

SPRING/SUMMER 2020 – VOLUME 29, NUMBER 1

Renewal

WALDORF
100



Looking to the Future — Innovating — Serving Humanity

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

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Photo by John Treillion

Tenth graders in computer science class



A is for Ai:Ren, the Mohawk word for eagle.



Courtesy of Al Luun Waldorf School

Altar for a Mayan celebration of the spring equinox



Courtesy of A. M. Tsadok and S. Maika

Students removing invasive seaweed at a Honolulu area beach

COVER PHOTOS Upper right: forest kindergarten, The Hartsbrook School (MA); upper left: finger-knitting, Community School for Excellence in Education (CA); lower: high school robotics, photo by Susan Hinton, Waldorf School of the Peninsula (CA).

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

Renewal—A Journal for Waldorf Education has been enjoyed by readers throughout North America for twenty-eight years. This is the final issue that will be produced by Ronald Koetzsch, Anne Riegel-Koetzsch, and their production team. AWSNA is actively researching how best to serve the Waldorf community in North America through publications for parents in the coming years. In the summer of 2020, we will announce to schools and individual subscribers the form and schedule of upcoming publications. Please stay tuned! On behalf of the whole Waldorf community, we thank Ronald and Anne for their years of service and wish them a healthy, relaxing, and joyful retirement.

—The AWSNA Executive Team

The Editorial Advisory Board of *Renewal*

As *Renewal* turns its last page, it is important to salute those who served on its Editorial Advisory Board, almost all of them doing so for many years. Their job has been to read all the articles submitted to the magazine and, in a twice-yearly meeting with Ronald, discuss the articles and decide which ones should be published in the magazine. The members of the board have been valued comrades and counselors to Ronald and Anne.

The founding board, formed in 1991, consisted of Henry Barnes (1912–2008), Patricia Livingston (1924–2017), and James Pewtherer. When, after some years, Henry retired and James stepped back, Vivian Jones-Schmidt, John Wulsin, and Shyla

Nelson joined the board. Patrice Maynard came on as AWSNA's liaison after its reorganization in 2004. After Beverly Amico became *Renewal's* AWSNA liaison in 2013, Patrice remained on the board until 2017. Two years ago Phil Fertey joined, and last year Linda Williams came on. Vivian and John are still serving, and Shyla only recently has resigned.

These people—all of them dedicated Waldorf educators—donated in total over a century of time (124 years, in fact!) to creating and sustaining *Renewal's* literary and artistic excellence. Their commitment to the magazine, their trust in its mission, their willingness to serve, and their staying power have been a great contribution to Waldorf Education.

—Patrice Maynard, John Wulsin, and James Pewtherer

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Courtesy of Kroka Expeditions

Education taking place far from the classroom



Photo by Anne Starke

Tara High School Candlelight Festival eurythmy

A Tribute

BY PATRICE MAYNARD, MEd
with JAMES PEWATHERER

*For nearly three decades, the Waldorf community in North America has been blessed, each spring and fall, by an issue of *Renewal*—A Journal for Waldorf Education. We have come to consider this magazine an essential part of our landscape. It has been educational and inspiring for parents, teachers, administrators, and alumni. To honor Ronald and Anne for their long and valuable service, Patrice Maynard, with input from James Pewtherer, has written this tribute.*

—John Wulsin

On a bus from the Toronto airport in 1991, on our way to my first AWSNA teachers conference, I met Ronald Koetzsch. Ronald mentioned that Henry Barnes, Patti Livingston, and James Pewtherer, on behalf of AWSNA, had invited him to help them begin a magazine to represent Waldorf Education in North America. He talked to me about his work as a staff writer at *East West Journal*. He commented on my antique, Outward Bound–styled backpack, and through this I learned of his earlier career as an Outward Bound instructor. Lucky for me, Ronald and I have been friends ever since. That fateful bus ride! It was a splendid example of karmic grace, bestowing upon us a gift that we might not have earned, but are given, nevertheless. Somewhere along the way, I learned that Ronald is a Princeton graduate, has a doctorate from Harvard in World Religions, with a concentration in Japanese religion, and has run five marathons!

For the next many years, I saw Ronald at least once a year at the ASWNA delegates meetings and teachers conferences. Ronald would begin each day at these conferences on stage with his “announcements.” These included actual announcements but also Ronald’s insightful—and hilarious—comments about the previous day. Ronald could always roast without burning, highlight the ridiculous, and commend the deserving while keeping us all laughing till we cried. Ronald’s morning “announcements” are a fixture to this day, used as a way to get conference attendees into the hall on time.

As part of my work with AWSNA, I served as a member of *Renewal*’s Editorial Advisory Board. I also was supposed to be the “manager” of *Renewal* and Ronald—something as necessary as government intervention in a Waldorf school! During this time,

Ronald
Koetzsch
and Anne
Riegel-
Koetzsch



Photo by Jeanne DePrince Bowen

I discovered that Ronald can translate German accurately and poetically on the spot, find the essence of a topic in a heartbeat, identify the genuinely beautiful with authenticity, manage a social problem with courage and compassion, write at the level of Hemingway, and, best of all, edit like a master samurai.

This last capacity fills me with particular gratitude, because Ronald’s skill as an editor made me look better than my best as a writer. It was not only that he made me look good, it was also a wonder to watch him work on any article toward its betterment.

For the past twenty-five years, Ronald and *Renewal* have been blessed by the work of Anne Riegel-Koetzsch as assistant editor and, more recently, also as art director. Anne is an Oberlin graduate, having majored in philosophy and fine arts, and began her career as a professional editor while still in college. She is an accomplished artist and musician and, like Ronald, was a teacher at Rudolf Steiner College for many years. Anne’s insightful consideration of articles and her painterly skill at making all things beautiful contributed greatly to the quality of the magazine. Anne is also an excellent copyeditor and proofreader. In all the many issues of *Renewal*, the number of grammatical and typographical errors that escaped her notice has been miniscule.

Ronald, with his remarkable capacities, and Anne, with her refined artistic sensibilities, share a highly professional love of language. Together, they developed *Renewal* into a magazine both practical and useful—in that it deepened its readers’ understanding of Waldorf Education—but also a publication filled with the same beauty that Waldorf teachers strive to create in every classroom. Each issue has been an example of this.

This comes as a final *bravo!* to you, Ronald and Anne. Your love of this work has brought us to love the light that shines from each issue of the magazine. Through the many issues of *Renewal* you have given an immeasurable gift to Waldorf Education, to our Waldorf community, and to the children of the world. We wish you health and happiness as you proceed to your next chapter of life together! Love and thanks. ☺

Patrice Maynard, formerly a Waldorf class teacher and AWSNA’s Leader for Outreach and Development, is currently Director of Publications and Development with the Research Institute for Waldorf Education. James Pewtherer was a Waldorf elementary and high school teacher for over forty years. He has been a longtime member of the Pedagogical Section Council of North America and of the International Forum for Waldorf/Steiner Education—The Hague Circle.

Thank You and Goodbye

Dear Reader,

This is the last issue of *Renewal* of which I will be the editor. After twenty-eight years, and fifty-seven biannual autumn and spring issues, I am retiring.

Producing and distributing a magazine is a complicated, collaborative enterprise involving many people. It requires writers, an editorial board, copyeditors, proofreaders, layout designers, at least one computer ace, a printing company, packers, shippers, and administrative staff who keep track of subscribers, handle the advertising, pay the bills, and balance the budget. More than fifty people were involved in the creation and distribution of this issue, including thirty-eight writers!

As I look back over the years, I feel a tremendous gratitude to all the people who worked in these various ways and made the magazine possible. Marianne Alsop was managing editor and graphic designer from the first issue in 1992 until 2002. In that year, Hallie Wootan took on those roles and stayed with the magazine until 2008. Marianne and Hallie did superlative work and made *Renewal* into a beautiful magazine. Many other people have played an important role over the years. Earlier chairs of AWSNA—David Alsop, Donald Bufano, and Patrice Maynard—were sources of support as are the

current three leaders. Our neighbors and friends Charley and Judy Blatchford were for years our trusted proofreaders. Our current production team is listed on the inside front cover. Please read the masthead and send a thank-you thought to those good folks.

I feel grateful also to the Waldorf schools who have been our primary subscribers, buying bulk subscriptions so they could provide copies to the parents, staff, and faculty. Finally, I am indebted to you, dear Readers, without whom all this work would be in vain.

Anne Riegel-Koetzsch deserves special mention. For the past twenty-five years she has served as assistant editor and for the past thirteen years also as art director. Her contribution to the quality of the text and the visual appeal of the magazine has been immeasurable. And, as my indispensable “better half” and support, Anne has made it possible for me to continue this work for over a quarter century. Thank you, Dear.

And so, dear Reader, thank you, and fare thee well!

—Ronald E. Koetzsch, PhD



Vol. 1, No. 1
Spring 1992



Vol. 12, No. 2
Fall 2003

Innovation and Waldorf Education

Waldorf Education, as founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1919, was a comprehensive innovation in the world of education at the time. The distinctive characteristics of Waldorf Education—such as a curriculum and pedagogy based on the developmental stages of the child, scheduling subjects in study blocks, the important role of the arts and handcrafts in the curriculum, the eight-year relationship between a teacher and an elementary school class, and the artistic presentation of academic subjects—were all striking innovations at the time. Today, most are still outside the mainstream of education.

As the second century of Waldorf Education begins, there is a general consensus about the essential elements in the Waldorf curriculum, pedagogy, and governance—certainly among educators and schools in the independent Waldorf school movement. Most teachers and schools follow the standard, revered K–12 curriculum developed in Europe in the years after the first

school was founded and slowly developed thereafter. In recent years, all members of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America agreed upon the *AWSNA Principles for Waldorf Schools* and committed themselves to a self-study process that supports embodying the principles in school life.

However, creative innovation to meet the changing conditions and the challenges of life today is going on throughout the Waldorf movement in North America and around the world. In late 2019, a request was sent to all member schools of AWSNA to report on any innovations that had been initiated in the school, particularly recent ones. There were a great many replies reporting on innovations in the curriculum, pedagogy, governance, and finances—innovations that are congruent with Waldorf values and practices. This issue of *Renewal* contains a number of articles describing innovations that schools and teachers have found useful

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Educating Our Children for an Unknowable Future

BY BEVERLY AMICO

In 2017 International Data Corporation, a market research firm, predicted that by 2025, 180 zetta bytes of data will be created and stored every year. That is 180 followed by 21 zeros! We are facing a new wave of technological realities—everything from cyborg insects and real-life invisibility cloaks to machines that sense, reason, and act and are capable of providing solutions to climate change and other world problems. By 2050, one machine may possess more intellectual capacity than all human beings on Earth.

The coming innovations are not only in the realm of information and intellect. *The Soul Machine™* project, modeled on research in neuroscience, seeks to “bring technology to life by creating lifelike, emotionally responsive Digital Humans with personality and character, [with] digital brains that simulate reflexive, emotional processes which control attention, learning, sensing, and the responsive actions.”

These changes are occurring at an exponential pace. It took 115 years after the first telephone call for the first website on the internet to be created and then only sixteen years for the iPhone to appear. From 2000 to 2012, global online traffic increased by a factor of 500.

Related changes in economic and social life are also major and occurring at breakneck speed. Jobs in certain areas such as manufacturing are disappearing because of robotics, while in other areas, such as the service industries, they are increasing. There is a shift from a career workforce to a gig workforce. Workers have relatively short careers with a particular company and then move to another company or even another field.

There is a general increase in income and wealth, but it is happening mostly among the top five percent of earners. The global economy has become totally and tightly interrelated. What happens in one country can immediately and strongly affect many other nations. Social shifts are equally striking. The number of one-parent households is increasing. There are more and more women in leadership roles in business and government.

In the past, education in the United States sought to provide what the society needed most at the time. In the nineteenth century, public education had largely to do with assimilating newly arrived immigrants into mainstream American culture. In the twentieth



A Fire Rainbow in the Himalayas—a reminder, perhaps, that there is always a redeeming light beyond the inscrutable darkness of the moment.

century, it sought to prepare students for careers in an industrialized economy, one that was changing, but at a relatively slow pace. Today, we are called to prepare our children for life in a future society and economy that we can scarcely imagine. And we need to do so while sensing that what we can imagine may not actually manifest.

There is much innovation going on in education today. For-profit schools, online schools, schools blending online and in-person instruction, girls-only programs, individual learning programs, and schools emphasizing basic academic competency are now part of the educational landscape. In higher education, even traditional universities such as Princeton, Cornell, and Duke are offering not just standard credit/degree programs but also apprenticeships, programs in cutting-edge technology such as Blockchain, and lifelong learning opportunities.

So, what are we in independent Waldorf schools to do?

First, we have to remain committed to our values and to the curriculum and pedagogy that have served us so well for the past many years. They will continue to help us educate our students to become clear-thinking, knowledgeable, well-informed, imaginative, creative, strong-willed, resilient, moral, compassionate, and free human beings. As such, our students will be able to survive and thrive in whatever personal, economic, or social circumstances they encounter in life. They will be nurtured to become valuable and successful citizens and participants in the global culture and economy. They will be empowered to realize and fulfill their destinies as human beings of the twenty-first century.

Second, to meet the changes and challenges in the world around us, we have to be open to innovation

Beverly Amico, formerly a high school teacher, advancement professional, and school director, is currently a member of AWSNA's executive team. She is an avid hiker and recently has solo-hiked major sections of the Pacific Crest Trail.

in the curriculum, pedagogy, governance, and financing of Waldorf Education. Certainly, we need to explore opportunities in data literacy and technology. As John Trevillion, faculty member at Chicago Waldorf School, recently observed: Technology education in Waldorf schools, from grade one through high school, should become the gold standard in computer education in North America.

However, every innovation—in curriculum, pedagogy, governance, or finance—should be in harmony with the seven AWSNA Principles for Waldorf Schools, which express the fundamental elements of Waldorf Education. These principles have preserved the integrity and the high moral and spiritual purpose of Waldorf Education for the past 100 years and will continue to do so in the future. We need to look to the Principles, look to the purpose of Waldorf Education, and look to the children. If we remain awake, conscious, and unafraid, the path will become clear. o

AWSNA Principles for Waldorf Schools

1. The image of the human being as a spiritual being informs every aspect of the school.
2. Waldorf schools foster social renewal by cultivating human capacities that serve the individual and society.
3. The anthroposophical understanding of child development guides the educational program.
4. Waldorf schools support freedom in teaching within the context of the school's shared agreements.
5. The conscious development of human relationships fosters the health of the individual and the community.
6. Spiritual development in support of professional growth is an ongoing activity for the faculty, board, and staff.
7. Collaboration and shared responsibility provide the foundations of school leadership and governance.

Innovation, continued from page 3

in keeping Waldorf Education viable and relevant in our changing world. We hope that these stories will be of interest and will, perhaps, inspire teachers and schools to try something new, but still Waldorf.

Unfortunately, because of space considerations we could not include full articles on all the worthy innovations. Here are a few, briefly described:

- Kelly Barham, early childhood teacher at Maine Coast Waldorf School, has added to the previously all-white sheepskins in her classroom a rainbow of browns and tans, giving the children a picture of the variety of beautiful skin tones.
- Live Oak School in Meadow Vista, California, has Healthy Food Guidelines. They stipulate that food served at the school—in the hot lunch program, in the after-school program, and at festivals and fundraising events—be organic whenever possible, unrefined (whole wheat flour rather than white flour, natural sweeteners rather than white sugar), and free of synthetic additives. Using food that meets fair trade and fair labor standards, while not in the guidelines, is also considered preferable. The policy reflects the school's concern for the health of its students and of the environment and for social justice.
- At Alabama Waldorf School, innovations include offering every grade from one to eight, regardless of enrollment—thanks to a combined class model; a two-year apprenticeship program for early childhood

teachers; limiting weekly faculty meetings to fifty minutes, with the agenda alternating between focusing on business and renewal; and administrators working out of a servant-leadership model.

- New Amsterdam School, located in an economically and ethnically diverse neighborhood in Manhattan, is providing 99 percent scholarships to children from low-income families, particularly families of color. Many of the children have been in the nearby Head Start program and enter the school in kindergarten. This is one of several measures to reach out to the local community and to increase racial, ethnic, linguistic, and economic diversity within the school community.
- At Seattle Waldorf High School, students manage an aquaponics business that provides various greens and vegetables to the local community. The students get experience in environmental agriculture as well as in business—developing and exercising their skills and will forces in the practical, material world.
- High Mowing School in Wilton, New Hampshire, has—through an international student exchange program, a homestay program for international students, trimester programs particularly for students from China, and a program for aspiring soccer players—created a genuinely international student body. Of the 144 students in the high school, 52 are from outside the United States and come from 20 countries including Brazil, Ecuador, Ghana, Russia, Georgia, Trinidad and Tobago, China, and South Africa.

—R.E.K.



Public Waldorf Education in the United States

Looking Around and Looking Ahead

BY LIZ BEAVEN, EdD

The first Waldorf school was founded in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919. In 1928, less than ten years later, the first school in the United States was founded in New York City. From then until 1991, all Waldorf schools in the country were private institutions and thus were able to practice their distinct approach to education with little or no interference from the wider world. The Waldorf movement was small and self-contained, and Waldorf educators—with a mixture of fondness and frustration—referred to what they were doing as “the best-kept secret in education.” The original social mission of Waldorf Education—to transform the future through a new art of education—was not forgotten. However, it was interpreted more to mean preparing the students to become agents of positive change than making the education available to children, regardless of resources.

I know the independent Waldorf movement from first-hand experience. I was a parent, teacher, and administrator in independent Waldorf schools from 1985 until 2012. However, along with many colleagues, I periodically reflected on those founding social goals and wondered how we could provide access to this enriched education to many more children, without the barrier of tuition. Waldorf Education had entered the world against a backdrop of dire social conditions and uncertainty about the future. Surely, it had something important to offer public education in this country. New opportunities opened up in the early 1990s, a time of questioning, innovation, and widespread concern throughout public education. The first district public school based on Waldorf principles was opened in inner-city Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1991, followed by a public magnet school in Sacramento, California. Charter school legislation, first enacted in 1991, opened new doors to those wishing to establish public schools, and a flurry of activity followed.

Today, there are approximately fifty public schools in fifteen states that are founded on the Core Principles

of Public Waldorf Education and are members of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. Their development has been a story of perseverance in the face of challenges. Because of Waldorf’s philosophical foundations, both Waldorf educators and public educators for years questioned the ability of Waldorf to exist in public education. Indeed, the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education was initially formed to defend the right of these schools to exist. This was mystifying to colleagues in other countries where Waldorf schools flourished with public funding. Were we in the United States saying that Waldorf Education could only thrive in an independent school setting? Clearly, this was not the case when examined from a global perspective.

Today, we have a public school movement that is still young and growing. The Alliance is primarily a volunteer organization, but one that has moved beyond a defensive “right to exist” gesture into advocacy, support for schools, and collaboration with fellow educators, both within Waldorf and in the broader educational world. Its public presence continues to open new doors for Waldorf Education as a whole. As we stand at 100 years and look to the future, what can we expect and predict for public sector Waldorf Education?

First, there are and will continue to be questions of compromise and adaptation. Some of the concerns about the compatibility of aspects of Waldorf’s philosophical basis within the public sector are valid. They force us to ask what is essential, what is beloved habit, and where change and adaptation will be needed in order to meet increasingly diverse groups of students and their families, to adequately respond to a rapidly changing society, and to prepare young people for an unknowable future.

The question of compromise immediately brings important considerations: which compromises are acceptable, which will fundamentally change the nature of Waldorf Education, possibly beyond recognition, and who decides? It also brings questions of freedom and

control. Public schools are required to meet district, state, or federal requirements in important areas including standardized assessment, aspects of curriculum, and school governance. In considering these questions, it can be reassuring to note that Rudolf Steiner addressed the need for compromise with that first school, stating that compromises, including accountability to local authorities, would be essential for the school to exist, and that the most important thing was that this new art of education be a force for transformation in the world. Most assuredly, that still holds true today.

Diversity and inclusion represent a second major area for consideration. Expansion into public education has brought a requirement to examine Waldorf Education and many of our school customs and practices and to ask: Whose curriculum is this? What is it based on? Which teaching style should be used? Do the children and community find themselves reflected in their school? This examination is essential for all of us in today's pluralistic society and is very much aligned with the founding impulses of this education and with Steiner's directive that Waldorf Education should be a living art, ever created anew to meet children in time and place. What we seek, whether in public or independent settings, is an education that endures because it supports the health and the unfolding capacities of children. Steiner never intended to establish a fixed or closed system of education. Rather, his emphasis was on a very modern idea of awakening capacities within students and teachers.

One of the primary goals of Public Waldorf Education is increasing access and thereby building inclusion and diversity. As we continue to develop, we will need to be alert to another trend that was already evident in that first school and that we have seen in our public school movement—a trend toward upward mobility and gentrification. The schools tend to serve children from economically and socially privileged families. Social justice through access is an Alliance Core Principle. Ongoing vigilance, research, and a willingness to ask hard questions will be needed to ensure that our schools develop in ways that are truly welcoming to all children.

Our independent and public schools have made great strides in collaboration over the past few years. If Waldorf is to thrive, continued efforts will be essential as we look to the future. If we are able to view independent and public as two expressions of a common approach, we see that each can benefit the other. Independent schools are largely free from government intervention in the pedagogical and governance realms. Their long experience in implementing Waldorf Education and their ongoing study and research can deepen our

understanding of this approach. Public schools demand adaptation and open doors to discussions with other educators, and they provide a more visible pathway to inclusion and access. The simple reality is that Waldorf, whether public or independent, is a very small sector of education, and we will achieve more for children with a united voice. By working together, we have a greater chance of developing new forms, conducting new research, questioning assumptions, speaking more clearly, and, of greatest importance, serving and supporting more children.

We live in a diverse, multicultural society, and quality education is key to an uncertain future—a future that belongs to our children. Those of us who are active in Public Waldorf Education anticipate that there will be continued slow but steady expansion of Alliance member schools. To us, a public expression of Waldorf Education is essential. Public education is a core part of American life and values. For the sake of all children, it is important that Waldorf exists and flourishes in the public schools as well as in the established independent school setting. Many of our older Public Waldorf schools are vibrant, established parts of their communities. Growth will undoubtedly require the questioning of assumptions, dealing with challenges, and continued self-examination. The need for expansion is urgent. We Waldorf educators, in both the independent and public movements, have much to offer American education. On behalf of all of our children and the future, we need to take hold of one final essential ingredient—courage—and walk forward together on a path of adaptation, innovation, and inclusion. That requirement was surely set in motion with Steiner's insights and the founding of that first Waldorf school in Germany over 100 years ago. ☺



LIZ BEAVEN has over thirty years' experience in Waldorf Education in a variety of positions and currently is president of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education and is also provost of California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. As an educator, parent, and grandparent, she is deeply interested in supporting healthy child development and family life.

We the North—Canada Challenges and Opportunities

BY JAMES BRIAN

Canada, as a young nation, has had a childlike quality. Rudolf Steiner once said that the folk soul of Canada is comparable to the first stage of human development, from birth to age seven. Canada, in the last century, has tended to build upon the impulses of other peoples and cultures.

As Phil Fertey described so well in the last issue of *Renewal*, Canada's first Waldorf initiatives were founded by pioneers from Great Britain, France, and Germany. For decades, these pioneers, in partnership with Canadians, worked with great sacrifice to establish a foothold of schools in Canada's largest cities. A new generation of Canadians then built upon the pioneering efforts. Today there are thirty Waldorf schools in Canada—twenty-one associate schools and registered initiatives and nine full members of AWSNA. There are now four teacher education institutes: the Rudolf Steiner Centre Toronto, the West Coast Institute for Studies in Anthroposophy in British Columbia, and Institut Pégase and Institut Rudolf Steiner in Quebec.



*Rudolf Steiner Centre
Toronto, a full-time Waldorf
teacher education institute*

Most of Canada's thirty-eight million people (one-tenth of the United States population) live in a ribbon of land that straddles the border from Nova Scotia and Quebec to British Columbia. The Waldorf schools are all located in this long east-west band. The largest cluster is in Ontario, where

there are six schools within five hours of each other. Over 2,000 miles to the west, there are two schools in Alberta—in Calgary and Edmonton. In British Columbia, there are schools in Vancouver, Duncan, Squamish, Whistler, Nelson, and Kelowna, as well as a number of initiatives in smaller communities. Far to the east, there are two schools in Quebec and one in Nova Scotia.

The great distances that separate the schools are a challenge. Gathering together to meet face to face and to deal with the concerns that we share is difficult, as is also just developing a sense of connection. In addition,

two of the schools are French-speaking and the rest are English-speaking. Developing a strong sense of connection and working together to meet our shared challenges need to be priorities.

As independent, private institutions, our schools face financial challenges. These involve keeping our schools financially viable while providing adequate salaries for teachers and staff and having tuition fees that are affordable to families. Creating sustainable funding for our Waldorf teacher education centers and keeping our programs relevant will be another priority in the future.

Looking ahead at the next decade of Waldorf Education in Canada, there are opportunities. Today, fifty years after the first efforts to establish Waldorf Education in Canada, a new impulse is visible in Canadian society—finding and articulating a Canadian identity. More and more Canadians are interested in alternative styles of life, including new ways of educating their children, eating consciously, and growing food in a sustainable way. We in the Waldorf schools can reach out to those seeking new ways to see and experience the world. Parents want something for their children and don't know what it can be. Our task as a Waldorf movement is to respond to this growing awareness coming from the periphery: What are people saying to us? What do they need? Our challenge for the future is to find the language and methods of outreach to speak to their needs in a nonsectarian, nondogmatic way.

The schools will continue working with AWSNA to bring cohesiveness and common direction to the Waldorf Education movement in North America. They will also work to support new initiatives in Canada. Imagine this vision for the not-distant future: A team consisting of an experienced Waldorf teacher, an administrator, and one person experienced in outreach and parent relations is available to travel and to spend four weeks at a Waldorf initiative, however small, to provide on-site advising and support.

Canada is twice the size of the United States. To the north of the densely populated border ribbon stretches a vast region of boreal forest, tundra, lakes, and seas that extends into the Arctic. This area is home to Canada's substantial Indigenous population—over six hundred First Nations tribes and bands who speak over forty native languages. The Indigenous population is now 1,670,000 and is expected to grow to 2.1 million by 2030.

Since 2013 the Douglas Cardinal Foundation for Indigenous Waldorf Education has given over ten workshops called *Waldorf Education For and By Indigenous Peoples* in reserves across Canada. Waldorf Education is in tune with how Indigenous children learn. As one participant at a November 2014 Waldorf workshop in Sept-Îles, Quebec, said:

Now I am able to put words on what is appropriate for the profile of the Innu student, in the sense that the Waldorf method resembles the way our grandparents passed on their knowledge: being, doing, and interacting with the environment.

For the future, there is a great potential contribution of Indigenous culture and traditions to cultural renewal in Canadian society. Indigenous communities have maintained a living thread to spirituality in their culture and traditions—a living connection with the Earth, with other human souls, and with the spirit. This thread has been suppressed by Western culture through materialistic methods of education being forced upon Indigenous peoples, measures to discourage use of their native languages, and discrediting of their culture as not aligned with modern Western society.



Educators from five Haudenonsaunee (Iroquois) communities at a conference on Haudenonsaunee culture and language and Waldorf Education

Throughout Canada's history, the Indigenous peoples have been suppressed and marginalized by the government and the mainstream culture. Native children were taken from their families and villages, forced to attend residential schools, and forbidden to speak their native tongue.

Due to this suppression of their culture, Indigenous peoples have been known in mainstream Canadian society in a caricatured way, mostly negative. Canadians have not seen the best elements of



Douglas Cardinal, Indigenous leader and advocate of Waldorf Education for and by First Nations

Indigenous culture and learning, elements that could enrich and inform all of Canadian society. These include spiritual knowledge and traditions, connection to and knowledge of nature, and a harmonious, integrated relationship with nature.

It is evident that current, conventional educational methods are not appropriate to the Indigenous style of learning and teaching. As Thomas King wrote in *The Inconvenient Indian*:

In the 1950s and '60s, Helen's father, Bernard Hoy, my father-in-law, was an inspector for the Catholic Separate School Board in the Sudbury region. One of his duties was to look in on Catholic residential schools in northern Ontario. His memories of the schools were neither as damning as the Meriam Report nor as detailed as the Hawthorn Report. What he remembered were Native students who spent their classroom time in their seats, looking out the window. "They didn't belong there," Bernard told his daughter.

He was right. But if they didn't belong there, where did they belong? Instead of trying to kill the Indian to save the child, North America might have gone into partnership with the various nations, and, together, they could have come up with an education plan that would have complemented Native cultures and, perhaps, even enriched White culture at the same time.*

An art of education developed by Rudolf Steiner to meet the needs of all modern humanity—based on a view of the human being as consisting of body, soul, and spirit—can support Indigenous peoples in educating their children in a way that may enable Canadians to see their strengths and gifts. The same can be said for the potential contribution of all Indigenous peoples in the world.

The challenges are great but the opportunities are there, if we but find the courage, the openness of spirit, and the will to act. ☉

* Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Doubleday Canada, 2012), 118.

JAMES BRIAN is executive director of Rudolf Steiner Centre Toronto and president of Douglas Cardinal Foundation for Indigenous Waldorf Education. He has diplomas in Waldorf teaching and remedial education and has worked with both adults and children for more than thirty years.

Looking to the Future in Mexico

BY NORA HIDALGO DE HEREDIA

Mexico is a country of contrasts. Public education is mediocre, but about 90 percent of middle class families send their children to private schools, which are very good and in a wide range of affordability.

However, Waldorf Education has been “out of sight” for most of its history in Mexico. Due to the strict rules and regulations from the Ministry of Education, following a Waldorf curriculum has been a challenge since the founding of the first Waldorf school in the 1960s. Nevertheless, Waldorf Education today is spreading in Mexico extremely quickly. For many years there were only two or three schools. However, by 1998 there were six, and by 2010 there were twelve. Just last year, 2019, I was astounded to find out there are at least seventy initiatives in the country.

Part of this is due to a change in consciousness. Also, tuition at Waldorf schools is comparable to that of other private schools. But this uncontrolled growth has led to certain challenges. Each challenge has its own imperative and task for the future.

Waldorf Standards

Among the many new initiatives using the Waldorf name, there are some without a strong foundation or a qualified faculty. At present, there are no clear guidelines or regulations regarding the right to call a school a “Waldorf” school. Hence, we need to make clear what is required for a school to be a Waldorf school and have all new initiatives abide by these standards. AWSNA’s Principles for Waldorf Schools can be helpful in this.

Lack of Trained, Qualified Teachers

This might be a universal challenge. In Mexico, we have only one “official” teacher training center working with a full, complete curriculum, and staffed with enough specialist teachers. Schools and individual experienced teachers are doing what they can to offer training to new teachers, but the demand is much greater than the resources available. Also, important pedagogical skills, such as classroom management, child observation, and the ability to work with children with special needs are deeply needed matters that sometimes need an extended or specialized training and much practice.

To deal with these challenges, we need more teacher trainers to support teacher education centers that will

fully prepare candidates. In addition, the older, more experienced schools could become training centers offering opportunities for internships and practice teaching. Also, we need to increase pay for teachers, both to attract qualified, new teachers and to retain gifted and experienced ones.

Informed, Committed Parents

The Waldorf philosophy, curriculum, school governance, view of child development, and our stance in regard to media and screens are all likely to seem foreign topics to most new Waldorf parents. Thus, we need to provide clear, accessible information about all these areas through parent education. It is important that parents understand child development and the siege that families are under in our society, so that at home they can provide the right protection and nurturing.

Social and Economic Diversity

The great majority of families in the Waldorf schools in Mexico come from the middle and upper economic and social classes. To realize the social mission of our education, we need to reach out to the broader community and commit to making our schools accessible to all children, regardless of financial resources and/or social status.

At present, even some of our well-to-do families are challenged in keeping their children in our schools. The economy is unstable. Many parents have lost jobs and are struggling financially. It would be socially responsible for the schools to be able to provide a safety net for those families that are already committed to Waldorf Education and might need some temporary support, without compromising their own delicate financial situations. It is this difficult balance between attracting a diverse community and paying the teachers decent wages that most Waldorf schools struggle with.

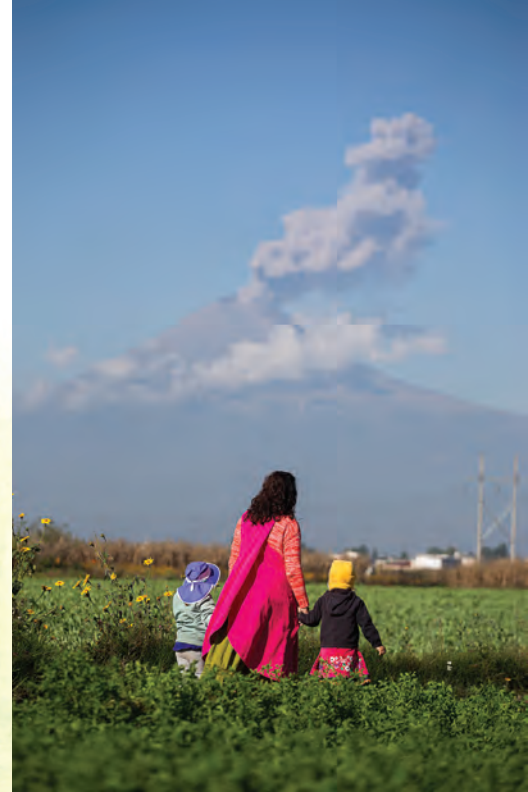


Photo at top: In the town of Cholula, in the field across from the Waldorf school, an early childhood teacher walks with two of her charges. The volcano Popocatepetl is in the background.

The recent formation of the Mexican Association of Waldorf Schools (Asociación Mexicana de Escuelas Waldorf, or AMEW, in Spanish) bodes well for our ability to help Waldorf Education in Mexico thrive in the coming years. As a central umbrella organization in which the schools can work together, AMEW will be able to establish standards for and protect the brand name of Waldorf Education in the country. It should also be able to provide guidance and support in the establishment of teacher training centers, as well as provide quality resources for the community of parents and teachers.

An important part of the Association's work will be the relationship with the Ministry of Education. At present, the Ministry does not recognize either Waldorf or any other schools as independent schools. Some of our schools have chosen to be incorporated into the Ministry system, which means that they have to comply with the many rules and regulations of the Ministry. This compliance requires much time, energy, and effort and sometimes involves the compromising of part of our curriculum. Other schools have chosen not to be burdened with the Ministry's standards and procedures. However, this lack of connection with the Ministry makes them less attractive for parents. The ultimate aim of the new Association should be that one day the Ministry recognizes the Waldorf schools as independent schools, entitled to offer their unique education without interference from the government.

The fulfillment of Waldorf's role in Mexico largely depends on trained, skilled, and dedicated teachers and on informed, awakened parents who want this

education for their children. These two groups support and strengthen each other. Excellent teachers inspire in parents a commitment to the education. Dedicated parents provide the support—financial and other—to teachers to do their work. This mutual relationship begins with effective teacher training and parent education.

Waldorf Education in Mexico is already linked to Central America, having established connections with Waldorf initiatives in Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica, as well as South America. I believe we can be instrumental in creating a strong bond among Waldorf schools in Latin America, all the way from Mexico to Argentina. And, I believe that Mexico can be a bridge linking Latin America and North America.

I see in the future a Mexican Association of Waldorf Schools that works synergistically with AWSNA, the Pedagogical Section of the School for Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum, and other international organizations to strengthen and support the important work to be done for children in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America.

The scope of our work is clear, and life is calling. These are exciting times with exciting challenges in front of us. May we be able to harness our collective imagination, inspiration, and intuition for the benefit of humankind. ☉

NORA HIDALGO DE HEREDIA, *formerly a biochemical engineer, is a trained Waldorf teacher who has taught at schools in Mexico and the United States. She is currently AWSNA's Mexico subregional representative and teaches parent education classes online and in Mexico.*

Celebrating Michaelmas in Mexico

BY LENYA BLOOM, MA

Escuela Raíces is a kindergarten through grade five Waldorf initiative in the city of Cholula, in Puebla state in central Mexico. Three years ago, the faculty began to explore how we could introduce elements of traditional Mexican culture into our celebration of Michaelmas.

We began by clarifying the reasons for wanting Michaelmas at our school. We realized that our experience of Michael is connected with our finding courage within ourselves to move fearlessly toward what is right and good. We then had to create ways to make the festival less foreign and more relevant to our community. This was complicated because Saint Michael (San Miguel) is important in Roman Catholicism and is already present in the churches and in the devotional life of the people.

At our Michaelmas festivals, we noticed that while the students were interested in the wooden swords they had fashioned, they showed a deeper affinity for the *cempasúchil* flowers, a strain of marigold native to Cholula. The *cempasúchil* is a large, golden-yellow flower that grows on a five-foot stalk. It has



hundreds of sword-shaped petals that form great, luminous, sun-like globes. The cempasúchil plays an important role in the celebration of the Day of the Dead. The Day of the Dead festival takes place at the beginning of November and is a time of remembering, being with, and honoring loved ones who have died. In the Day of the Dead festival, the cempasúchil flower has the task of guiding and protecting the spirits of the dead who come to visit their loved ones, illuminating their path from, and back to, the spiritual world.

We decided to give the cempasúchil a place on our campus, in the life of our school, and in the Michaelmas festival. In August, under the direction of our master gardener, Jesús Romero, whose family has lived in Cholula for centuries, the children prepare the soil in various places on the campus and plant the cempasúchil sprouts. They water and tend the plants, and when the flowers first blossom—just before Michaelmas—the children pick enough flowers for the festival. The remaining flowers, in full bloom about a month later, will be sold to provide income for Mr. Romero or will be used in the school's Day of the Dead celebration. There,

they adorn an altar honoring Cholula Digna, a local, ongoing nativist movement.

Before the Michaelmas festival, the older children sew the cempasúchil into garlands to wear. The younger ones use them to make fiery pathways on the campus along which the dragon will wend its way. During the festival, all the children carry a cempasúchil flower as they wait for and encounter the dragon. Feeling its protective, fiery power, they tend to draw the flower toward their hearts.

The planting and harvesting of the cempasúchil and its use in the Day of the Dead celebration is a centuries-old traditional, seasonal activity in Cholula. Our cultivation of this flower and our use of it in our Michaelmas festival connects our school in a deep way to the history, customs, and culture of our area. ☉

LENYA BLOOM is a graduate of San Francisco Waldorf School. She now lives in Puebla, Mexico, and is a cofounder of Escuela Raíces Waldorf Initiative, now in its fifth year.

Indigenous Peoples and Waldorf Education

In his article on Canada in this issue, James Brian reports on the collaboration there between Waldorf and Indigenous educators. Also in Mexico and the United States, there are initiatives coming from the same intercultural impulse.

Lenya Bloom's article (above) recounts how Escuela Raíces has integrated traditional elements into the school's Michaelmas celebration. In Mexico's Riviera Maya, the Ak Lu'um Waldorf Community has found a way to connect to traditional Mayan culture. Each year, the community celebrates the equinoxes in a way that preserves and honors the Mayan traditions. It marks the spring equinox with the Festival of Sun, Flowers, and Bees and the fall equinox with the Festival of Honey and Corn. The fall 2019 event, also celebrating Waldorf100, took place in a large town square.

In the United States, Waldorf Education has found a place within the Native American community. Lakota Waldorf School is a K–8 school located in South Dakota on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation of the Oglala Lakota tribe. Founded in 1993, the school is committed to helping Lakota children develop a strong cultural identity, reverence for their heritage, and the academic, social, and practical resources they will need for life in today's world.

The parents and families who founded the school adopted the Waldorf approach because the Waldorf experiential, developmental curriculum and teaching methods

are in harmony with their values and traditional spiritual worldview. Lakota language and culture permeate the school life. The students learn to speak Lakota while engaging in practical activities related to gardening, plants, native ecology, food processing, and meal preparation. The curriculum includes Lakota arts, crafts, singing and drumming, sports, and the full cycle of Lakota seasonal rituals and celebrations. The children work every day in the large school garden. Gardening, harvesting, and food preparation are part of school life and are integral to the language immersion program. The school has recently established an on-site Waldorf teacher training program, the Academy for Indigenous Waldorf Pedagogy (AIWP). Also, the school currently is in the midst of a major capital campaign for the construction of a new classroom and community building.

—R.E.K.



Generational Transition in Waldorf Schools

BY CONNIE STOKES, MS

It was election night, November 8, 2016, and I was taking care of my grandsons while their parents were working. When my son Peter, a political activist, arrived home at 1:00 a.m.—just as the new president was giving his victory speech—I naively asked him how he was doing. This led to an emotional discussion about the plight of humanity and the responsibility of the baby boomers (my generation) to “let go,” so that the young people can step in and try to implement the changes necessary for the world at this time.

This issue is as relevant today in the Waldorf world as it is in the nation’s capital. Baby boomers, born between 1945 and 1965, were behind the expansion of Waldorf Education in North America from just eight schools in 1965 to over one hundred in 2000. They were the pioneers, the founders, the teachers, and the parents. In recent years, many of our baby boomer leaders have reached retirement age and have stepped back. However, many are still teaching, still administering schools, and still actively involved in Waldorf teacher education. Meanwhile, three other generational cohorts have become part of the Waldorf world, as teachers, parents, administrators, board members, alumni, and students. So we are in a period of generational transition.

Just as baby boomers are assumed to be idealistic, self-sacrificing, hardworking, and a bit self-righteous, these younger generations also have been stereotyped. Gen Xers (born 1965–1980) are perceived as easygoing and valuing a balance between work and family life; millennials (born 1980–2000) as self-confident, ambitious, achievement oriented, and willing to question authority; and centennials (born after 2000) as competent with the internet and social media and valuing independence and change.

While these are broad brush stereotypes, they point to a reality—that persons who have come of age at a certain time and have shared life experiences are likely to share underlying values, priorities, and outlooks. The characterizations also suggest that when individuals from different generations are working together, difficult issues may arise. This applies especially when the members of one generation are handing over an institution to members of another or even two other generations.



This inevitable, generational transition is exactly what is happening in Waldorf schools throughout North America at this time. It calls upon my generation to pass the baton to the younger generations; to invite them into the decision-making processes; to be open to new approaches and new practices; to think out of the box; and to solicit suggestions from parents, alumni, and even students. And from the other side, from those moving into the positions of leadership and responsibility, it asks for patience, understanding, and acknowledgment of accomplishments achieved. On both sides, it necessitates open and honest communication, empathy, compassion, and sensitivity to the needs of others—capacities that we seek to engender in our students.

Recently, I worked with two Waldorf-related planning groups. Both included baby boomers who had pioneered schools in the '70s and '80s, as well as members of the younger generations, some of whom are Waldorf alumni. In both groups, we were able to work well together and to agree on the important topics related to the future of Waldorf Education. I was impressed by the commitment and depth of understanding of these younger colleagues and was encouraged and heartened through working with them.

My son Peter spoke at the 2019 graduation of Portland Waldorf School. He said, “No great change ever happened in this country without the power, passion, and ideas of young people. You matter. What you believe matters. What you do matters.”

As a not-quite-retired baby boomer, and on behalf of my fellow baby boomers, I would like to express gratitude to the new generation of leaders and wish them well. ☺

CONNIE STOKES *has been a leader in the Waldorf movement for over forty years, as a teacher (Chicago), administrative director (Chicago and Honolulu), and pedagogical chair (Northridge, California). She still serves Waldorf Education as a mentor and consultant and in her work with AWSNA.*



Waldorf World in the 21st Century

Dealing with Technology in the Lower and Middle School

BY CHARLES WEEMS, PhD

An observer of pre-K–8 classes in a Waldorf school will often come away with an impression that the teachers and children are living in a world separate from reality. Visitors often remark upon a particular distinction from other schools—there is no technology in the classrooms of the “Waldorf world.”

This seems inconsistent with guidance given by Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, to teachers, in a lecture about children in the first four grades:

There is no desire on our part to deride technical innovations, but we should be able to keep our eyes open to what they do to us, and we should find ways to compensate for any harmful effects. Such matters are especially important to teachers, because they have to relate education to ordinary life. What we do at school and with children is not the only thing that matters. The most important thing is that school and everything related to education must relate to life in the fullest sense. This implies that those who choose to be educators must be familiar with events in the larger world; they must know and recognize life in its widest context.¹

Thus, Steiner calls upon elementary school teachers to be completely familiar with the technology of their times. But notice that he doesn’t say they must bring technology into the classroom. Later in that same lecture, Steiner states:

With the change of teeth, children enter a new relationship to the world. As the life of their own soul gradually emerges, which they now experience in its own right, they must first meet the world supported through an experience of authority. At this stage, educators represent the larger world, and children have to meet it through the eyes of their teachers.²

It is not that the children should be immersed in technology, but that the teachers should be, so they can bring it to the children with appropriate compensation for their stage of development. But what does that

mean? Steiner tells us that the teachers must understand the technology of their time so they can give the children the necessary strength of will and moral clarity to work with it in freedom, rather than becoming enslaved or addicted to it.

For the Waldorf movement, then, it is imperative in each era to ensure that teachers are fully cognizant of the challenges that the dominant technologies will present to the children as they grow up. Out of that knowledge, the faculty must reflect on the curriculum and change it as needed, so that it ensures that children can meet those challenges while remaining fully human. For example, with respect to digital technology, teachers should understand what it is at a fundamental level, the essentials of how it works, why it manifests as it does in our lives, and how it can affect us psychologically and socially, as individuals and as a society.

With this understanding, teachers might shift the choices of fairy tales and fables in the early grades to offer examples of characters who are faced with moral choices more akin to what arises from online communication, where one’s words can take on a life of their own beyond what was intended and where people may not be who they seem. Recognizing the sensory bias that may arise from using flat screens with a limited color palette that is always luminous, teachers may consciously decide to incorporate more experiences of sculpture, a richer range of color work in painting, and more encounters with color and form in the world of nature.

In the upper grades—sixth, seventh, and eighth—teachers may rethink their choices of class plays to let children explore feelings of isolation or their reaction to having lies spread about



The story of Henny Penny (“The sky is falling!”) could be a lesson in the dangers of spreading false information.

them—common challenges associated with social media. In the study of modern history, students may research biographies of people who influenced the rise of technology, and the moral arcs of their lives. Some sought profit from the beginning, while some started from altruistic impulses but under business pressure had to fight to remain true to ideals. It is a valuable lesson to see these different life paths and how they shaped the technology landscape in which we live.

The faculty may also want to explore appropriate ways of introducing technology in the upper grades. For example, cell phone cameras can be used to intensively explore the creation and qualities of beautifully composed artistic images, providing an alternative to the egotism of selfies and of compulsive posting on social media. In handwork, emphasis can be put on learning to dress a loom to weave an intricate pattern, because it involves the kind of problem-solving used in programming.



*Katherine Johnson
(1918–2020),
pioneer computer
programmer and NASA
mathematician*

If the school does not have a high school where programming is taught, then a school may include a class for programming robots with one of the graphical blocks languages. These languages employ a visual representation of the algorithmic steps the robot will follow, and thus their programs are more directly relatable to the concrete actions of the robot than a textual program would be. When the robots are programmed as team projects, it can also foster collaborative social skills.

These examples should not be taken as recommendations. They are merely meant to illustrate what could result from faculty in the elementary grades taking up the study of the technology of our era and working out of an anthroposophical understanding of the human being to develop their work in response. It should be remembered that Steiner was well aware of how technology would shape civilization, and thus the Waldorf curriculum was designed to support children toward freedom in that context. Therefore, much of the study may simply serve to bring existing curricular wisdom into awareness with respect to the modern context, enabling teachers to hold it more appropriately. Waldorf teachers know that it is not the content of a fable, but how the teacher imagines it inwardly that most deeply

affects the second grader. Such study also enables teachers to explain the relevance of the curriculum to parents and visitors.

With respect to younger children, in the same lecture series Steiner tells us:

Children take in all that we do, such as the ways that we act or move. They are equally susceptible to our feelings and thoughts. They imitate us, and even if this is not outwardly noticeable, they nevertheless do this by developing tendencies for imitation that, through their organic soul forces, they press down into the physical organism. Therefore, education during these first two and a half years should be confined to the self-education of the adults in charge, who should think, feel, and act in a way that, when perceived by children, will cause them no harm. Fundamentally, the stage of imitation continues until the change of teeth, and thus children will be strongly influenced by their environment later on as well.²

Having stated that Waldorf teachers need to fully embrace the real world, Steiner here implies that young children know how an early childhood teacher feels with respect to the technologies that surround them. A child will take in those feelings at a deep level that has ramifications for later life.

It is thus important for the teacher to be able to stand before the child as an example of a human being who feels mastery of technology. That means more than just being a competent user. Again, the teacher should grasp the underlying nature of the technology to have clarity regarding its effects. Of greater importance, however, is contemplative work that enables the teacher to meet the technology on a daily basis in a manner that actually reinforces their inner humanity.

When a Waldorf school has a high school, technology education can be more direct, as described in prior articles in this magazine.³ Even then, it is still essential that elementary and early childhood teachers understand how their role in



Dressing a loom involves the capacities used also in computer programming.

Waldorf Teacher Education in North America—Current and Future Issues

BY TORIN FINSER, PhD

As we look into the next century of Waldorf Education, certain important issues regarding the training of Waldorf teachers present themselves, issues that deserve serious, ongoing consideration.

Role of Anthroposophy

In 1919 Rudolf Steiner asked his close associate Karl Stockmeyer to contact persons who would be suitable to become teachers in the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart. Most of those chosen were not teachers, but all were students of Anthroposophy. Today we are still exploring methods of engagement and delivery options to best support the inner work possible through Anthroposophy.

Nature versus Nurture

One of the original candidates, Hannah Lang, was chosen because she was a “pedagogical natural talent.” The issue of nature versus nurture is very much with us. Some aspiring Waldorf teachers are naturally gifted. Others are not so blessed and need the transformative benefit of extended coursework and internships. Creative tensions exist between the true developmental needs of new teachers and scarce resources and limited school funding.

Risk-Taking and Innovation

The pioneer Waldorf teachers were characterized by Dr. Johannes Tautz, later a teacher at the original school, as “risk-takers.” We need to ask ourselves: How do we stand with risk-taking today? How much of our work is based on patterns developed in our 100-year history, and how much arises through new research and fresh inspiration?

Commitment to Social Change

Between August 9 and August 17, 1919, just a few weeks before giving the original course to teachers, Rudolf Steiner gave six lectures in Dornach, Switzerland, later published as *Education as a Social Problem*. He identified some of the key social issues of the time—materialism, egoism, and “problem-laden personalities”—and he described how education can bring about social change. Today, a century later, we cannot only ask ourselves if these issues still exist. We must ask: How can Waldorf schools reclaim the mandate of social change?

Balance of Theory and Practice

The experience of the participants in the first teacher training, conducted by Rudolf Steiner himself, can



barely be imagined. The content of the sessions is invaluable, but the way Steiner structured the day is also instructive. The morning sessions dealt with larger, even cosmic issues, and the afternoon sessions focused on more concrete, practical concerns. Today, we still need to attend to maintaining the correct balance between theory and practice in our teacher trainings.

New, Radical Departures

There is very little detailed material available about how Rudolf Steiner envisioned the training of Waldorf teachers. The curriculum plan that he did review and approve involved the students in the “plastic [sculptural], musical, and speech” arts. That approach to teacher preparation was and remains highly unconventional. Mainstream teacher education is still today based on subject-area specialization, compartmentalized courses, and credit requirements. We need to ask ourselves: What are the radical departures in teacher education needed in 2020 and beyond?

Collaboration between Schools and Institutes

Schools refer individuals to the training centers and open their doors to interns. Centers can provide an array of professional adult educators not possible in just one school community. Yet funding remains inadequate, and the partnership needs further work going forward.

Gaining Mainstream Status

Collaboration within higher education and with an established university has been a goal at several centers. The longest such collaboration has occurred with the Waldorf Teacher Education Program at Antioch University New



Artistic work, including modeling in clay, is an important part of Waldorf teacher education.

England since 1982. This collaboration allows the program to offer an advanced degree (MEd) from an accredited institution and helps the graduates—and Waldorf Education—to be taken seriously in the mainstream educational world.

Maintaining Centers of Anthroposophical Culture

From the early days, the Waldorf teacher training programs served a dual role. They were anthroposophical centers as well as sites for teacher education and professional development. The Threefold Educational Foundation in Chestnut Ridge, New York, and the Rudolf Steiner College campus in Fair Oaks, California, were for many years active cultural centers. Summer conferences, weekend workshops, and a variety of professional trainings provided vibrant examples of the



The students' work in eurythmy often culminates in a graduation performance.

many facets of anthroposophical inquiry and development. The fate of Waldorf teacher training and the experiential community life steeped in Anthroposophy have been intimately connected. Some of these communities have struggled in recent years. The larger anthroposophical movement needs to attend to and support the sustainability of our adult cultural centers.

Exploring and Evaluating New Delivery Models

Very little research has been done to examine the relationship of the delivery model of Waldorf teacher education to the quality of instruction, the quality of collegueship, and the level of parent satisfaction within our schools. The connection between quality teacher education and enrollment in our schools would also be worthy of study. We need Waldorf teacher education alumni surveys!

Welcoming Teachers from the Public Waldorf Movement

The tremendous growth of Public Waldorf schools has provided new opportunities for Waldorf teacher education. For many years, Betty Staley at Rudolf Steiner

College specialized in training teachers for the charter and public schools. Today, the Center for Anthroposophy in Wilton, New Hampshire, has a program called "Building Bridges," designed for teachers who are, or will be, teaching in Public Waldorf schools. Waldorf teacher educators have to deal with a new and crucial challenge: How should we present Anthroposophy, the meditative life of the teacher, and the festival life of the school to persons who have encountered Waldorf Education as a method of instruction rather than a path of spiritual development? How can AWSNA schools and Alliance for Public Waldorf Education (APWE) schools learn from each other?

Affirmation of Core Values and the Courage to Innovate

At 100 years, Waldorf teacher education is being asked to renew itself. The future of our schools is intimately bound up with the quality of our teachers. Their ability to serve depends very much on their initial preparation and continued professional development. With so many crosscurrents at work in society today, the focus on integrity is essential. Intense examination of core principles needs to be carried forward in each and every school. Can all those involved in the movement ask: Given a reaffirmation of our social mandate and our core principles, can we summon the courage to assume a "beginner's mind" in regard to everything else? What are the essentials, and are we walking our talk? If we can fully embrace these essential pillars, do we have the courage to let everything else go to make room for innovation?

For Waldorf Education to flourish in the next 100 years, we will need radical transformation. Change is not an option; it is a necessity. ☉



Torin Finser congratulating a teacher education program graduate

TORIN FINSER is director of the Waldorf teacher education programs at Antioch University New England in Keene, New Hampshire, and the Center for Anthroposophy in Wilton, New Hampshire. Himself a Waldorf graduate, Torin was a class teacher for many years. He is the author of *Education for Nonviolence*, the Waldorf Way and *The False Door between Life and Death* and other books on Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy.

What the Future Asks of Us

BY JOHN WULSIN, MA

Since the time Waldorf Education was born out of the rubble of post–World War I Germany, it has had to grow and flourish amidst adversity. The first Waldorf school in North America, the Rudolf Steiner School of New York, was founded just as the Great Depression started. Since then, virtually every independent Waldorf school in North America has been the result of a brave and inspired impulse to create an educational institution, even though the available resources were quite modest.

So what can we do to insure that Waldorf Education will survive and thrive, that it will adjust to the rapidly changing and challenging conditions in the world, and that it will continue to meet the needs of its students and continue to serve humanity? We can:

- Notice, treasure, and protect the natural life that exists on our school campuses: the flowers, bushes, trees, birds, insects, and—if the school is blessed with a garden or farm—the vegetables, fruit trees, and farm animals.
- Keep in mind that, behind all these visible blessings of nature, there are perhaps spiritual beings who are invisible members of our community and who are able and willing to help.
- Involve all members of the community—teachers,

staff, parents, alumni, friends of the school, and, of course, students—in the life of the school and also in charting the course of the school into the future.

- Have a sincere interest in every individual whom we encounter in the life of the community, mindful that each person is comprised of body, soul, and also spirit—and is an infinitely valuable being.
- Reach out into the broader community and interact with those who are not acquainted with Waldorf Education.
- Strive to listen to the Being of our school, the spiritual impulse that led to the school's creation, to learn what it is wishing for and how we should proceed.
- Summon up the courage and imagination to face the future, to hold onto what is good and proven, and to bring new, valuable elements into the curriculum, pedagogy, and governance of our schools. The courage and imagination of countless individuals have brought Waldorf Education to where it is today, and these qualities will allow us to help Waldorf Education achieve its mission in the twenty-first century. ☉

JOHN WULSIN *was a high school humanities teacher at Green Meadow Waldorf School (Chestnut Ridge, New York) for thirty-five years, and is currently semiretired and living in Austin, Texas.*

Weems, continued from page 15

preparing young human beings for life in a technological world was set out by Steiner as an essential aspect of Waldorf Education. Teachers should appreciate that there are necessary deeds in this regard, at every stage of the child's development. For the Waldorf world to be relevant to the spirit of the twenty-first century, faculty need to work together, helping each other to gain the necessary knowledge and find the intuitive insights to guide their work in the context of the technologies their students will encounter. ☉

Journal for Waldorf Education 25, no. 1 (S/S 2016); "Computer Science in a Waldorf Ninth Grade," *Renewal* 26, no. 1 (S/S 2017); "Computer Science in a Waldorf Tenth Grade," *Renewal* 26, no. 2 (F/W 2017); "Computer Science in a Waldorf Eleventh Grade," *Renewal* 27, no. 1 (S/S 2018); "Computer Science in a Waldorf Twelfth Grade," *Renewal* 27, no. 2 (F/W 2018).

CHARLES (CHIP) WEEMS *has been teaching at the college level for forty-two years and is currently a professor in the College of Information and Computer Science at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where he is recipient of the University Distinguished Teaching Award. For the past eighteen years, he has been teaching earth science and computer science at The Hartsbrook (Waldorf) High School. Chip is a member of the Anthroposophical Society and the Pedagogical Section of the School for Spiritual Science.*

Notes

1. Rudolf Steiner, *Soul Economy: Body, Soul, and Spirit in Waldorf Education* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2003), chap. 9.
2. *Ibid.*, chap. 7.
3. Prior articles by the author include: "Computer Education in Waldorf Schools," *Renewal: A*

Waldorf Alumni Survey

BY DOUGLAS GERWIN, PhD

In 2019 the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE) conducted a survey of Waldorf alumni who had graduated from a Waldorf high school in the United States or Canada between 1990 and 2017.

RIWE collated the online responses and arrived at the following results. Waldorf graduates:

- Attend college after high school, sometimes following a “gap year” (98%)
- Feel prepared by their Waldorf high school for college life (95%)
- Complete their initial college degree (92%)
- Earn a bachelor’s degree or higher (88%)
- Pursue a postgraduate degree (ca. 50%)
- Say they would recommend Waldorf Education to a friend or family member (87%)
- Report that their Waldorf experience has influenced their own parenting (85%)
- Feel more strongly, when compared to graduates of other independent high schools, that their education prepared them to be open-minded, creative and innovative, empathetic, able to think in whole pictures, and able to take leadership roles

The survey also indicated that more Waldorf graduates major in the sciences, including the social sciences, and math (45%) than in the humanities (38%). Recently graduated Waldorf students are majoring at higher rates (22%) in science, technology, engineering, and math—the so-called “STEM” subjects—than earlier Waldorf alumni. Compared to graduates of other independent high schools, Waldorf graduates are more likely to choose a career in education (23%), medicine and health (12%), or a field of artistic practice (12%). They are less likely to go into finance and retail.

Students’ retrospective reflections about their education included:

“Everything about the way the education is structured influences the capacity to create healthy, balanced relationships.”

“The multidisciplinary approach to training your mind to look at something from all sides is extremely valuable. It lends itself to flexibility in thinking, creativity, confidence, and being able to teach yourself something.”

“We learned many useful skills—carpentry and so forth . . . that have saved me thousands of dollars in home maintenance costs!”



Commenting on an aspect of his education about which his opinion has changed, one graduate answered:

“Eurythmy! I play ice hockey with many people who have had several concussions. I have never had a concussion and am very skilled at avoiding collisions. I attribute this partly to eurythmy and also to outdoor play in lower school.”

Henry Barnes, that venerable leader of the Waldorf school movement in the United States, was fond of saying: “Waldorf Education prepares you especially for the second half of life!” In that sense, Waldorf teachers bestow on their children hidden gifts that take many years to mature. Put differently, a Waldorf education may require years to show its full worth in the lives of its graduates. Or, in the words of a thoughtful respondent to the alumni survey:

“There were so many seeds planted within me that are even now just beginning to break the soil. So many things that teachers told me that I didn’t understand at the time, but now feel that I do.”

The full survey, coauthored by Douglas Gerwin and Ilan Safit, is summarized in the Autumn/Winter 2019 edition of RIWE’s *Research Bulletin* and is available in book form at waldorfpublishings.org

For examples of notable Waldorf graduates worldwide, including neuroscientist and Nobel laureate Thomas Südhof, visit www.thewaldorfs.waldorf.net ☺

DOUGLAS GERWIN is executive director of the Center for Anthroposophy (CfA), where he divides his time between adult education and mentoring Waldorf schools across North America. Himself a Waldorf graduate, he is the author or editor of ten books on Waldorf Education as well as numerous articles on education and Anthroposophy.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

BY THE AWSNA EXECUTIVE TEAM:
BEVERLY AMICO, MELANIE REISER, PhD,
STEPHANIE RYNAS, MBA, MS

Early in 1919, the year Rudolf Steiner founded the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, he gave a series of lectures titled “The Social Question.” In lecture 3, he highlighted the importance of understanding the current societal realities in order to rightly bring freedom, equity, and brotherhood into being. He stated: “One needs to know how to lift the actual impulse of the real social question, urgent and burning, into the light, in a way relevant to the present, in order to discover the real symptoms.” Given this, how do we best work with these critical questions of diversity, equity, and inclusion so prominent in our society?

For Steiner, a key element in the realization of social justice is the ideal of equity—that all persons in a society, regardless of social or economic situation, have equal rights and privileges and equal access to the educational, cultural, and spiritual resources of the society. Thus, when the Stuttgart school was founded, Steiner stipulated that it be accessible to all children, regardless of the financial resources of their families. And, in fact, the student body of the first school included children of the workers in the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory as well as children of the intellectual and professional elite of the city. Also, Steiner and cofounder Emil Molt expressed the hope and expectation that the new education would engender in the students the capacities for empathy and

compassion as well as a strong moral sense, so that as adults they would work in the world for the betterment of all.

This concern for social justice has been a characteristic of Waldorf Education as it has spread around the world. In North America,



virtually all schools have striven to be accessible. In addition, the movement has retained its sense of responsibility for the broader society. Betty Staley, longtime Waldorf teacher and Waldorf teacher educator, has written:

[Waldorf] teachers have a special responsibility to understand and recognize the perilous situation of our time. Our task is to create and foster a relationship with our children that will help them find their true humanity, allowing them to make choices guided by an inner moral compass. In addition, we need to go beyond interest in students in our classroom to a concern for humanity at large, particularly in the context of the kinds of temptation that seek to weaken or even destroy the awakening ego of human souls. [*Research Bulletin*, Autumn/Winter 2012, Volume XVII, No. 2, 9.]

In recent years, AWSNA and the member schools and institutes have been paying increasing attention to questions related to social justice. Many schools in the United States, Canada, and Mexico have been focusing on manifesting diversity, equity, and inclusion in their school communities. In Canada, much work has been done applying the “truth and reconciliation” process to the relationship between the Indigenous peoples and the dominant society.

In June 2019, AWSNA member schools and institutes officially affirmed its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The statement, in part, read:

Waldorf schools and institutes embrace respect for human rights and for the diversity of humankind, and we believe that valuing and supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion comprise a journey of both moral and educational importance. Through our commitment to social justice, we recognize the value of addressing the historical context and the endemic nature of racism and inequality. This commitment is supported by an anthroposophical understanding of the spiritual nature of all humans and the importance of the conscious development of human relationships, as described in



Woodworking class in the first Waldorf school, ca. 1920. That female students had such a class was in itself an advance in inclusion.

principles 1 and 5 of both the AWSNA Principles for Waldorf Schools and the AWSNA Principles for Waldorf Institutes. These principles state, respectively: *The image of the human being as a spiritual being informs every aspect of the school*, and *The conscious development of human relationships fosters individual and community health*.

Also in June 2019, the board of trustees and the leadership team of AWSNA finalized a strategic plan for the 2019–2024 period. The plan serves as a foundation for the development of Waldorf Education in North America in the coming decades. There are four main priorities, three of them being increasing capacities for collaborative and effective governance, strengthening and supporting teacher quality, and preparing for the next century of Waldorf Education.

The fourth priority of the plan is the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in member schools and institutes. This is in accord with Rudolf Steiner’s intention that Waldorf Education be devoted to the ideal of social justice. This priority is in accord also with a basic tenet of Anthroposophy—Steiner’s philosophy that is the foundation for Waldorf Education—that all human beings are of equal worth and deserve respect and access to all possible resources for their development. Manifesting DEI in all our schools is critical to fulfilling the social mission of Waldorf Education.

AWSNA dedicates itself to social justice and DEI as a North American organization. It recognizes that endemic racism and inequity are part of our history and of our current society. It recognizes that there are biases—conscious and unconscious—and systemic injustices that must be overcome. AWSNA is dedicated to providing financial and human resources to help engagement in this work, which will support Waldorf Education in reaching its full potential.

AWSNA has three overarching goals related to DEI. These goals and related activities will be a focus of our work over the next five years.

- Our first goal is to clearly express our commitment to DEI and make sure that our defining documents, values, aims, and activities are all congruent with that commitment.
- Our second goal is to help each school and institute to develop an authentic community of diversity, equity, and inclusion in a way that is suited to its particular community and that is appropriate to life in twenty-first-century North America. This will be done by collaboration and

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.



—Martin Luther King Jr.,
Letter from Birmingham Jail

making resources available that increase accessibility, awareness, and engagement.

- Our third goal is to promote the development of and school access to curriculum resources that reflect the diversity in our society and in our student bodies. In its best expression, our curriculum is both a window and a mirror, so that every child is aware of the multicultural nature of our society and also sees herself, himself, or themselves reflected in that context.

How a particular school or institute seeks to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion will depend on the nature of the community and of the school. Each Waldorf school is a cultural institution rooted in a community. It should reflect the diversity of human beings in the community and serve all members of the community equally. AWSNA and all its member schools and institutes are dedicated to the realization of this key aspect of the mission of Waldorf Education. ☉

BEVERLY AMICO, MELANIE REISER, and
STEPHANIE RYNAS are the AWSNA Executive
Directors, respectively, for *Advancement, Membership,*
and *Operations and Member Services*.

“As an association and as individuals, we acknowledge that we have room to grow in our understanding of oppression and social justice. We will strive to make diversity, equity, and inclusion central to our work; when we do, we get closer to the world that we want for our youth.”

—AWSNA Executive Team

A Waldorf Preschool for Children Experiencing Homelessness

BY ILANA JAKUBOWSKI

Visitors who come through the doors of First Place Kids Preschool in Eugene, Oregon, are greeted by the harmonious hum of children at play. One group of children builds a playhouse in the corner, while another helps prepare vegetables for tomorrow's lunch. In the adjoining classroom, toddlers crawl and take wobbly steps, and infants stretch out on the soft rug and squeal with delight. The lighting is low and gentle. The teacher quietly sings. All is good in the world.

Just on the other side of the doors there is a cacophony; the preschool is housed within First Place Family Center, a day shelter that serves families who are experiencing homelessness. The day center is filled with the clamor of many adults moving about, carrying on loud, adult-content conversations, each trying to meet their family's basic needs under the roof of one building.

First Place Kids Preschool started in 2010, when local early childhood specialists recognized a gap in services being provided to young children. It started as and remains a program of St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, a nonprofit human services organization. Six years ago, First Place Kids Preschool's program director, Eileen Chanti, brought the first insight and impulse to bring Waldorf early childhood pedagogy into the school. Over the years, we

have found that Waldorf methods create an effective therapeutic environment in which a child's self-healing can take place.

What began as a weekly playgroup is now a five half-days a week, Waldorf-inspired preschool for children from birth to five years of age. Each day, First Place Kids Preschool

serves up to twenty children, with free drop-in access to the therapeutic space that they so desperately need. Since the First Place Family Center is a day facility, the children spend their nights elsewhere; many



families are enrolled in St. Vincent de Paul's overnight shelter, while others sleep in a car or tent.

When a family becomes homeless, there is often a total disruption of routine, a loss of familiar possessions, and a shift in community. The stress of these changes can lead to anxiety, depression, and aggression in homeless children at a rate three times higher than their housed peers. In addition, children whose families are experiencing homelessness are more likely to experience abuse, violence, and erratic adult behavior. When the stressful events that accompany homelessness in early childhood continually overwhelm a child's ability to process these experiences, a child can be adversely affected for their entire life. First Place Kids Preschool is a place of safety, security, and refuge, giving children an opportunity to process their outer experiences while feeding them with the nourishment they need to heal the wounds of homelessness.

At First Place Kids Preschool, we incorporate the essential elements of Waldorf early childhood education. These include:

- a predictable rhythm of activities throughout the day
- daily circle time with songs, games, and stories
- consistent warmth, love, and care from the teachers
- a beautiful and soothing sensory environment
- daily artistic activity such as watercolor painting, drawing with beeswax crayons, sewing, or clay modeling
- the opportunity to observe and take part in simple, meaningful household tasks
- free, imaginative play every day
- time outside every day, rain or shine, to explore and to experience the beauty and magic of nature



Learning in the School of Nature

A Waldorf Forest Kindergarten

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD with
RACHEL KENNEDY

Rachel Kennedy is a kindergarten teacher at The Hartsbrook School in Hadley, Massachusetts. The school is located on a forty-six-acre campus of field and forest, bordered to the south by the low, rounded peaks of the Holyoke Mountains.

After five years of teaching in a kindergarten classroom, Kennedy decided she would like to start an outdoor or forest kindergarten program. She felt that the daily, direct experience of the beauty and magic of nature and the opportunities for movement and exploration would benefit the children.

That was six years ago, and the forest kindergarten has since been a successful and much appreciated part of school life. This year the program has fourteen students—four girls and ten boys. They range in age from three to six. The full outdoor schedule of the forest kindergarten is followed in the fall and spring. During the winter months, there is a “hearth semester” in deference to the New England winter weather. During the hearth semester, the class prioritizes time outside, but part of the day is spent in a kindergarten classroom.

A typical day in the fall or spring follows the schedule below.

The children arrive at 8:15 a.m., each carrying a backpack containing what they will need for the day—extra clothes, lunch box, and water bottle. The children walk with their parents, past the school’s garden and beehives and into the woods. The parents say goodbye and return to the parking lot and their cars, and the children, Rachel Kennedy, and an assistant teacher begin the day.

First, the children have time for free play. This often takes place in and around Harts Brook, the stream that runs through the campus. The children play by the water, make mud pies, and scoop out water with pots. Or they may tell each other stories

with pine cones, stones, moss, and branches as props, or play made-up games among the trees.

Snack time follows and the class gathers at a picnic table in the woods. Kennedy encourages the children to take a “Golden Moment”—to be silent and listen to the birds and look at the beautiful sky and clouds above and the trees around them. Once a week, the class makes a campfire, cooks soup, and bakes pan-bread.

Then there is time for singing and movement games that involve running, skipping, balancing, and rolling. The children also play finger games. Another period of free play follows. After that, the children gather at “Grandfather Pine” for story time. With the children sitting on rough-hewn wooden benches, Kennedy brings out her puppets and tells a story.

Then the children eat lunch and at 12:45 head back to the school. Some children are met by their parents and go home, while the others stay for a rest indoors.

Thus, in a typical day, the children are immersed in the beauty of the natural world—the myriad sights, sounds, scents, and textures that are provided by the trees, plants, earth, sky, and wildlife. They actively interact with that world, gathering and sawing firewood, building little log homes, pulling themselves up on grapevines, and tapping maple trees and collecting sap from them. They acquire skills and a sense of themselves as competent “agents of change.” They move in countless different ways: they run, crawl, skip, climb, roll, swing, pour, stir, cut, clip, and saw, experiencing





A hands-on natural history lesson

the joy of movement and sometimes having to summon up the courage for it. They learn to take care of themselves, each other, and the natural environment. They learn to be alone and quiet at times. They learn to feel at home in the natural world and at home in themselves. And they internalize the truth, goodness, and beauty that live in nature.

The parents are very enthusiastic about the forest kindergarten. They see their children flourishing. They feel the program meets their young child's need for movement, exploration, and self-discovery. Parents often remark that the program has helped the children develop self-confidence and an ability to enjoy being in nature. They see that the forest kindergarten is supporting the healthy development of the children—physical, emotional, mental, and social. ☺



Rachel Kennedy and puppeteers-in-training tell a story.

RACHEL KENNEDY spent much of her childhood in the central western mountains of Maine, playing, exploring, and learning from the forest near her home. Rachel completed the Waldorf early childhood teacher training at Antioch University New England before joining the Hartsbrook faculty.

Jakubowski, continued from page 22

- nourishing and delicious organic snacks and meals that the children are invited to help prepare

We, as caregivers at the school, realize that we can do little to change the overall circumstances of the children's lives. However, we know that by providing them with the experience of a Waldorf preschool environment, we are helping them develop the inner strength and resiliency needed to integrate their past and current traumas. That same strength and

resiliency will serve them for the rest of their lives. Our great and fervent hope is that the children we serve may blossom into their full, free selves and lead happy and productive lives. ☺



Staff member and children planting potatoes



Ilana Jakubowski with one of her youngest charges

ILANA JAKUBOWSKI is the current director of First Place Kids Pre-school in Eugene, Oregon. Ilana holds a certificate in early childhood education from Waldorf Teacher Education Eugene. She has long been interested in the intersection of therapeutic education and social justice issues and is deeply grateful to work and play at First Place Kids Preschool! Ilana can be contacted at ilana.jakubowski@sudp.edu

Ilana Jakubowski with one of her youngest charges

A Therapeutic Kindergarten for Children on the Autism Spectrum

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD with LAKSHMI PRASANNA, MBBS, DCH

Lakshmi Prasanna is a pediatrician who has specialized in neonatal intensive care. Since 1990 she has had a clinic in Hyderabad, India, called Little Hearts Children's Hospital, where she cares for premature infants. In 1997 she learned about Waldorf Education, Anthroposophy, and anthroposophic medicine. She became one of the founding parents of the Abhaya Waldorf School in Hyderabad and also the school physician.

Prasanna's observation of her clinic patients as they grew up convinced her of the importance of sensory integration. It became clear to her that the successful transition to each new stage of childhood is dependent on appropriate sensory development. After encountering Waldorf Education, she realized that the Waldorf kindergarten promotes healthy development by its nurturing of the senses—particularly in the aesthetic of the kindergarten room and in the use of rhythm. Prasanna saw that Waldorf Education is a healing education. She began to prescribe Waldorf school for her patients.

In 2004 Prasanna founded at her clinic a Waldorf-based curative program, called Saandeevani, for special needs children. In effect, she created a therapeutic Waldorf kindergarten complete with trained teachers. To enhance the sensory integration aspect, the program emphasizes music—particularly Indian classical music—rhythmic movement, and handwork. About

ninety percent of the children are on the autism spectrum, with the balance having other challenges including ADHD, spastic hemiplegia, and Down syndrome.

The goal for the autistic children after the program is integration into a kindergarten in one of the many Waldorf schools in Hyderabad and, if possible, continuing on in the early



grades. While all the children benefit, individual results vary. Some children attend a regular Waldorf kindergarten for a while and then return to the therapeutic program for the early grades; the program now offers a Waldorf experience through the fifth grade. Some attend a regular Waldorf kindergarten and then continue on in the lower grades in the school, often with ongoing therapeutic support. A few go on through the grades and even into high school.

Typically, only one autistic child at a time is enrolled in a kindergarten class in a regular Waldorf school. However, concerns about autistic behaviors such as hand-flapping, screaming, and rocking have proved unfounded. The other children in the class seem not to notice anything unusual about the child and are not bothered. They accept the autistic child as one of them. The teachers have experienced the presence of the autistic child as a blessing. They say that the experience has deepened their understanding of child development, has helped them see each child as a spiritual being in the process of incarnation, and has deepened their inner, meditative life. They also have learned to perceive problematic situations in the classroom before they happen.

Dr. Prasanna has helped develop similar programs at other Waldorf schools in India—in Chennai and Bangalore. She is also very active in Australia as a lecturer and health educator, particularly within Waldorf school communities. Her work has shown that Waldorf Education can be a therapy for children on the autism spectrum, enabling some to receive a Waldorf schooling with their peers. ☺



Birthday celebration at Saandeevani



Reaching Out to Homeschoolers

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD WITH
MARSHUNDA SMITH, MM AND KELLY HODGKIN, MSBA

looking into the logistical and other factors in order to have the program go through the whole academic year and to have classes meet twice a week,” says Smith. Also, the school wants to offer German as a world language and, if enough ten- to fourteen-year-old students enroll, a Cyber Civics course.

A Publicly Funded Program For Homeschoolers

Kelly Hodgkin is a Waldorf early childhood and kindergarten teacher and the founder, ten years ago, of BeeLoved Farm Waldorf School (BFWS), an early childhood center in Shingle Springs, California. Hodgkin has developed a program through which BFWS serves local homeschooling families. The program has been in operation at the school for the past two years.



Students in the Waldorf School at Moraine Farm homeschool program doing nature observation. Please note tiny butterfly on tree at left.

The California Homeschool Charter System gives each homeschooling family a voucher for \$3,000 per year, per student for educational purposes. At BFWS—which is qualified as an educational vendor within the charter system—that amount covers eighty-five percent of the tuition for the school’s half-time Waldorf kindergarten program. A \$600 per year contribution from each family covers the balance.

For BFWS’s kindergarten program to qualify as an “enrichment program,” children must not attend more than two days per week. Thus, the kindergarten program is set up so that the children are in one of two tracks:

There are about 1.8 million children in the United States who are being homeschooled, or 3.4 percent of the total school-age population. Canada has about 22,000 homeschoolers, or about .5 percent of the school-age population, and the number is growing quickly. Waldorf methods are very popular among homeschooling families, and homeschoolers may be the fastest-growing demographic in the Waldorf movement.

In the area where Waldorf School at Moraine Farm is located—the Massachusetts North Shore—there are many homeschooling families that have a connection to Waldorf Education. The parents attend talks and workshops at the school and incorporate elements of Waldorf Education into their homeschooling approach.

Recently, the school decided to try to serve those families more fully. In September 2019, it established a homeschool program. The program consists of three eight-week terms. Each term, there are classes in two subjects. In the 2019–20 academic year, Science in Nature and Fine Arts were offered in the fall term, Music and Theater Games in the winter, and Art/Making of Storybooks and Handwork in the spring. In the fall term, ten students, all between six and ten years of age, were enrolled. In the winter term, there were just nine students because one child chose to enroll as a regular full-time student in the school. The homeschoolers got to participate in an important aspect of school life: they appeared in the Michaelmas play as the very important meteors.

The students come every Thursday at 10:00 a.m. They attend one of the classes offered in that term from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. After a break and snack, they attend the other.

According to program director Marshunda Smith, who has a second career as a professional musician (cellist) and conductor, there are plans to expand the homeschool program in the 2020–21 school year. “We are

“Kid Writing”

Helping Children Learn to Read and Write

BY JANET LANGLEY AND PATTI CONNOLLY

Mi dg is fne. Hr nm is Mde.

(Translation: My dog is funny. Her name is Mandy.)

The above sentences, written by a Waldorf first grader, exemplify an innovative approach to promote the development of reading and writing skills known as “Kid Writing” or, as Else Göttgens—distinguished Waldorf educator and mentor—called it, “talking on paper.”

Kid Writing, based on recent discoveries in neuroscience, is an effective tool for literacy instruction because it supports the brain development necessary for learning to read and write. Reading and writing are not innate human skills like understanding and speaking our mother tongue. Reading and writing require the linking up of certain areas of our brains—originally tasked with interpreting and communicating through spoken words and images—so that we can decode the alphabet and the text it creates.

There are several steps in this process. First, the child must cognize that speech consists of separate groups of sounds called words, that it is not just a continuous stream of sound. Then the child must learn that each of these words is made of smaller bits of sound called syllables (e.g., pen-cil), which in turn consist of individual sounds or phonemes (e.g., /p/ /ɛ/ /n/ /c/ /i/ /l/).

Now the child is ready to rhyme words, separate the different sounds in a word, and blend sounds to create words. This recognizing and manipulating of individual sounds involves only listening and speaking.

Next, the child is ready to learn that sounds are represented by letters of the alphabet. For example, the sound /d/ is represented by the letter D, formed by a straight and a curved line.

To continue on to Kid Writing, the child needs to:

- know at least ten letters of the alphabet and be able to print them
- know how to use an alphabet display that shows the uppercase and lowercase versions of each letter

- know how to break down words into their component sounds
- know how to identify and write down the first sound of a word

Most Waldorf students, with the proper instruction, reach this stage in November or December of first grade.

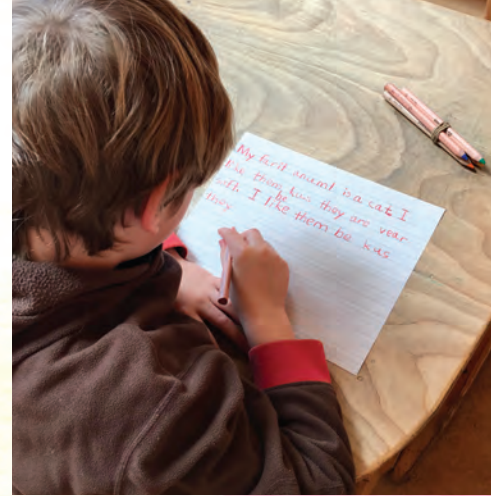
Kid Writing is essential in the first and second grades. Unlike copying text that the teacher has written on the chalkboard, which is basically handwriting practice, Kid Writing involves the child’s will and creativity. In doing so, she engages and connects the three areas of the left hemisphere of the brain needed for learning to read and spell. Kid Writing helps create what is called the “letter-to-sound decoding route,” the essential neural superhighway connecting these three regions.

Typically, the exercise begins with the teacher giving the students a theme, for example: “What is your favorite animal?” or, “What will you do after school today?” Or the teacher may suggest that they write something about yesterday’s story, once it has been reviewed.

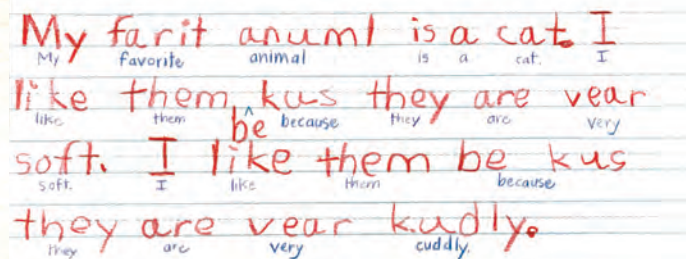
“Mi dg is fne. Hr nm is Mde.”

The child used several learned skills in writing this sentence. First, she had to think about her dog and decide what she wanted to tell the reader about Mandy. Then she had to transform her idea into words in an order that made sense. This engaged her compositional skills. As she wrote the words, she had to determine the order of the sounds and which letter made each sound, thereby engaging her phonemic awareness and phonics skills. She then wrote those identified letters, using her knowledge of sound–symbol relationships as well as her handwriting skills.

Because she had already received lessons on basic language mechanics and proofreading, she checked that the first word of each sentence and any proper nouns began with a “grown-up” letter. She also checked to see if her sentences ended with a period. And she used her knowledge of the high-frequency sight word *is*.



Lastly, as part of the Kid Writing process, the student read her composition to her teacher. The teacher showed her how an adult would write her sentences—right under hers—and excitedly pointed out all of the ways her Kid Writing matched the adult writing.



Providing this opportunity for children to express their own thoughts in writing encourages a real enthusiasm for writing, spelling, and reading. Kid Writing also provides teachers with an effective way to assess a student's progress in phonemic awareness, letter formation, and sight-word knowledge.

Waldorf class teachers who use Kid Writing typically report that it is one of their students' favorite things to do! This is understandable since Kid Writing allows children to share their own thoughts on a selected topic or on the story their teacher told.

We highly recommend that first and second graders Kid Write at least twice a week to ensure that they accomplish the early-grade goals set by Rudolf Steiner:

If we proceed rationally we will get far enough in the first grade so that the children will be able to write

simple things that we say to them or that they compose themselves. If we stick to simple things, the children will also be able to read them. . . .

At the beginning of the second grade, we will continue with the telling and retelling of stories and . . . the children can be brought gradually to the point of writing down the stories we tell them. After they have had some space to digest the stories, have them write short descriptions of what we've told them about the animals, plants, meadows, and woods in the surroundings.* ☉

* Rudolf Steiner quoted by Roberto Trostli in *Teaching Language Arts in the Waldorf School: A Compendium of Excerpts from the Foundation of Waldorf Education Series*. (Fair Oaks, CA: AWSNA, 2004), 10–11.

For in-depth instructions on how to teach Kid Writing, read Chapter 3.13 in *The Roadmap to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 1 through 3* by Janet Langley and Jennifer Militzer-Kopperl (Mill City Press, 2019).

JANET LANGLEY, *coauthor of The Roadmap to Literacy and her colleague PATTI CONNOLLY, a major contributor to Roadmap, have been involved in Waldorf Education for over thirty years as parents, teachers, mentors, and teacher educators. They are cocreators of the teacher resource www.waldorfinspirations.com and currently offer regional workshops on "Teaching Literacy in Waldorf Grades 1–3."*

Homeschoolers, continued from page 26



Children at BeeLoved Farm Waldorf School polishing their swords to a golden glow

the Tuesday/Thursday track, the "Orchard Tree Farmers," or the Wednesday/Friday track, the "Vegetable Farmers." Each track has between fifteen and twenty children, so the school serves between thirty and forty homeschooling families. For both tracks, the school day goes from 8:15 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Thus, although the program is considered half-time, the children spend nearly as much time with their teachers as do children in a regular Waldorf kindergarten. Hodgkin expects to expand the program in the next academic year to include first and second graders.

While not all states give financial support to homeschooling families, this type of program can work well in the states that do. North Carolina is one state, besides California, that provides vouchers. Hodgkin hopes that schools in states with a voucher system will consider this way of making Waldorf Education accessible to homeschooling families regardless of socioeconomic status. ☉

Developing a Positive Math Mindset in Grades Four and Five

BY KELLY MORROW, MS

As a Waldorf class teacher for many years, I have observed that in the fourth and fifth grades there is a decline in confidence in mathematics, particularly among girls. Current research corroborates this and suggests that antipathy, anxiety, and even fear in regard to math can continue into the middle school years.

I have observed that the students who struggle in math, who feel they are “not good at math,” have not developed a couple of important capacities. They do not have a strong “number sense”—an intuitive understanding of numbers, their relationships, and how they are affected by operations, such as multiplication and division. Also, the students have not developed what I term “a problem-solving attitude,” which includes a willingness to try to solve a problem, perseverance in the attempt, and resiliency in response to failure.

The Waldorf math curriculum in grades one, two, and three aims to foster these capacities. However, some students arrive in grade four not having developed these crucial abilities. Recently, when I picked up a new class in grade four, I observed this familiar pattern again. Many of my students had developed an attitude that “math is hard” and “I can’t do this.” I knew that my attitude and approach in the teaching of math would be key to helping them develop a positive attitude.

I researched the mainstream “best practices” in the teaching of math and learned that the typical, accepted pattern for teaching math is for the teacher to present a math story problem and demonstrate the way to solve it. Then the students apply that methodology to similar problems.

However, current research in the teaching of math indicates that reversing this process is more effective in improving number sense and problem-solving skills and in developing confidence and resiliency. The current recommendation is that, first, the teacher presents a math story problem. Next, the students work on their own to develop a way to solve the problem. Then, the students share with classmates how they arrived at a solution. Finally, the teacher shares a way—possibly one not yet presented—of arriving at the solution.

Last year, I implemented this method in my fourth-grade class with good results. This year, our fifth-grade

year, we have math practice two or three times a week and use the following process:

1. A story problem is presented. For example: Marcy decided to start a new business of walking dogs. She designed a flyer to advertise her business. She had 100 flyers printed. The copy center charged 7¢ per copy for the first 10 copies and then 5¢ for each additional copy. What was the total cost of the flyers?
2. Students, working alone, consider the problem, make a reasonable estimate of the answer, and share that with another student.
3. Students, working alone but with paper and pencil, create a step-by-step process that provides an answer. They share it with a partner and they explain the reasoning they used to arrive at the answer.
4. The whole class gathers again, and a few possible methods of reaching the solution are shared by individual students.
5. All ideas are accepted and acknowledged as valuable. The process is the most important element. The right answer is shared at the end, but the focus is on the process and not on who got a correct answer or not.

A key to the effectiveness of this approach is the teacher’s role. The teacher strives to create an environment where all students are invited to engage in mathematics and wrestle with solutions to the problems. The teacher makes it clear that there is no one right path, and that all ideas are welcome as part of the learning process. Errors in reasoning and missed steps in the process are examined and appreciated as opportunities for learning. The students come to experience that there exists a truth within mathematics that follows logic and predictable patterns. Everyone has access to this truth, though they may enter through different doorways. ☺

KELLY MORROW
has been a Waldorf class teacher and pedagogical administrator for twenty-one years. She is currently a class teacher at Boulder Valley Waldorf School in Niwot, Colorado, and enjoys hiking in the beauty of the nearby mountains.

The image shows two handwritten solutions for a math problem. Solution #1 is circled and labeled '#1' in a circle. It shows the calculation: 10 x 7¢ = 70¢, 90 x 5¢ = \$4.50, 9 x 5 = 45, and a vertical addition of \$4.50 + .70 = \$5.20. A caption below reads 'Solution #1—Perhaps the most obvious'. Solution #2 is also circled and labeled '#2' in a circle. It shows: 10 x 7¢ = 70¢, 5¢ + 5¢ = 10¢, 90 ÷ 2 = 45, and then 45 x 10¢ = \$4.50. It also shows a vertical addition of \$4.50 + .70 = \$5.20. A caption below reads 'Solution #2—Devised by a girl who finds multiplying by 10 easier than multiplying by 5'.



A Place-Based Middle School Program in Hawai'i

BY ALICIA MEHLE TSADOK, MA
AND SARAH MAIKA

At the beginning of the 2019–20 academic year, Honolulu Waldorf School began a new program for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. The program is strongly connected to the natural environment of Hawai'i and is based on *Aloha Āina*—love of the land that is our home, and *Mālama Āina*—stewardship and active caring for the Earth that sustains us.

The twenty-nine middle school students and we—their two teachers—begin the day with a circle gathering outside on the school's grounds. First we chant our *oli* (Hawaiian chant): “*E hō mai ka 'ike mai luna mai ē*” (Grant us knowledge from above). Then we recite our Waldorf morning verse: “I look into the world....” A “heart circle” follows—a time for the students to share what is going on in their ever-changing lives.

The morning main lesson does not have the traditional Waldorf format—one teacher for each class. For the three grades, there are just two main lesson teachers, so no class has their “own” teacher. Each of the three grades will have independent main lesson blocks several times during the year while the other two grades are combined. For example, while the sixth graders had a solo Roman History block, the seventh and eighth graders were engaged in a block titled Explorers of Earth, Sea, and Sky. When grades six and seven had a combined Hawaiian Studies block, the eighth graders studied History of Revolutions. Over the period of three years, each class will have completed the full Waldorf upper grades curriculum through this innovative scheduling. We have been able to add new blocks to our curriculum, including an ecology block in sixth grade that prepares students for the service work that we do with local organizations. The block is called Aloha Āina: Ecology and Sustainability.

Service learning is a key part of the program and an opportunity to experience our mountains and ocean. It

is important that these students on the cusp of adolescence acquire the habit of service. We spend each Monday working in our local community restoring native species and cleaning up the local watershed and *loko i'a* (traditional fish ponds). We join Mālama Maunalua, a local environmental organization, for a *buki* (pulling) of invasive *limu* (seaweeds) in Maunalua Bay. We were given two plots in the bay to care for, so we are able to monitor our progress and watch for the return of native species, especially the native seagrass that feeds the *honu* (sea turtle). Through another local partner, the Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center, we learn local history and meet many *kūpuna* (elders) who have worked tirelessly to protect the natural springs that provide fresh, clean water to the shores in our neighborhood.

Hearing from our elders provides the students with an opportunity to connect deeply with the world around them and with the community. The work of the many students has made a difference in the local environment. It is a work and learning experience that integrates science, history, and geography in direct relation to our place.

In conjunction with our service work, guest speakers visit. They describe sustainability practices, share Native Hawaiian wisdom, and teach about local



Weeding out invasive plant species at the He'eia Estuary on the west coast of O'ahu

Photo at top: Proud middle schoolers showing off the trash they picked up in the residential neighborhood around the school; photos by Alicia Mehle Tsadok and Sarah Maika

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Building a Core Green Eighth-Grade Classroom

BY KIRSTEN CHRISTOPHERSON-CLARK, MEd

In the fall of 2019, Waldorf School of Pittsburgh began construction of a new stand-alone building that will serve as an eighth-grade classroom. The building is a 1000-square-foot structure and includes the main teaching space as well as a mudroom, cubbies, restrooms, and storage. It is being built according to the requirements of the Core Green Building Certification issued by International Living Future Institute (www.living-future.org/core). When it is finished, it will be the first Core Green certified school building in the country. Building green did not in itself add to the cost of the building.

The building is situated away from the main school building—a more than one-hundred-year-old Victorian mansion—to reflect the growing independence of the eighth graders and their transition into adolescence. The completed building will manifest the values of Waldorf Education in relation to practicality, aesthetics, environmental impact, and sustainability. The building has a number of distinctive features that reflect Waldorf values and/or the principles of Core Green construction.

Organic Aesthetic

There are a number of curvilinear elements in the structure, including the gently arcing northern wall that delineates the teaching space. The interior surface of that wall will be lazured in muted colors.

Natural, Sustainable Materials

The exterior of the north wall is sheathed in vertical, lapped hemlock wood siding. The plywood used on the



Sixth graders get a look at their future classroom.



North wall in progress . . .

ceiling and the exterior soffits was certified by the Forest Stewardship Council as coming from sustainable forests. The interior casework of the teaching space was built with wood from a large pin oak felled on-site. The tree was cut down out of necessity after being damaged by a storm, and the school saved it so it could be used in this project. The utility wing is clad in a horizontal cement board siding. All interior doors and related hardware were procured from a local door-salvaging company. Slate chalkboard from the school's main building will be used in the new teaching space.

Minimal Impact on the Environment

Not one of the much-loved, almost seventy trees on the campus was cut down because of the construction. The pathway leading to the building was curved around several trees in order to preserve them.

Minimal Energy Use

The building is designed with optimal energy performance. The wall assemblies utilize high-density in-wall insulation and continuous exterior insulation to achieve a very high R-value. The roof assembly achieves R-60 performance. The building uses a high-efficiency fan coil unit (FCU) for heating and also an energy recovery ventilator (ERV) to recycle captured heat. Instant-response water heaters will minimize the energy needed to heat a large water tank.

Light and Air

Daylight comes in through the all-glass west wall, a number of windows, and smaller apertures in the structure. All of the windows can be opened to let in fresh air as conditions permit.





West wall

Water

The rainwater that falls on the building is directed to a rain chain, which was fabricated by a local metal craftsman who does a blacksmith-

ing demonstration at our Michaelmas festival each year. During the summer months, a portion of the rainwater will be harvested in a rain barrel for use in the school's garden area. During the winter months, the rainwater is directed into an underground drywell, created on the site of an old structure that was demolished. Inside the new classroom building, low-flow plumbing fixtures will reduce the on-site water usage by 80 percent below the baseline.

Accessibility

The broad, paved path leading to the building and the open, one-level interior design of the building make it accessible to all.

It will provide students with a learning environment in harmony with the Earth and its resources. The

Hawai'i, continued from page 30

fauna and flora. Young activists inspire us to reduce our plastic consumption and provide us with practical tools to measure our success. These outside voices strengthen our program and offer the students a chance to learn from the wider community. They inspire the students to create change within our local community. Recently, we have been working with Nainoa Thompson—a Hawaiian master navigator and a member of one of our school's founding families. He inspires us in outdoor classroom activities such as learning to build a traditional Hawaiian star compass.

In this first year of this new program, we are already seeing remarkable results. Many of the main lesson blocks have become interdisciplinary. There is increased social cohesiveness among the mixed grades. The sixth graders bring excitement and joy to the program, with the seventh and eighth graders responding with more playfulness and social responsibility. We are experiencing growing pains, as expected, and we work continuously to evaluate and refine the program. Concerns and trepidation can arise when traditions are changed and families are asked to pioneer a new impulse, but our students have fearlessly embarked on this new journey. ☺

school faculty and staff hope that the building will be a wonderful culminating experience for the eighth graders and an inspiration to other schools that have the opportunity to create purpose-built structures. ☺



North wall completed with main school building in background to right

KIRSTEN CHRISTOPHERSON-CLARK came to Waldorf School of Pittsburgh in 2002 as a class teacher and became Head of School in 2012.



Listening to their kumu (teacher), Uncle Chris, "talk story" at historic Kalauha'ihā'i fishpond

ALICIA MEHLE TSADOK is a native of Minnesota and has a strong interest in theatre, social change, women's rights, and LGBTQ issues. She has a master's degree in education and a certification in Waldorf Education and facilitates workshops in diversity and social healing. She has been teaching in Waldorf schools for twelve years.

SARAH MAIKA is a graduate of Lake Champlain Waldorf School in Vermont. After college, she taught at two Waldorf schools in Vermont before joining Honolulu Waldorf School. She has experience teaching art, handwork, and chorus across the grades and is currently working on a master's degree in education.

LGBTQ Literature in the Middle School Classroom

BY EM BOWEN WITH
JUDY TAYLOR

Last summer, I reread many of the books that are part of the curriculum for Waldorf middle school students. As a language arts teacher, my task is to present to the students a picture of the world and of themselves that is engaging, inspiring, and honest. However, in all the many books I read, there were no stories about LGBTQ people.

Today, many preteen children begin to experience that they do not fit into the binary model of sexuality that dominates our culture. They experience themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer—or some combination of these identities. This realization can be a source of great emotional and social stress for a child.

I was one such child. As a student, I didn't see myself in books. I didn't see myself in the classroom. I did not understand what was missing but I felt it. In fifth grade, I would have rather died than wear a gown and bonnet, like the other girls, for the California public schools' Colonial Days event. I know now that *alone* is what I felt.

Rudolf Steiner said that Waldorf teachers need to actively engage in the issues of the times. He also held that part of our task, as teachers, is to remove "psychical obstacles" so that our students can discover and follow their unique life paths. In Waldorf Education, we try to help the children find their true identity, become comfortable with it, and realize their true destiny with that identity.

As a culture, we tend to shield, often unintentionally, children and young people from the nondominant social narrative, in relation to gender and sexuality but also regarding race, class, and ability. LGBTQ issues are particularly problematic. Addressing LGBTQ topics, even in a middle school classroom, can be considered as having non-age-appropriate conversations about sexuality and gender. However, we have conversations with children about sexuality and gender from an early age. They are just not conversations that are inclusive of sexual and gender minorities. These conversations are not direct, of course, but are reinforced through stories and tales, and what we as adults signal as being acceptable or unacceptable.

For children in middle school grades, such conversations about sexuality and gender are appropriate and important. The students probably have had a relevant health class about human reproduction. Stories and novels about the topic can be the basis for talking to and with the students about LGBTQ issues.

Fortunately, there are a large and growing number of books in the young adult LGBTQ literature category. Here are three books that can bring LGBTQ issues into the classroom in a way that fits into the curriculum and is age appropriate.

Grade Six: *George* by Alex Gino

This story by a nonbinary author is about a transgender girl who is still seen as a boy. George wants to play Charlotte in the *Charlotte's Web* class play, but her teacher tells her it's not possible because Charlotte is not a character for a boy to play.

Grade Seven: *Every Day* by David Levithan

This book tells the story of A, a being who inexplicably wakes up in a different body every morning. A has their own spirit but senses into the memories and experiences of each new person they wake up as. The book led to deep discussions about the nature of identity, compassion, and being.



Grade Eight: *Photographic: The Life of Graciela Iturbide*

by Isabel Quintero and Zeke Peña
This graphic novel tells the story of a famous Mexican photographer and of Juchitán de Zaragoza, in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. This Indigenous town has had, since precolonial times, a matriarchal culture, and it celebrates *muxes*, a third gender identity.



If we, as teachers, can introduce LGBTQ topics in an open, responsible, loving way, we can then help all of our students, both those comfortable with a binary identity and those struggling with their sexual identity, develop into healthy, self-confident, and compassionate human beings. o

EM BOWEN is a teacher at Tucson Waldorf School and also a PhD student in the College of Education at the University of Arizona. Em's pronouns are they/them/theirs. JUDY TAYLOR has been a Waldorf class teacher for over twenty years and is currently the second-grade teacher at Tucson Waldorf School.

Bringing Color into the High School Humanities Curriculum

BY FACULTY OF THE MAINE COAST WALDORF HIGH SCHOOL

“Are we really representing diversity in our curricula, or are we living in a Waldorf bubble?” At the Waldorf Teachers Conference in Washington, DC, in June 2018, veteran teachers Neil Boland and Linda Williams challenged attendees with this pivotal question. The obvious implication was that the Waldorf curriculum needs to represent the full diversity of the worldwide human family. If we offer only the treasures of the Western cultural tradition, we are ignoring a basic aspect of our mission—to prepare our students to be empathetic and contributing citizens of the world.

Fortunately, we humanities teachers at Maine Coast Waldorf High School could answer “yes” to the first part of the question. Although our school is located in one of the most ethnically homogeneous (white) regions of the United States, we have long felt the responsibility of introducing our students to as many diverse voices and cultures as possible.

This past summer, the entire high school community—students, teachers, and staff—read Zora Neale Hurston’s 1937 masterpiece, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and discussed the book together in mixed-age groups on the opening-of-school camping trip. We consciously chose a book written by an African American author and with a female main character for our first-ever entire high school read. We extended this initiative during the school year by offering eleventh and twelfth graders a half-dozen courses dealing with diversity. Four of the courses are described below.

The Immigrant Experience

By John Reinhart

In the past two years, Maine has experienced a dramatic influx of immigrants—many from Africa. That has made this course of immediate relevance to the students. The course covers the history of immigration to the United States and its political and social implications. We start with the European colonization of the vibrant and developed Native American population, and then we consider how enslaved Africans fit into this picture of conquest. We look at

push-and-pull factors in the Irish (pushed by starvation brought on by colonial English landlords), Chinese (pulled by the lure of gold in California), Japanese, and Jewish immigrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Our exploration of current immigration patterns is aided by guest speakers who share their personal experiences. These include local immigrants, an immigration lawyer, a retired United Nations diplomat, and Abdi Nor Iftin, a Somali refugee and author now living in Maine, whose book, *Call Me American: A Memoir*, is part of the reading for the course.



Abdi Nor Iftin (l), from Somalia, and Kifah Abdullah (r), from Iraq, shared their experiences as immigrants in America.

The course helps the students develop an understanding of, and perhaps an empathy for, people who leave their native land and venture to a new, unknown, and not necessarily welcoming place. But the study is also personally relevant. The act of immigration is somewhat akin to the transition that the adolescent experiences when graduating from high school, leaving the parental home, and going off to college or to some other new situation. Although going to college is not the same as moving a family across continents to escape violence, emerging adults must face some of the same issues as do immigrants: What are my values? What do I take with me from my family traditions? How much do I assimilate into a new culture? How do I remain true to myself while being open to new experiences?

Thus, while the students gain an understanding of the challenges and opportunities of immigration, they also acquire a better understanding of themselves.

Native American Studies

By David Sloan

This course takes a hard look at the devastation wrought when, over three centuries, a dominant society nearly obliterated Indigenous peoples in the quest for material gain and cultural supremacy. One of our first challenges is to confront prevailing stereotypes of Native Americans. Another is to uncover more hidden prejudices—most pointedly, how modern Americans tacitly promulgate the “invisibility and erasure” of today’s Native populations.

The class provides students with an opportunity to examine the past and present of Indigenous cultures of the Americas, with particular emphasis on their rich traditions of storytelling. Because the subject is so vast, and the diversity of Native American peoples so immense, we focus on selected tribes and representative experiences, both pre- and post-Columbus: Mayan, Cherokee, Wampanoag, Nez Perce, and Lakota Sioux. For a more contemporary perspective, we read and discuss Leslie Marmon Silko’s classic novel *Ceremony*. The book depicts a Laguna Pueblo young man suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome, who strives to find himself amid the conflicting values of the white and Native American cultures.



Leslie Marmon Silko, of the
Laguna Pueblo tribe

Students also undertake research on a Native tribe of their choice. They commit to memory—and then retell—a tribal creation tale or legend. In the process, students learn to recognize in Native stories, brimming with reverence for the sacred in nature, our common humanity.

African American Literature

By David Barham

We are working hard to help our students better understand the racial disparities in our country. In history classes, we strive to show that the wealth, income, and opportunity gaps between people of color and white Americans are directly related to the history of enslavement and to the subsequent policies

that have benefited some people more than others because of race. This attempt to reveal the structural racism in American society and history is reflected in our commitment to expand the stories we tell and the novels, poems, and songs we explore.

In a new course on African American literature, students are reading Toni Morrison’s extraordinary 1977 novel, *Song of Solomon*. Morrison introduces the students to an African American world far removed from the overwhelmingly white world we inhabit here in Maine. In addition, this masterpiece allows us to explore the structural differences of Eurocentric and African American novels. If a Eurocentric novel presents us with a hero seeking a goal (e.g., a ring, a whale) who then encounters numerous obstacles in the way of obtaining the desired object, Toni Morrison offers a different set of aims for an African American novel. According to Morrison, such a novel has an obligation to bear



Toni Morrison
1931–2019

witness, to foster intimacy, to take people through the pain of a racially haunted history to a healing zone, to honor the ancestors, and to edify readers, not simply entertain them. In this way, the study of African American literature enlarges the students’

experience of our diverse and complex world.

Asian Literature

by Josh Lytle

We commonly speak of the dichotomy of West and East in modern culture, but what do these terms refer to on a deeper level? In considering the East, we can somewhat perceive mysterious qualities—vaguely familiar, yet essentially quite foreign. It’s a perfect opportunity to explore the “other,” and literature is a perfect medium to observe some of these elements.

We begin with an exploration of the philosophical “underpinnings” of three Asian cultures—India, China, and Japan—by reading from sacred texts of Hinduism, Confucianism and Taoism, and Zen Buddhism. Students read excerpts from the

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Wilderness Adventure and Waldorf Education

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD AND MISHA GOLFMAN, MEd



Wilderness adventure courses became part of the broader experiential education movement in North America in the 1960s and '70s with the founding of the Outward Bound schools and similar institutions. The courses are based on the idea that adolescents and young people benefit from having a challenging experience that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. They are, in effect, rites of passage akin to the initiation rites that are almost universal in traditional Indigenous cultures.

Wilderness adventure courses give the young person the opportunity to experience and learn about a wilderness environment, acquire the skills necessary to survive in the environment, and test themselves against physical, mental, and social challenges. A

typical course will include instruction in wilderness camping and travel skills, a ropes obstacle course, a solo experience, training in group decision making, group challenges or initiative tests, and tests of individual endurance and resilience.

The aim is that the students will discover their true strength, stamina, and resilience and develop self-confidence, a strong will, empathy, and a sense of responsibility toward the natural world.

Because of their experiential nature and their aim of personal development, these wilderness adventure

courses fit very harmoniously into the Waldorf curriculum. And, in fact, in recent years many Waldorf schools in North America have made a wilderness adventure experience part of what they offer their students. In some schools, a wilderness adventure experience for the graduating eighth-grade class has become a tradition.



Base-camp chores include splitting wood for cooking and heating.

A few schools have established their own in-house wilderness challenge programs. At Kimberton Waldorf School in Pennsylvania, the Outdoor Program, founded in 1996, has overnight camping trips for children starting in the fourth grade. The students do at least one trip per year through the twelfth grade, with the outings becoming longer and more challenging. The culminating trips for high school seniors are a one-week experience on Hermit Island in Maine in September and a week in western Pennsylvania in May, which includes study of the Transcendentalists, white-water rafting, and a twenty-four-hour solo experience.

Most schools, however, engage an outside organization to run the courses, which are usually for their late middle school and high school students. One of the organizations serving Waldorf schools in this way is Kroka Expeditions, a place-based nonprofit located in Marlow, New Hampshire. It was founded in 1996 by Misha Golfman and Lynne Boudreau. In 1997 Kroka designed and led a rite-of-passage wilderness



Rapelling is a good way to come down a rock face after climbing it. But, don't look down!



Kayaking on the Deerfield River in Western Massachusetts

expedition for the eighth-grade students of Baltimore Waldorf School. The organization has been working with Waldorf schools since then. Kroka offers a variety of wilderness adventure courses for students in the third grade through high school. It tailors each course to the particular needs of the school and its students.

A number of other organizations also work with Waldorf schools in giving students a challenging and meaningful wilderness experience. These include Camp Glen Brook, Deer Hill Expeditions, Go Adventure, and Synergia Learning Ventures in the United States, and, in Canada, Northwaters and Langskib Wilderness Programs, and Coastal Bliss.

Photos courtesy of Kroka Expeditions

Kroka and these other organizations are highly professional, share the values and aims of Waldorf Education, and seek to support young people in developing wilderness skills, compassion, altruism, collaborative skills, enthusiasm for life, and a love of nature.

We are today in the age of screens. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, children ages eight through eighteen spend, on average, 7.5 hours in front of a screen for entertainment each day. The Seattle Children's Research Institute states that, on average, children ages ten through sixteen spend only 12.6 minutes a day in vigorous outdoor activity but 10.5 waking hours relatively motionless while in school or in front of a screen. Our children are spending almost all of their waking hours indoors, with little opportunity to experience the natural world or to test themselves against the challenges nature can offer. Today, wilderness adventure courses are more important than ever in helping our children grow up into healthy, well-rounded adults. ☺

MISHA GOLFMAN grew up in Russia and is the director and a senior guide for Kroka Expeditions. He has had a lifelong relationship to wilderness travel and education and has guided expeditions with young people in many places, including the Canadian Arctic and the Everglades.

Maine Coast Faculty, continued from page 35

Ramayana, the *Mahabharata*, the *Tao Tè Ching*, and Chuang Tzu's stories, as well as Zen koans. From this beginning, we move to poetry: Japan's haiku masters (Basho, Buson, Issa), China's T'ang dynasty masters (Wang Wei, Li Bai, Tu Fu), and the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, India's Rabindranath Tagore. Each of these authors' work either explicitly or implicitly echoes elements of the dominant religions.

We finish the course with a glimpse at modern fiction: an excerpt from Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*; short stories from post-Cultural Revolution Chinese authors Tie Ning and Li Rui; and, from Japan, a selection of micro-fiction from another Nobel Prize recipient, Yasunari Kawabata.

Each of these literary "categories" provides opportunities to see resonances, both obvious and subtle, among the three cultures. The aim is not so much to give the students a fixed characterization of each culture, but rather for them to develop powers of perception for, and heightened appreciation of, cultural distinctions. Thus, what lies between the "self" and

the "other," between West and East, becomes more of a bridge than a divide. ☺

* Rebecca Nagle, "Media, Race/Ethnicity: Research reveals media role in stereotypes about Native Americans," July 18, 2018 (womensmediacenter.com)



Matsuo Bashō, 1644–1694

*Furuike ya
Kawazu tobikomu
Mizu no oto*

古池や
蛙飛こむ
水のをと—

*The old pond
A frog leaps in
The sound of water*



Painting by Watanabe Shōtei, aka Seikei (1851–1918)

Encounter-Based Science

From Learning About to Learning Through

BY CRAIG HOLDREGE, PhD

Some time ago, I was working with Waldorf high school juniors and seniors at a weeklong conference in Germany. Our topic was human evolution, which circles around deep questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? What is humanness? Here I want to discuss just one part of our explorations in order to highlight some of the issues that I believe matter in education.

Many of the students had already learned about Darwinian theory and some knew a little about the fossils of the hominids who preceded modern humans (*Homo sapiens*). Using teaching materials I have developed to explore human fossil history,¹ the students worked in small groups with a packet of drawings depicting thirty different fossil skulls, which were all in some way related to human evolution. They did not know where the skulls came from, the time period, or the species names. They only had what they could see.



Students working to place the skulls in an evolutionary sequence

My directions were simple: Order the skulls in the way you think makes the most sense evolutionarily. There was lots of discussing, ordering, and reordering. The students were startled and, at times, a bit overwhelmed by the diversity of forms. Each group presented to the others the criteria by which they ordered: overall shape, the size of the braincase in relation to the face and jaw, the degree to which the jaw jutted forward, tooth form

and size, or massiveness of the eyebrows. The students had looked, discerned, and ordered. They had formed clusters of fossil drawings with similar characteristics and arranged the clusters in what they thought might be the temporal order. They had many questions.

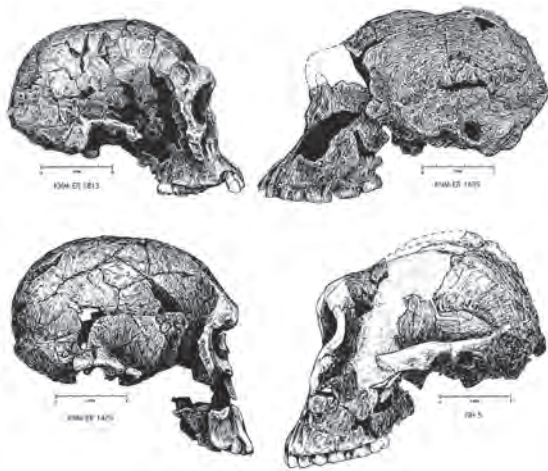
As a next step, I gave them additional information—a table that expresses the tip of the iceberg of work that thousands of scientists and technicians around the world have carried out during the past 150 years or so. The table indicates where each fossil had been found and also the geological time period in which scientists currently think each of the fossils had been deposited.

The students worked again and reordered the skulls. There were many new surprises. Some fossils that look quite modern are, in fact, quite old, and some “primitive-looking” skulls are more recent than others that look more “advanced.” At certain time periods there can be an astounding variety of fossil forms. Through this process the students understood for themselves why researchers argue about the relation of fossil discoveries to the human lineage. They experienced what scientists encounter in the process of research. The fossil record is rich and intriguing, but it does not provide simple, clear-cut answers to deep questions about the origins of humanity.

Many of the students had expected that the fossils would line up in a straightforward order, since they all had seen depictions of an ape-like creature turning step-by-step into the modern human being. Through delving into the complex reality of the fossil record, this schematic, oversimplified, and yet very suggestive picture of human evolution was shattered. The students’ eyes were opened to riddles that the world offers—something that is all too easily ignored in science education.

By encountering the diversity of fossil forms, the students could track the coming into appearance of humanness in evolution. They discerned overriding trends that were not linear. This work was the entry-way into further considerations in which we held back speculating and theorizing in order to stay as close to the observed phenomena as possible. This is the heart of a phenomenological approach. What became clear is that evolution is not an unfolding of what is already there, but rather a creative process in which new qualities of being emerge. Many stimulating conversations and explorations followed.

I want to highlight through this example the difference between *learning about* a topic and *learning through* experience and exploration. In *learning about* something, I am separate from the object of knowledge. I take in what is presented and then I “know.” I can memorize—the names of fossils, their age, their location, and maybe even their shape. All this can be important. But when schools emphasize *learning about* and then test whether students “know” the material, this “knowing” has little life. You can tell when the students have succumbed to this form of education when they say: “Just tell us what we have to know for the test.”



Hominid skulls from East Africa. All are about the same geological age—around 1.8 million years, according to current dating methods. Note the variety of forms.

When students *learn through*, they engage. They don’t know where their activity will lead. They are in a process of discovery. This is, I think, particularly important in our times and for the coming future. Information is literally at all students’ fingertips through the internet. And they will likely find the information more readily than some of their teachers. But it is another matter to learn through discovery, where students make decisions and explore in different directions, and where they can see: The world is big and deep, and I can engage with it. That is encounter-based learning, and it is, in my view, crucial in teaching science—and every other subject!

Information does not provide grounding in the world. Exploring and discovering things that matter does. When students have experiences, gain insights, and reflect on the processes they go through, they can rely on what they have learned. They know what they know and what they don’t. This will help them to navigate through the thickets of opinions, generalizations, and half-truths they encounter. In our unsettled times, experiential grounding is more important than ever.

Encounter-based science education can take a variety of forms, and there are no recipes. But as an educator I can ask myself a number of guiding questions: Am I offering the students mainly prepackaged concepts? Will the students have the opportunity and challenge to make discoveries? What fields of life touch their innermost questions? Is the work inviting the students to enter a quest that may lead to deeper and broader questions?

Imagine the topic of climate change crafted as learning experiences. Not just learning about it, but learning through encounters with carbon, carbon dioxide, fossil fuels, weather dynamics, economics, and more. What a great challenge for educators, and what an opportunity for students who want school to be alive.

Educators are often hemmed in by the idea that they are to prepare the students—for college, to be good citizens, for life. Often this mandate is understood as learning content now that they will need later. But this is a static view of life, since in the future both students and life situations will be different. As John Dewey pointed out long ago, only by letting students engage with experiences in meaningful ways now, will they be able to do the same later in life.² In this sense, education, as Rudolf Steiner put it, should “be life.”³ When education helps young people respond creatively to what comes toward them and develop initiative and perseverance in the face of challenges, then it sows viable seeds that can come to life in surprising ways in the future. ☺

Notes

1. Craig Holdrege, *Diversity in Human Fossil History: A Teaching Unit on Hominid Evolution* (Ghent, New York: The Nature Institute, 2017). To purchase, visit www.natureinstitute.org/store
2. John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1997).
3. Rudolf Steiner, *The Younger Generation* (Spring Valley, New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1967), lecture 2. Available online: https://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA217/English/AP1967/YunGen_index.html

CRAIG HOLDREGE is cofounder and director of *The Nature Institute* in Ghent, New York (natureinstitute.org). He was a Waldorf high school science teacher for twenty-one years and is currently active in teacher education programs. In addition to courses at *The Nature Institute*, he gives talks and workshops in the United States and abroad. Craig is the author of many articles, monographs, and books, including *Thinking Like a Plant: A Living Science for Life* and *Do Frogs Come From Tadpoles?*

Race, Class, and Gender

A Main Lesson Block for Twelfth Graders

BY VICTORIA REYES, MA

If we want to create a world where rising generations can work to make society more just and equitable, we need an education that inspires students to engage in meaningful conversations, listen empathically, and speak effectively about difficult topics.

In the fall of 2011, I proposed the addition of a main lesson block called Race, Class, and Gender to our high school humanities curriculum. I did so because interest in those areas and the broader issue of social justice has grown in our society. Our students should have an opportunity to study and wrestle with these issues. My proposal was approved, and I have taught the block for the past eight years to twelfth graders.

During the three-week block, the students meet daily in a seminar-style discussion. Each day, some event—local, national, or international—relating to race, class, or gender, or to social justice in general, is the focus of discussion. Typical topics include police treatment toward people of color in the United States; gender inequality in professional life and income; bias against LGBTQ persons; and the role of economic class in the quality of education.

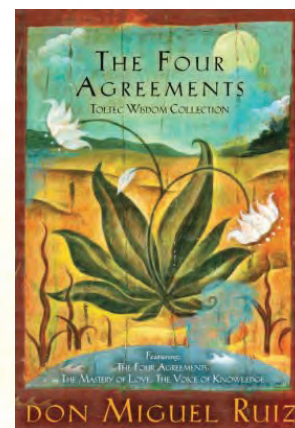
First, the students consider the topic in the context of our present society: What exactly is happening and to whom? Then, through an anthropological and historical lens, we explore how society came to be structured as it is in the present day. For example, if we are considering the socioeconomic disadvantages of our African American population, we look at the legacy of slavery, from the racist culture it left behind in the Jim Crow South to the systemic racial discrimination in our nation today. If we are considering gender inequality, we look back at the patriarchal structures that have characterized human culture for millennia and at the male domination in our own country since its founding. We ask, what is the “machinery” behind these systems of domination?

Then the students explore and share their own feelings and thoughts about the issues. The discussions can become quite lively, even contentious, as disagreement is inevitable. We try to maintain a safe, respectful space where each student feels they can express their opinion. As a guide, we use the following “Four Agreements,” based on Toltec wisdom, as presented in a book by Don Miguel Ruiz.*

- Be impeccable with your word.
- Do not take anything personally.
- Do not make assumptions.
- Always do your best.

In this block, students learn about the historical roots of many of the current issues related to race, class, and gender. They explore their own responses and views regarding these issues and learn other perspectives. Often, students are moved to consider taking positive action. Hence, the students learn not only about what is going on in the world, but they also learn about themselves. This is an excellent preparation for students about to graduate. Also, the students practice expressing themselves effectively and listening to others empathetically. These abilities will serve them well in their adult lives.

Lastly, students usually begin to question the labels that identify people according to race, class, and gender. They begin to see that these identities are just outer garments assigned to each person by society, that beneath those obscuring sheaths, there is a core human being possessing a divine essence shared by all human beings, and that each individual is unique in gifts and destiny and is deserving of respect. When our students begin to carry these truths with intention, they can keep them in mind as they encounter more and more people. And insofar as the student carries this attitude through life, we will have given a gift to them and to the world. ☉



* Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom, A Toltec Wisdom Book* (San Rafael, CA: Amber-Allen Publishing, 2018).

VICTORIA REYES has been at Austin Waldorf School since 2005. She is chair of the high school Humanities Department and a member of the Pedagogical Circle, the College of Teachers, and the Curriculum Committee.

Starting an Independent Waldorf High School

The great majority of the 156 Waldorf schools in North America are K–8 or pre-K–8 schools. Only thirty-five schools have a high school. This is disappointing to many parents and students. However, it is possible to have a Waldorf high school that is not connected to a Waldorf lower school. Below are two examples, one founded largely on student initiative, and one scheduled to open in September 2021, after many years of planning and work by motivated parents of prospective students.

Youth Initiative High School

In 1996 a group of high school-age students in Viroqua, Wisconsin, many of whom had attended Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School (PRWS), decided they wanted a special kind of high school. They envisioned a Waldorf or Waldorf-inspired school that would be academically challenging, respectful of individual freedom and dignity, and rooted in a meaningful sense of community and shared responsibility.



School portrait, Youth Initiative High School, Viroqua, Wisconsin

Because PRWS was not ready for the project, the students took things into their own hands. They worked with their parents, their teachers, and other members of the community to raise money, find a space for the school, create organizational forms, and design a curriculum that focuses on developing the will and initiative to effect positive change in the world. The school opened in the fall of 1996 with eleven students (ten boys and one girl) in a single room in a former public school building close to PRWS. By the

end of the 1996–97 academic year, the school building was called Youth Initiative High School (YIHS).

Today, YIHS fully occupies that former public school building. It has sixty-seven students, seven full-time staff, and thirty part-time teachers. There is a strong tradition of collaboration and shared responsibility, and the students play a central role in the running of the school. They serve on the school's board and on various committees, including administration, personnel, finance, and curriculum. Several years ago, the students were instrumental in bringing more crafts and practical skills into the curriculum, including sewing, carpentry, car maintenance and repair, and welding. Students are active in making school policies, vote on all issues affect-

ing the whole school, and are instrumental in addressing conflicts that arise. The school has no janitorial staff; the students do all the cleaning and maintenance in the building. The students are active in fundraising; over the years, they have operated a landscape mulch business and a bindery for main-lesson books, grown and sold organic produce, picked up stones for local farmers, held elegant

dinners and dances, and run a mobile food truck called "Food for Thought," all to raise money for their school.

The result is a vibrant, active community in which students work with faculty, parents, and members of the larger community in an environment in which creativity, social conscience, compassion, and initiative to do good in the world are fostered.

—R.E.K. with Shawn Lavoie, YIHS faculty chair

Independent High School of the Willamette Valley

When the current seventh graders at Eugene Waldorf School (Oregon) were in the first grade, their parents asked the school if it had the intention to add a high school program to its pre-K–8 program. The school felt it was not in a position to do so and answered in the negative.

From that time, those parents, grandparents, and community members have been preparing to found a high school. The group had study sessions about Waldorf school organization; formulated a mission statement; committed to a policy of diversity, equity, and inclusion; raised funds; and publicized the initiative. As the projected opening in September 2021 nears, the group has

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Tara: A Waldorf High School of the Performing Arts

BY BETSY BARRICKLOW

Tara Performing Arts High School in Boulder, Colorado, was born in the 1990s when Laurel Fisher and I, who had been Waldorf educators for a combined forty-plus years, recognized that deep work in the performing arts inspires an all-encompassing love of learning and interest in life itself. Together with Greg Fisher, we founded Tara on the following principles:

- engaging academic and experiential learning through the Waldorf high school curriculum and pedagogy
- deep experience of the festivals of the year
- experience of culture and history through travel
- an honor code and substance agreement
- the performing arts as a vehicle for adolescent intellectual and personal development

Today, over twenty years later, Tara is a thriving institution. Intentionally small, we try to hold our enrollment at twelve to fifteen students per grade in order to create the ideal environment for all aspects of our program. A high percentage of our applicants come from local Waldorf schools, but students from many other educational backgrounds and parts of the country—and the world—meet our criteria for acceptance, principally, the passionate desire to be a part of what Tara offers. All enrollees commit to a substance agreement in which they promise to forgo all recreational drugs and alcohol, 365 days a year. They also agree to uphold the student-created and annually updated honor code that embodies the ideals our community strives to live by.

Tara offers a full, demanding academic curriculum with all the usual high school subjects—

including English, math, the sciences, and world languages—taught according to Waldorf principles. Integrated into the schedule are regular, twice-weekly choir rehearsals as well as recurring intensive periods of three to five weeks dedicated to the preparation of a play and culminating in a weekend of performances at our own historic theater. Each year, the school puts on three plays and one all-school musical, as well as two public festival events. Recent productions include Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Tina Howe's *Pride's Crossing*, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, and Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In the Heights*. At Tara, performance builds confidence and community spirit, preparing students for success in all of life's endeavors.

Travel is an essential part of the Tara curriculum. In our classrooms-without-walls program, each year the ninth and eleventh graders travel to New York City for a week of theater and museums; the tenth graders spend a week in Ute Tribal Park in Colorado studying Native American traditions and ten days on the San Juan River in Utah studying geology; and the seniors spend four weeks in Europe in direct experience of the history, art, and culture of other countries.

Over the years, Tara has sent close to two hundred graduates into the world—clear-thinking, talented, compassionate human beings eager to make a positive difference in the world. They lead extraordinary lives in fields ranging from astrophysics to education and from environmental law to theater.

This past holiday season, the entire student body gathered in the home of a board member to hear Greg, Laurel, and me read a version of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. The students listened with rapt attention; they laughed, they wept, and, upon leaving, they said that the experience was better than seeing a professional theater production. At the Christmas Candlelight Festival later that week, over one hundred alumni were



Ninth-grade History through Art class, taking place in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

Tara offers a full, demanding academic curriculum with all the usual high school subjects—

Photo top right: Tenth- and eleventh-grade 2019 class play, *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder



Christmas Candlelight Festival choir, directed by Laurel Fisher

in attendance and joined the choir in singing a beloved piece of music traditional to this celebration. At the final performance, as the choir processed out, the alums raised their candles above their heads to honor Tara and its current students.

A few days later, many of these alumni visited our home. As the Christmas tree was lit, they began to sing songs from their Tara days, and the room was filled with joy. They stayed until midnight dipping candles. As they left, they told us how strongly the theater, music, and travel of their Tara years continue to impact their adult lives and how grateful they were to come

back to recharge and refresh those meaningful memories.

Moments like these with our students and alumni confirm for us that the unique Waldorf-based program we offer young people at Tara is critically needed in our world. One graduate recently characterized Tara as “Outward Bound for the Soul.” ☉



Tenth-grade Native American Traditions trip to Ute Tribal Park

BETSY BARRICKLOW began her Waldorf teaching career in the kindergarten at Highland Hall (Northridge, California). She continued as a class teacher there, taking a class from grade one through grade eight, and then for twelve years was active in teaching and administration in the high school. In 1997 she cofounded Tara Performing Arts High School with Greg and Laurel Fisher.

To learn more about Tara Performing Arts High School, visit www.tarahighschool.org

Independent High School, continued from page 41

an approved nonprofit organization, status as a Waldorf initiative registered with and approved by AWSNA, an official name—Independent High School of the Willamette Valley—a board of directors, a school site at a local Methodist church, and a sound budget. It has received a grant from RSF Social Finance to support its advocacy for diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as a \$50,000 matching grant from the Rudolf Steiner Foundation.

The students have enthusiastically embraced the project, donating their time and money and helping to publicize it. Emily Chaison Morales, current board vice chair and grandparent of a seventh grader, says:

We want to make a difference in the world. We are committed to offering programs that empower

young people and develop their creative and leadership capabilities. In this rapidly changing and evolving world, we need inventors and creative thinkers who can comprehend complex issues and resolve them. We have

been challenged at every step, but like the indomitable spirit of the adolescent, we find new ways and make things happen!

Word of the initiative in Eugene has spread through the Waldorf world. Parents—whose local Waldorf school does not have a high school but who want a Waldorf high school experience for their children—have contacted the Eugene group for advice. For those parents, what is happening in Eugene is a model and an inspiration.

—R.E.K. with Emily Chaison Morales



Future students of the new independent Waldorf high school in Eugene, Oregon. Please note anticipated dates of graduation.

Marketing Waldorf Schools

BY LYNNE GOLODNER, MFA



When I moved my son from public school to Detroit Waldorf School in third grade, I was delighted to find an educational option that perfectly fit my child. Yet, I was dismayed that the Waldorf school wasn't more widely known. As a public relations and marketing entrepreneur, I wanted to spread the word about Waldorf Education. I began to use the marketing strategies listed below. These best practices worked well in Detroit and also at other Waldorf schools where I have consulted on marketing and outreach.

Create Foundational Messaging

"Foundational messaging" serves as the basis for all marketing narratives. Foundational messaging is the core story that comes out of research and discussion by a school's main stakeholders. Foundational messaging includes mission and vision statements, taglines, and five to ten paragraphs regarding the school's origin, perspective, and place. A mission statement should be outward facing and understandable to persons beyond the school community. It articulates what the school strives to achieve today. A vision statement is an internal compass guiding staff and faculty in their path to positively impact the world. All members of the school community—faculty, staff, and parents—should be familiar with the foundational messaging and use it when speaking to prospective parents. A big problem in marketing is that prospective parents often get different messages from different people, each passionately devoted to the school.

Use Storytelling to Promote the School

Part of the foundational messaging is the school's "story." The story might include the school's origins and history, a description of the landscape and buildings, or vivid anecdotes about classroom activities and interactions. In the Waldorf classroom, storytelling informs, educates, and inspires children. In like manner, storytelling marketing is an effective

way to interest and attract people outside the school community. The creation of a school's story should be a team effort, involving teachers, administrators, parents, alumni, and students.

Tell a Positive Story

It is tempting in our marketing to try to dispel myths and correct wrong assumptions about Waldorf Education, such as "Oh, Waldorf doesn't start teaching reading until third grade." It is better, though, to focus on positive aspects of Waldorf pedagogy, such as the integration of subjects and the important role of the arts. By explaining why Waldorf works, we can capture the imagination of prospective parents.

Use Accessible Language

All marketing messaging should be in clear, descriptive language. There are words and phrases used within the Waldorf subculture that are particular to Waldorf Education and unknown in the world at large. We should present Waldorf Education—its philosophy, curriculum, and pedagogy—in a way that bridges worlds and inspires inquiry.

Create and Empower School Ambassadors

Newspaper articles, social media, e-blasts, websites, advertising, and blogging are great marketing tools. However, word of mouth is still the most effective way to attract people. Marketing research reveals that it takes seven touches of an organization before a person takes action—and the most common impetus for engagement is a personal referral. Parents and friends of the school will spread the word, whether asked to do so or not. A school can identify enthusiastic and articulate parents, teachers, and alumni and ask them to be ambassadors promoting the school. The school can train these ambassadors on how to present the school and then encourage them to welcome people at events, use email to invite friends, and share on social media why they love Waldorf. ☉

LYNNE GOLODNER owns *Your People LLC*, a marketing and public relations company in Detroit. She has worked with Detroit Waldorf School, Sacramento Waldorf School, Toronto Waldorf Academy, and Aurora Waldorf School and facilitated an AWSNA webinar and an AWSNA seminar in Chicago. She is the mother of four teenagers.

Sensible Tuition

BY ROB SCHWARE, PhD AND
RUTH GODBERFFORDE, MSc

Boulder Valley Waldorf School is a pre-K–8 independent Waldorf school located in Niwot, Colorado, on a beautiful thirty-eight-acre campus. It has been providing a quality Waldorf education to students since 1993.

Six years ago, however, the school was in financial crisis. Despite budget cuts, frozen faculty salaries, staff reductions, and combined classes, the school's financial situation was precarious. Some board members wondered if the school could continue operation. It all seemed to be hanging by a thread.

One major factor was the school's tuition plan. Almost 45 percent of the school's students were receiving 50 percent or greater tuition discounts. The average tuition assistance—almost \$4,000 per student in the school—was three times more than the recommendation for a healthy Waldorf school. This discounting had increased over 10 percent in the past decade, making the school one of the highest-giving Waldorf schools in the country. Something had to change.

Then, at a board meeting, a parent suggested that the school look at different tuition models. This idea led the board to examine the school and its future. Basic issues were raised, such as: "What if we were a brand new school? What would we emphasize? How would we market it? How would we approach parents? What would be special about us?" The possibilities of selling the outer campus or making it into a nature preserve were considered.

Regarding tuition, the board felt the school needed to comply with the tuition guidelines of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), i.e., that no more than 20 percent of the gross income from tuition be given away as tuition discounts. The school was discounting at approximately 33 percent and one year had reached 38 percent. It was like an airline giving away a third of the seats on each flight.

The board realized it had to make a bold and decisive move that would allow the school to offer an exceptional private school education even to families of modest means and budgets. In accord with Rudolf Steiner's original impulse, the school wanted to serve all families, regardless of financial resources. The key to this proved to be a stable, predictable, affordable tuition.



Prior to the 2016–17 academic year, the board announced a new tuition model called "Sensible Tuition." It involved a 40 percent reduction in tuition per full-time student, from roughly \$15,000 to \$8,900. This figure had been determined to be the break-even number for the school. Thus, instead of having a high tuition and giving financial assistance, the school was setting tuition at a sustainable and fixed number. In addition, the school made a commitment to the community to hold the new rates steady for at least three years. This was done to make budgeting predictable for families and to show that the school was committed to the shift. The school had reduced tuition rates to an affordable \$10,000 per year with fees included. The average tuition of other independent schools in the area was about \$18,000.

The response was immediate and positive. In the first year of Sensible Tuition, enrollment increased by 30 percent. Parent comments included:

"Financially speaking, we were on the fence about sending our second child to Boulder Valley. Now we can afford to send both of our children for practically the price of sending one!"

"Last year we were accepting tuition assistance. This year we will be able to pay full tuition for both our children."

After four years of the new affordable tuition structure, Boulder Valley Waldorf School has an enrollment 68 percent larger than it had in 2016, before Sensible Tuition. The program has been an unmitigated success and is an essential element in the life of the school. Now the school is thriving, thanks to an innovative financial model that serves a wider range of middle-class parents. ◊

ROB SCHWARE has a PhD from the London School of Economics and is a member of the BVWS Board of Trustees. RUTH GODBERFFORDE has an MSc from the University of Washington, Seattle, and is Director of Advancement at BVWS.

Book Reviews

Tending the Spark: Lighting the Future for Middle School Students

BY BETTY STALEY

REVIEWED BY LINDA WILLIAMS, PhD

Last spring, as my class's fifth-grade year at Detroit Waldorf School was coming to an end, I was looking ahead to sixth grade with my class with both joyful anticipation and apprehension. Some of my students were already in puberty, and it seemed that in the following year I would be dealing with a group of rambunctious adolescents. Fortunately, I learned about and read Betty Staley's new book *Tending the Spark: Lighting the Future for Middle School Students*. The book is a guide for parents and teachers to the world of the middle schooler and a source of wise advice about how to help these eleven- to fourteen-year-olds develop in a healthy way.

Staley relies on her fifty years of experience as a leading Waldorf educator but also references the latest neurological research. She introduces the concept of the "vulnerability gap," central to the work of neuropsychologist Eklhonon Goldberg. The vulnerability gap is the period of time between a child entering puberty and the time when they develop executive function. Executive function includes the ability to make and carry out a plan, to control emotion, and to follow directions. It usually develops around age sixteen. Because children today on average enter puberty around age twelve, there is now a four-year gap, which Staley describes as "a fragile time when youngsters are at risk of being strongly affected by cultural, emotional, and biological influences without

having the emotional and intellectual capacity to handle what is happening within them." (p. 26)

A primary task for parents and teachers is helping our young people and students to safely cross this vulnerability gap. Staley cites three essentials that students need during this time of transition. First, they need healthy adult role models who demonstrate what it means to be a "responsible, caring, altruistic, 21st century adult." Teachers, coaches, neighbors, relatives, and appropriate heroes in popular culture, literature, or music can serve this purpose. Second, middle schoolers need stories—stories of exemplary people with high ideals, who have overcome challenges and have done some great deed for the world. These stories can come in the school curriculum, through books, or through movies. The third essential is service: Middle schoolers need to experience what they can do with their hands to serve others. Service helps to shift the focus from self to others and offers a way to connect to the world and be useful citizens. Artistic and craft work, likewise involving the will and the hands, can give the young person an experience of creativity, competence, and accomplishment.

Betty Staley reassures us that although society has changed and young people have changed, it is still possible for caring adults to tend the spark of each child's higher soul capacity and help them develop into adults who are able to find and realize their destiny in life. Her book is a valuable resource for adults in fulfilling that task.



Star of the Sea

BY WILLIAM WARD

REVIEWED BY PATRICE MAYNARD, MEd

William Ward, who passed away in 2008, was for many years a beloved class teacher at Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School in Ghent, New York. William was a master storyteller, and this story of redemption was one that William told to many generations of seventh and eighth graders. It is about the transformation of a troubled young soul and how human beings can influence each other for the better. The protagonist, Luke, grows up in a poor and burdened family with an abusive father. Luke makes the inward journey from

being a juvenile delinquent to finding his higher self. This happens through the influence of good people around him, including a little girl who has clairvoyant powers and loves Luke deeply. The book, beautifully illustrated by Pamela Dalton, is a posthumous tribute to a remarkable, wise, and loving teacher and human being. The tale it tells is meant to evoke in middle school-age children a sense of reverence and an appreciation for the spiritual dimension of life.



Both books are available at www.waldorfpublishings.org and www.smile.amazon.com



Educational Programs for 2020-2021

Explorations

This program is designed for parents and beginning teachers who seek an introduction to the philosophy and arts that support Waldorf education. Classes are offered at a host school one weekend per month. In 2020-2021, we're in Alaska, Southern New Hampshire and Washington, D.C. Further communities interested in hosting a 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: July 4- July 31

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 27-July 2, July 4-9

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:

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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, Phone: (603) 654-2566

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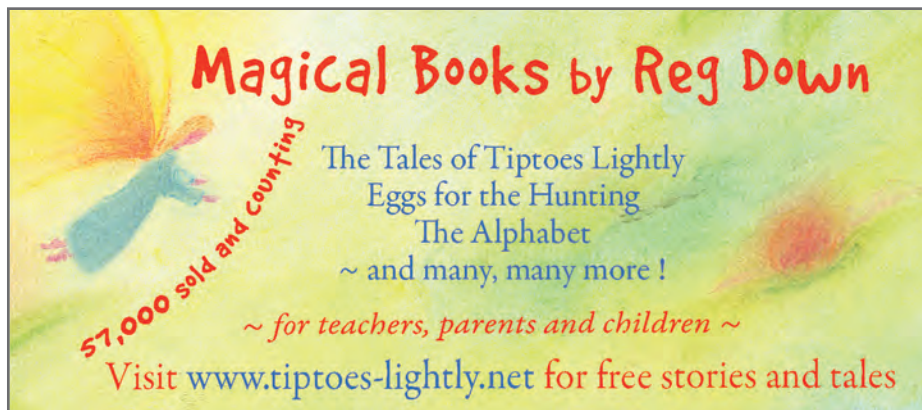
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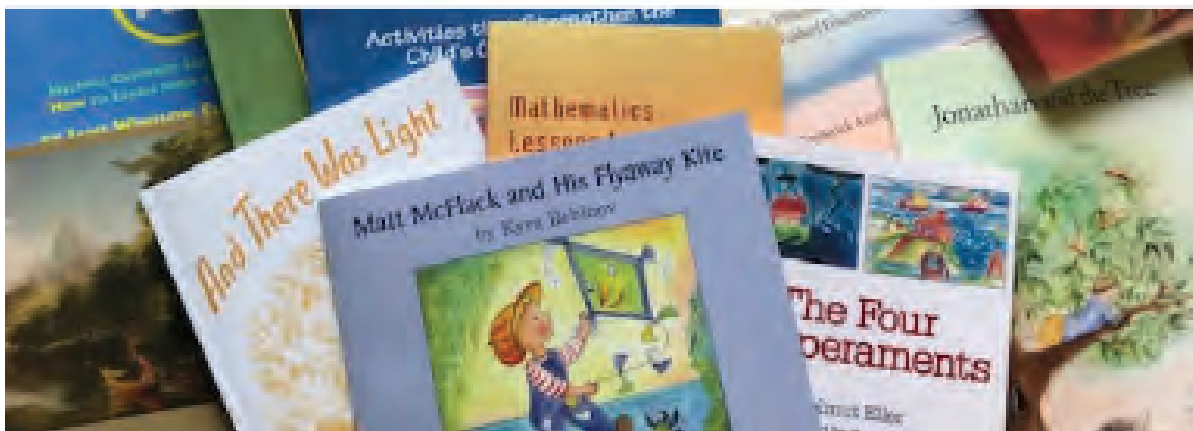
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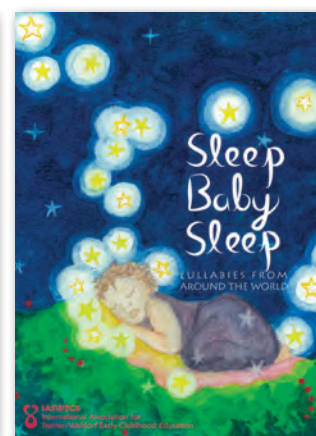
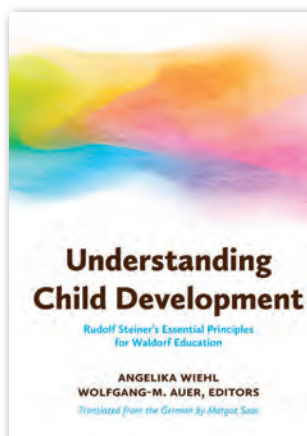
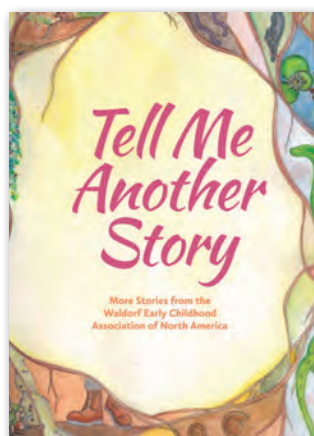
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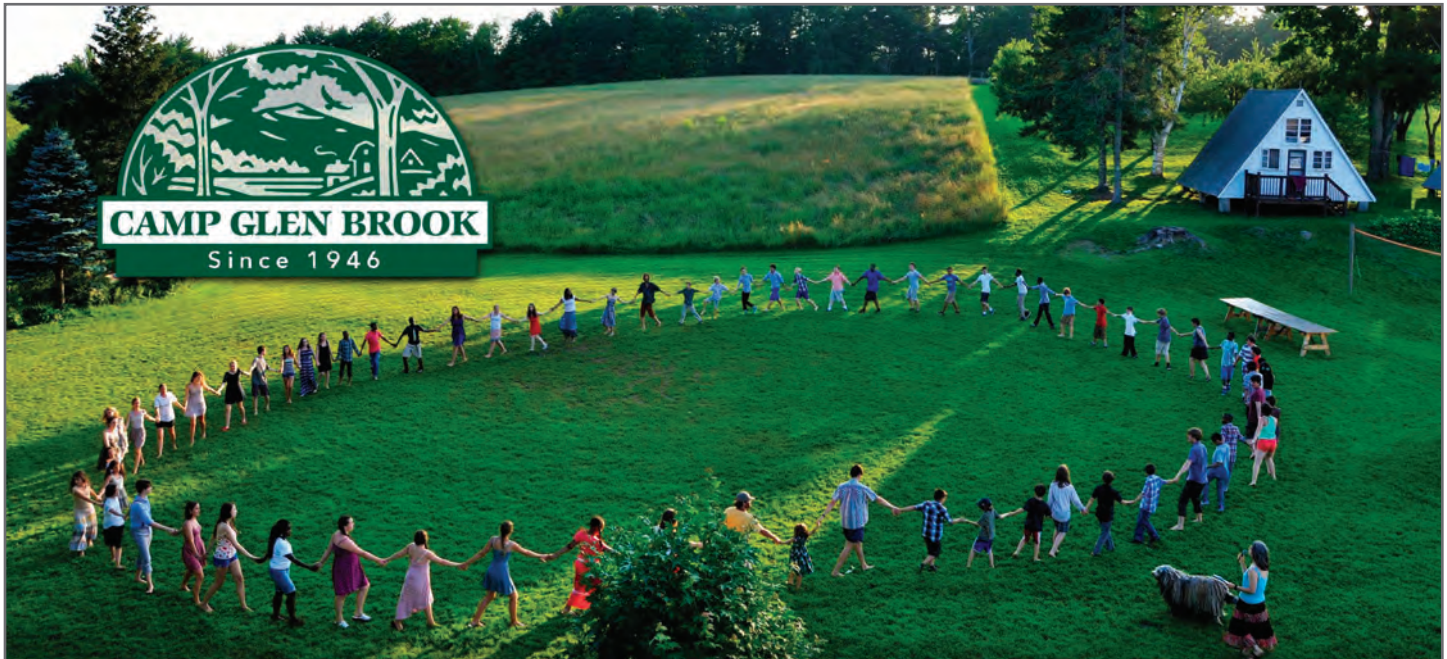
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