Nature, playing with their rescue dog Woof, doing hand-crafts, and otherwise enjoying themselves. Although the story takes place in the present time, there is no mention of a television, computer, or cell phone in the home.



*The Christmas tree fairy appears to Scoochie.*

In the evening, the family sings together and often reads a story aloud. Some of these are incorporated into the book, including a Grimm's fairy tale and a story about a group of young knights, both men and women, going off into the world but then finding their way back home. The day ends with the family standing around a lighted candle as Mom recites an evening prayer:

*Our work, our words, our play,  
Our deeds throughout the day  
In us become a light.  
We carry it along 'til stars shine*

*Through the night.  
To the stars we give  
our light,  
Filled with love,  
shining bright.*

A chorus of "Amen" is followed by hugs and kisses all around. In the holiday season, the family celebrates both Hanukkah and Christmas, reading the stories that depict each of the holidays.

The family extends its warmth and love beyond itself. They befriend and then adopt into their home an old, lonely, and malnourished man named Birdie, who has lost his own family. The family's care and love bring Birdie back to health and peace of mind.

Meanwhile, another community of beings, visible and invisible, also is living on the farm. This includes Scoochie, who observes and enjoys vicariously the family life. Scoochie has befriended the farm's chickens to the extent that she often sleeps under Henrietta, one of the hens. This community also includes Spitzer, the gnome lord of the farm, and his many helper gnomes who protect and support all the animals, plants, trees, and rocks. Angels, fairies, and elemental beings—sylphs, undines, and salamanders—are also part of the life on the farm. Scoochie and Spitzer have various adventures together, including going to the city to bring back gnomes in need of the healing energy of life in the country.

Author Theresa Roach Melia, a longtime Waldorf kindergarten teacher, depicts a place, a little world, where—as the back-cover summary observes—the “most important of things are evident in abundance: a deep reverence for the natural world, an abiding kindness toward all creatures, and love and goodness.” It is also a place where all phenomena are interconnected and form a sacred unity.

*The Adventures of Scoochie Mouse* is a testimony for children and a reminder for adults that ultimately the world is good, true, and beautiful.

—R.E.K.



## The adventures of Scoochie Mouse

by Theresa Roach Melia  
Illustrations by Marcia Allyn Nilsson

# Waldorf Education and Technology

## Changing the Narrative

BY JOHN TREVILLION

“Waldorf schools—aren’t they anti-technology?”

At one time or another, most Waldorf teachers have heard this sentiment expressed either as a question or as an assertion by adults or students. Whether we agree with it or not, this is the prevalent narrative in our time. Today, this has a very narrow but significant meaning: Waldorf schools are anti-*digital* technology. In a world increasingly reliant upon digital technology and where digital skills are necessary for being a successful and responsible participant, being perceived as anti-technology does not serve Waldorf Education well.

Are Waldorf schools anti-technology? The short answer is no, they most certainly are not against technology—digital or otherwise. The founder of Waldorf Education, Rudolf Steiner, made it abundantly clear that if we use technology without understanding how it works, we become enslaved to it. Steiner also made clear that the study of technology, as an outcome of and spur to the growth of scientific knowledge, is an important part of the Waldorf curriculum. This surely makes it imperative that we introduce our students to digital technology in a thoughtful and deliberate manner aligned with our principles of child development.

For most of my career, I have taught students of middle school age. As a human being born into the age of the Industrial Revolution, I have felt an enormous responsibility to teach my students about the remarkable times in which we live and the technologies and individuals that have shaped these very times. Like most of my colleagues, however, I have long harbored ambivalent feelings about the digital realm. I make practical use of the technology and am grateful for being able to do so. I am frequently filled with wonder at its “world-at-my-fingertips” possibilities, particularly with the advent of the smartphone. But as far as young people are concerned, I have been deeply aware of the dangers it presents, and I have counseled parents to shield their children as much as possible. “Give them dumb-phones!” has been my advice.



In recent years, however, I have found that response to be insufficient for the following reasons:

1. I experienced direct evidence—from having recently taught two cycles of grades five through eight—that my colleagues and I were falling short in addressing the powerful effects of the digital world on middle school students. The compelling evidence included cyberbullying and sexting. Indeed, it was the appearance of these uncivil behaviors in one of my eighth-grade classes that introduced me to these very terms. Clearly, many of my students were swimming in waters that neither they nor I had charted—nor ever discussed.
2. There is growing evidence that my school, Chicago Waldorf School, has been losing students—particularly in the transition from grade school to high school, and particularly among boys—on account of our lack of an organized, comprehensive approach to the digital realm. We have had classes that involved the use of computer technology, but these classes could not in any sense be described as comprising a coherent computer science education. We were *using* the technology incidentally without much attempt to truly *understand and penetrate* it. Along with several colleagues, I became convinced that my school must find a way to address these issues. How?



*A quarter of all children have experienced cyberbullying.*

To address the need for a healthy introduction to the digital world, many schools have adopted Cyber Civics, a program created by Diana Graber, a parent at Journey School in Orange County, California. This three-year program, designed for students in grades six, seven, and eight, provides a coherent set of lessons aimed at cultivating digital citizenship or, more to the point, citizenship in the age of digitally based social relations. Because of this broad intent, the actual use of computers is not necessarily part of the course. The lesson content is thoughtful and imbued with a sense of fun that engages the students for whom it was designed. Diana Graber came to our school and gave a lengthy workshop providing the rationale of the program and some taste of it to the entire K–12 faculty. Afterward, the

school decided to implement Cyber Civics in the three middle school grades, beginning in September 2018.

The course is currently taught in our school by one teacher, the intention being to give the three-grade curriculum a continuity in terms of content and presentation. However, this will change. There is clear evidence that, generally speaking, the class teacher has the kind of intimate relationship with students that optimizes receptivity to and participation in the Cyber Civics curriculum. Therefore, in the 2019–20 academic year, the class teachers for each grade will present

the program to their own students. They will receive guidance and advice from a supervising teacher, who will oversee the whole three-grade program.

We are also currently examining the question of what, when, and how to introduce instruction in digital skills in the middle grades. Cyber Civics focuses on good citizen behavior rather than the introduction of practical digital skills. At this point, we offer a keyboarding class for the eighth grade but are seriously considering introducing those same skills in sixth grade, and

adding other digital skills—word processing, photo manipulation, and multimedia skills—in the seventh and eighth grades.

To address the need for a genuine penetration of the digital realm, some Waldorf high schools in North America have designed and implemented computer science curricula, spread over three or four years. My school invited Charles Weems to present his thinking on computer science education at the high school level. Dr. Weems is associate professor of computer technology at the University of Massachusetts and teacher of computer science at Hartsbrook Waldorf High School. He is also the author of several articles on teaching computer science at the high school level—in *Renewal* and the *Research Bulletin of Research Institute for Waldorf Education*. Following a full-day workshop in which the entire faculty engaged with Dr. Weems through discourse and practical experiences, the faculty chose to implement the first year (for the ninth grade) of an intended four-year high school computer science

program. In the 2018–19 academic year, this program is being carried by one teacher.

In neither of these initiatives is our school breaking new ground. What may distinguish our programs, however, is that we understand them as part of a new, comprehensive narrative—that, as a Waldorf school, we provide a pathway for our students toward a healthy relationship with digital technology. The teachers of both the middle school Cyber Civics program and the high school computer science program are committed to this narrative. However, we do not see that commitment as sufficient in itself for an effective education. Rather, we see it as essential that the entire faculty understand, support, and be ready to communicate this narrative for the following reasons:

♦ These two programs aimed at middle and high school students, respectively, are the obvious, visible components of the larger “healthy pathway.” Less obviously connected to computer education, but also important, are the aspects of Waldorf Education that counter-balance the students’ engagement with the digital realm. In early childhood and much of the elementary school years, one of these elements is the emphasis on healthy, imaginative, physically active play. Important also, throughout the grades, is the students’ ongoing engagement with the arts, music, wholesome movement (eurythmy and gymnastics), and handcrafts. Another key aspect in the early years is the avoidance in school of screen technologies of all kinds. The debate about when and to what extent children should start using digital devices is alive in the mainstream culture as well as in the Waldorf world. Fortunately, mainstream researchers are developing “slow-tech media guides” to inform the discussions that should take place in every school community about the powerful influence of digital devices on children.

♦ All teachers in a Waldorf school, at every grade level, need to own and communicate their commitment to this positive narrative regarding digital technology. To do otherwise sows confusion and misunderstanding among parents and students as to the school’s



*Eighth-grade keyboarding class at Chicago Waldorf School*



*Tenth graders disassembling a computer*

relationship to digital technology. This is especially true for early childhood and early grades teachers who, for excellent reasons, promote the message that we do our children a great favor by limiting or, better yet, eliminating exposure to screens of all kinds, especially those of computers. This message, motivated by the deepest concern, can have the unintended consequence of delivering the message that “Waldorf schools are anti-technology.”



*Nick Novak, computer science teacher at Chicago Waldorf School, helps tenth graders identify the parts of a computer.*

gesture of antipathy to it will almost certainly fail to inspire our students. This can be challenging. I, for example, resist the many possible modes of engagement that my smartphone makes possible only because it requires effort. I benefit from and am grateful for the help of indulgent friends, colleagues, and students. And, in spite of everything, I hang on to my smartphone.

♦ Each new “breakthrough technology” in history has challenged the human being’s sense of what it means to be human. While strolling in the English countryside in 1803, the poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge chanced upon a functioning steam engine with its whirring centrifugal self-regulator and wondered aloud—sufficiently so for their reaction to become recorded fact—if they were in the presence of a man-made intelligent being. Just twelve years later, the eighteen-year-old Mary Shelley was imagining and writing about a creature “created” by one Dr. Frankenstein and animated by that mysterious, invisible energy known as electricity. After a few more decades, the inventor Charles Babbage devised his “difference engine,” a machine that “could think,” and his colleague, Ada Lovelace, devised the first “computer program.”

With the advent of the modern computer in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the temptation

to believe that “computer intelligence” will match or surpass human intelligence has never been greater. Each new technology presents a new mirror in which to see ourselves—for who (or what) we are and for who (or what) we are not. As an education that devotes itself to and prides itself on “educating free human beings who out of themselves impart purpose and direction to their lives,” we should be helping our students acquire not only practical skills in the use of technology but also a clear understanding of what it is—and is not.

I am convinced that providing a pathway for our students toward a healthy relationship with digital technology is one of the paramount challenges of our time, and one with which Waldorf schools are uniquely prepared to engage. To the extent that we take up this challenge, to the same extent will we fulfill our core mission. To the extent that we avoid this challenge, to the same extent we will risk becoming irrelevant.

Meeting this challenge calls for conversation and research within each of our schools—conversation and research that engage the entire faculty and community. It also calls for conversation among schools, most obviously in conferences. Finally, it calls for a commitment to the challenging but doable task of replacing a long-standing and dubious narrative regarding Waldorf Education and technology with a new and positive one. ☉



JOHN TREVILLION *has been a class teacher for eight middle school cycles, roughly half at Detroit Waldorf School and half at Chicago Waldorf School. In recent years, he has been the chairperson of the college of teachers at Chicago Waldorf School and continues to teach occasional science-based blocks in its middle school. He has written many class plays, including three musicals in collaboration with more musically gifted colleagues.*



*Babbage’s “difference engine,” or automatic mechanical calculator (1822)*



*Ada Lovelace (1815–1852), writer of the first computer program*

# Cyber Civics—Teaching Cyber Literacy in the Middle School

BY DIANA GRABER, MA

In 2011, my two daughters were students at Journey School, a charter school in southern California that is part of the Public Waldorf movement. That year, when my eldest daughter was in eighth grade, our small, close-knit school community experienced its first cyber incident. Girls in the class were posting photos on Facebook that were unflattering to one another. It was not quite cyberbullying, but feelings were hurt, and students, parents, and teachers were upset. The warm, nurturing social environment of the school had been compromised.

Having just completed a master's degree in media psychology and social change, I believed I knew what was needed—digital literacy. I received permission to use a one-hour class each week, formerly devoted to the teaching of civics, to teach “Cyber Civics.” I hoped that the course would empower students to use technology thoughtfully, ethically, and competently, and thus prevent future problems.

## Three Years to Digital Literacy

The initial one-year course went very well. Parents, teachers, and the students themselves were happy with the progress the students made in handling their online lives. We soon discovered, though, that with weekly one-hour class lessons, it would take three years to cover all the concepts and skills that constitute “digital literacy.” Consequently, we developed a three-year curriculum and began using it at Journey School. Since then, the Cyber Civics program has been adopted by 121 other schools in the Waldorf Education movement in the United States and Canada, and one in both England and Peru.

The first year of the program teaches Digital Citizenship, which is “the safe and responsible use of online tools.” It is recommended for sixth grade, but some schools wait until seventh or even eighth grade. The lessons—about fifty minutes long—are taught entirely without actual technology. This is because, as experts agree, the most important media literacy skills are “social and behavioral skills,” and these are learned through engagement



with other human beings, not with a machine. The students learn how a computer works, how to avoid cyberbullying and digital drama, and what steps to take to protect their personal information. They also learn what it means to be a member of a community—online or offline—and that their



*Students learn that being a responsible member of any community—online or in real life—requires the following traits: Honesty, Respect for Others, Courage, Compassion, and Responsibility.*



*Students also learn that whatever they post on the internet becomes part of their permanent personal history.*

online behavior affects others and also affects their own reputation. The students do problem-solving and role-playing around digital media topics. The students also create beautiful illustrated lesson books to record their discoveries.

The second year—Information Literacy—teaches students to use digital tools to do research. They learn what “keywords” are and how to write effective search queries. They learn about copyright, plagiarism, fair use, public domain, Creative

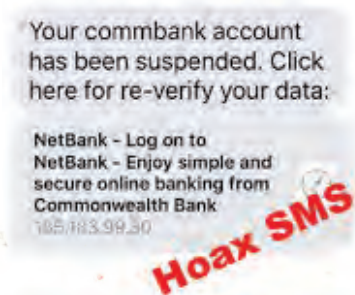
Commons, Wikipedia, and more. Perhaps the most important thing students learn in this second year is that when they search for something online, Google gathers up their personal information and then feeds them information it thinks they want. These “filter bubbles,” the students discover, lead to



*Another key lesson is that whatever is entered into the searchline Googles remembers and henceforth feeds us information accordingly.*

a one-sided exposure to information and perspective, and are in part responsible for the divided world we know today.

The third year of the Cyber Civics course, Media Literacy for Positive Participation, brings all these concepts and skills together. The students use their critical thinking to analyze media messages. They explore fake news stereotypes in media, photoshopped images, online hoaxes, and more. They also use their information and media-literacy skills to do research, write papers, and prepare for the creation and presentation of their eighth-grade projects. But, most importantly, they are encouraged to work with media in positive and



*A hoax text message scam attempting to lure the unwary into divulging personal and financial data.*



*Being able to identify an image—such as “Superkitty”—as photoshopped is an essential capacity for those using the internet.*

productive ways. Our aim is that they know how to wield powerful and constantly developing tools to make the world a better place.

Concern about the effect of electronic media on children, particularly young children, is well founded. Some of the leaders in the tech industry have protected their own children from the devices they themselves developed and are selling. The nurturing Waldorf curriculum of the early grades should be preserved. But at some point the children will have to enter the cyber world of today. We hope that providing them with the appropriate knowledge and skills will help them become responsible and productive citizens of that world. o



DIANA GRABER is a longtime parent and teacher at Journey School, a charter school that is part of the Public Waldorf movement. A media producer with an MA in media psychology and social change, Graber writes about technology’s impact on human behavior. She is the author of *Raising Humans in a Digital World: Helping Kids Build a Healthy Relationship with Technology*. She is also founder of *CyberWise.org* and *CyberCivics.com*, organizations dedicated to helping adults and students learn digital citizenship and literacy skills. She has served as adjunct professor of media psychology at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP) and was awarded the 2017 Media Literacy Teacher Award by the National Association of Media Literacy Education.

# “But, Mom, I Haven’t Killed the Dragon Yet”

## Preserving Family Life in the Age of Screens

BY HENRY M. TRAURIG, MA, LLP

*We are not human beings having spiritual experiences.  
We are spiritual beings having human experiences.*

—Teilhard de Chardin

Humanity stands upon a threshold. With the children born during the emergence of the technology age in the 1980s and 1990s now having children, we are in a time when the presence of and reliance on electronic devices is the norm. Many children grow up in families and schools where screens are ubiquitous. For parents wishing for more human and nature-based experiences for their child, the challenges are especially acute. With due respect to these difficult choices and situations parents face, I would like to offer some practical advice that may support efforts in addressing the prevalence of screens in our society.

◆ Spend time in thought and reflection to develop your own coherent philosophy about the role of electronic devices in family life. Ask yourself: Why this device at this time? What will the consequences be for my child and for our family? Is this really just a toy, or a machine designed to foster addiction?

◆ Consider delaying social media usage and the playing of video games until after age twelve. Then, establish and uphold family guidelines for the kind of media and games allowed and the amount of time spent on them. Encourage your child’s school to offer a middle school “internet citizenship” program such as Cyber Civics. This course prepares children to use social media in a conscious and responsible way.

◆ Delay the cell phone “rite of passage.” Mainstream movements like Wait Until 8th have excellent resources for parents. My own preference is to wait until at least ninth grade for a child to have this privilege and responsibility.

◆ Create screen-free time and/or spaces in the home.



Make conscious choices about when and where to use technology, and when and where not to. Model and involve children in screen-free activities—such as playing board games, putting together a jigsaw puzzle, and doing handcrafts.

◆ Have the courage to retrieve an inappropriate device. Sometimes we provide a child with an electronic device or allow access to social media, but then realize that the device or the access is premature. In such a case, simply and honestly explain, “I made a mistake in giving this to you. I did not realize what it would do. You may use it when you are older.” The child may react with anger and sadness and wish to challenge the decision. Suggest an alternative, fulfilling activity, and hold your ground. If your mistake was in allowing too much access to a device, set clear rules and enforce them.

◆ Meet with other class parents to reach a consensus on practices involving electronic devices. Two such gatherings each year can create a shared commitment to providing a wholesome environment for the children in the world of technology. Have at least one such meeting in someone’s home in order to create an intimate social environment for the class parents. Develop respectful “contracts” that specify how electronics will be used during playdates and sleepovers. Children and young people need face-to-face, ego-to-ego interactions. This is how they develop trust and deep connections with their peers.

◆ Model and support the reading of books as a part of daily life. Reading is meditative in form and function,



*The jigsaw puzzle, very popular throughout the twentieth century, can still be a source of family fun.*

both calming the brain and mood and supporting creative, imaginative thinking.

- ◆ Provide opportunities for your child to play outside daily for extended periods of time. The fundamental work of childhood is play. Play prepares the child for adult life by continually involving the child in imagined roles and by testing skills and endurance.
- ◆ Allow plenty of opportunity for boredom to occur in the daily life of a child. Every waking hour does not need to be programmed with activities or filled with entertainment. The experience of boredom can be the springboard to creative thinking and imaginative play. Children are developing resilience when they can respond to and overcome boredom with “I think I will practice the piano for a while” or “Hey, I know—let’s build a fort!”
- ◆ Provide opportunities for purposeful work. Children and teens need to develop gratitude, patience, and empathy—cornerstones of a healthy human life. Useful work within the home, beginning at age three and continuing through adolescence, fosters these positive qualities. Children can take part in cooking and baking, housecleaning, yard work, and gardening—working with parents or independently when they are ready. Purposeful work done in the home with the approval of parents creates in the child self-respect, a sense of belonging, and a feeling of empowerment. The child realizes that he or she is able to make a real contribution to family life.
- ◆ Take walks together daily in nature or the neighborhood and talk about concerns, problems, hopes, and dreams. Children and teens still need experiences in nature to ignite wonder and to enliven all the senses. They also need opportunities to communicate with adults in a meaningful way. Traveling together in a car can also be a time for sharing.
- ◆ Find opportunities for teens to interact with model-worthy adults. Seek out a leader in your school or community who can serve as a guide to lead young teens in rites of passage that include challenges and adventure. Whether given a spiritual intent or not, such an experience speaks to the young soul’s search for meaning. In my area, there is a small group of women who help girls make the transition into young womanhood through an ongoing group called the Young Maiden’s Circle.
- ◆ Cultivate family life. It is sacred. The souls who come to us as our children call out for protection, attention, and care. The warm, loving bonds formed

between parents and children will provide strength and inspiration throughout life. Therefore, it is important to share activities and pleasures as a family. You can play games together, go on outings, and visit museums and theme parks. There are many ways to have fun together.

- ◆ In particular, cultivate the life of the family hearth. For millennia, families in all cultures gathered in the evening around a warming fire. Today, if no actual fireplace is available, even a single burning candle can function as a hearth. The word *hearth* comprises “heat,” the “earth,” and the “heart,” and the hearth can be a place of belonging, safety, and love. Around the hearth one can talk about the events of the day. Share your life experiences and what you have learned from them; listen to the hopes and struggles of your children. These conversations will make a profound impression on your children. Read stories together as a family and, when children are old enough, read full-length books together. Stories nourish and enrich the human soul and spirit.

Perhaps the greatest gift we offer our children of all ages is the time spent loving them, guiding them, and simply being together. Life today is complicated. But parents and children can thrive through our mutual love and support and through healthy human and nature-based experiences. ○



*A family in Victorian England gathered around the hearth in the evening*



HENRY M. TRAURIG is a practicing psychotherapist who has worked with children, families, and adults for over four decades. He lives in the Detroit area, where his two daughters attended several Waldorf schools, including the historic Detroit Waldorf School. Focusing on the spirituality in being, he provides lectures, long-distance consultations, and workshops for Waldorf parents and schools on the challenges that the age of technology presents for humanity. His wife Diane’s diagnosis with multiple sclerosis a quarter-century ago brought an end to her work as a Waldorf home-based preschool teacher. Diane’s care has become his second vocation and has served as a powerful teacher of the sanctity of family.



## Buildings That Embody Waldorf Values

BY DAVID SLOAN and AMY ESHOO

*All Waldorf educators know that the warm, caring, open relationship between teachers and students is at the heart of Waldorf Education. They also know that the physical space in which learning takes place is also an important factor. Therefore, in every Waldorf school much effort is made to bring light, color, and organic forms into the classrooms and common spaces. Schools whose buildings have a prior, non-Waldorf history typically do much imaginative retrofitting. Some schools are blessed with the opportunity to design and build a purpose-built structure. Maine Coast Waldorf School had such an opportunity with its new high school building. The school sought to create a physical environment that would support the learning of its students and also embody Waldorf ideals.*

—R.E.K

If, as Winston Churchill once famously declared, “We shape our buildings, and thereafter they shape us,” then surely the schools we construct in our Waldorf communities need to be designed with consciousness and care. Inside classrooms, Waldorf teachers strive to “sculpt” lessons that foster the students’ soul capacities. In serving that end, we must be committed to shaping the very environments in which students learn.

Rudolf Steiner often stressed the importance of architecture, the crucial relationship between “inner” function and “outer” form. Steiner held that the design



*The Longaberger building was sold in 2018 for \$1.2 million to a developer who specializes in preserving and restoring historic buildings.*

of a building needs both to support and to visibly express the activities taking place within its walls. This does not mean, though, that a structure has to literally and externally depict the primary mission of an organization, as the executives of the Longaberger Basket Company in Newark, Ohio, decided in 1997, when they built a seven-story

office complex in the shape of a gigantic wicker basket, complete with handles!<sup>1</sup>

Designing a building that will express and support the varied activities in a complete K–12 Waldorf school is no simple matter. A central tenet of Waldorf Education is that there are distinct stages of development in childhood and that the young child, the elementary school student, and the high school student each need a distinct curriculum, pedagogy, and physical and soul environment in order to thrive. A Waldorf early childhood center anywhere in the world will be characterized by a sheltering gesture, softly colored, billowy fabrics, protected nooks, toys made from natural materials, and proximity to outside play areas. Inner and outer spaces work in concert to encourage the exercise of the young child’s imagination and will.



*Students in class at the Goderich Waldorf School in Sierra Leone*

Waldorf elementary school buildings vary greatly—from the elegant, stately manor house of Michael Hall School in Forest Row, England, to the newly constructed straw-bale classrooms of the Lakota Waldorf School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, to the rustic, corrugated-roof, open-air structure of the Goderich Waldorf School that serves war orphans and refugees in Sierra Leone.<sup>2</sup> In every Waldorf school, the aim is to create an aesthetically pleasing structure and space that will support the all-important relationships between teachers and students, so



*A wing of Aarhus Rudolf Steiner School, characterized by the angularity appropriate for high school students*

that the heart forces of the children, as well as their academic and practical skills, will develop.

Many Waldorf school buildings incorporate angled rooflines and strive to avoid the rectilinear form of most institutional spaces. As architect Morten Schmidt writes of his 2009 addition to the Rudolf Steiner School in Aarhus, Denmark, the building “creates engaging, colorful areas for students to explore, providing both intimate and open-plan areas that cater to the school’s range of learning activities.”<sup>3</sup>

Waldorf high schools often integrate elements of both early childhood and elementary school buildings—organic forms, dynamic rooflines, colorful walls, and easy access to the outdoors. However, just as a maturing teenager no longer fits into her nine-year-old clothes, high school students no longer “fit” into the more intimate classrooms of their younger years. They can benefit from spaciousness, separate and distinct areas for learning and socializing, and large windows opening to the wider world. As art historian, professor, and author David Adams has written, “That which is softer, more rounded, and more unified in the preschool and early elementary years will gradually become firmer, more articulated, and more angular as students advance through their schooling.”<sup>4</sup>

In the high school years, intellectual capacities begin to blossom. Waldorf teachers strive to help their students develop their logical and reasoning capacities. However, they are also interested in having the students develop holistic, creative cognitive faculties—the ability to think “outside the box.” It may be that box-like, institutional buildings predispose students to “in-the-box” thinking, while “organic architecture (will) offer greater support to the organically related, mobile, and flexible thought processes that Waldorf teachers hope to develop in their students.”<sup>5</sup>

Several years ago, Maine Coast Waldorf High School began to outgrow its rented space and decided to build a new building on its seventy-plus-acre campus in Freeport. This would unite a school that had been located on two campuses twenty minutes apart by bus. In addition, it would also provide an opportunity to design a high school building that would meet the needs of its high school students and also exemplify the aims and ideals of Waldorf Education.

Maine Coast’s mission statement echoes those of many Waldorf schools: “The mission of Maine Coast Waldorf School is to awaken the highest potential in every student by fostering clarity of thought, warmth of heart, and strength of resolve to make a difference in the world.”<sup>6</sup>

The last phrase of the statement—“make a difference in the world”—became the focal point of the planning group responsible for the building design. This aspiration could have manifested in myriad ways, but Maine is extremely environmentally conscious, and the planning group quickly recognized that the project was an opportunity for the school to manifest its commitment to the care of the environment in a practical, concrete way. With the support of the board, the capital campaign



*Maine Coast Waldorf High School building viewed from the southeast*

committee, and the wider community, the planning group decided to push for a sustainable, net-zero building that would demonstrate the school's commitment to responsible, long-range stewardship for the Earth. A net-zero energy building is one in which the total energy consumed in a year is roughly equivalent to the total renewable energy that the building generates.



*While windows look out to the wide world, students in the science lab study nature in its smaller manifestations.*

Maine Coast is one of many Waldorf schools committed to the stewardship of the environment. Among them, Shining Mountain Waldorf School in Boulder, Colorado, stresses environmental stewardship and has sustainability guidelines

for its campus.<sup>7</sup> Denver Waldorf School's vision of social renewal includes sustainability of humankind and stewardship of the Earth.<sup>8</sup> Minnesota Waldorf School's mission includes a statement declaring children's responsibility for themselves and the world around them.<sup>9</sup>

Maine Coast Waldorf School applied this principle of environmental responsibility directly to the design of the high school structure. The building would demonstrate environmental stewardship, as well as foster creativity, inspire curiosity, and honor the learning spirit of its occupants. The high school building, designed by Briburn Architects in Portland, Maine, is comprised of flexible, light-filled classrooms for learning, as well as angled halls, attractive office spaces, and creative community areas. The building achieves net-zero energy through a passive solar design, high insulation levels, efficient HVAC systems, day-lighting controls, and shading.



*Mixed-grade dance class in the school movement room*

Working closely with the architects, the planning group stayed true to the profile of typical Waldorf classrooms. Electrical outlets and computer jacks were kept to

a minimum. Instead of white boards and connectors to link the students' electronic devices to those of the teachers, the committee asked for blackboards and for walls on which artwork could be tacked.

While these requests, based on Waldorf pedagogy, were seemingly anachronistic, the design of the systems supporting the classrooms are high tech and state of the art. Interior lighting is tied to occupancy sensors that switch lights off when no one is in a given room. Water faucets also are automatically turned off as necessary. Heat pumps in virtually every room provide very efficient heating and cooling. An energy recovery ventilator (ERV) in each classroom floor retains as much thermal air conditioning as possible, which gives a healthy indoor environment through constant fresh air ventilation. The building is so well insulated and airtight that the people, computers, and equipment provide significant heating in the winter, and the heat pumps are there only to make up the difference.



*In the student center, students play chess, study, and relax on mushroom posture stools.*

The elements that contribute to the building's efficiency and the passive house gains are also features that embody signature Waldorf building aesthetics. This high school building is oriented to the south for maximum solar gain. The solar array on the metal roof is sized to produce at least as much electricity as the building is projected to use, and an online program keeps track of this. The triple-glazed pane windows are strategically located to capitalize on solar heat gain in the winter. Deep overhangs on the south-facing windows prevent overheating from the sun during warm months. Also, the windows allow for abundant natural light to fill the teaching spaces and offices. The views they afford to playing fields and woods connect the students with the outdoors and offer vistas to the rest of the campus and woods beyond.

The sheltering overhangs and the portico function as protection from the elements and also define a social space for the students to gather, rest, and play. They also enable the faculty to hold outdoor classes as weather

permits. Thus, the high school students can continue to experience the vital connection between what goes on inside and what goes on outside the school building. For most of them, this is a continuation of what they experienced earlier in their Waldorf years as elementary school and even kindergarten students.

As a result of this intensely “green” design, Maine Coast Waldorf High School became the nation’s first and only public or independent high school to be certified as a “passive house.” The Passive House Institute US (PHIUS)—the leading passive building standard-setter, information provider, and research, training, and certifying institute in North America—awarded the certification. The school also received a Maine Advanced Buildings certificate from Efficiency Maine. The hallmarks of a net-zero, certified passive house building are its efficient insulation, continuous air-sealing, high-performance windows, proper building orientation, and balanced heat-recovery ventilation.

Beyond the welcome accolades and certifications, perhaps the most telling testimonials about the success of the design have come from the students who have spent their school days there.

One observant rising senior wrote, “Aesthetically speaking, what is most remarkable about the building is that we don’t actually feel as if we are even in a school. What often weighs on high schoolers is the idea of feeling ‘trapped’ in a gray, monotonous building, but in our new high school the natural light pours in from outside, the walls curve and bend . . . and the floor is colored in blues to give the illusion of a flowing stream.”

Such student sentiments about the appealing nature of their new learning environment validate the vision that

the planning group and architects held throughout the design process. However, an even deeper hope of Maine Coast’s high school project team was that the build-

ing would demonstrate to the students and the community at large what it means “to make a difference,” not only in our local region, but in the wider world.

The building embodies the unwavering commitment to social responsibility that Waldorf educators have espoused for a century. ○

## Notes

1. Barbara Eldredge, *curbed.com*, “Iconic basket building finally sold for \$1.2M” ([www.curbed.com/2018/1/8/16862310/ohio-basket-building-sold-longaberger](http://www.curbed.com/2018/1/8/16862310/ohio-basket-building-sold-longaberger))
2. [www.goderichwaldorf.org](http://www.goderichwaldorf.org)
3. Isabelle Lomholt, “Waldorf School Aarhus, Denmark,” September 9, 2016 ([www.earchitecture.co.uk/denmark/waldorf-school-aarhus](http://www.earchitecture.co.uk/denmark/waldorf-school-aarhus))
4. David Adams, “Organic Functionalism: An Important Principle of the Visual Arts in Waldorf School Crafts and Architecture” ([www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org/pdf/BACraftsArchtRev.pdf](http://www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org/pdf/BACraftsArchtRev.pdf))
5. Ibid.
6. [www.maine coastwaldorf.org/about/](http://www.maine coastwaldorf.org/about/)
7. [www.shiningmountainwaldorf.org/all-school-2/our-school/environmental-sustainability/](http://www.shiningmountainwaldorf.org/all-school-2/our-school/environmental-sustainability/)
8. [www.denverwaldorf.org/mission-vision-values-history/](http://www.denverwaldorf.org/mission-vision-values-history/)
9. <https://mnwaldorf.org/mission/>



*Above the blue of a hallway floor, the architectural lines gesture toward a triangle of blue sky.*



DAVID SLOAN *has been a Waldorf high school teacher since 1979, first at Green Meadow Waldorf School in Spring Valley, New York, then at Shining Mountain Waldorf School in Boulder, Colorado, and currently at Maine Coast (formerly Merriconeag) Waldorf School in Freeport, Maine. He is on the faculty of the high school teacher training at the Center for Anthroposophy in Wilton, New Hampshire. He has given talks widely on Waldorf Education and has written two pedagogical books—Stages of Imagination: Working Dramatically with Adolescents and Life Lessons: Reaching Teenagers through Literature—as well as a collection of poetry, The Irresistible In-Between. At present, he is enjoying one of life’s greatest delights—grandfatherhood!*



AMY ESHOO *is the parent of a sixth grader at Maine Coast Waldorf School. She was the leader of the high school building committee and continues to be involved in the sustainability of the school campus. Amy is the program manager of 350 Maine, a grassroots climate justice organization.*



*This general purpose classroom also looks out into field and forest.*

# “How Do They Do Out There?”

## Transitioning from Waldorf to a Mainstream High School

BY PETER LAWTON, EdD

The first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, provided a full K–12 education, from kindergarten through high school. In North America today, however, only 42 of the 119 AWSNA member schools have a high school and can offer a twelve- or thirteen-year Waldorf experience. The other schools are K–8, and their graduates must continue their education at a local public high school or at another independent high school.\* Even in areas with a viable Waldorf high school option, some Waldorf elementary graduates choose to transfer to other schools. Among the reasons often given are the desire for broader social experiences, more developed athletic programs, and opportunities for varied academic concentrations.

The educational experiences of a student who has attended Waldorf school through grade eight differ in many ways from those of students who have attended mainstream public or independent schools. Waldorf graduates have had much less

They are used to studying natural phenomena through observation and personal experience rather than through abstract concepts and formulae. They are used to the integration of academic study and artistic activity. And they are used to the intimate and supportive social environment of a relatively small school, and of classmates, teachers, and community members whom they may have known since kindergarten.

As a Waldorf elementary teacher in a school lacking a high school, I have been very interested in two questions:

- How do our graduates fare in their transition to mainstream public or independent high schools?
- Is there anything more we can do to prepare them for this transition?

These questions were the focus of research for my doctoral dissertation. In considering how to answer the first question, I decided that first-person descriptions of the actual transitional experiences of Waldorf elementary graduates would be more important than any outward measures of success such as GPAs or class standing. And because student experiences entail emotional states related to feelings of competence, belonging, and, perhaps most importantly, meaning, I decided that in-depth interviews would be the best way to understand those experiences.

I conducted interviews with students who had attended a Waldorf school through eighth grade and were attending non-Waldorf high schools. I compiled over five hundred pages of written transcript in the process. I interviewed only high school seniors and recent graduates because I was concerned about the ability of a freshman—or even a sophomore—to contextualize or interpret transitional experiences while in the midst of the transition process. And, in fact, all of the interviewees shared the experience of later reevaluating and reinterpreting their initial transitional experiences. I also consulted research into the normal high school transition experience—the transition to high school from traditional elementary, middle, and junior high schools. Finally, I compared the transitional experiences of the Waldorf interviewees to the



*Among the aspects of life in a typical, large public high school that will probably be new to the Waldorf eighth-grade graduate are a large, imposing school building—here, Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, . . .*

contact with computers as an educational tool. They have had less experience taking tests, particularly those that are purely quantitative in measure or that focus on the retention of facts. They have had little experience with traditional textbooks.

typical or normal high school transition experience described in the scholarly literature.

### The Academic Transition

From my research, the common concern that Waldorf graduates might be at a disadvantage with regard to specific academic content—what they already know about any specific subject area—seems unfounded. None of the participants mentioned feeling unprepared in any specific content area, including science and technology. Neither did any participant mention feeling underprepared in other content areas such as math, language arts, or world languages. And I should be clear: Interviewees did not report a complete absence of content gaps—that would be surprising in any school change. But, as they explained, those gaps did not pose any important transitional challenges. The overwhelming majority of participants reported doing very well academically their freshman year, and half the interviewees described their high school academic programs as basically “easy.”

Participants reported that their academic adjustment to high school pertained more to new instructional methods and learning styles—how teachers teach and how students learn—than to specific academic content. Instruction in high school was more teacher-centered and visually oriented and included an increase in the use of textbooks, lectures, and supplemental worksheets. Grading and testing were more quantitative, abstract, and fact-based. Learning itself became more passive in nature. The artistic, experiential, and cooperative social modes of learning that students experienced during their Waldorf years were, for the most part, not present. The students’ comments



*... an instructor-centered, lecture-style teaching method, ...*

on testing and grading were consistent. Most of the students were motivated to achieve high grades, although many felt grading was one-dimensional and heavily weighted toward the reproduction of facts. Despite the substantial dissonance between Waldorf and mainstream high school pedagogy, the students were able to adjust in a relatively short time—about a semester for most.



*... emphasis on fact-based exams and letter or number grades, ...*

Participants reported that the main challenge to achieving desired grades initially involved, again, acclimating to new instructional methods and not to any academic content per se. One important area of adaptation involved learning “how to work for a grade.” One student described receiving poor grades on his first few history tests. At first, the student thought he was “bad” at history, or was, perhaps, unprepared for high school. Then he realized his teacher was not looking for him to reinterpret or synthesize content in his own words, but to rewrite the boldface sections of the textbook from memory!

As I stated earlier, the transition experience not only entails emotional states related to feelings of competence (i.e., grades), but also emotional states related to meaning. Participant adjustment to new instructional methods and learning styles came at a cost. In fact, every one of the Waldorf graduates I interviewed reported their intrinsic connection to academic material declined in high school. They were less interested and engaged in their studies and found less meaning in their schoolwork. Nevertheless, students maintained their motivation to do well academically and achieve desired grades.

Waldorf students are not alone in their need to adjust to new instructional methods in high school.

Research shows the biggest transitional concern for students coming from a public elementary or middle school regards “academic nuts and bolts.” Aspects of academic life that may be new and challenging include testing and grading practices, homework protocols, attendance requirements, lack of coordination between different academic departments, and prerequisites for certain courses. Also, new students need to figure out where to go for academic or other help. Research shows that while Waldorf students experience a certain “nuts and bolts” adjustment, the same probably applies to any high school freshman. But it bears repeating—the academic adjustment period for the majority of participants lasted less than one semester.

### The Social Transition

Going to a new and, in most cases, much larger school invariably involves social challenges. These include making new friends, becoming part of a social group, developing a sense of belonging, and learning how to relate to teachers. In this process, school size is crucial. One hundred percent of the interviewees who transitioned to larger high schools reported feeling a less personal connection



*... large class size, and ...*

with teachers and a less familiar connection with the student population in general than at their Waldorf schools. Half of the participants attending smaller high schools reported having a positive experience of their school community. That seems encouraging, though it means the other half of students did not have a positive social experience, even at a smaller school.

Waldorf alums are not alone in the social challenges they face in their transition to high school. Mainstream research confirms that many of the social emotional challenges reported by Waldorf grade eight graduates, including relational

challenges, anxiety, and a decrease in motivation, are also experienced by students from mainstream schools. Research has also shown that school size is one of the most important structural characteristics associated with academic and social success across the high school transition. Positive academic and social outcomes, including feeling a sense of belonging, occur more often in smaller high schools with student populations under one thousand.

In assessing their own transitional social challenges, participants explained that the initial difficulty they experienced in making new friends and developing a general sense of belonging in their new high schools was not due only to the size and newness (to them) of the school. It also related directly to the new instructional methods and learning styles described above. A majority of interviewees explained that passive, teacher-focused instructional approaches and the de-emphasis on artistic, experiential, and cooperative social modes of learning hindered their ability to make new friends and experience a sense of community and shared purpose. Artistic, experiential, and cooperative social modes of learning are not only inherently more meaningful, they also help foster a deeper sense of community and belonging.

### Implications

In general, it can be said that Waldorf graduates fare well academically in their new high school environments. Still, there may be things that Waldorf elementary schools can do to prepare students for their academic transition. This preparation might include familiarizing students with some of the academic “nuts and bolts” they will soon experience in high school. This familiarization process need not be formal or constitute the central content of any unit of study. Starting in the middle school years, teachers may want to begin introducing terms such as “syllabus,” “rubric,” and “performance vs. proficiency grading.” They may want to discuss different ways in which grades are calculated or weighted and the pros and cons and the advantages and pitfalls of different grading practices. They may even want to give students the opportunity to study and rehearse best-practice strategies for taking various types of tests. And, it goes without saying, teachers will want to continue to provide regular, imaginative, and explicit descriptions of desirable student work habits—habits that will prove successful in any educational environment. I have emphasized the importance of hard work and a good attitude to my current eighth graders 101 times and in 101 different ways.

However, with regard to the main transitional academic challenge reported by Waldorf graduates, it is perhaps not advisable to expose elementary school students to passive, abstract teaching and learning strategies they will encounter later on. Given the possible damaging, long-term effects of passive learning and performance-oriented grading schemes on children before age thirteen or fourteen, and their dubious efficacy in preparing students for future competitive environments, and given the relatively short “nuts and bolts” adjustment period in high school, it may be enough to simply give Waldorf eighth graders a “heads-up” on some of the more unhealthy, traditional instructional methods they will encounter.

Imagining how Waldorf schools can better prepare students for their social transition to high school is a much harder exercise. This is in part because, as research indicates, the social adjustment to high school is difficult for *all* students, including those coming from mainstream schools. Some of the social challenges Waldorf graduates experience may simply be “baked in” to the system. Or, put differently, potential social remedies may exist not



*... the central role of computers in the learning process.*

in the students' former schools, but in the high schools themselves. Anxiety, relational challenges, and declines in motivation are all part of the “normal” high school transition experience. They seem to be challenges experienced by freshman regardless of their former school. Thus, the concern that Waldorf students may be disadvantaged by having been schooled in a small, protective “social bubble” may be unfounded.

Nevertheless, there may be ways to help make the social adjustment smoother for the students who will leave us after eighth grade. Certainly, schools could offer formal counseling to families about



*Class of 2017 graduating eighth graders at the Housatonic Waldorf School, Newtown, Connecticut*

choosing an appropriate high school for their child. The class teacher and other professional staff could work with the parents and the student to discern what kind of school would best meet the student's unique emotional, social, and academic needs. An outgoing, resilient student will likely thrive in a large high school, while a shy, anxious student might be happier in a smaller, more intimate school setting. Counseling could also include what to expect in any normal high school transition. Sometimes the value of a small, supportive social environment will have to be weighed against a rich and challenging academic program that is available in a larger school.

We parents and teachers can do much to help prepare the young people in our care for the next step in their education. However, we can take comfort in the fact that, assuming we have done our job in raising and educating them, the vast majority of Waldorf eighth-grade graduates will survive and thrive wherever they continue their education—at a Waldorf high school or at a mainstream public or independent institution. ○

*\*Some Waldorf eighth-grade graduates attend High Mowing School, a Waldorf boarding high school in New Hampshire, or transfer to other Waldorf high schools with boarding or homestay options.*

PETER LAWTON *has served as a class teacher at City of Lakes Waldorf School in Minneapolis for the past seventeen years, taking two classes from first through eighth grade. He holds a Bachelor of Music in voice from the Manhattan School of Music, a Doctor of Education in policy and administration from the University of St. Thomas, and a Waldorf teaching certificate from the Arcturus Rudolf Steiner Education Program. Before becoming a Waldorf teacher, Peter taught math in Minneapolis public schools.*



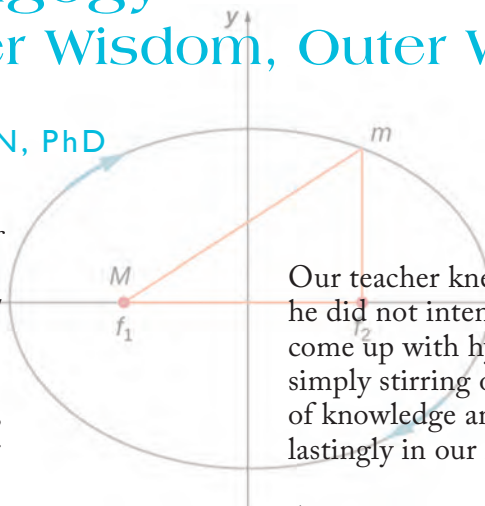
# Waldorf Pedagogy

## Cultivating Inner Wisdom, Outer Wakefulness

BY DOUGLAS GERWIN, PhD

*We shape our self  
to fit this world  
and by the world  
are shaped again.*

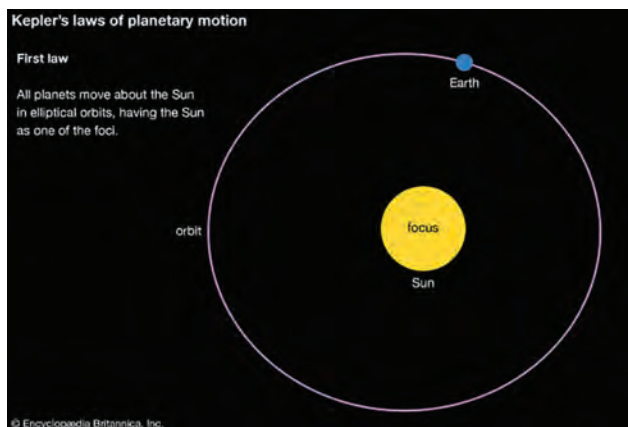
*The visible  
and the invisible,  
working together  
in common cause,  
to produce  
the miraculous. . . .*



Our teacher knew this, of course, which means he did not intend for us to answer the question or come up with hypothetical explanations. He was simply stirring our intellectual faculties and store of knowledge and giving us something to ponder lastingly in our hearts.

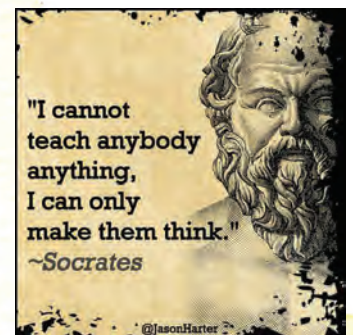
The teacher stepped to the board and, with a quick, freehand gesture, sketched a slightly elliptical form representing the pathway of Earth around the Sun. At one of the ellipse's two foci, he drew a miniature sun, then posed the question: "What do you suppose is located at the other focus?"

Though the presentation by this tenth-grade teacher lasted less than a couple of minutes, the question he put at the end of it has lingered in my mind for well over fifty years. For it turns out that the question is not easily answered. Since Earth's orbit around the Sun is only slightly elliptical, the two foci are closely aligned. As a result, the radiance of the Sun at one focus blocks out any observation of the second focus. Indeed, it has been calculated that the Sun is so huge that the second focus may actually be located somewhere within its glowing circumference.



*Now, where is that second focus?*

A more common interchange in a classroom would be the reverse: students posing questions and teachers supplying the answers. Socrates, however, that most venerable role model of teachers, was well aware that teaching by supplying answers, whether in the form of information or explanation, is a losing game. What we today call "the Socratic method" arose from his insistence that the teacher simply reminds students of what they already know. "There is no such thing as teaching, only recollection," he proclaimed, "for seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection."<sup>1</sup>



In this view, children learn not by receiving information from without—the literal derivation of the term "in-struction"—but rather by fashioning images from within. Though at a young age children may imitate those around them—indeed, they need to be surrounded by other human beings if they are to become educated—still the fundamental act of learning arises from within; it is not inserted by some outside instructor.

As they grow older, children respond to outer "input" with inner resonance. They say, "Yeah, that makes sense." Now the teacher is akin to a vocalist singing a note into an open piano, and the students, like the exposed strings within the instrument, vibrate if the sung note is true. If the students cannot resonate with what their teacher is telling them, all they can do is memorize without really "getting it."

In the words of Rudolf Steiner, the teacher is there to provide support and remove obstacles to learning so that the child can teach himself:

It is really the child who educates himself through us. We only educate when we behave in such a way that through our own behavior the child can educate himself.<sup>2</sup>

Here, a widely accepted view of teaching is overturned. Rather than filling children with information, a Waldorf teacher enters the classroom with the assumption that at some level—however deep and however unconscious—the child already knows the lesson that is to be taught. The task of the teacher, far from “delivering content,” is to draw forth the lesson (the original meaning of the word “e-ducate”) from out of the students. As one of the twelfth graders at Chicago Waldorf School exclaimed to me during a discussion of their edu-

cation: “I get it: Waldorf is not a process of *insertion*, it’s a process of *extraction*!”

This simple statement is a fair summary of the Waldorf method of teaching. It does not insert into the child what was not previously there; it teases from the child

what, in some sense, is already present. In this way, ultimately, children educate themselves.

Teachers unfamiliar with this way of working with the child may find it daunting to upend their traditional understanding of the educational process, and yet nothing less is required if they are to engage students in this fundamentally different way. Prospective and even practicing Waldorf teachers need to undergo a complete involution—a “turning inside out”—of their pedagogical praxis, and

this radical transformation will be the hallmark of any successful Waldorf teacher education program.

Letting go of old habits and suppositions is difficult, even under the most favorable and sympathetic of circumstances. The question, then, remains: How to achieve this? Here, Rudolf Steiner offers a simple yet profound response:

Education is the Art of awakening what is actually there within the human being. . . . [But] first of all, the teachers must be awakened, and then the teachers must awaken the children and the young people. . . . Every human being is a teacher, but he is sleeping and must be awakened, and Art is the awakener.<sup>3</sup>

Put differently, the preparation of teachers, like any form of education, is a process of gradually awakening them from within, rather than of stimulating them from without. That is why, in Waldorf teacher training programs—even in those geared specifically to prepare subject or high school teachers, for whom specific content is very important—easily fifty percent of the time is spent in the practice of both fine arts and performing arts, even if these teachers will never have to conduct a single class in these subjects.



*Plato and his student Aristotle, who developed a philosophy quite different from that of his teacher*



*As part of their training, aspiring Waldorf teachers practice various arts, including sculpture, . . .*

There are many reasons for placing the arts so centrally in the training of Waldorf teachers. A key one is this: Inasmuch as they are expected to draw forth from their students what already resides within them, Waldorf teachers need to have developed organs of psychological and spiritual perception that can discern what lies hidden as potential in their students. Here again, the arts help teachers develop this more subtle—one might say “meta-physical”—form of perception. With

enhanced powers of observation made possible by artistic practice, teachers learn to see into the hearts of their students where lie concealed the buried riches of knowledge waiting to be lifted gently into the broad daylight of consciousness.

This is not to deny the importance of a teacher “knowing her stuff” and being a skilled practitioner of her craft—classroom management, parent relations, administrative responsibilities, and so forth. And yet, beyond the necessary skills of this profession lies the art of teaching, which entails



... drawing with pastels (shown here), as well as painting, singing, ...

awakening students to the world around them in such a way that they recognize something of themselves in it. In perceiving the world, they begin to discover themselves.

A further step on this path of discovery—which is a Waldorf education—involves the student not simply awakening to the world but beginning to pose thoughtful questions of it and about it. This leads beyond the immediacy of sense experience to the far reaches of metaphysical conundrums. As in the outcome of a rewarding discussion, students graduate from this kind of education with a proliferation of lingering questions, rather than a set of pat answers or hypothetical explanations masquerading as fact. After all, in the words of the poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Hypotheses are lullabies that teachers use to put their students to sleep.”

So, what is it that resides at the other focus of our elliptical journey around the Sun? I don’t really know—but something has been awakened through



... eurythmy (shown here), speech, drama, and instrumental music.

this question that makes pondering it some five decades later still immensely nourishing. o

... So may we, in this life  
trust to those elements  
we have yet to see  
or imagine,  
and look for the true shape  
of our own self,  
by forming it well  
to the great  
intangibles about us.

—David Whyte, “Working Together”

## Notes

1. Plato, *Meno*, 81d.
2. Rudolf Steiner, *The Younger Generation* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1967), 144.
3. Ibid., 23.



DOUGLAS GERWIN, *Executive Director of the Center for Anthroposophy (CfA)*, is Co-chair of the Teacher Education Delegates (TED) Circle, a standing committee of AWSNA that is responsible for coordinating the activities of the Association’s full- and associate-member teacher training institutions. Himself a Waldorf graduate, Douglas has been teaching high school students as well as mentoring teachers and Waldorf high schools for thirty-five years. He is also the first Executive Director of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education and author and editor of nine books on Waldorf Education.

# Awakening Connections: Creating Community Biography Work in Waldorf School Communities

BY PATTI SMITH, EdD

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) often wrote and spoke about the stages of human life, from birth through old age, and about the characteristics and meaning of each stage. His understanding of the first three stages—birth to age seven, seven to fourteen, and fourteen to twenty-one—was the foundation on which the Waldorf pedagogy and curriculum were built.

Bernhard Lievegoed (1905–1992) was a Dutch medical doctor, psychiatrist, and author. As a young man, he discovered and became interested in Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy, particularly in Steiner's ideas about social and economic organization. He also deeply studied Steiner's teachings about the stages of human life and development.



Bernhard Lievegoed

After many years, Lievegoed published a book titled *Phases—The Spiritual Rhythms in Adult Life*. Using Steiner's insights as a basis, he asserted that each individual's path in life is "a unique work of art" through which the higher self (or I-being) of the person is creating what it needs for its further development. Nevertheless, the inner quality and the particular opportunities, challenges, and milestones of each stage of life are shared by all.

Since *Phases* was published, "biography work" has become an important initiative in the anthroposophical world. The review and analysis of an individual's own life path has been developed and used as a therapeutic technique by medical doctors and psychologists. This same autobiographical retrospective, done in a group of individuals and mutually shared, has become a powerful tool in building empathy, mutual interest, compassion, and a sense of community. Biography workshops have taken place in Waldorf schools, Camphill Villages, and anthroposophically oriented hospitals, clinics,

businesses, and senior communities all over the world. These workshops include talks about the significance of one's biography, general discussions, group sharing, and artistic activities such as painting, eurythmy, and clay modeling. A person who has completed a special training in biography work leads and facilitates the workshop.

The Center for Biography and Social Art (CBSA), based in Northampton, Massachusetts, promotes biography work in the United States and Mexico. Recently the Center received a grant to provide biography workshops in Waldorf school communities. These workshops are specifically designed to help faculty, parents, staff, and board members get to know each other and to work together. This academic year, the Awakening Connections program is being held at seven schools around the country. Each workshop series consists of three sessions of at least four hours each, and the sessions are scheduled through the academic year. Each workshop is conducted by a trained facilitator.

The first session focuses on childhood and adolescence (birth to age twenty-one), the second on young adulthood (twenty-one to forty-two), and the third on early middle age



*Biography workshop exercises include remembering a person you knew when you were young and sharing that memory with another person; and . . .*



*. . . remembering a person who opened a door for you and sharing that memory with a partner; and . . .*

# Memoir and Self-Discovery in the Tenth Grade

BY ANDREW MAY

Memoir, from the French *mémoire*, meaning memory or reminiscence. A memoir is a first-person account of a specific period or series of events in a person's life. Memoir writing goes back to ancient times—Julius Caesar's *The Gallic Wars*—and has been a much-used literary form throughout history. Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods* is a classic in memoir genre.

*In some ways, writing a memoir is knocking yourself out with your own fist, if it's done right. Sure, there's the pleasure of doing work guaranteed to engage you emotionally—who's indifferent to their own history? The form always has profound psychological consequences on its author. It can't not. What project can match it for that?*

—Mary Karr, *The Art of Memoir*

As I bravely stared down at my teaching assignments heading into my first year at Sacramento Waldorf School, I suddenly felt punched in the gut. I had been handed the memoir course for tenth-grade English. To say I felt overwhelmed would be an understatement.

Tenth grade is a difficult year, perhaps the most difficult year of high school, for the students as well as the teachers and parents. One reason is the students, no longer children and not yet adults, can become deeply self-absorbed and so-lipsistic—literally “alone with the self.” Students at this age can become and feel figuratively lost. The opening lines in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which they will study in grade eleven, are quite pertinent. “I found myself within a Dark Wood / For the right way had been missed.”

The question for me as a teacher quickly became, “How can this course really help my students?” That they would become more proficient and savvy users of language was a given expectation for any English class. I wanted the experience to go beyond academic skills. I wondered how I could help them through a typically unsettling and alienating time on their way to adulthood.

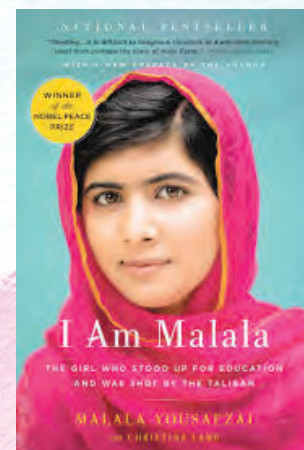
I was already a fan of memoirists and the power of their writing; Joan Didion's series of three memoirs literally saved my life. Also, I was quite familiar with the assigned reading for the course, *I Am Malala*, the 2013 memoir by the young Pakistani civil rights activist, Malala Yousafzai. I envisioned a fairly straightforward high school

English course. The students would read the memoir in sections, we would analyze and discuss the text, and we would critique Yousafzai's writing style through the lens of Mary Karr's book on memoir writing. Material on Pakistan's history and culture would provide a context. We might include a few *tableaux vivants* along the way—static living pictures in which students, through gesture and facial expression, depict a particular moment in the narrative. Near the end of the course, the class would be engaged in a crisp, orderly, three-week literary analysis writing project. Pretty straightforward stuff.

In the end, I kept the tableaux and the discussions, but the writing project turned into something else entirely. Here's a sampling of what the students produced:

“Why did you leave?” I asked him. He sat there, just a little too big for the carved wooden chair and in a silence so long that I started to think he wouldn't answer. But eventually he did. “I wasn't ready to be a father then.”

It didn't occur to me until afterward what a crappy answer that was. Fatherhood isn't always



*Malala Yousafzai's memoir recounts her struggle for the educational and civil rights of girls and women in a patriarchal society.*

something you get to be ready for. But that was the closest I've gotten to an explanation from him. That old familiar feeling of resentment still hovers in the back of my mind, some days more prominently than others. I don't know if I'll ever be able to forgive my father for what he did, but I can always fall back on the knowledge that, despite all of his flaws, he loves me. And in the end, I think, that's all that really matters.

Picture me turning into a weepy puddle at my desk, my correction pen frozen above this gut-spilling, soul-purging writing. Here is another student's recollection:

But one day, I realized that the things I was most afraid of, the things I would die for before sharing with anyone, could actually be shared in the form of written words.

One day, I realized that my thoughts and ideas, no matter how weird and messed up they might seem, could create words in a sequence that no one else's could.

And one day, when I was sitting at my desk and a tiny voice in some dark corner of my mind asked me what good reason I had for living, another voice responded, "Think of all the words you have to tell."

And from another student . . .

Writing a memoir and anxiety go hand in hand. With an anxious mind, you go through life twice. I would relive every minuscule moment that had happened that day as I sat in bed rocking back and forth, holding my head, trying to get the thoughts to stop. So when I go to write these memories down on paper, it's easy. These memories stick to my brain with super glue, and they aren't planning on leaving anytime soon. I've had my fair share of crazy stories, but I chose to write about my anxiety for a reason. It truly has shaped me as a person. The good and the bad. And it will always be a part of me whether I like it or not. Having said all of this, anxiety does give you a surreal sense of empathy. What had isolated you before now connects you with others like bus stops on a map. You're all going different places, but this is one thing you all share.

The memoir course has become for the students a meeting with the Self at a point in life when the



*In Walden, Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) recalls the two years he lived alone in a small cabin on the shores of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts.*

Self begins to be doubted and even abused. It is a meeting with a Self that transcends the youthful narcissism teenagers typically fall prey to. Creative non-fiction is perfect for this kind of catharsis.

Sometimes a student complains that they have lived an uneventful sixteen years and they don't have material significant enough for a writing assignment. I remind them that they are the only person on this planet who has walked in their shoes, and they are the only one who can tell their story. Sometimes the topic comes quickly. Other times it's a knock-down fight to discover "The Thing." But everyone eventually lands, builds an angle, plays with "The Story," and, with memory and with time, the writing process takes over from there.

I have often found myself sitting at my desk in tears—a fine replacement for that punch-in-the-gut feeling I had before—because of how beautiful, how meaningful, how honest, and how vulnerable my students are able to be in this memoir form. It has changed who I am as a teacher, and I think it has changed my students as well. Taking themselves seriously enough to write about their lives has ultimately changed how they see themselves in the world. Recognizing that their story matters has been transformative. And, really, that's why I do what I do. ☺



ANDREW MAY grew up in California and has been a high school teacher there for ten years. He is currently a high school humanities teacher at Sacramento

Waldorf School and is completing a trans-disciplinary master's in education program at Antioch University New England.

# The Romantic Poets, Friendship, and Collaboration

## An Eleventh-Grade Experience

BY KATE GOODWIN, MA

The study block on the English Romantic poets is a mainstay of the eleventh-grade Waldorf curriculum. The block celebrates the natural world and its salubrious effects on the human spirit. In the poetry of William Wordsworth (1770–1850), for example, we discover the value of contemplating nature in solitude. The block also depicts, in the poetry of William Blake (1757–1827), for example, the damage industrialization does to the landscape and the quality of human life. But there is another aspect to the English Romantic poets that strongly appeals to the eleventh-grade student—an intense desire for camaraderie and creative collaboration.

In the years after the founding of the first Waldorf school, Rudolf Steiner spoke of the young person's longing to connect with others. Although Steiner is observing the youth of almost a century ago, his description applies to the young people of today:

It is a fact that what young people miss most of all today is the finding of other human beings. Wherever they go, they find, not human beings, for the human beings have died, but masks, everywhere masks! This has had a natural consequence: a search by human beings for one another. . . . Young people want to join with others; they are looking in others for the human being. This is quite comprehensible. Because the human being was no longer there spiritually, each one said to himself: "But I feel, all the same, that the human being must be there." And they looked for the human being, looked for him in community.<sup>1</sup>

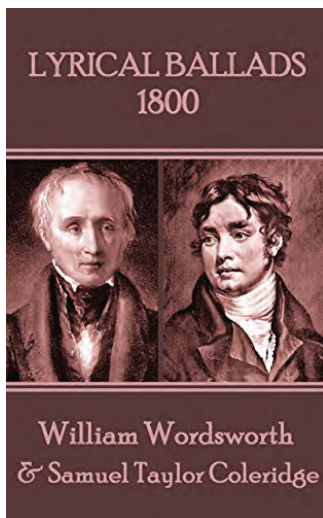
Today, the communities of young people are mostly digital ones, held together by electronic communication. Technology has permitted young people, who otherwise may never have met, to

find individuals with similar interests. But a virtual community rarely fulfills the longing for the human spirit that Steiner describes. Face-to-face social interactions cannot be replaced by email exchanges and Facebook posts. Many students are aware that they and their friends are wearing masks in their social networking. And they readily confess that they feel isolated and lonely after spending time on social media.

Both the first generation of Romantic poets—Wordsworth and his contemporaries—and the second generation—Shelley and his peers—offer an engaging model of companionship and creativity. Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) were very close friends. Students love to hear tales of Wordsworth and Coleridge's famous walks through England's Lake District, where the local people watched

suspiciously, wondering if the two strangers might be spies. The collection of poems, *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1798 and marking the beginning of the Romantic movement, includes poems by both poets. It is an inspiring, concrete example of artistic, intellectual, and spiritual collaboration.

Two of Wordsworth's poems in the collection, "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned; An Evening Scene, on the Same Subject," can be the model for a student exercise in collaboration. In the first poem, a speaker identified as Matthew admonishes his companion for dreamily observing nature instead of taking up his books. In the second, the speaker encourages his friend to quit his books, lest he "grow double." I have my students discuss the two poems. Then they work in pairs to draft their own contrasting poems, each poem expressing a different perspective on a topic of their choice. The students, approaching the end of their



high school career, often choose questions of immediate personal relevance. Should I go to college or enter the workforce? Should I openly express my identity? Should I let myself fall in love?

Developing the ability to look at an issue from different points of view is important for the individual student. But it is also important for the community. According to Rudolf Steiner, a healthy social life depends on the ability of the community's members to view a question from different perspectives:

What matters is that a person should have a sound will and a sound heart in order to look at the world from every standpoint. But people today do not want what they can glean from different standpoints. The egoistic assertions of their own particular standpoints are more important to them. Yet, they thus shut themselves off in the most rigorous way from others. If other people say something, they do not really enter into it, because they have their own standpoint. However, people do not get closer to each other by such means. We can only come closer to each other when we know how to place our different standpoints in a world that is common to all.<sup>2</sup>

The second wave of Romantic poets, young and radical in their social and political thinking, are yet more appealing to students. Students delight in



*Leigh Hunt (1784–1859)*

the story of lesser-known Romantic poet and journalist Leigh Hunt, which offers an inspiring model of friendship, support, and collaboration in the service of social and political ideals. In 1813, Hunt was imprisoned for libel against the United Kingdom's Prince Regent. Hunt turned his jail cell into a veritable drawing room, complete with cozy furniture and flowers, where he entertained friends and admirers interested in ensuring that Hunt's radical newspaper, *The Examiner*, flourished. Author Daisy Hay calls Hunt's circle "a group of friends [that] could constitute their friendship and support of

each other as an act of political resistance."<sup>3</sup> Hay also claims that Hunt's "experiment in living . . . elevated the rituals of friendship—communal dining, music making, letter writing, and shared reading—so that . . . these rituals took on a cooperative, oppositional significance."<sup>4</sup>



*Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (1797–1851)*  
*Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)*

Students also readily relate to Percy Bysshe Shelley and his archetypal, albeit extreme, early biography. Shelley grew up in a bucolic environment with four loving and admiring younger sisters. At the age of ten, however, he was sent off to boarding school, first to Syon House and then to Eton. At both places, Shelley was an outsider who searched in vain for true companionship. This search for true human connection continued, with more success, throughout Shelley's life. During his brief stint at Oxford University, he met and befriended the barrister Thomas Jefferson Hogg. Later, Shelley met and married Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and they traveled together through western Europe, accompanied at times by Mary's stepsister Claire Clairmont, and George Gordon, a.k.a. Lord Byron. Shelley spent his final years in Italy. There he was, at long last, surrounded by friends who shared his radical ideals, indulged his fanciful imagination, and challenged him with their own literary successes. One of the literary fruits of this period is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which was conceived among such friends in an amiable competition one dark and stormy summer's night.

The study of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* by the eleventh graders can be an exploration of the human desire for companionship—and the devastating effects of work conducted in egoistic isolation. One insightful student suggested that the monster's terrifying appearance and malicious



behaviors were the direct result of Frankenstein, the monster's father—creator, working sequestered from friends and family and not having any regard for the spiritual life of his creature. In this suggestion we hear the echo of Steiner's words:

One cannot find the human being in another person unless one knows how to look for him in a spiritual way—for man is in fact a spiritual being, and if one approached a man only externally, he cannot be found, even if he is there.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, while the monster and Frankenstein cross paths several times, neither sees into the heart of the other, until such communion becomes impossible.

By studying the biographies and works of the English Romantics, students can begin to consider



*A winter landscape—with hibernating fox—  
painted collaboratively by two eleventh graders*

how collaboration with others can enrich their perspectives and elevate their individual passions in service to their communities. As we conclude the study block, I ask students to research the role of collaboration in other, more contemporary social movements.

Most recently, the students have looked at young people collaborating in protests against what they see as complacency in government, perhaps the most obvious example being the movement begun by the survivors of the mass shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Our own students worked together to organize a local rally to support stricter gun laws in Illinois. While these events are often based on a specific action—a rally or a march—we discuss how artists can support political causes through their artistic work. Whatever they choose to investigate, students inevitably conclude that a key to any successful social movement is recognizing, as Steiner entreated us, the spiritual nature of those who surround us. ☺

## Notes

1. Rudolf Steiner, "Youth in an Age of Light," lecture, Breslau, June 9, 1924.
2. Rudolf Steiner, lecture, Stuttgart, October 3, 1922.
3. Daisy Hay, *Young Romantics: The Shelleys, Byron, and Other Tangled Lives* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 11.
4. *Ibid.*, 41.
5. Rudolf Steiner, "Youth in an Age of Light."



KATE GOODWIN is a humanities teacher and class advisor at Chicago Waldorf School. She has a BS in English Education from Miami University (of Ohio) and an MA in English Literature from Middlebury College. She has seventeen years of teaching experience.

# Getting Ready for the Real World

## A Twelfth-Grade Economics Block

BY LISA MAHAR

Students typically enter twelfth grade with a collection of disconnected ideas about economics. Economics has something to do with the stock market, they think, or world trade, or how the price of a product is established. And, it's related to money and earnings and is always in the news. But, students typically don't have a clear idea of what economics encompasses, nor do they see their own direct relationship to the subject.

The Waldorf high school economics block typically comes in the students' senior year. This is the culminating school year, brimming with the promise of new freedoms for the twelfth graders—freedoms both alluring and unsettling. As students gaze out to that farther horizon, they often meet curriculum offerings with the question, “What does this have to do with me and my immediate future?”

The following is a look at one school's approach to the twelfth-grade economics block. The block is taught by Katie Schwerin at Monadnock Waldorf School in Keene, New Hampshire. Schwerin brings a unique blend of experience and skills to her high school economics teaching. She is a trained Waldorf teacher, both for the grades and the high school, and was a class teacher for twelve years at Monadnock Waldorf School. She is currently the chief operating officer at W.S. Badger Company in Gilsum, New Hampshire—a successful, growing, family-led business making natural and organic body care products. Badger is a “benefit corporation,” dedicated to the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit. The company is consistently recognized for its

efforts to create a family-friendly work environment and for its positive contributions to the well-being of the community. Katie Schwerin was recognized as New Hampshire's Outstanding Woman in Business in 2017.

Schwerin offers a block that gives students purposeful information, opportunities to explore, imaginative challenges, and methods to connect and synthesize economic ideas and insights. This is all done in a way that is appropriate for their stage of development and that serves them as they step out into the wider world.



### Basic Economics and the Human Community

Schwerin begins this morning main lesson block with the basics. At the outset, she presents a simple box of tissues to the students. She asks them to estimate how many people have played a role in the creation and distribution of this simple household product. A lively discussion identifies the forester, the logging truck driver, the worker at the paper mill, the designers of the box, the machinists who set up the printing, those who made the ink, the shipper who packed the cases, the store clerk who stocked the shelves, and . . . and . . .

Also, early in the block, Schwerin draws two parallel lines on the board, going from left to right. The upper line represents money, and the lower line represents the goods and services that are produced and distributed in society. In ancient societies, economic life was connected to the earth and paralleled our immediate human relationships through barter and the exchange of money for goods. Partway across the board, Schwerin draws the upper line rising up, while the other line continues its steady path. This depicts that money, initially a medium facilitating exchanges, over time has separated from basic human activity. It has become a kind of commodity unto itself. The class is asked to consider how that increasing disparity between money and the basic exchange of goods and services is reflected in today's hedge funds, “magical” investment schemes, and the money-making-money cycle.



*Katie Schwerin, a benefit corporation COO and the economics block teacher*

Through these initial exercises, the students grasp a key point of economics. Economics is about people working together to provide goods and services for other people. Economics involves agreements, partnerships, collaborations, affiliations, relationships, associations, and connections—people linking their work with the work of others in order to achieve a shared goal. This simple yet remarkable reality is largely hidden to us in our daily lives. We take for granted that the box of tissues will be there for us when we need it, but we are not aware of the huge amount of complex, coordinated, cooperative human activity that has gone into it. Economics is about human beings working together to make human life possible.

### Unfolding the Economics Block

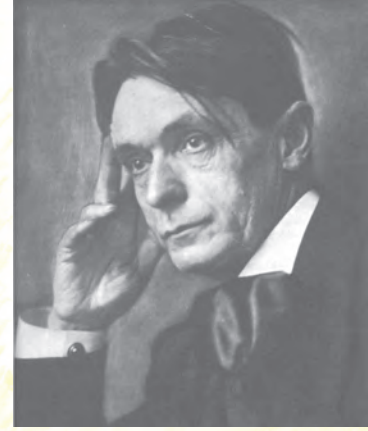
Next comes a review of classical capitalism and of other economic systems and theories. Through classroom presentations and reading assignments, the students are introduced to different theories about economics, some of which strongly influence current economic realities. Readings include selections from Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *World Economy* by Rudolf Steiner, and essays from *Rethinking Globalization*, edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson.

As each reading assignment is reviewed and discussed, students are asked if they think the themes, theories, and insights still pertain today. For example, lively and thoughtful discussions take place around the Bible verse from the Gospel of Matthew that states: "The poor you will always have with you." Is that still true? A proverb counsels: "Never charge a friend interest!" Still good advice? The students are ready with ideas, points to debate,

compelling follow-up questions, and inquiry about their own emerging insights.

For many students, reading excerpts from *World Economy* is their introduction to the work of Rudolf Steiner.

Steiner introduced his view of the threefold nature of social relationships after the devastation of Europe during World War I. He identified three distinct areas of human relationships: the economic sphere, the political sphere, and the cultural sphere. Each domain carries its own focus, laws, and purpose. Steiner asserted that a healthy social life results when each of the three domains retains its separate integrity and there is a dynamic balance among the three.



*Rudolf Steiner in 1919, during the period when he was proposing a new economic and social order for Central Europe*

Study of this threefold nature of social life leads the class to an exploration of "the ethical human being" and what Steiner called "the fundamental social law." This law states that the more a person works for the benefit of the community, and the more the community is structured to provide for the needs of each individual, the greater the well-being of the whole community will be.

A variety of homework assignments encourage students to begin to form their own economic thinking. One assignment asks the students to research a global social justice organization. This research must include what the organization says about itself and what others say about the organization. Students use their research to write an opinion piece answering a variety of questions: What are the serious problems the organization was created to address? What actions does the organization take, and what actions does it urge others to take to address these problems? How does it measure success? Is the organization addressing the root of the problem it strives to address? If so, how?

To form a deeper understanding about the global nature of economics, the class follows the life cycle of a tee shirt from its beginnings in the cotton fields of one country, to its manufacture in another country, and to its sale and use in yet another. Is it practical and logical for the production and consumption of an item to involve so much transport around the globe? Next comes a field trip to the local headquarters of a large international company. How does a company with thousands of employees in different countries approach growth, engage in problem-solving, manage inventory, communicate effectively, and review performance?

The students take field trips to various other local businesses and host visits from local entrepreneurs.



*The New York Stock Exchange, one major nexus of the "money-making-money" economy*

They prepare questions and then consider and compare the answers they receive. Looking at the life cycle of a tee shirt, visiting a modern global company, and interviewing business leaders—all of these activities help students appreciate the scope of modern economics and give rise to conversations and insights into the role and significance of local and global economics.

### The Entrepreneur

This is all heady stuff, and it becomes obvious that the students are ready for something practical. So, now comes the core element of the economics block: Each student conceives an idea for a business and develops that idea into a business plan. Students are then asked to think about their individual strengths and skills and consider what interests them. They are also asked to think about the community in which we live and to ask themselves what the community needs. Next, they are challenged to meet a community need with their own strengths and skills and to come up with their own unique business idea.



*This unassuming cotton tee shirt has probably been around the world.*

Instruction on building a spreadsheet, capitalization, profitability, and marketing all add to the students' growing business knowledge. The business plan includes an overview, a statement of mission and purpose, a plan of operations, a pro forma budget, and a capitalization plan. Market research leads to a marketing plan, and consideration is given to socially responsible business practices in creating a wage structure and sourcing materials.

Students have developed proposals for all sorts of businesses, including a music and dance venue for local bands, a food truck, an acting studio, a breakfast place, a noodle shop, a bowling center, a music school, a detective agency, a made-to-order shoe store, a photography studio, a bus service to Boston, and an organic plant care service. This is an exciting and engaging part of the block, requiring imagination, inspiration, and focused work. The block culminates with the students presenting their business plans, using the PowerPoint presentations they have developed. The enthusiastic audience consists not only of parents and friends but also of

interested community business leaders, who ask questions and offer expertise, advice, and encouragement.

In this block, the students learn about the role of economics in human life and the different economic theories and systems that have appeared in human history, including those of the present time. They have an opportunity to develop a personal economic ethic, to understand economic life from a local and an international perspective, and to imagine how they might contribute to economic life in a positive way. Having this block close to the end of senior year supports the students as they look to their future lives.

Comments on the block from seniors over the past several years include:

"What resonated with me in this block was the conflict of different economic systems like guilds, colonialism, communism, and the threefold social order."

"I find myself thinking about every business I walk into: how they are making a profit and how [they] made their vision come to life."

"The field trips were really important for engagement and for seeing how these things apply in real life."

"I enjoyed creating my business plan and learning about ecosystems and about all the different types of seafood that can be harvested."

"I learned that everything that happens in our life seems to have a connection to economics. And economics is not only about money."



*A young entrepreneur with an idea for a cheese company named The Mouse Trap uses a PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of his enterprise, and then . . .*



*. . . fields comments and questions from a hungry audience.*



*A twelfth-grade entrepreneuse presents her idea for a fine dining restaurant.*

“Thank you for this block. Not many high schoolers get the opportunity to do something at this level of realism.”

Katie Schwerin reflects on the economics block:

What begins with a recognition of the cooperation required to create

the items we need to live, ends with the vision of how each individual student can enter the economic life of

*Smith, continued from page 35*

(forty-two to sixty-three). In each session, participants recall and share their own journeys at that time of life.

This year’s parent participants have reported that sharing life stories is a wonderful way for people to see the humanity in one another. They also say that biography practices such as journaling, deep listening, and developing observation skills are transferrable to professional and home lives. One participant in a biography workshop at

the River Valley School in Pennsylvania wrote the facilitator the following note:

Thank you for such a wonderful afternoon yesterday! I spoke to several parents who felt both more connected and freer in

self by the end of the day. Me too! One of the exercises was brought to the board meeting last night and it was well received. I am eager to bring this work to the Parent Council meeting. Also, it was powerful to step out of the busy-ness and connect with others,



*... drawing a picture of yourself in three communities you have been part of.*

today’s world and out of his or her own effort find a place. What we have done together is open a doorway to a deeply important human activity, one that supports our daily lives and creates possibilities for the future. ☺



LISA MAHAR *worked for twenty years as the school administrator at Monadnock Waldorf School in Keene, New Hampshire. She is a founding member of the Administrators Network of AWSNA (ANA) and now advises and consults with Waldorf schools in the areas of governance, community building, administrative review, mentoring, team building, envisioning, and administrative planning. She can be contacted at lisamahar5@gmail.com*

and to be reminded to pause to connect with myself. I heard over and over from colleagues how invigorating the day was.

In the next academic year, there will be Awakening Connections workshops at seven other Waldorf schools. Once the two-year pilot stage is completed, the program will be available to all Waldorf schools interested in strengthening relationships within their community.

Anyone interested in implementing biography work for their school community can contact CBSA at [center4biography@gmail.com](mailto:center4biography@gmail.com) or 413-320-1723. More information is available at: [biographysocialart.org](http://biographysocialart.org) ☺



PATTI SMITH *is an educational researcher who for twenty-five years has worked to increase high school graduation rates, college attendance, and employment opportunities for traditionally underserved students in urban school districts. She was a Waldorf kindergarten teacher for eight years. She currently serves as a member of the Board of CBSA and as a facilitator for the Center for Courage and Renewal. She has produced a film—Taking a Risk in Education: Waldorf Inspired Public Schools—and is co-editor of More Lifeways, a book on parenting. She lives in southern Rhode Island.*

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## Educational Programs for 2019

### Explorations

This new program offers weekend study workshops in the arts at a central "hub" location, supplemented by "satellite" study seminars. Locations this year are planned in Florida, Georgia, and Maryland. Further communities interested in hosting a "hub" program should contact the Center for Anthroposophy for an onsite information/orientation session.

### Building Bridges

Customized for practicing teachers and leaders in Waldorf schools who are seeking Waldorf teacher education and continued professional development. This streamlined program includes the option of earning advance standing credits in the Waldorf Teacher Education Program at Antioch University New England, leading to a fully-accredited Master's degree in Waldorf Education. Each year, this program is offered in a different host site.

### Waldorf High School Teacher Education Program: June 30-July 27

Offered each July, this 3-summer program prepares high school teachers in the specialized disciplines of arts and art history, English, history, life science, earth science, mathematics, computer science, physics, and chemistry. A new cycle is launched each year in Wilton, NH, including the option to earn a fully-accredited Master's degree in Waldorf Education.

### Renewal Courses: June 23-28, June 30-July 5

2 weeks of 5-day retreats in Wilton, NH, for Waldorf teachers and those seeking personal rejuvenation and professional renewal through anthroposophical study, artistic immersion, good food, and fun.

### Waldorf Elementary Teacher Education Three different programs offered by Antioch University New England:

#### *\*Year Round Waldorf Teacher Education—*

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#### *\*Summer Sequence Waldorf Teacher Education—*

3 summers in Wilton, NH; online studies and internship in a Waldorf school; plus online Master's Project leading to M.Ed.

#### *\*Healing Education (Advanced Track)—*

2 consecutive summer sessions in Wilton, NH, for experienced Waldorf educators and anthroposophical practitioners. Program in partnership with Camphill Academy.

### Waldorf Administration and Leadership Development

Intended for those serving as administrators and leaders in Waldorf schools. This streamlined program (two five-day institutes in Keene, NH; one Renewal Course in Wilton, NH) includes mentorship and online group dialogue on assigned readings.

[info@centerforanthroposophy.org](mailto:info@centerforanthroposophy.org), Phone: (603) 654-2566

[antioch.edu/new-england/degrees-programs/education](http://antioch.edu/new-england/degrees-programs/education), Phone: (603) 283-2311

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## Week 1:

June 23rd to June 28th

**The Art of the Child Study**  
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**The Journey Begins**  
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**From Form to Solid Foundation**  
with Michael Gannon

**Grade 3:**

**Awakening to Self and Surroundings**  
with Kris Ritz

**Grade 4:**

**Norse Mythology and the Mantle of Responsibility**  
with Shannon Wiley

**Grade 5:**

**The Golden Age**  
with Monica Lander

**Grade 6:**

**From Romans to Knights and Ladies**  
with Lynn Thurrell

**Grade 7:**

**A Year of Reawakening and Exploration**  
with Alison Henry

**Grade 8:**

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- **Singing** with Meg Chittenden (Week 1)
- **Drawing, Painting, or Clay** with Elizabeth Auer (Weeks 1 & 2)
- **Eurythmy** with Cezary Ciaglo (Weeks 1 & 2)
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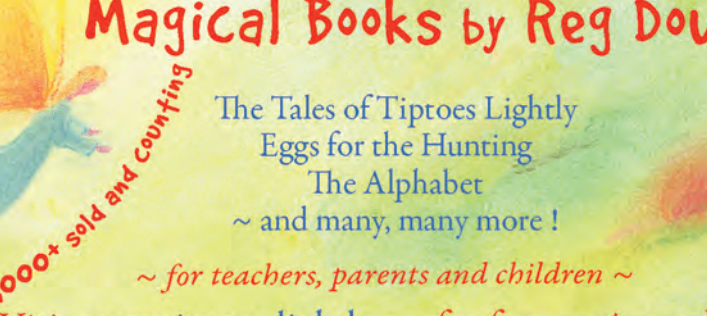
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Potential Difference (V)

Current (A)

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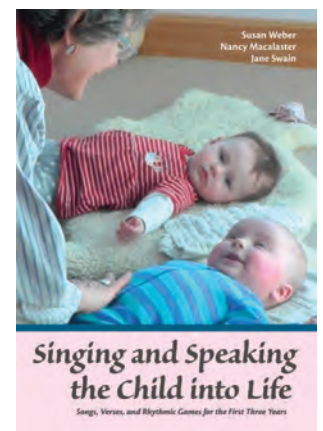
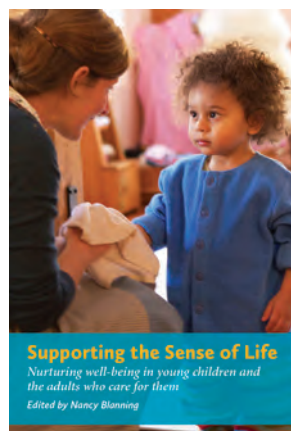
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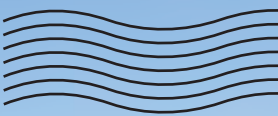
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