

Renewal

SPRING/SUMMER 2005 - VOLUME 14, NUMBER 1

Children and Sports
Reading and Children's Health
Famous Waldorf Graduates
and Families



A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

The Dining Room Table

Algebra has been wrestled to
surrender here.

Geometry has bloomed on the page.
The Rights of Man were declared
here one evening.

It was at this table that Hannibal
cajoled elephants over the
Alps,
Their big bucket feet inching over icy
switchbacks.

Thor hammered things out in
Asgaard here,
While Loki lurked and laughed.
Martin Luther King dreamed.
The Raven quothed.
Pythagoras theorized.

The crew of the Mayflower dropped
anchor at this table more
than once.
Each time the weary voyagers
emerged from below-decks
Relieved, afraid, amazed, resolved.

Siddhartha met his milkmaid here.
Mayan culture flourished,
Aztec, too.
Columbus arrived here several times
And at first was always warmly
welcomed.

Aristotle composed the Organon
here,
His work spread out in every
direction, covering the table,
Crowding out Socrates and Plato
before he was finished.

Saint Francis fed the birds here.
This table burned with Joan of Arc.
Marco Polo set off for China from this
very spot,
Though at first he wasn't sure where
he was going.

Horses reared in battle
While coats-of-arms slapped in the
wind.
It was from here that Ferdinand and
Isabella drove the Moors
out of Spain,
And then the Jews, too.

The sun stopped revolving around the
earth at this table,
Though it took the powerful a while
to realize it.

The Bastille was stormed here
And tyrants subdued.
Women's rights,
Declared at a similar table in a
wood-framed house in Seneca
Falls,
Made their way to this table, too.

Triumph, discovery, defeat
Hope, betrayal, fear
Insight, knowledge, love:
The sweep of human history itself
has been our guest,
And we its privileged hosts.

—Lisa Mahar
administrator at the Monadnock Waldorf School in
Keene, NH, and mother of three Waldorf students



Waldorf Education is based on the teachings of Austrian scientist, philosopher, and spiritual teacher Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925). The first Waldorf school was founded in Stuttgart, Germany, and today there are about 900 Waldorf schools in more than eighty different countries. In North America there are about 150 Waldorf schools and initiatives. Almost all of these are independent schools that do not receive government support. The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) promotes Waldorf Education in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. *Renewal: A Journal for Waldorf Education* is a publication of AWSNA.

COVER ART: A mosaic made of origami paper, depicting a traditional Japanese fairy tale. The artist is Kyoko Taniguchi, now a class teacher at the Tokyo Steiner Schule in Japan. This piece was part of her curriculum project when she was a teacher trainee at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA.

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Renewal

DEPARTMENTS

1 From the Editor
BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

31 From the High School
Movement, Truth, and
Beauty: The International
High School Eurythmy
Festival in Austin
BY JODI CASEY AND
KATHY WELLS



Books in Brief

33 *The Waldorf School Curriculum Wall Chart*
BY DAVID MITCHELL

39 *Lilipoh Holistic Wellness Guide*

43 *Painting in Waldorf Education*
BY DICK BRUIN AND ATTIE LICHTHART

Book Reviews

47 *The Social Mission of Waldorf Education*
BY GARY LAMB

47 *Freeing the Circling Stars*
BY DR. CHRISTOPHER HOUGHTON BUDD

49 *Goethe and the Power of Rhythm*
BY JOHN BARNES

50 **Contacts
Information
Opportunities**

ARTICLES

- 4 *Renewal Goes People Magazine*
Famous Waldorf Graduates and Waldorf Families
BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI
- 6 *Children and Sports*
Finding a Healthy Balance
BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI
- 11 *Experiencing the Grace and Grandeur of Ancient Greece*
The Waldorf Fifth-Grade Olympiad
BY SHARON VANDERSLICE
- 15 *The Gift of Imagination*
The Nature and Nurturing of a Unique Human Capacity
BY MICHAEL PRESTON, PhD
- 20 *Butterflies and Flowers*
A Little Story for Everyone
BY REG DOWN
- 22 *Does Early Reading Contribute to Attention and Learning Difficulties in Our Children?*
BY SUSAN JOHNSON, MD
- 25 *The Redemption of Reading*
Making Learning to Read a Health-Giving Process
BY ARTHUR PITTIS
- 29 *In Praise of Cursive Writing*
BY MEMBERS OF THE GREEN MEADOW HIGH SCHOOL FACULTY
- 34 *After Waldorf, What?*
Sterling College, Craftsbury Common, Vermont
BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH
- 36 *Who's Getting Educated Here, Anyway?*
Confessions of a Waldorf Father
BY JOHN WHITE
- 40 *From Fear to Love*
Changing the Way We Experience the World
BY PHILIP INCAO, MD
- 44 *Building Enrollment in a Waldorf School*
Filling Classrooms and Serving the Educational Needs of Children and Families
BY DEIRDRE JOHNSON



From the Editor

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD

Recently, by counting on my fingers and toes, I determined that I have been working for the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America for almost fourteen years. This is a pretty long time for a hard-core Sagittarian (Sun, Mercury, and Mars in that restless constellation). The realization moved me to think about the Association, what it is, and what it does.

AWSNA was founded in the early 1970s when the Waldorf schools in North America could be counted on anyone's fingers and toes. The schools treasured their independence and entered into a very loose association without great enthusiasm. They met occasionally to commit themselves again to not doing much together. When I had my first contact with the Association—in 1986 as a journalist gathering information for an article about Waldorf Education—Anne Charles was the chairperson. Anne, a retired class teacher, apparently ran the Association from her living room in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, with the help of a single box of files.

In 1990, David Alsop was chosen chairperson, and the Association moved to Fair Oaks, California. Over the next ten years, as the number of Waldorf schools increased rapidly, the organization, under David's strong and capable leadership, also grew. AWSNA took on the role—carried out mostly by three regional chairs—of advising new initiatives and established schools. It began to publish books (AWSNA Publications), a semiannual magazine (*Renewal*), and a monthly newsletter (*Inform*), and it represented and spoke for Waldorf Education in the public arena.

In 2001, Donald Bufano took over as chair. Donald came into a difficult situation. The private donations that had been augmenting income from school dues and that had helped make possible the growth of the Association were drying up. When Donald left after a year and a half of energetic service, it was clear that a rethinking of the structure of the organization was needed. An Organizational Development Committee was created and in time presented a new vision of AWSNA and its role in supporting Waldorf Education. This year that vision has become a reality.

AWSNA is now directed by an executive team comprised of three "Association leaders." Each of the leaders has a particular area of responsibility. Each brings a wealth of Waldorf experience, life experience, and practical expertise to the work of the Association.

Patrice Maynard, a longtime class teacher at the Hawthorne Valley School in Ghent, New York, is leader for outreach and

development. Her responsibilities include advocating and speaking for Waldorf Education, engaging in dialogue with groups outside the Waldorf world, and helping direct AWSNA Publications (still in the competent hands of David Mitchell) as well as *Renewal*.

Frances Kane, a Waldorf graduate, former handwork teacher, and for ten years the administrator of the City of Lakes Waldorf School in Minneapolis, is leader for administration. Aided by a small staff, Frances handles record-keeping and finances, responds to inquiries about Waldorf Education, oversees organizational development, and more.

Connie Daniel, a former class teacher, formerly administrator at the Chicago Waldorf School, and currently administrator at the Honolulu Waldorf School, has been chosen as leader for services. The tasks of this leadership position include helping Waldorf schools maintain the integrity and quality of the education they offer; organizing conferences, and running the Association's accreditation program. While Connie has already to some degree taken up these responsibilities, she will not officially enter the role until July 1, 2005.

The administrative office in Minneapolis is now considered the Association's base. The three leaders, living in different parts of the continent, are in constant contact through electronic means and meet face-to-face once a month.

The former main office in Fair Oaks, which once housed six full-time employees, is greatly reduced in size and staffing. Half of the house has been turned into an apartment. In the remaining part work Hallie Wootan—the artistic director and production manager for *Renewal* and for AWSNA Publications—and Rucha Powers—for the past two years "the (telephone) voice of AWSNA," who now works mainly with billing and shipping for AWSNA Publications. Hallie's and Rucha's days are brightened by occasional visits from my cat, Felicity, an editorial assistant at the magazine since 1996. Anne Riegel-Koetzsch, *Renewal's* copy editor, proofreader, and artistic consultant, sublets one room for use as her office and art studio. Backup copy editor, Charley Blatchford, PhD, lives next door, and my own office remains in a cottage nearby, adjacent to the campus of Rudolf Steiner College.

The almost 200 affiliated schools of the Association are now grouped in eight regions—Northeast/Quebec, Mid-Atlantic, Northwest, and so on. "TexMexSoRocks" refers not to a hot nightclub in San Antonio but to the Association region that comprises Texas, Mexico, the Southwest, and the Rocky Mountains. Schools in each region meet periodically to discuss the health of each school and initiative and of the region as a

continued on page 48

Renewal Goes People Magazine



Nastassja Kinski



Rainer Werner Fassbinder



Kenneth Chenault

Famous Waldorf Graduates and Waldorf Families

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI



Chris Elliott



Jennifer Aniston



Sandra Bullock

It is always encouraging when graduates of Waldorf schools go on to be outstanding in a particular field and achieve a measure of fame. Also, it is interesting to know that many well-known and successful people choose Waldorf Education for their children.

Following is a list of famous Waldorf graduates, most of them from North America, but a few from Europe. Following that is a list of celebrities whose children have attended or are attending a Waldorf school. The names are listed in no particular order, and the two lists are by no means complete. So if you are aware of anyone we have missed, please let us know.

The professions represented on the list of well-known graduates include architecture, science, finance, literature, and sport. There are also a relatively high number of people in the entertainment industry—actors, actresses, musicians, and so on. One editorial board member was concerned that, because of this, the list would

give the impression that most Waldorf students try to become movie stars or musicians. Certainly a number do, and they are no doubt helped by the experiences in drama, music, and the arts that they have had as Waldorf students.

In fact, though, Waldorf graduates go into many different professions. There are uncounted physicians, lawyers, business persons, academics, teachers, farmers, social workers, scientists, artists, and craftspersons among Waldorf graduates. These people may be very successful in their fields, but they have not necessarily achieved the fame that would include them on our list.

We hope that none of those listed here feels that his or her privacy has been compromised. If any do feel intruded upon, we sincerely apologize. We are proud of you and hope that you are not unproud of your connection to Waldorf Education.

Waldorf Graduates

Jennifer Aniston, actress, star of the television serial *Friends*

Kenneth Chenault, CEO of American Express Corporation

Michael Ende, writer, author of fantasy novels for children, including *The Neverending Story* and *The Grey Gentleman*

Nastassja Kinski, movie star and supermodel

Rainer Werner Fassbinder, film and stage director

Veronica Webb, supermodel, writer, actress

Barbara Becker, movie star and wife of tennis player Boris Becker

William Lee Scott, movie star

Daniel T. Jones, college professor and author of best-selling management books such as *Lean Thinking* and *The Machine that Changed the World*

Julianna Margulies, actress, star of the television serial *ER*

Martin Schenkel, rock musician and actor

Karl Schmidt, Founder of CONSORS discount brokerage firm

Juliane Kohler, actress, star of *Aimee* and *Jaguar*

Albert Watson, internationally known photographer

Sandra Bullock, movie star

Douglas Brenner, editor of *Garden Design*, former chief editor of *Martha Stewart Living*

Charles Rose, internationally known architect

Gastao Fraguas Filho, world champion Renault Formula 1 race car driver

Shana Blake Hill, internationally active opera singer, Los Angeles Opera

Victor Navasky, publisher of the magazine *The Nation*

Thomas Kagermann, innovative "New Age" violinist and flutist

Timothy Daly, screen actor in *Diner*, *I Married a Centerfold*, and other films

Zoe Schneider, pop singer of "My Love is Dangerous"

Cecilie Brask Thomsen, actress and former "Bond Girl," appeared in *Tomorrow Never Dies*

Dr. Wolf-Christian Dullo, oceanographer

Chris Elliott, screen actor in *FDR* and *Groundhog Day*, also television entertainer

Waldorf Families

Some years ago, an aspiring actor in Los Angeles wanted his children to attend a Waldorf school but couldn't afford the tuition. The actor and the Highland Hall School in Northridge reached a barter agreement in which he worked as a carpenter for the school in exchange for tuition. **Harrison Ford** was later able to put away the hammer and saw when success in his role as Indiana Jones changed his financial situation.

Other Waldorf students who have famous parents include:

Children and grandchildren of **Paul Newman**, actor

Daughter of **Mikhail Baryshnikov**, dancer

Son of **Jean-Paul Belmondo**, actor

Children of **Greg Allman**, musician (Allman Brothers Band)

Daughter of **Tom Waits**, rock musician

Daughter of **Jessica Lange** and **Sam Shepard**, screen stars

Daughter of **Lenny Kravitz**, rock musician

Son of **Cheech Marin**, screen actor and comedian (Cheech and Chong)

Children of **Glen Frey**, singer (The Eagles)

Son of **Charles Neville**, musician (The Neville Brothers)

Daughter of **Carol Huston**, TV actress (Matlock)

Children of **Harvey Keitel**, actor

Children of **George Lucas**, film director

Daughter of **Alan Parsons**, musician (Alan Parsons Project)

Children of **Heinz Nixdorf**, computer pioneer

Children of **James Taylor** and **Carly Simon**, musicians

Children of **Clifford Stoll**, codeveloper of the Internet and author of *Log Out*

Children of **John Paul Jones**, bass player of Led Zeppelin

Son of **Mick Jones**, musician (member of the band Foreigner)

Children of **Thomas Moore**, psychologist and author, *Care of the Soul*

Children of **Joe Namath**, football quarterback

Children of **John DeLorean**, automobile designer and manufacturer

Children of **Russell Schweikert**, astronaut

Daughter of **Chubby Checker**, "King of the Twist"

Children of **Gilbert Grosvenor**, longtime editor of National Geographic



Children and Sports

Finding a Healthy Balance

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI

Over the last thirty or forty years, the sanctity and wholesomeness of early childhood have been under attack. Exposure to sex and violence in the media, pressure to achieve early reading, measurable academic achievement, and computer competence, and other factors have produced the "hurried child." Many children today are forced into choices and activities for which, in terms of their physical, emotional, and intellectual development, they are not yet ready. This has demonstrably taken place in the realm of sports.

In previous generations, most children learned and played games such as baseball, basketball, football, and soccer in their neighborhood, playing with children who lived nearby. Parents were involved very little in this. The stay-at-home mothers of the time were there to help if someone got hurt and to provide cold lemonade for thirsty players.

Today, unsupervised local play and sports activity is much less common. In many areas there are concerns about safety. Also, since in many families both parents work, there is no one at home to provide safety-net supervision. The result is that today children are likely to wind up after school in a supervised aftercare situation or doing some adult-organized and adult-led activity. And the organized activities of choice today are competitive sports. Hence, we have the ubiquity of the soccer league, the swim team, the basketball league, and so on, complete with uniforms, team names, scheduled games, championships, coaches, sponsors, and so on.

Organized teams and leagues for youngsters did exist in the past. They were much less common, however, and supplemented rather than replaced neighborhood play. And they were mostly for children who were approaching adolescence or had entered into it. Today there is a trend to have younger and younger children take part in organized athletic activities—in preschool soccer leagues and swim teams, for example. There is a tendency too to have children specialize in a single sport and to do that sport all year round, rather than just during its particular season. While in some communities the idea prevails that sports for children are wholesome play rather than competition, the current growing emphasis on achievement and winning has endangered this attitude. Thus, organized sports for children have taken on a disturbing life of their own. Often they do not serve the physical and emotional health of the child, and sports can undermine rather than enhance the life of the family.

Stresses on Young Bodies

The growing muscles and bones of young children are not strong enough for the rigorous, repetitive training

and practice regimens used by adult athletes. When these regimens are imposed on children, problems arise.

Overuse injuries are so common that pediatric sports medicine is now a recognized medical specialty.

Tendonitis is a very common problem among child athletes. Stress fractures, caused by repeated overtaxing of the bones that are not yet fully calcified, are also very common. To make matters worse, almost a quarter of all children with athletic injuries are—according to a study by the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission—encouraged by parents and coaches to continue playing.

This compromising of the healthy growth of children's bodies goes on in spite of there being no evidence that starting a child before age eight or nine in any organized team sport gives a lasting advantage. Rather, there is abundant evidence that engaging in adult-level sports at a young age carries the risk of long-lasting injuries. Besides, many experts in child development—as well as disinterested common sense—tell us that growing children need to experience a variety of physical activities in order to grow in a balanced way.

Stresses on Families

A child's joining an athletic team has a big impact on the child's and on also the family's schedule and daily life. Homework, music lessons, and other activities have to be squeezed into a suddenly much fuller schedule, and there is little space for free play and time to just relax and unwind. The family dinner hour is often disrupted. A regular and appropriately early bedtime is a common casualty as well. Parents usually find that their chauffeuring duties increase markedly as they are enlisted to drive budding athletes to practices and games. Parents may also spend time (willingly or unwillingly) watching games and practices and waiting in parking lots for their children to be ready to go home.

According to New York child psychiatrist Alvin Rosen, structured sports time has doubled in the past generation, unstructured playtime has been cut in half, and time for that essential ingredient in family life—the family dinner—has declined by a third.

Especially problematic has been the proliferation of so-called "travel teams." These teams provide professional-level coaching and stiffer competition but place greater

demands on the child and the family. A travel team may practice twice a week and play another two times a week. Its away-games can involve a round-trip of up to four hours. Such time-demands obviously put a lot of pressure on the schedules of children, parents, and families.

The travel team offers the child with some talent and interest an accelerated development in the sport and a better chance to "make the team" at the next level. Most travel teams have involved children in the year or two before high school. In some areas, though, the soccer travel team now involves eight-year-olds concerned about making the ten-year-old team. As one soccer mom complained, the whole thing can begin to feel like "an arms race."

Children on travel teams are often encouraged to play the same sport in more than one season. They are told that they will fall behind their peers if they do not play all year round. This full-time involvement puts a lot of emotional pressure on the child.

The Sport takes on an importance far beyond what a recreational activity should have for a child.

Besides, this narrow focus may prevent the balanced physical development that playing a variety of sports brings. Former major league baseball star Cal Ripken Jr. has been very critical of year-round single-sport involvement for young people. He feels that specialization in a single sport before age fifteen has no advantages and may in fact cause harm. Ripken himself played three sports through high school and attributes some of his success to this. Through soccer he developed footwork and balance and, through basketball, explosiveness and quickness. Ripken urges aspiring young baseball players to "put the glove down" when the baseball season is over.

Early Does Not Mean Better

The appearance of "the earlier the better" philosophy in sports training is no surprise. Tiger Woods, who began to play golf at age three; the East European world-class gymnasts who began training soon after they learned to walk; and other similar examples have convinced many parents that their child will miss out if they do not start early.

Sports history, though, reveals that often it is the late bloomers, who had to work longer and harder to

catch up, who later became stars. The same applies to early and intense ballet training. Rudolf Nureyev began formal training at age eleven.

There are substantial pressures on parents to go along with the trend toward early, organized athletics. When a child of seven or eight comes home reporting that all her friends are joining a soccer league, the parent feels impelled to let her join the crowd. Besides, many children need more exercise, and there may be no other opportunities for out-of-school group games. Organized competitive sports may seem to be the only option.

For some parents, the hope for their child of a college athletic scholarship or even a career in professional sports is also a factor. However, for children involved in organized sports, the dropout rate before adolescence is very high and is increasing. A *U.S. News & World Report* article (June 7, 2004) called "Fixing Kids' Sports" reports that 70 percent of children involved in early, organized sports eventually drop out.

For a child who continues in a sport, the best motivation to do so is love of the game. The odds of even a talented child who persists in a particular sport profiting financially from it is not great. Dan Dayle, director of the Institute of Sports at the University of Rhode Island, cautions parents who hope that their child will get a college sports scholarship. His research shows that of the 475,000 fourth graders playing organized basketball, only 87,000 were still playing as seniors in high school. Of these, less than 3,000 won scholarships for their first year of college, and only 160 made it to the professional level. In soccer, the odds are much longer because many colleges recruit foreign players. For other sports, there is a similarly large gap between those who aspire to get scholarships and those who actually get them.

The Waldorf Model

In Waldorf schools, the healthy, balanced physical development of the child is emphasized, perhaps more so than in any other approach to education. From the kindergarten through the elementary grades and high school, the children do activities that develop their fine motor and coarse motor coordination. Finger games, handwork, outdoor games, eurythmy, Bothmer gymnastics, Spacial Dynamics®, and (in the older grades) competitive sports such as soccer and basketball comprise an integrated approach to developing a healthy body that will be the basis for healthy emotional and intellectual life. Organized sports are indeed important in the healthy development of the child. Waldorf educators do not oppose organized sports but only counsel that they be begun at a particular age and be done in a particular way. Most schools have teams beginning in



the sixth or seventh grade and going through high school.

During the first seven years, the child lives in a world of fantasy and imagination. As Rudolf Steiner said, "Play is the work of the young child." Free play (both indoors and outdoors) and simple noncompetitive games are all that is needed for the child's healthy physical development—assuming, of course, that the diet is a balanced one, based on a variety of whole, natural foods.

At this stage, pushing a structured or competitive activity can be problematic. It can lead to a "hardening" that is physical, emotional, and psychological. The young child's body can start to lose its characteristic softness and flexibility. Aggressiveness and competitiveness may develop, along with an awakened self-consciousness that is not really appropriate at this stage. Free play and noncompetitive games played for the fun of it should dominate in the first several years of formal school.

After age nine, the child changes, becoming less dreamy, more self-aware, and more independent. Also, he begins to be able to really practice, develop, and master the

skills involved in a sport such as gymnastics or baseball. He may be ready for organized sports.

If the child does begin an organized athletic activity,

the joy of the game rather than competitive achievement should be emphasized.

Also, the activity should not become too much of a focus in a child's life. There should be other activities and other sports. And a healthy family life should be a priority. If a child's sports involvement is wreaking havoc with a family's daily schedule and with their time together, that involvement should be critically examined.

Even if the child shows interest and promise in a sport, it is best to proceed slowly. Travel teams, four days a week of gymnastic practice, and the like, are best left until the child is a few years older.



Some parents fall into the trap of overscheduling their child, of arranging too many activities. They may enroll their children in two or more sports in a single season, while organizing a smorgasbord of sports, art, musical, and other activities. Children need lots of unstructured time to relax and do what just comes to mind.

**For the younger child,
overscheduling may
lead to health and
emotional problems.**

Even after age twelve, the young person needs unscheduled free time.

For teenagers, sports and physical activity are very important. Adolescents tend to have a surplus of energy that needs to be channeled. Otherwise, physical and

emotional problems may arise. Sports and physical disciplines such as dance or eurythmy are ideal at this time. Unfortunately, with the current emphasis on early sports, many young people are burned out by the time they reach high school. Having played one hundred soccer games a year before they set foot in high school, they are ready to take a rest. The high dropout rate in youth sports means that when young people really need this outlet in their adolescent years, many have already given up on it.

The American Academy of Pediatrics released the following statement in 2000:

Those who participate in a variety of sports and specialize only after reaching puberty tend to be more consistent performers, have fewer injuries, and adhere to sports play longer than those who specialize early.

In many areas of modern life, the adult world is impinging on the world of childhood. With the "ratings creep" in movies, for example, adult content and language are increasingly allowed in G- and PG-rated films. This is happening in the world of sports as well.

Parents and teachers need to work together to see that children are protected from the very problematic trend of intense, early athletic competition. Waldorf educators generally have a clear idea of what is appropriate for the children in their classes.

It is up to parents to see that outside of school hours their children and the shared life of the family are not adversely affected by current trends in intense, early, organized sports activities. Parents of younger children can arrange children's play and sports gatherings outside the local league system. If there is no local neighborhood, parents can create an "intentional neighborhood" to do the same. Children need only to be brought together in a safe venue, given the necessary equipment, apprised of the rules of the game, and then left pretty much to themselves. A weekly after-school third-grade baseball get-together, for example, can be an alternative to the more intense, organized league.

When a child is ready for organized sports, the parent can ensure that the involvement does not adversely affect the child or family life. Sports can provide young people with enjoyable and valuable experiences. Sports are an important part of life, but only a part.

THOMAS POPLAWSKI, *Renewal's staff writer, has written a great number of informative, insightful, practical, and popular articles for the magazine. Thomas is a psychotherapist living in Northampton, Massachusetts. He and his wife, Valerie, a kindergarten teacher at the Hartsbrook School in Hadley, MA, are both trained eurythmists. Their two sons are students at the Hartsbrook School.*



Experiencing the Grace and Grandeur of Ancient Greece

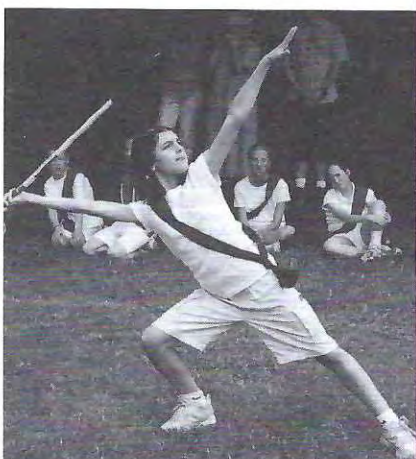
The Waldorf Fifth-Grade Olympiad

BY SHARON VANDERSLICE



Our culture is gripped by a paradoxical and unhealthy relationship to sports and to physical fitness. We are obsessed with professional sports and professional athletes. But, at the same time, the majority of North Americans, increasingly including our children, do not move much and are not physically fit. We are in danger of becoming a nation of couch potatoes, staring slack-jawed as preternaturally gifted athletes perform on television.

In many schools and school systems, physical education and intramural sports are disappearing. Varsity athletics flourish, but the average student is in danger of losing the opportunity to develop physical and athletic skills. Are we creating yet another generation of couch potatoes? As this article relates, Waldorf schools are trying to buck the tide.



Clockwise from top: Opening ceremony with fifth graders from the Meadowbrook Waldorf School; the Olympic flame; a girl throwing the javelin



A fifth-grade boy receiving a laurel wreath

In the previous issue of Renewal, we ran an article about the international All In Peace movement. Founded by Waldorf educators, All In Peace brings together children from communities in conflict to participate in festivals featuring the Waldorf fifth-grade pentathlon. This article describes the fifth-grade pentathlon in depth and relates it to the Waldorf fifth-grade curriculum. Because the two articles overlap slightly, we hesitated to use this one. But it is such an excellent companion piece to Thomas Poplawski's article "Children and Sports" that we chose to run it. While Thomas describes the hypercompetitive and unhealthy trends that dominate most organized sports for children today, Sharon Vanderslice here paints an inspiring picture of children enjoying athletic activity together in a manner that is informed by grace, cooperation, and an awareness of a spiritual context.

—R. E. K.

Every year on the third Friday in May, fifth-grade Waldorf students from around New England, accompanied by teachers and parents, travel to The Waldorf School in Lexington, Massachusetts, for the annual Waldorf Olympics. There are usually more than 100 students from the region's seven schools, and amid the smoke of starting guns, the snap of colored flags in the breeze, and the shouts of spectators, they recreate the original Greek Olympic pentathlon.

The original Olympiads were not only athletic events but religious festivals in which citizens of the Greek city-states paid homage to their deities. The Waldorf Olympics hence begin with singing, music, gymnastics, and dance performed by the participants in honor of the Greek god Zeus. The opening ceremony includes a torch run of about three-quarters of a mile. A torch,

constructed by a fifth-grade student, is lighted and carried in turn by a representative of each of the schools. The last student to carry the flame climbs a ladder and lights the Olympic flame. The flame burns throughout the day above an altar erected to the father of the Greek gods. Then the athletes take an oath to compete fairly, and the games begin.

The athletes are clothed all in white with a single-colored sash to indicate their city-state: Athens, Corinth, Sparta, Delphi, Marathon, or Thebes. In the weeks and months previous, they have been preparing for this day—improving their aerobic fitness, developing their form in the javelin, adjusting the timing of their release in the discus. Now they compete in the five pentathlon activities—running, long jump, javelin, discus, and wrestling. There are two running events—a 50-yard dash and a long run of about three-quarters of a mile. Since boys and girls at age eleven have about the same muscle development, they compete together. For the stand-up wrestling event, the children are divided into three weight categories.

The emphasis throughout the festival is on mutual support and appreciation and on each individual doing his or her best, rather than on competition and winning at any cost. In the javelin and discus, awards are made for grace, form, and bearing, as well as for distance.

The typical fifth grader has a special relation with ancient Greek culture. He is in the Golden Age of childhood—at home in his body, gifted with balance, coordination, and a natural grace. He is not yet subject to the physical and emotional turbulence of adolescence. He is—for a time at least—a Greek, close to exemplifying the ancient physical ideals. Hence, there is a surprising grace and beauty in the girls and boys as they go through the events.

The Olympics and the training that precedes it have several purposes. One is to help the children develop an experiential appreciation of ancient Greece. Classical civilization is a major topic in the fifth-grade Waldorf curriculum. There are usually two main lesson blocks on Greek history, mythology, and the "Greek state of mind."

Students warming up in preparation for the javelin throw



The pentathlon and Olympics are a supplement to this work in the classroom. "At Waldorf schools, we don't just talk about Greek history, we live it," observes Ralph Brooks, the athletic director at the Lexington school. "This is what this education is all about. Instead of telling the children, 'Read this book and we'll have a test on Friday,' we help them have an experience of what the Olympics were really like."

Also, the Olympiad can help prepare the children for a lifetime of physical strength and fitness. "The muscles remember," says Lexington class teacher Tara DeNatale, whose fifth graders took part in the 2004 event. "If you don't have a memory of being strong as a child, you're not as likely to develop that strength as an adult."

Beginning in September of the class's fifth-grade year, Ms. DeNatale took the children outside each morning to run for the first twenty minutes of their main lesson period. If it was raining, they jumped rope or ran up and down stairs inside the school building. Halfway through the academic year, the children began training for individual events during physical education class.

Ms. DeNatale observes that the pentathlon events call for various physical as well as emotional and mental qualities in the children. The running races build stamina; the javelin and discus improve aim and grace; and the wrestling matches teach children to stand up for themselves—to face an opponent and to hold their ground. To succeed in the long jump, children must learn to use power in a disciplined manner. They must run as hard as they can, hit the takeoff, throw their bodies into space, and land in a particular way.

Training for all the events teaches children the value of persistence. As Ms. DeNatale notes, the children begin to see that "if I work at something over a period of time, I can become good at it." This kind of confidence carries over into the classroom and into life.

Like Waldorf Education itself, the Waldorf Olympic Games tend to be a well-kept secret, unknown to the broader public. In 2004, however, the Olympiad in Lexington attracted the attention of both National Public Radio and Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. Looking ahead to the Summer Olympics in Athens, both organizations sent representatives to record and report on the Waldorf games.

On his weekly national sports program, "Only a Game," NPR commentator Bill Littlefield first talked of the

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A fifth-grade girl competing in the long jump

efforts to ban performance-enhancing drugs from the Athens games. He then described what transpired at the Waldorf Olympics and pointed out that the festival is delightfully free of "lawsuits, controversy, and unpronounceable chemical compounds." The program also mentioned that in Lexington grace and beauty count for

just as much as strength and speed, with laurel wreaths being presented for form as well as for place.

Officials from Boston's Museum of Fine Arts also were impressed by the Waldorf Olympic games. The museum had an exhibit during the summer of 2004 called "Games for the Gods: The Greek Athlete and the Olympic Spirit." In conjunction with this, the museum organized free programs for families and for children in area summer camps. Visitors were given the opportunity to learn how to throw the discus and the javelin.

About 3000 people took part in the programs, and more than 400 tried their hand at the discus and javelin for the first time. Ralph Brooks organized the program, and The Waldorf School of Lexington supplied the equipment.

At the 2004 Waldorf Olympiad, the fifth graders from the various schools quickly befriended each other and came to appreciate each other's efforts and skills. Also, in interviews with NPR producer Karen Givens, they were eager to share their knowledge of Greek history and culture. They pointed out that the original Olympic athletes competed in the nude and that spectators, out of respect for the gods, had to stand hatless in the sun for five days to view the events.

Fortunately, Waldorf parents—and their children—get to wear sunblock and hats, not to mention clothes.

SHARON VANDERSLICE is the communications and outreach manager at The Waldorf School in Lexington, Massachusetts and is the mother of two Waldorf-educated boys. A radio program on the Waldorf Olympics is available online at www.onlyagame.org. Type "Waldorf" in the search window.

CREDITS: The two top photos on page 11 and the photos on pages 13 and 14 by Vito Aluia. The bottom photo on page 11 and the photo on page 12 by Betsy Peck.

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The Gift of Imagination

The Nature and Nurturing of a
Unique Human Capacity



BY MICHAEL PRESTON, PhD

We [Waldorf teachers] can accomplish our work only if we do not see it as simply a matter of intellect or feeling, but, in the highest sense, as a moral and spiritual task.

—Rudolf Steiner
August 21, 1919

Today, popular culture seems to value imagination, at least in some forms. In education, there is a seeking for ways to develop “creative problem-solving abilities” in students. In the business world, “thinking outside the box” is considered a great advantage. Those who create the fantasy worlds on which much modern entertainment is based (i.e., computer games, movies like *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings*, and so on) are well rewarded.

We usually think of imagination as the ability to form an inner picture of something—“to imagine” something that has not existed and does not currently exist. One imagines a painting, a gadget, a solution to a problem, a story, or a video game and, if one’s will is healthy, manifests it in the tangible world. In this, the imagination is individual, creative, productive, even useful and profitable.

But the imagination involves a variety of capacities, some of which are more passive, reflective, and receptive. These more passive capacities are important in our inner life and in our moral and personal lives. They enliven and synthesize our study and experience of the world. They can deepen our understanding of other human beings and of ourselves and form a foundation for empathy, morality, and personal transformation. Imagination is something that helps create us as human beings.

Imagination is commonly thought of as having its root meaning in the word *image*. Thus we usually think of imagination as an inner seeing. We sometimes talk of “picture thinking.”

The philosopher of aesthetics R. K. Elliott¹ asserts that many types of imaginative activity do

not involve visualizing or picturing. He suggests that imagination is more correctly conceived of as having its root meaning in “magic.”

Elliott points out that imagination has various dimensions. If I tell you of a tall, wise king, you will conjure him up before your inner eye. And if I add that this character lives far away, in a mountainous country by the sea, that this country is Greece, and that the time is the fifth century BC, you will transport yourself to that place and time, ready to witness the events that are to take place there. Thus the imagination has the magical power to summon characters far removed from us in time and space. And it can also transport us to any situation and allow us to participate in it.

This sorcerer’s power, which we call metaphorical allusion, can also metamorphose the familiar into the fantastic. We see a gnarled tree as an old peasant, clouds as horses, the stars in the night sky as serene,

conscious beings. Thus we can imbue the inanimate with life and give the world new meaning and interest.

Imagination can also take us out of our own perspective into that of another human being. The description of Joan of Arc’s physical appearance results in a kind of conjuration, an arising or summoning in space and time. However, the description of her thoughts and feelings leads us into her soul. We begin to see and experience the world as she did. This conscious transposing of the soul can be a foundation for empathy, compassion, and true understanding of another human being. As such, it is essential to moral and social life.

Our imagination can also allow us to set aside our usual inside-looking-out perspective and view ourselves objectively, from the outside, as others see us. By this means we gain an important self-awareness that can lead to moral transformation. *Metanoia*—the deep change of soul, the recognition of error, and the redirecting of our path in life (a core human experience recognized by the ancient Greeks)—depends upon

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Imagination also supports our ability to enter deeply into a subject of study. At first a particular topic—quadrilateral triangles or the refraction of light—may not seem interesting. But if our imagination is active, it can in a moment grasp connections and sets of connections not perceived before and can suddenly create relevance and meaning. We can find ourselves swept into a journey of exploration, discovery, and mental transformation. We may feel we have explored a strange forest or a great cathedral filled with surprises and wonders.

This experience frequently opens connections to other fields of study and leads to the discovery of the beauty, paradox, and reference to the macrocosm inherent in every microcosmic, finite phenomenon. Every study can be experienced as a journey of exploration, discovery, and personal transformation.

Related to this power to enter into an experience or field of study and be enveloped by it is the ability of imagination to grasp something as a whole. While our rational, analytical capacity experiences and understands something in comprehensible bits, our imagination can embrace the totality. The story of Hamlet involves many shifts in mood and stages of development in the hero. Through our sympathetic entry into and involvement in the action, and in the hero's inner experience, we can gain a comprehensive grasp of his tragic development. The same occurs in music. When we have listened to and moved along with a beautiful melody as it unfolds, it can come to take its place as a whole, like a personality, in the gallery of our affections.

At its highest level, imagination also is related to the clairvoyant's ability to recall an unrecorded past and the prophet's ability to look into the future. It is related too to the mystic's capacity to enter the invisible world of spirit, to perceive the realm of archetypes and ideas, and to communicate with spiritual beings.

Thus, in summary, it can be said that the imagination can

- create what does not and has not existed
- transport us to far-off times and places
- quicken and enliven our understanding
- synthesize disconnected experience into a coherent whole
- help us see the world from other points of view
- help us become empathetic, moral, and loving persons
- help us objectify ourselves and bring about changes in ourselves
- experience transcendent aspects of reality

The imagination, comprising these various capacities, is not an addendum or accessory to the human personality. It is an intrinsic, necessary human attribute. Nor is it something that an individual creates for himself. It is

transpersonal, an elemental life force that is bestowed upon us by higher powers. Imagination is a mysterious gift, and its true source and nature are hidden to us. It conveys us to exotic realms, brings unexpected insights, and bestows intimations of the transcendent with our scarcely being aware of it, without our knowing how it operates. The philosopher Kant calls imagination "an art concealed in the depths of the human soul whose real modes of activity Nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover and have open to our gaze."²

Yet the gift of imagination, this life force so crucial to our humanity, is fragile. It can weaken, as happens when we are ill, or even disappear entirely. And in the growing child and adolescent, the imaginative faculties can be developed or allowed to remain dormant and undeveloped. We parents and teachers must honor, nourish, and guide the unfolding of this gift within our children.

The cultivation of the imagination and all its separate capacities is a central aim of Waldorf Education. From kindergarten

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on, the Waldorf child listens to fairy tales, stories, legends, biographies, and historical narratives, all of which require the visualizing of characters and the summoning up of other times and places.

Even the teaching of geography is done primarily through the spoken word rather than through video or film. Thus the children develop the ability to travel inwardly to a distant place, to Central Asia, for example, to feel the icy wind of the Pamir Mountains, hear the crunching of the yaks' hooves on the rocky paths, and see the crimson peaks at dawn, as the crackling wood fire heats water for tea.

There is daily artistic activity—in painting, drawing, music, singing, the modeling of clay—and also in the crafts—knitting, crocheting, woodwork. These school the ability to create something in the soul and then to manifest it in the world.

Each year every Waldorf school class stages a play. In acting, one must enter empathetically into a character's inner life, must see the world from another point of view, perhaps that of a human being distant in time and cultural circumstance. The students are here developing that ability to enter into the other, which is a basis for empathy, compassion, and love.

The development of the imagination, however, can be a two-edged sword. Imagination without a strong ethical grounding can serve caprice and deceit. The facile thinker can fall into mere whimsy and skittishness. The imaginative personality may become the chronic liar. It is always possible that an inventive, creative person can devise and bring into the world that which causes destruction, chaos, and suffering.

Thus, while Waldorf Education nurtures and develops the imaginative faculties, it does so while providing a structure. This structure is comprised of those three interrelated ideals: truth, beauty, and goodness. These nourish the soul life of the child so that the

developing imagination will direct its creativity into positive channels.

In the lower grades, the children hear fairy tales, legends, and myths. While these stories may not be objectively factual, they convey deep truths about human life and the world. A nature story told to first graders is never pure fancy, but is always grounded in clear and faithful observation of nature. Throughout the grades, the students listen to and study the biographies of great, exemplary human beings—the saints, heroes, and pioneers that have appeared in various times and places. These stories provide moral and ethical models that can inspire and direct them in their lives.

In the Waldorf upper grades and high school, imaginative powers are exercised in many artistic activities and creative projects. At the same time, though, the students analyze and objectively assess their own work—their

arts and crafts projects, their essays and stories, even their own skills in music and sports. This is not antithetical to imagination but involves an imaginative capacity—the ability to put out of mind what is irrelevant and distracting and to see themselves, or their projects, from a dispassionate perspective. This self-objectification—concern for truth about oneself—will make possible moral and personal transformation throughout life.

In the kindergarten and lower school, this self-observation and correction is inappropriate because of the developmental stage of the child. Other, more subtle means are used to nurture the imagination in a healthy way.

Great care is taken to create a beautiful and orderly environment in the kindergarten and in the rooms of the younger classes. The child (like the adult) has an immediate positive reaction to such an environment, is awakened, and led to feel more peaceful, safe, and content. But this environment, reinforced by the daily activities in drawing, painting, writing, listening, reciting, singing, and the like, can have a more permanent effect as well.

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The beauty and order flow through the senses into the soul of the child and have a significant healing and structuring effect. The confluence of truth, beauty, and goodness work deeply into the child's soul life. A child brought up in such an environment will be strengthened inwardly and the powers of imagination anchored in truth and beauty.

The human imagination is—along with speech, thought, and upright posture—a power or constellation of powers that distinguishes us from other beings in nature. It is active, productive, creative, and yet also receptive and reflective. It helps us continually transform our world by creating what is new and original. But it also helps us develop inwardly by providing the possibility of empathy, of union with the other, and transcendence of the self. It is a gift of grace that can lead from the personal to the transcendent.

Johann Sebastian Bach fully realized the source of his own mighty musical imagination. He inscribed his compositions with the dedication: "To the most high God." The composer knew that his ability was a gift bestowed upon him and that what he created belonged not to himself but to the world and to the bestower of the gift.

Imagination is a capacity that we human beings all share and depend on. It enlivens, broadens, and deepens us and in so doing helps make us fully human. This mysterious power, which we do not create but receive as a gift, should evoke in us reverence and gratitude.

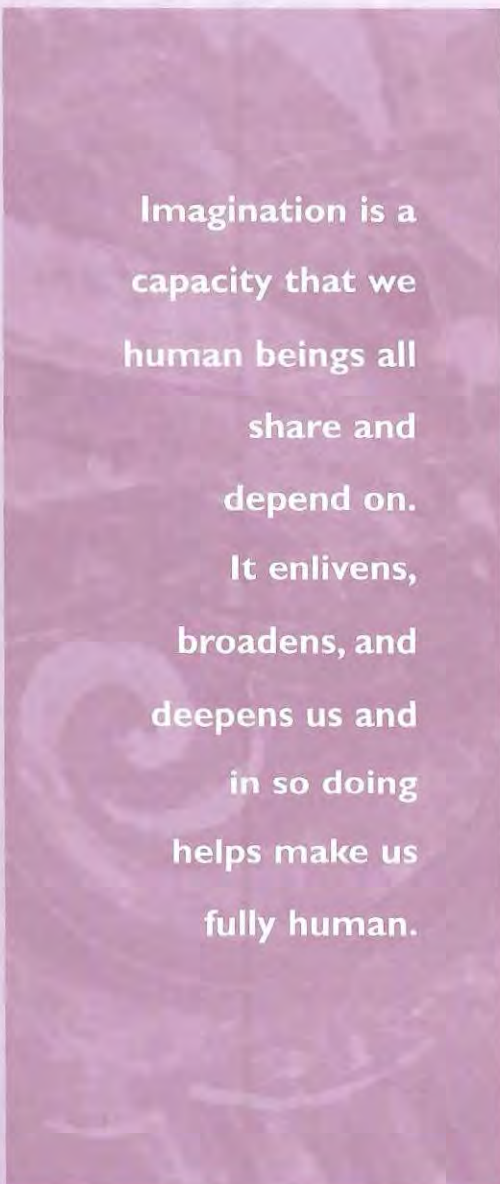
Parents and teachers should welcome and celebrate the daily exercise of imaginative power in the children and mindfully shepherd its healthy growth. We serve our children best if we guide them to understand that imagination is not only creative and personal, but also social and moral. It is a gift and is a set of capacities greater and deeper than individual consciousness, and its unfolding requires diligence, passion, and courage.

Rudolf Steiner concluded his course for Waldorf teachers with these words:

A need for imagination, a sense for truth, a feeling for responsibility, these are the three forces that constitute the nerves of pedagogy. Those who would take up education should write this as their motto:

Enliven imagination,
Stand for truth,
Feel responsibility.³

The epigraph to this article is drawn from The Foundations of Human Experience by Rudolf Steiner, trans. Nancy Whittaker and Robert Lathe (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996), opening words of lecture 1, 33.



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NOTES

1. R. K. Elliott, "Imagination: A Kind of Magical Faculty" (Birmingham, England: University of Birmingham Press, June 1976), inaugural lecture, given November 1975. I am indebted to R. K. Elliott not only for this lecture, with his exegesis of the different powers of imagination on which my account chiefly relies, but also for his inspiring guidance when I studied under him.

2. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933), 180-1.

3. Steiner, *Foundations of Human Experience*, concluding words, 212.

MICHAEL PRESTON was educated in Kenya, New Zealand, and England. He was a volunteer teacher in Vanuatu, has taught in state schools in England, and has been a class teacher in Waldorf schools for twenty-three years. Michael earned a PhD in philosophy of education at London University, specializing in phenomenology and aesthetics, and focusing on the work of Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty. Michael and his wife, Tanya, both teach at the Honolulu Waldorf School. Together they have three children and three grandchildren.



Butterflies and Flowers

A Little Story for Everyone

BY REG DOWN

Renewal doesn't usually publish stories. But children in Waldorf schools are nourished every day by stories, and we adults, too, need a story now and then, especially one that inspires wonder and joy at nature and stimulates our imaginative capacity for forming inner pictures.

So here is a little tale about a fairy named Tiptoes Lightly, who lives in an acorn at the top of a great oak tree, and Jeremy Mouse, who lives among the roots of that same tree. The story deals with that amazing point where the plant and the animal world meet: the butterfly-flower nexus.

This simple but evocative story provides a good example of the kind of answer that a child—or a mouse—wants when asking a question about the world. The child—or the mouse—doesn't want a scientific explanation, but rather wants a good story. May this little tale remind all of us children, young and old, of the origin of those mysterious sisters, the flower and the butterfly.

—R. E. K.

Jeremy Mouse and his fairy friend Tiptoes Lightly sat in Farmer Brown's flower garden. Two children were playing on a swing underneath a mulberry tree close by. One was Tom Nutcracker, Farmer John's son, and the other was his sister, June Berry. They were the best of friends. Sometimes they played with Tiptoes, but Jeremy Mouse stayed out of sight. He was shy of people, even of children.

Two butterflies flitted from flower to flower. They had creamy yellow wings and played tag with each other in the air.

"Why do butterflies and flowers look so much alike?" asked Jeremy Mouse.

"Well," said Tiptoes, "I'll tell you. When the earth was very young there were no plants or butterflies, but the Earth Princess lived in the world. In summer, when it was hot, the Earth Princess flew high into the air and spread out wings like flower petals which covered the whole summer world. In winter, when it was cold, she changed into a root and dug deep into the earth to get away from the ice and snow.

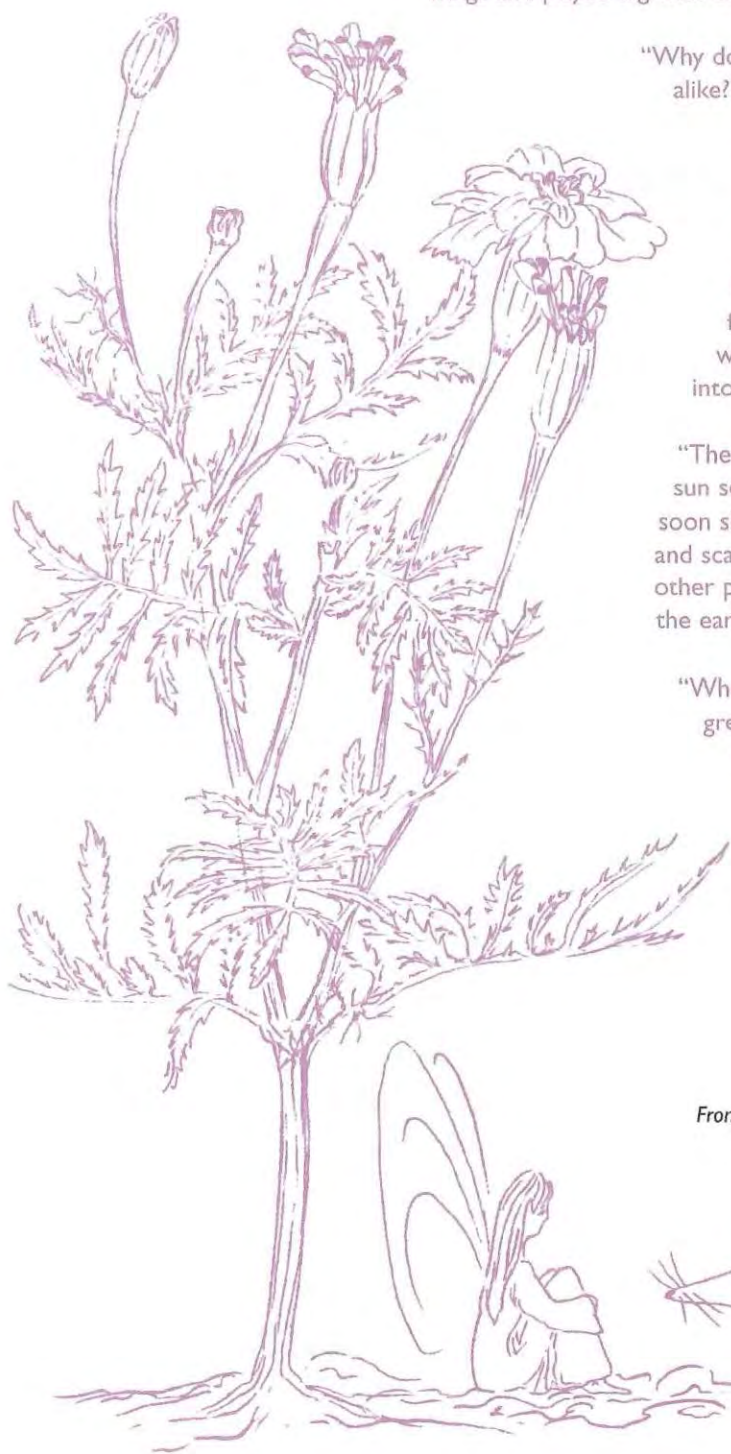
"Then a long, long winter came. It lasted for many seasons and the sun seemed far away. The Earth Princess grew old, and knew that soon she would die. So she reached into her pocket with one hand and scattered seeds all over the ground. Then she reached into her other pocket with her other hand and scattered tiny eggs all over the earth. The seeds and eggs rested for long ages.

"When the sun grew strong again, the seeds sprouted roots and grew toward the sun. They blossomed into flowers all over the summer earth. And the tiny eggs grew into butterflies who flitted in the sunlight above the flowers.

"That's why butterflies and flowers are almost the same," said Tiptoes. "They are brothers and sisters who, a long time ago, came from the same mother."

"That's a good story," said Jeremy Mouse....

From *The Tales of Tiptoes Lightly*, written and illustrated
by Reg Down • Trafford Press, Victoria, BC, Canada, 2004
www.trafford.com and www.tiptoes-lightly.net





SUSAN R. JOHNSON, MD, is a developmental and behavioral pediatrician and serves several Waldorf schools in the Sacramento area as a school physician. She also has a private practice at Raphael House in Fair Oaks, California. In addition, Susan is a trained Waldorf teacher, having graduated in 1999 from Rudolf Steiner College's San Francisco Waldorf Teacher Training. Susan's son, Brendan, is in the fifth grade at the Sacramento Waldorf School. Information about Raphael House as well as copies of other articles Susan has written for parents can be found at the Web site: www.RaphaelAssociation.org.

Does Early Reading Contribute to Attention and Learning Difficulties in Our Children?

BY SUSAN R. JOHNSON, MD, FAAP

I have great concerns about preschool and kindergarten children being taught to read and write. In terms of their neurological and physical development, it doesn't make sense. There are a number of sensory-motor skills that a child needs to master in the first seven years of life before she is able to easily learn to read and write. Also, the brain has to reach a stage of development at which the left—rational, analytic—side has sufficiently matured. Ironically, teaching children to read before they are physiologically ready may be a cause of later reading, learning, and behavioral problems.

The ability in children to match a particular sound to a specific letter (phonics) is predominantly an activity of the left side of the brain. However, the left brain doesn't fully start to develop or myelinate until between the ages of seven and nine. For girls, this tends to happen earlier and, for boys, usually later in this period. When we teach a young child to read earlier, before the left side of the brain is developed, we stress his body and mind and force him to read using only the right—intuitive, holistic—side

Children taught to read before they are truly ready are likely to develop various problems.

of the brain. The right brain perceives the whole picture rather than the details. Thus the young child typically looks only at the first and last letters and the length of the word and makes a guess. Unable to sound out the word, he uses sight memory to read.

Some children can easily switch from the right hemisphere to the left as they get older, but many have difficulty making this transition. These children are stuck trying to read and spell with the right hemisphere. They often write letters backwards, misspell words, and have difficulty remembering which sound goes with which letter. The effort required to print is also tremendous, since writing also involves the left side of the brain.

A child about to learn to read and write should be able to pay attention and sit still in a chair for at least twenty minutes—without needing to wiggle, or sit on her feet, or wrap her feet around the legs of the chair in order to locate her body in space by muscle movement or by activation of pressure receptors. She needs to be able to balance on one foot in stillness, without her knees touching, with both arms extended out from her sides, and to count backwards from ten without losing her balance. She needs to be able to stand on one foot, with arms stretched out in front of her (palms facing up), with both eyes closed for ten seconds, without falling. Also, she needs to be able to reproduce a pattern of abstract lines and curves—a geometric form, number, or letter—on a piece of paper with a pencil when someone else draws that form, number, or letter on her back. Finally, the child needs to be able to walk slowly on a balance beam and to skip before she embarks on learning to read and write.

These little “tests” indicate that a child has reached a level of sensory-motor integration that will allow him to master reading and writing without stress. A child reaches this stage because of movements in utero and through physical activity in infancy and early childhood. These movements create in the young child’s brain the neural pathways that he will use to read, write, spell, do arithmetic, and, later, think in an imaginative and creative way. This process of creating new neural pathways through physical movement continues throughout life. Learning is not “all in the head.”

If a child can’t do these tasks easily, it means she hasn’t integrated her vestibular (balance) and proprioceptive (sensory-motor) systems. In a classroom situation, she will have difficulty focusing her eyes, sitting still, paying attention to the teacher, maintaining attentiveness,

concentrating on a mental task, and remembering the shapes of numbers and letters.

Children taught to read before they are truly ready are likely to develop various problems. My seventeen years’ experience as a developmental and behavioral pediatrician have shown me that children who have problems reading and writing usually also have a poorly developed sense of balance, have difficulty making eye contact and tracking something with their eyes, can’t easily distinguish the right side of the body from the left, and have trouble sitting still in a chair and locating their bodies in space. Many also have poor muscle tone resulting in poor posture, a tense or fisted pencil grip, and flat feet (collapsed arches). Sometimes these children are overly sensitive to being touched by another person. They often have difficulties in their peer relationships because their minds and eyes are preoccupied with helping their bodies navigate in space and they fail to notice the social, nonverbal cues from their playmates. These children also have an overactive nervous system—a heightened fight-or-flight response—because they are stressed by having to do too many mental tasks at the same time.

Children integrate their sensory-motor system through physical movements. Activities such as skipping, hopping, rolling down a hill, playing catch with a ball, jumping rope, running, walking, playing clapping and circle games, and fine motor activities involving the hands and fingers—cutting with scissors, digging in the garden, kneading bread dough, pulling weeds, painting, beading, drawing, sewing, finger knitting—build and strengthen neural pathways.

In addition, children develop and strengthen the connection between the right and left hemispheres by



Active physical movements such as jumping rope and skipping help to integrate the sensory-motor system.

I have seen countless children diagnosed with ADD or learning disabilities who have miraculously improved when taken out of an academic kindergarten ...

performing cross-lateral movements, that is, by moving opposite extremities (for example, the right arm and the left leg) at the same time. Cross-lateral activities such as walking, skipping, running, and climbing strengthen this neural bridge—the corpus callosum. All fine motor activities that involve the simultaneous use of both hands, such as knitting and playing a musical instrument, also promote the development of the corpus callosum. Thus cross-lateral and fine two-handed manual activities help ensure that when children learn to read, write, and spell, the left hemisphere will play its appropriate part.

In contrast, watching television and videos and playing computer games provide little stimulation for sensory-motor development. These activities actually prevent healthy neural development by keeping the child inactive and in a state of stress, by directly activating the sympathetic nervous system's fight-or-flight response. A child's nervous system cannot heal or fully develop when he or she is chronically in this stressed state.

Fortunately, problems caused by premature academics can be helped by putting the child in a different type of school situation. In my practice, I have seen countless children diagnosed with ADD or learning disabilities who have miraculously improved when taken out of an academic kindergarten and put in a kindergarten that emphasizes physical activities that integrate the sensory-motor systems. Sometimes waiting until the child turns seven years old before having him start first grade and giving that child an additional kindergarten year in such an environment can be very helpful. This is especially true for boys.

There are various factors contributing to our current epidemic in attention and learning problems. One is children being pushed to read and write too early.

Another is the typical American diet—high in simple sugars and other stimulant foods such as chocolate, high in partially hydrogenated (“bad”) fats and low in omega-3 fatty acids. Overexposure to television, video games, and computers, as well as irregular daily schedules and inadequate sleep, also play a role.

We need to create for our children an environment and pattern of daily life that promotes a state of relaxation, calmness, and openness, in which the parasympathetic and not the sympathetic nervous system dominates. Predictable daily rhythms and routines, adequate sleep, wholesome nutrition, physical warmth, harmonious noncompetitive physical activities and games, and, most importantly, our love as parents and teachers can foster this optimal state of being. Children's brains develop and integrate when they are in this calm state. Such growth and healing cannot happen when the children are under stress and in a fight-or-flight mode.

Therefore, I support preschools and kindergartens that emphasize activities involving healthful movement; that promote basic, physical living skills—sweeping, stirring, digging, and the like; and that encourage creative pretend-play. If preschools and kindergartens as well as the federal government (with its laws that set educational standards) would support these healthy movement activities and stop trying to teach our very young children to read and write, then I believe we will start seeing healthier eight- and nine-year-olds, children who can sit still, focus, listen, pay attention, and learn to read and write with ease.

CREDITS: *Photos of students from the Waldorf School of Baltimore by Larry Canner.*



Handwork, climbing, and stirring, as well as other common, practical activities promote healthy neural development.

The Redemption of Reading



Making Learning to Read a Health-Giving Process

BY ARTHUR PITTIS WITH RONALD E. KOETZSCH

*On all issues that confront Waldorf educators—including the teaching of writing and reading—there are areas of universal or near-universal agreement. There are also areas where there are differences of opinion. Readers should thus keep in mind that this article, like all articles in *Renewal*, represents the views of the writer and not necessarily those of all Waldorf educators.*

Arthur Pittis is a longtime, well-known, and widely respected Waldorf teacher. Himself a late reader, Arthur has long been interested in helping children become competent and avid readers. He has recently finished writing a set of reading primers for children in the second through fourth grades.

This past January, Arthur and I met in New York City during the AWSNA delegates' meeting. We had dinner together and afterward, bundled against the cold, walked the Upper West Side as Arthur discoursed on child development, reading education, his reading series, and related matters. Since Arthur was still busy with the final stages of producing his series, I offered to help put his comments into article form. I wrote a first draft, which Arthur corrected, enhanced, and added to. The end result follows.

—R. E. K.

When Rudolf Steiner developed the Waldorf curriculum some eighty-five years ago, he confronted a paradox that concerned (and still concerns) the teaching of reading. Steiner believed that reading, as an activity dealing with abstractions—printed words that are symbols for things, not things themselves—is for the young child basically an unhealthy activity. [Please see Dr. Susan Johnson's relevant article on page 22 of this issue. —Ed.] Steiner held that the developing child becomes able to deal with abstractions and concepts in a natural and unstressed way only at puberty. Ideally, then, reading should be taught when the child is twelve or thirteen years old.

This idea of course conflicts with the dominant attitude toward reading that existed then as now, namely, that reading is such a critical skill that it should be taught to children at an early age, and that the earlier the better. Steiner certainly realized that his new approach to education could not delay the learning of reading until puberty. His challenge was to develop a way of teaching reading that transformed what was otherwise a harmful activity into something nourishing and health-giving for the child.

To that end, Steiner designed a unique approach to the teaching of reading. In this approach, the child's development of the ability to read is connected to his own inner development of consciousness as well as to the evolutionary development of human literacy.

The Waldorf kindergarten is essentially a preliterate culture, as far as the child is concerned. No attempt is made to teach children how to read in the traditional academic sense. Even the child's personal cubby usually bears a distinctive, colorful icon, a picture of a bird or chipmunk, perhaps, rather than a nametag.

Also, the kindergarten teacher consciously tries to imbue all the language that the child experiences with beauty. Directions and instructions are usually sung; poems are recited; songs sung; and nature stories and fairy tales told. In all cases of verbal communication, the child experiences elevated language that is different from that which is experienced in the day-to-day language in the home, play, and the media. Central to this way of using language is the pedagogical intention of strengthening the child's ability to form living, inner, imaginative pictures.

This type of early childhood experience works to develop the capacities for language that exist in a non- or preliterate cultural context. Reading, itself, characterizes literate society, but it is not an indispensable or universal human activity. It represents a type of cultural achievement that is not absolutely necessary for human

development in the way that keen observation, or manual dexterity, or even facility with arithmetic is. Highly developed, culturally based use of language can exist without reading.

Modern culture obviously values the ability to read and to read at an early age. The communication of information, thoughts, and feelings is largely through the written and printed word. Ours is a culture swimming in print, and the assumption is that the earlier the child learns to

read, the better it will be for all. Inevitably, the child absorbs this attitude and learns to place a high value on knowing how to read. Children are as anxious in this regard as parents, grandparents, and most non-Waldorf teachers.

It is against this background that formal reading instruction begins in the Waldorf first grade. The curricular indication by Rudolf Steiner regarding reading is very simple. The child will learn to read through writing, and the activity of writing will arise out of pictorial representations of the letters. Consonants are pictures of the outer world, and vowels are expressions of inner states of soul. As in all aspects of Waldorf elementary school education, the learning process should proceed from the whole to the part and not the other way around. Let us consider how this process would take place in first grade.

Imagine that the class teacher creates, in the fairy-tale tradition, a story in which a character is sent on a

The child will learn to
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of the letters.

journey to the sea and must pass over high mountains on the way. While passing through the mountains, the character encounters a snake who guides the journey. Once our seeker arrives at the sea, a fish with magical powers appears atop the waves and provides the knowledge the character has been seeking. In reviewing this story, four key elements—the mountains, the snake, the fish, and the waves—figure prominently. Each of them is something of importance in the outer world that the character must encounter.

The next day, the teacher makes a series of drawings on the board that emphasize these four key elements. The pedagogical intention of these images is to serve as a form of picture-writing out of which specific consonants can be extracted. The mountain becomes the letter **M**, the snake the **S**, and the waves of the water the **W**. These discovered letters become the basis of all sorts of artistically based writing exercises that ultimately focus on the formal skill of handwriting.

Of course, not every consonant letter we use in our modern alphabet is given to this activity, and it would be pedantic to try to fit all our letters into this form. The teacher is free to pick and choose as appropriate; and as for the other consonants, the children can simply be told that they can discover more pictures of their own.

The vowels are of a completely different nature. They are expressions of the inner life of feeling. They reveal the inner gestures of our human soul. In the historical evolution of written language they did not emerge pictographically, as did the consonants. Thus the vowels are not taught in the way described above. Teachers use a variety of approaches. Some draw angelic or human figures making the eurythmy gestures for these sounds. The popular cultural representation, “A is for apple,” has no place in the Waldorf classroom. It is aesthetically banal and linguistically false. The long vowel *ā* is not even found in the word *apple*.

What has been described above is simply the introductory lessons in writing/reading that take place in the first half of first grade in most Waldorf classrooms. These lessons comprise a leisurely process, founded on the pedagogical principles that children should not be rushed, that learning must appeal to and be directed through imaginative capacities, and that a subject, even one as seemingly simple as the alphabet, should be

explored in a way that guides the children toward an understanding of deeper truths.

Letters by themselves are, of course, a dead end; they need to be combined into words and then the words must be put together to form a sentence. Just as the ancient pictograph was an iconographic representation of a thing in the outer world, the written word—and by extension the written sentence in which it lives—becomes an abstraction of that thing, but an abstraction that is still imbued with the power of imagination and feeling.

Once the process of mastering the form of the letters has begun, the teacher immediately returns to the whole story, its sentences and individual words. New stories are told, and the children begin copying into their main lesson books texts that the teacher has written on the

blackboard. This copy work is accompanied by supporting skill work in building sight-vocabulary and, to a lesser extent, phonetic decoding. Over time, each of the children, each at his own pace, develops a set of recognizable words—a set that grows day by day—and eventually discovers that he can read.

Let us reflect upon this wonder-filled process and examine how this abstract, intellectual activity is transformed into an ever-

expanding and health-engendering one. The key lies in its abstract, intellectual aspect being metamorphosed through a rhythmic alternation of artistically based, purposeful activity and what could be called “soul breathing” (described below).

A story is told by the teacher, and the children take the images evoked into their inner life of feeling and thinking. Next, the story is reviewed through recapitulation and even playacting, and the inner pictures that the children formed are “breathed out” again. The story is now written on the board and, with the teacher’s guidance, read aloud and once more inhaled into the inner life of imagination. The children now artistically copy the story into their main lesson books, and it becomes very deeply their own. Imagine the intensity of this activity. And finally, the copied text is once more read aloud, this time from the children’s individual pages, and exhaled into the room.

In the early grades, the class teacher will employ this method of instruction, using it to teach the fundamentals



of reading. Later, in the middle and upper grades, the method is transformed and used to teach composition, both narrative and expository.

Usually by the middle of the second grade, many children want to read something other than what the teacher has written on the board. They want to test their abilities with “real,” printed texts. After all, they are approaching the nine-year change, and the strong, individualized experiences of themselves in the world that this change stimulates are becoming manifest.

At this point, most teachers seek out printed materials for the children to read in school. Ideally this material should consist of engaging and edifying stories that hold the children’s interest while supporting the Waldorf school curriculum. On a practical, skills level, these texts need to contain controlled, but increasingly rich, basic vocabulary and increasingly complex types of sentence structure. While the textbook industry has no shortage of these books, what they offer is almost completely devoid of value for the pedagogical intentions of the Waldorf school curriculum. The ongoing cultural war between secular and religious values in our society has seen to this.

To meet this need, I have written a five-volume Waldorf reader series. (Please see sidebar.) The series is being published by AWSNA and will be available for the upcoming 2005–2006 academic year. I hope that these readers will help children to develop a deep love for reading.

ARTHUR M. PITTIS *has been a Waldorf teacher for twenty-four years, first in Baltimore and currently in Austin, Texas. He has led classes through two-and-a-half eight-year cycles and is now teaching high school humanities. Arthur has been on sabbatical for the 2004–2005 academic year and during that time has written a series of readers for students in the early grades. He is a member of the AWSNA Leadership Council, representing the Texas-Mexico-Southwest-Rockies region. Arthur is the author of Pedagogical Theatre: Dramaturgy and Performance Practice in the Lower and Middle Schools, a very popular resource book for Waldorf class teachers. His two daughters, now young adults, were fortunate enough to have a Waldorf education from kindergarten through high school.*

CREDITS: *Drawings on pages 25 and 27 by Elizabeth Auer, class teacher at Pine Hill Waldorf School, Wilton, NH. She also teaches a Waldorf drawing course at Antioch New England Graduate School in Keene, NH.*

Stories of the Beasts and the Blessed

Volume 1
A Waldorf Reader
for the Third Grade



The Waldorf Reader Series

The series currently consists of five volumes. **Volume 1** is intended for children in the latter part of the second grade. It contains the types of stories that the children experienced

in the Waldorf first grade—fairy tales and folktales of various cultures. The stories are told in a straightforward but compelling manner and use controlled but not pauperized vocabulary and syntax.

Volumes 2 and 3 are meant for third graders. These books include fables and stories of holy persons from various cultural traditions—Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, and Sufi. These two volumes, like the first, allow the children to return to stories they experienced in an earlier grade. The stories feature compelling characters and plots, strong visual images, drama, and emotion. While the fables are designed for single-sitting reading, the stories are episodic and encourage the reader to develop the focus and stamina for reading that today is becoming increasingly rare.

Volume 4, which is meant for the second half of grade four, consists exclusively of American tales. These include African-American fabulous tales from the Brer Rabbit tradition; legendary hero tales such as Johnny Appleseed, Annie Christmas, and John Henry; stories from the Davy Crockett, Pecos Bill, and Paul Bunyan tall-tale cycles; and scary stories. The stories feature distinctive narrative voices and syntax and thus introduce the young reader to working with colloquial language, dialect, and non-standard syntax.

Volume 5 is a remedial book using simplified versions of the stories in volumes 1–3. The decision to use parallel texts was made to permit the class teacher to keep a class together on the same story if possible.

The Waldorf Reader Series, by Arthur Pittis and illustrated by AUSA Peacock, will be available from AWSNA Publications. Please see the Web site or on-line store at www.awsna.org.

in some of the finest passages I have ever
ed. I am anxious to see the entire volume
thank you for the promise to send it

I shall write, to-day, to Grace
to do as you desire, touching

Truly Your Friend

In Praise of

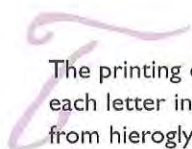
Cursive Writing

BY MEMBERS OF THE GREEN MEADOW
HIGH SCHOOL FACULTY

The ability to write in cursive script is disappearing in our culture. Most adults rely predominantly on the keyboard to record and to communicate information, thoughts, and feelings. Children today often master the keyboard before they learn to write by hand. When they do learn to write, they learn to print first. Learning to write cursively may or may not follow, depending on the particular school or school system. Even if a child has learned to write cursively, she may prefer to print and may be allowed to do so. Cursive writing—this minor art that has characterized literate, educated persons in the Western world for centuries—may soon be extinct.

The Green Meadow Waldorf School is a flagship Waldorf school, one of the oldest and most respected Waldorf schools in North America. Recently, teachers in the humanities department in the high school—Leah Henderson, Alix Lowenthal, Karl Schurman, David Sloan, and John Wulsin—wrote a letter addressed to all their colleagues in the lower school and in the high school. The letter concerns the role and the importance of cursive writing in the development of the child. It asks that everyone support the use of cursive writing by the students in both schools. Following, in condensed and paraphrased form, are the main points made in the letter.

—R. E. K.

The printing of letters and words—the forming of each letter independently—is descended in spirit from hieroglyphic writing. In hieroglyphic writing, each character symbolizes, suggests, or even depicts a particular object or act. This writing developed at a time in the evolution of human consciousness when human beings had a pictorial imagination. People thought in pictures, and it was appropriate that their writing should also consist of pictures. Printing thus echoes and reinforces a pictorial imagination.

One central aim of Waldorf Education is to nurture a pictorial imagination. Hence, from kindergarten on, children learn largely through the spoken word, listening to fairy tales, stories, descriptions of historic events, and biographies, and through engaging daily in a variety of artistic activities.

From the third grade, when the child is turning nine, other important pedagogical aims come into play. One is to help the child develop conceptual thinking. Another is to help the child develop her

individuality. In both, the teaching of cursive writing plays a part.

If a child writes the word *ball* in print—B A L L—there lingers the pictorial association of each letter. If, however, the child writes the same word cursively—*ball*—his attention is freed to perceive the abstract concept embodied in the combination of all the letters and sounds. Writing cursively quickens and activates the capacity for conceptual thinking.

Cursive writing also helps develop the individuality of the child. Printing is essentially universal in form. It can be difficult to identify printed writing as belonging to this or that child. But cursive writing is individual, as distinctive as one's fingerprint or speaking voice.

Waldorf pedagogy in the elementary grades does not seek to develop conceptual thinking. But cursive writing will provide a firm foundation for this type of thinking. Then the transition from pictorial to conceptual thinking that takes place after puberty, during the high school years, will be smooth. If lower school students have been writing in cursive script through the grades—as advised by Rudolf Steiner—the pictorial consciousness will, harmoniously and appropriately, yield place to the conceptual consciousness, as in a plant the leaf does to the flower. The seed of individuality, having been steadily quickened through the process, will help the student regain the pictorial imagination as a consciously and freely developed capacity.

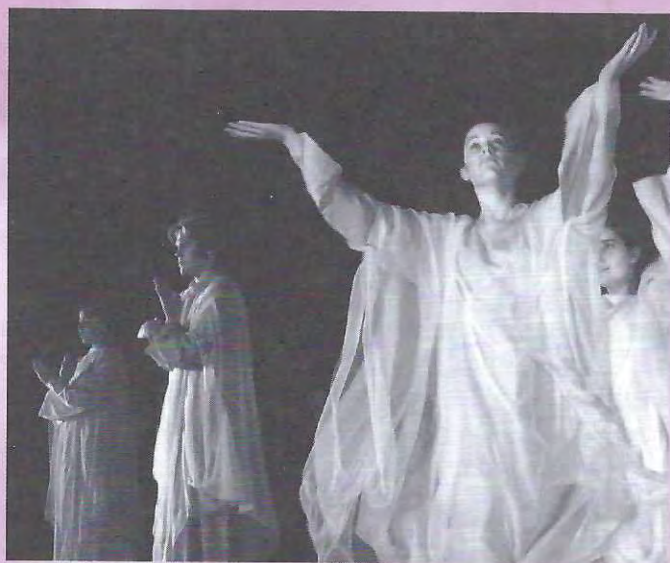
Students who have not used cursive writing in the lower school will find the transition from pictorial to conceptual consciousness in the high school a difficult shock. Limited to printing, they will be trapped in undeveloped, childlike imaginations and will have to struggle to learn to think conceptually and independently.

In our contemporary world, dominated by keyboards and computer screens, the activity of writing in cursive script is one of the few activities left that develops conceptual thinking and individuality. We should help our students take advantage of its benefits.

CREDITS: Clockwise from the top left, letters or original writings of: Edgar Allen Poe, Virginia Woolf, Walt Whitman, Charlotte Brontë (*Jane Eyre* manuscript), and Thomas Hardy.

Movement, Truth, and Beauty

The 2004 International High School Eurythmy Festival



BY JODI CASEY AND KATHY WELLS

*I learn a lot [from eurythmy] about the world around me and about myself.
It teaches me to feel things that I wouldn't normally feel.*

—Emily Brandt, sophomore

*Eurythmy expresses all aspects of yourself. It teaches you to be open, and it
deepens your appreciation and understanding of poetry and music.*

—Marit Myklebust, sophomore

Eurythmy just feels good. It's an art form you have to experience inside. It is you.

—Jonathan Lorand, senior

*T*hese comments were made by participants in North America's first International High School Eurythmy Festival, which was held at the Austin Waldorf School in March 2004. They indicate the enthusiasm, seriousness, and insight that Waldorf high school students can bring to the study and practice of an art that has been described as "visible music, visible speech."



More than 120 students from seven Waldorf high schools—Austin, East Bay (CA), Summerfield (CA), San Francisco, New York City, Garden City (NY), and São Paulo, Brazil—and their teachers and accompanists took part in the festival. For four days, through master classes, discussion groups, practices, and performances, the students shared their love of eurythmy. They also experienced the common bond of their Waldorf schooling, gaining a sense of the scope of the Waldorf movement and a deeper appreciation of the unique opportunities this schooling has given them.

The public performances were a highlight. Some of the schools have had performing troupes for almost a decade. Others had gathered together juniors and seniors especially dedicated to eurythmy and formed troupes for the festival. The program of each troupe was the result of the teachers and students working together. The performance programs varied, including pieces by Chopin and Jimmy Hendrix, a “Saturday Night Live”-type skit, and a silent eurythmy piece formed out of the qualities of the zodiac.

The audiences, which numbered up to 350 persons, included children, staff, and faculty from the Austin school, persons from the community, as well as festival participants. Every offering was received with enthusiasm and joy. The festival was not a competition. It was a place for students from different parts of the country and different parts of the hemisphere to appreciate and to support one another.

Andrea Weder, eurythmy teacher in Austin, observed, “The performances were above pedagogical eurythmy. They were a manifestation of the [eurythmists] as Waldorf students. It was amazing to behold the possibilities and the fruition of the pedagogy. I wish every Waldorf teacher could have been a witness.”

In discussion groups and the final plenum, the participants explored issues concerning eurythmy—including facial expression, colored lighting, props, the relationship between dance and eurythmy, and the evolution of eurythmy. The students’ comments showed a deep understanding of their art:

“The face must be integrated into the [eurythmic] movement.”

“Colored lighting intensifies the feeling and separates the stage from the audience, creating another world to watch and witness.”

“Eurythmy is art in motion. It is painting and sculpture in movement.”

“Eurythmy becomes merely a dance when it is done solely with the physical body. To be eurythmy, the movement must transcend into the etheric.”

“Eurythmy comes from the heart. If the heart is evolving, eurythmy must then evolve.”

Astrid Thiersch, eurythmy teacher from the San Francisco Waldorf School, spoke of the role of eurythmy in the high school. “Our job as eurythmists in a school is to care for the [life of] feeling. Eurythmy is a mediator between the thinking and the willing. Can the students feel—experience in a deep way—what they are doing? A movement isn’t worth anything unless it has intention. Eurythmy is an enormous tool for life. It is a self-education.”

Of the students, Thiersch observed: "There is an intensity in these young people. There is self-understanding. There is no question for them about whether or not eurythmy is of value for them. They want to, have to, do eurythmy for their own development. They know this. We don't have to pull it out of them or convince them. It's like slipping into a glove."

Eurythmy is an art that combines music, poetry, movement, and color and gives expression to the human soul. It is not surprising, therefore, that adolescents going through what is often a turbulent time in human development can come to appreciate eurythmy in a deep way. The art form enables students to connect with their feelings and be true to them. Also, as Renate Lundberg, eurythmy teacher at the East Bay Waldorf School, observed, the twin pillars on which eurythmy rests are truth and beauty. Thus, besides connecting the adolescent with his or her own inner life, eurythmy can make accessible transcendent ideals.

At the close of the final performance, all the participants gathered on the stage and in unison did the eurythmic "Hallelujah" in silence. The only sound in the large auditorium was that of 120 pairs of arms moving together through the air to form the gestures. It was like the sound of giant wings making possible a peaceful and joyful flight into the future.

The twenty-three Brazilian students had arrived a week before the festival, staying with school families, and attending classes. One host parent commented after the festival that the student eurythmy performances and the character of her two house-guests from Brazil made her realize "that the world is producing extraordinary young people. There is hope."

The 2004 International High School Eurythmy Festival was organized by the Austin Eurythmy Ensemble and was made possible by the generosity and hard work of the members of the ensemble—Andrea Weder, Marcus Weder, Annette Heinze, and Jolanda Frischknecht—and of the parents, teachers, staff, students, and friends of the Austin Waldorf School.

The Austin Eurythmy Ensemble's "Summer Eurythmy Academy" will take place from July 4 through August 6. It is meant for Waldorf high school seniors and graduates and will include a trip to Dornach, Switzerland. Contact AEE for application details and deadlines: 512-301-1673 or info@austineurythmy.org.

JODI CASEY is a marketing and enrollment consultant and a former director of enrollment at the Austin Waldorf School. She is currently enrolled in the master's program for Waldorf administration at Sunbridge College. Jodi was a member of the board of trustees of the Austin Eurythmy Ensemble for four years. Her three children attend the Austin school, and Jodi dreams of living by the sea and writing stories.

KATHY WELLS is a parent at the Austin Waldorf School. Her two children are in grades four and seven. For the past year, she has worked for the Austin Eurythmy Ensemble. In her spare time, she dreams of visiting Jodi Casey by the sea.

BOOKS

in Brief

The Waldorf School Curriculum Wall Chart An Overview for American Waldorf School Teachers

BY DAVID S. MITCHELL

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

*AWSNA Publications
Fair Oaks, CA, 2004
12 x 17 inches • \$7.00
21 x 29.5 inches • \$12.00*

This colorful, readable wall chart is a considerable achievement. It presents in an artistic and clear design the entire Waldorf curriculum for grades one through twelve, showing what the children in each grade do and learn in their various academic, practical, and artistic subjects.

The grades are listed on the left edge of the chart, and columns, each representing a subject area, go from the upper chart to the bottom. Sixteen subject headings are listed, among them English and Grammar, Geography, Arithmetic/Mathematics, Science, Painting, Music, Eurythmy, Handwork, and Woodwork. Thus one can discover what second graders, for example, learn in the various subjects by reading across. And by reading down a column, one can find out, for example, the entire history curriculum through the grades.

The original version of the Waldorf School Curriculum Wall Chart was created almost fifteen years ago by Waldorf master teacher David Mitchell, now director of AWSNA Publications. This updated, revised version was designed by Hallie Wootan, AWSNA's resident graphic designer, who does the graphic design for *Renewal*. The wall chart is available in two sizes, the smaller being a handy desk reference. It is an invaluable resource for both Waldorf educators and parents.

After Waldorf,

What?



Mager Hall, a classroom and office building on the Sterling College campus

Sterling College Craftsbury Common, Vermont

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

At the end of the fall semester, students in Ned Houston's course, *Humans in the Environment*, are presenting the results of their projects on sustainable living. Charged with imagining a workable, environmentally sound human society, they present in turn their visions of the future. The students talk about bio-diesel fuel, homes built from local renewable natural materials, methane gas for heating derived from landfill and compost heaps, greenhouses that provide local organic vegetables even in midwinter, and so on. Although just freshmen, they seem to grasp both the theoretical and the practical issues. They seem also to have an idealism and commitment tempered with realism and experience.

My visit to the class is a bit of a trip into the past, reminding me of the heyday of environmental education in the 1970s. It was also, I hope, a look into the future. Without students like these wrestling with the question of how human beings can live harmoniously with nature, the prospects for nature and for humanity are bleak.

Sterling College is a small—about 110 students and 20 faculty—college located in the picturesque village of Craftsbury Common in north central Vermont. The 130-acre campus includes classroom, residence, and office buildings—most of them white clapboard and clustered next to the village common—a library, hiking and skiing trails, a state-of-the-art climbing wall, an organic vegetable garden, herb

Sterling College students, participants in the Mountain Cultures Semester, walk across a bridge in Sikkim, India.

beds, and a working farm. The farm has two solar- and wind-powered barns; cows, draft horses, sheep, goats, and chickens, pastures, and woodlots. The

college's Center for Northern Studies, six miles west of the main campus, has a classroom and office building and a 350-acre boreal research forest and swamp.

Sterling began as an alternative preparatory school inspired by the experiential education ideas of Kurt Hahn, the founder of the Outward Bound movement. Today, as a college, Sterling primarily offers a four-year baccalaureate degree and also grants a two-year associate's degree.

All students fulfill core curriculum requirements that include courses such as A Sense of Place (about the ecology of northern New England); A Reverence for Wood (in which they fashion their own canoe paddle); and Tools and their Applications (in which they learn to use a variety of hand and power tools such as the crosscut saw and chainsaw). They choose one of four majors: Sustainable Agriculture, Outdoor Education and Leadership, Ecosystem Management, and Northern Studies, the last focusing on the human cultures and the plant and animal life of the circumpolar regions. Students can also create their own majors by combining elements of the standard programs.

There is a balance between classroom and field experience. Students work on the farm, in the garden, and in the woodlots, studying and observing natural habitats on site. They also complete off-campus internships with

businesses and organizations doing the kind of work in which they are interested. Some juniors and seniors participate in a Mountain Cultures Semester (visiting, for example, in 2003, the state of Sikkim in northern India). There are shorter field study programs in Iceland and the Scottish Isles, Belize, Japan, and elsewhere.



A Sterling College student on an internship at an organic farm in Whitefish, Montana

On campus, all students are involved in work and community service programs. Each spends about thirty hours a semester doing chores on campus such as cleaning, working in the kitchen, caring for the animals on the farm, and tending the bookstore. Each semester every student also does eighty hours of community service such as additional on-campus chores, mentoring and tutoring in local schools, and community grassroots organizing.

Sterling seeks to realize its ideals in the microcosm of campus life. The kitchen uses, as much as possible, grains, vegetables, and other foods produced on the farm or on local farms. The Sterling Sustainability Program promotes energy conservation, recycling, and the use of renewable resources on the campus.

Community life is fostered in many ways. There is a weekly community meeting for all students, faculty, and staff. One transfer student from the University of Vermont told me that a main reason she came to Sterling was the supportive community life.



A professor and student work together on tissue cultures in a plant science lab.

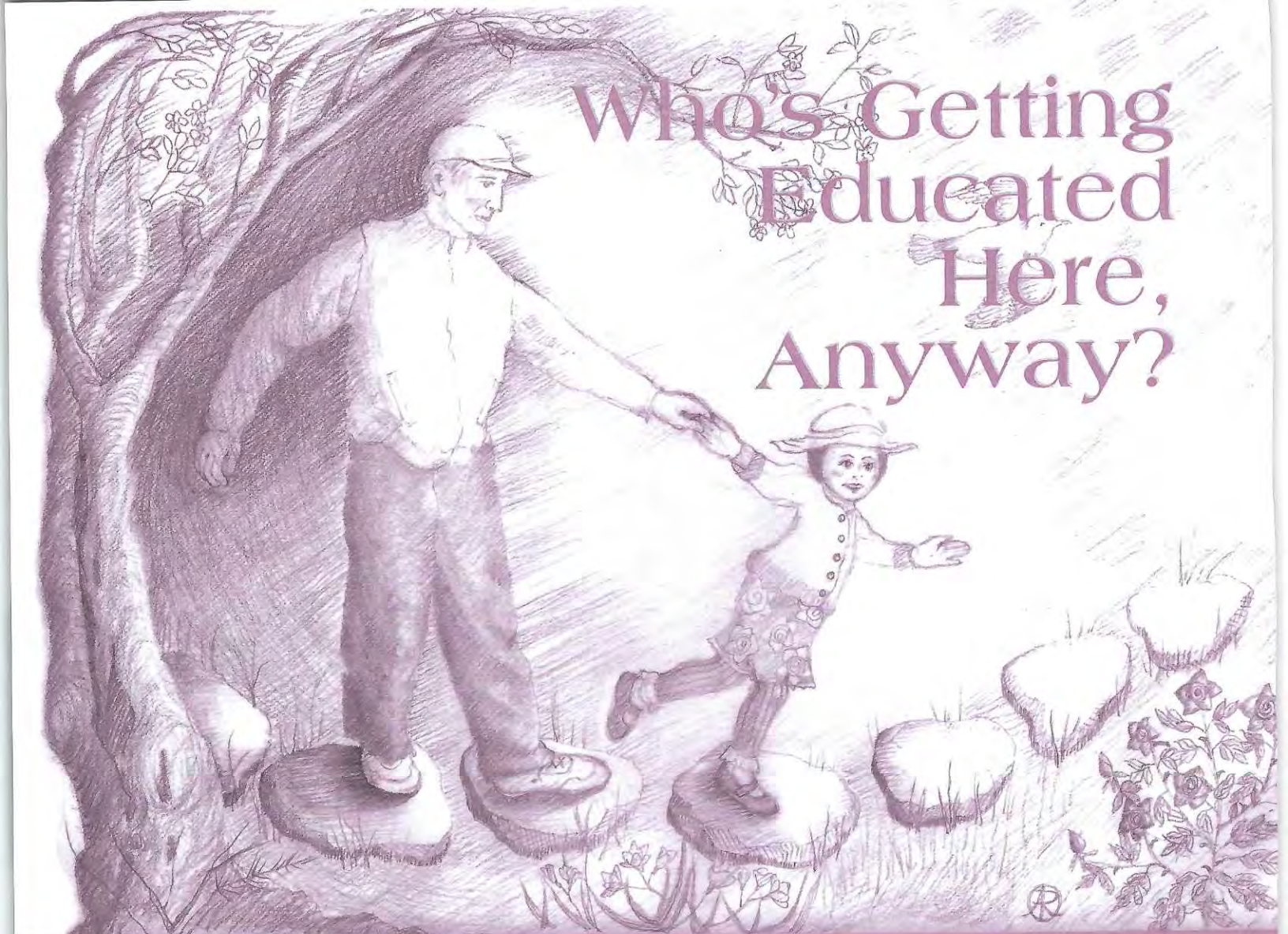
On the one hand, Sterling College is a professional school.

It trains outdoor educators, organic farmers and gardeners, environmental scientists, and wildlife/wildlands managers. On the other hand, it is a school for the liberal arts, in the best sense. By fostering a concern for and love of nature and a desire to serve the community and the world and by teaching practical skills and the value of work, the college is helping its students become well-rounded human beings, useful members of society, and citizens of the planet.

In this concern for the natural environment, for experiential education, independent thinking, physical work, practical skills, social service, and for the quality of human life, Sterling College shares much common ground with Waldorf Education. For a Waldorf graduate intending to go into environmental science or education or agriculture, it is an ideal place. It could also well serve a student intending to become a lawyer, doctor, banker, computer engineer, or the like. A year or two at Sterling College—or even the whole four-year baccalaureate experience—might well provide the resources of heart and hand to balance the demands of a career more distanced from the roots of life.



Students on a field study program in Belize learn about marine and rainforest ecosystems.



Who's Getting Educated Here, Anyway?

Confessions of a Waldorf Father

BY JOHN WHITE

I've been a Waldorf student for almost nine years now, ever since my daughter at five years of age walked into the kindergarten at the Hartsbrook School and her eyes became brighter and opened wider than I had ever seen them before.

Now, as we all know, children of that age have a natural sense of wonder when approaching the phenomena of our world. I feel certain, though, that this long-ago hour in Bluebird Kindergarten was the first instance of Gaelyn's soul being touched by something much larger than her young awareness could understand. It still brings quivers of emotion to my throat and tears to my eyes when I tell others of that moment. She didn't look back, left her mother and father standing alone in the hallway, and after we finished the interview she had to be coaxed out of the room.

Of course, she is still not old enough to realize what it was that touched her soul that day nearly nine years ago. This year she is fully engaged in her seventh-grade curriculum. But watching her grow and mature and open up to the wonder of life through these passing grades has given birth to several moments similar to that first one. Today I recognize that she is on the cusp of an essential stage (and a possibly trying stage for her parents) of development where independence will be explored. Years ago she was a shy and somewhat clingy child, particularly around strangers—until, that is, she discovered the wonders of

teacher Celia Riahi's kindergarten room. At that moment, Gaelyn's opening up to a fuller and wondrous life began. Through the portal she fearlessly strode, and pulled me right in after her.

This is why I began by saying that "I've been a Waldorf student for nine years." My daughter's experience has led to an education of the mind, body, and soul for both of us. One of the first and most profound lessons was around learning to read.

In the middle of the third grade, I was convinced she was not being "taught" how to read, and I expressed my concerns to her class teacher. His reassurance fell on deaf ears and an anxious mind. I read to her more frequently after that, always asking her if she didn't want to read to me. Nine out of ten times she declined, content to cuddle and listen. By the end of that year, her reading had improved a bit, but my concern remained. Then something happened during the summer before fourth grade. It was as though she had been pulling my leg all along, because by the early weeks of fourth grade she was reading everything in sight. Notes I wrote about errands, cards from relatives, advertisements in newspapers, the writing on the side of a passing vehicle—everything suddenly was of important interest to her. Questions constantly flew around my head: "What does that word mean?" "How do you say that?" "Why are they called cold cuts?"

I look at this experience with reading as the beginning of our dual education. She was learning, obviously, somehow, and the ability became apparent in her own time. For me, this experience with reading opened the gates of recognition to the possibility that tremendous internal development was occurring, the full extent of which would not have a truly visible face for some years to come.

As the fourth-grade year began, I decided to be more conscious of her classroom work. While she sought to master her assignments in form drawing, I attempted to understand the purpose for such a seemingly obscure subject. In doing so, I slowly gained some insight into the link between pattern work and brain development. As she brought home knitting and crocheting and woodworking projects, I fumbled my fingers

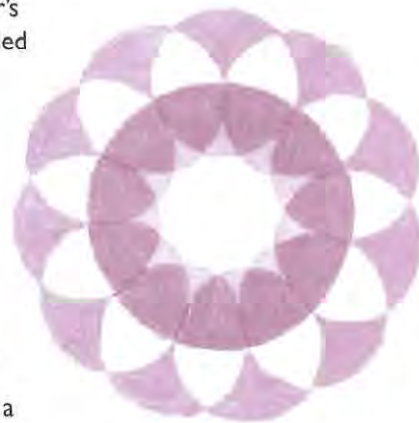
over them and began to understand the connection between the uses of the human hand and mental dexterity. As she frowned at eurythmy lessons, I rejoiced in the freedom and challenge of the movement (I've always liked dancing—not that eurythmy is dancing) while struggling to understand any of the deeper meaning of the sounds and forms. While she has taken on the natural attribute of a strong memory by way of her classroom recitations, I have sought to improve my aging memory through more disciplined habits. At my age it also seemed prudent to combine this effort with that of extending acceptance toward my shortcomings in this realm, while not settling for them.

I have begun to recognize more fully, with each grade level she achieves, that her life—her inner life as well as her outer, everyday life—is expanding far beyond where mine was at a similar age. I am hopeful and confident that she may someday recognize this fact. My desire is for her to reach far beyond my capacities. Often several fingers are tightly crossed, however, in the hope that this awareness will not come to her during any troubling moment of the teenage years. I admit to being worried that her keen mind and developing wit

I have begun to recognize more fully, with each grade level she achieves, that her life—her inner life as well as her outer, everyday life—is expanding far beyond where mine was at a similar age.

will be used as a rapier to jab at the bubble of my parental authority, which is already being tested under the disguise of playfulness.

As for me, I have come to realize that, in very many areas of my life, this attempt to understand my daughter's Waldorf education has led to a deepening of my own involvement with and enjoyment of life. In the early grade years, I was able to see only a glimmering of the possibilities. I was quite busy in my work life, and it seemed enough effort to spend a year as a class parent, to read the occasional article or pamphlet, to help organize the school's holiday fair, or to attend a lecture now and then. However, after five years of slow and unsuspected inner





I would like to thank Rudolf Steiner at this point in my story. Through the wonder of his life and work, my daughter and hundreds of thousands of children and adults—and millions more to come—have been given a doorway to unlimited growth. His wisdom and insight have certainly enlarged my view of life and of creation—and better late in life than not at all. So, even if it were to happen that I will not be fortunate enough to be around when my daughter's children cross the threshold of a Waldorf kindergarten, I'll do my best to be holding their hands and smiling at the light in their eyes. You see, my lessons have shown me such new possibilities. I can't wait to see what the next school year brings our way!



John White with his daughter, Gaelyn Harvey

JOHN WHITE is the father of two children and is also a grandfather. He currently resides in Amherst, Massachusetts, where he spends his time working for a nonprofit educational organization and volunteering for various tasks at the Hartsbrook School and with charitable organizations. He managed the Seven Sisters school store at Hartsbrook for three years. Currently, with four friends, John hosts a biweekly reading group that studies the work of Rudolf Steiner. He also organizes the lectures and workshops for the local branch of the Anthroposophical Society.

CREDITS: Illustration on page 36 by Anne Riegel-Koetzsch. Main-lesson artwork on pages 37–39 by Gaelyn Harvey.

BOOKS

in Brief

Lilipoh Holistic Wellness Guide

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

Lilipoh Publishing, Inc.
Phoenixville, PA, 2004
\$5.00 • 52 pages

Lilipoh (from “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”) is a quarterly magazine that promotes a holistic and spiritually based approach to human life. From a perspective based on Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy, *Lilipoh* deals with a variety of issues—health, medicine, diet, child-rearing, education, social organization, business and money, the arts, and moral and spiritual development. The *Lilipoh Holistic Wellness Guide* is a special edition of a 1998 issue that focused on children’s health and on home care of common ailments. It was put together with the help of a team of medical doctors and a number of licensed therapists.

The core of the book is a thirty-five page, alphabetically organized section on the diagnosis and treatment of everything from cold sores to head lice, asthma to mumps. The treatments prescribed include basic care, herbal teas, dietary do’s and don’ts, massage, compresses, inhalations, baths, poultices, homeopathic and floral essence remedies, and essential oils.

For bronchitis, for example, the *Guide* suggests rest, the avoidance of cold air, keeping the feet warm, hot vegetable broth, ginger and thyme teas, reducing dairy food and protein-rich food, mustard chest compresses, steam inhalation of chamomile flowers with eucalyptus oil, and other measures. The recommendations are offered with the caveat that the advice of a physician (preferably one who practices anthroposophically extended medicine) should be sought.

Interspersed in this section are sidebars dealing with topics such as the special virtues of wool and peat clothing; the importance of protecting our children and ourselves from cold and also from the direct rays of the sun; the possibility of dealing with crowded teeth through non-extractive orthodontics; the virtue of the hot water bottle, and so on. There is also a useful section on how to prepare and apply the various therapeutic applications—poultices, compresses, and the like.

The *Guide* concludes with a list of items that should be in every household’s home remedy kit, along with a list of sources for the various items. This little book is essential for the family that wants to maintain the health of all its members in a natural, holistic, and minimally intrusive way.

From *Fear* to *Love*



Changing the Way
We Experience
the World

BY PHILIP F. INCAO, MD

A paradigm is a living conceptual model of the world. It incorporates our assumptions about the nature of reality and is the lens through which we view the world and our experience in it. Each human culture has its own distinctive paradigm. And each individual in the culture has his or her own version of that paradigm, influenced by individual constitution and personal experience.

While paradigms are expressed in ideas and concepts, underlying each is a primal feeling toward life and the world. Love of the world and fear of the world create very different paradigms. In ancient and traditional cultures, the ruling paradigm was based on love for the world. Today the prevailing materialistic-scientific paradigm is based on fear of the world. Because of this underlying fear, science and medicine assume that we must control, master, and change Nature in order to survive.

The paradigm of ancient and traditional cultures was spirit-based and God-based. In Europe, this spirit-

The scientific paradigm has dominated Western culture for the past five centuries. Among the principles that inform this paradigm are:

- Matter is the primary reality.
- Consciousness is the result of material processes.
- Through the objective investigation of material phenomena, science can plumb all mysteries, answer all questions, and solve all problems.
- Humankind can and should control and subjugate Nature in order to survive and to fulfill its needs and wants.

Over the last hundred years, though, modern physics has come to the ironic and unsettling conclusion that matter is nonmaterial, that it is energy. We in the West have in effect come full circle, from a spirit-based paradigm to a matter-based model of the world, and now back to the possibility of a new spirit-based view.

Paradigms are like living things that grow, reach maturity, and then become old, overripe, and prone to illness and

The holding on to wealth and privilege and the resistance to change that characterized the Church in the sixteenth century now characterize institutionalized and commercialized science and medicine.

centered paradigm became institutionalized in the Church. By the 1500s, the paradigm had become outdated. It was out of harmony with evolving human consciousness. Human beings had for the most part lost the ability to perceive the world of spirit and were much better suited to perceive and study the world of matter.

Then, through the work of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and others, a mighty paradigm shift occurred. Matter came to be understood as the primary reality, and the scientific method was developed to understand the sensory-material world. The freedom to objectively study Nature and to draw conclusions, free from preconceptions and the demands of authority, has been an essential element in the development of this scientific paradigm. Galileo stood for the inviolable right of the scientist to follow his own conscience, free from outside pressure.

decay. The scientific paradigm is in a sclerotic old age. A new paradigm is now struggling to be born.

But the scientific paradigm is well established, institutionalized, entrenched, and very powerful. Today again, as five centuries ago, those seeking truth, those who challenge the dominant paradigm, are being excommunicated from the mainstream. Scientific freedom and creativity are being stifled.

History is repeating itself. The holding on to wealth and privilege and the resistance to change that characterized the Church in the sixteenth century now characterize institutionalized and commercialized science and medicine. This modern "church" is resisting the birth of a new paradigm. This resistance is a sign that the present paradigm has made its greatest contributions to the evolution of humanity and is now too old and

inflexible to adapt to the changing consciousness of the twenty-first century.

The new paradigm, now forming, includes the following concepts:

- Consciousness or spirit is an independent reality. It is not the result of matter, but in fact precedes, creates, and determines matter.
- Our attempts to understand ourselves and the world must take this spiritual element into account.
- We human beings are intimately interconnected with Nature and with all other beings; we must humbly and consciously try to work with Nature and its processes.
- The freedom of the researcher to seek the truth and express it must again be honored without exception.

Today the scientific-materialistic paradigm prevails in medicine, in education, in agriculture, and in almost every other domain of Western culture. In medicine, for example, the human being is treated as a biological

of the underlying mechanisms of physical reality to create a megatechnology with ever-increasing power over the forces of Nature, both in the environment and in the human being. Science will develop the 200 or so vaccines now in the research pipeline and will also develop and apply genetic engineering, gene therapy, cloning, and so on. It will seek to extend its dominance in the world and will in the process do great harm to humanity and the world.

Each person today can help the new paradigm come fully into existence and to transform human culture. What is valuable in the old paradigm will survive. A paradigm shift such as we are living through today involves, of necessity, a death but also new life, new possibilities, and a new step in human evolution.

Today's growing crisis in the mental, emotional, and physical health of our children is an urgent signal to us that their deeper needs are not being met. Children today come into the world to work for a new heart-centered paradigm. This paradigm, based on respect and loving interest in the world and all its peoples,

Children have a deep inner hunger and thirst for meaning and justice. They will not be satisfied by material success when so many in the world are miserable or starving.

machine. Illness is understood as an attack by external organisms, which can be repelled by vaccines or overcome by antibiotics. Or disease is seen as a mechanical malfunction that must be rectified by mechanical means. No importance is given to the consciousness and spiritual condition of the individual involved.

The new paradigm informs holistic and complementary medicine. It sees an important role for consciousness and spirit in both the cause of illness and in healing. It sees vaccines as undermining the immune system and as preventing an acute short-term inflammation but creating a chronic inflammation.

We are at a crossroads, and the forces of change are moving in two opposing and irreconcilable directions. The current scientific establishment, based on an outdated paradigm, will nevertheless apply its knowledge

transcends the old divisions of race, religion, gender, and class.

Children have a deep inner hunger and thirst for meaning and justice. They will not be satisfied by material success when so many in the world are miserable or starving. They are pained by the apathy, greed, and selfishness in the world and pained yet more by those same qualities within themselves. Children today need the example of adults willing to tackle such problems—role models of positivity, courage, selflessness, and integrity.

Here are a few of the things we as parents, educators, and role models can do to help today's children and ourselves prepare for the coming new paradigm:

- Learn for ourselves what children innately know—that an important part of our mission on Earth is to improve ourselves morally. While we need to love

and accept others as they are, we need to be objective about ourselves and seek to improve.

- Realize that infants and children need a nurturing and peaceful atmosphere informed with human heart-warmth, wonder, and reverence for life, just as surely as they need mother's milk and parental love.
- Realize that human health is really a verb, not a noun. Well-being and health are the unsought-for effects of what Emerson called "the active soul," of creatively pursuing worthwhile work with enthusiasm.
- Realize that, in human conflicts, to be interested in the other person is more important than being right.
- Realize that health crises and life crises are not a punishment but an opportunity to change the way we think and live and to become healthier and happier.

DR. PHILIP INCAO is an anthroposophic physician with a family practice in Denver, Colorado, and has written many articles on children's health from a holistic perspective. He is a contributing author to a new book, *The Vaccination Dilemma*, written by doctors, nurses, and knowledgeable authorities on the question of vaccination. The book reveals an alternative health-care system that removes much of the fear concerning childhood disease. The book presents health-creating medical approaches such as homeopathy and anthroposophically extended medicine and helps parents to understand how illness serves a unique need for every child. Ultimately, *The Vaccination Dilemma* encourages parents to trust their innate wisdom, that of their children, and that of Nature. It is published by Lantern Books: www.lanternbooks.com.

CREDITS: Artwork by Martina Müller, from the cover of *The Dynamic Heart and Circulation*, edited by Craig Holdrege, published by AWSNA Publications.

BOOKS

in Brief

Painting in Waldorf Education

BY DICK BRUIN AND ATTIE LICHTHART

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

AWSNA Publications

Fair Oaks, CA, 2004

\$17.00 • 215 pages • CD-ROM included

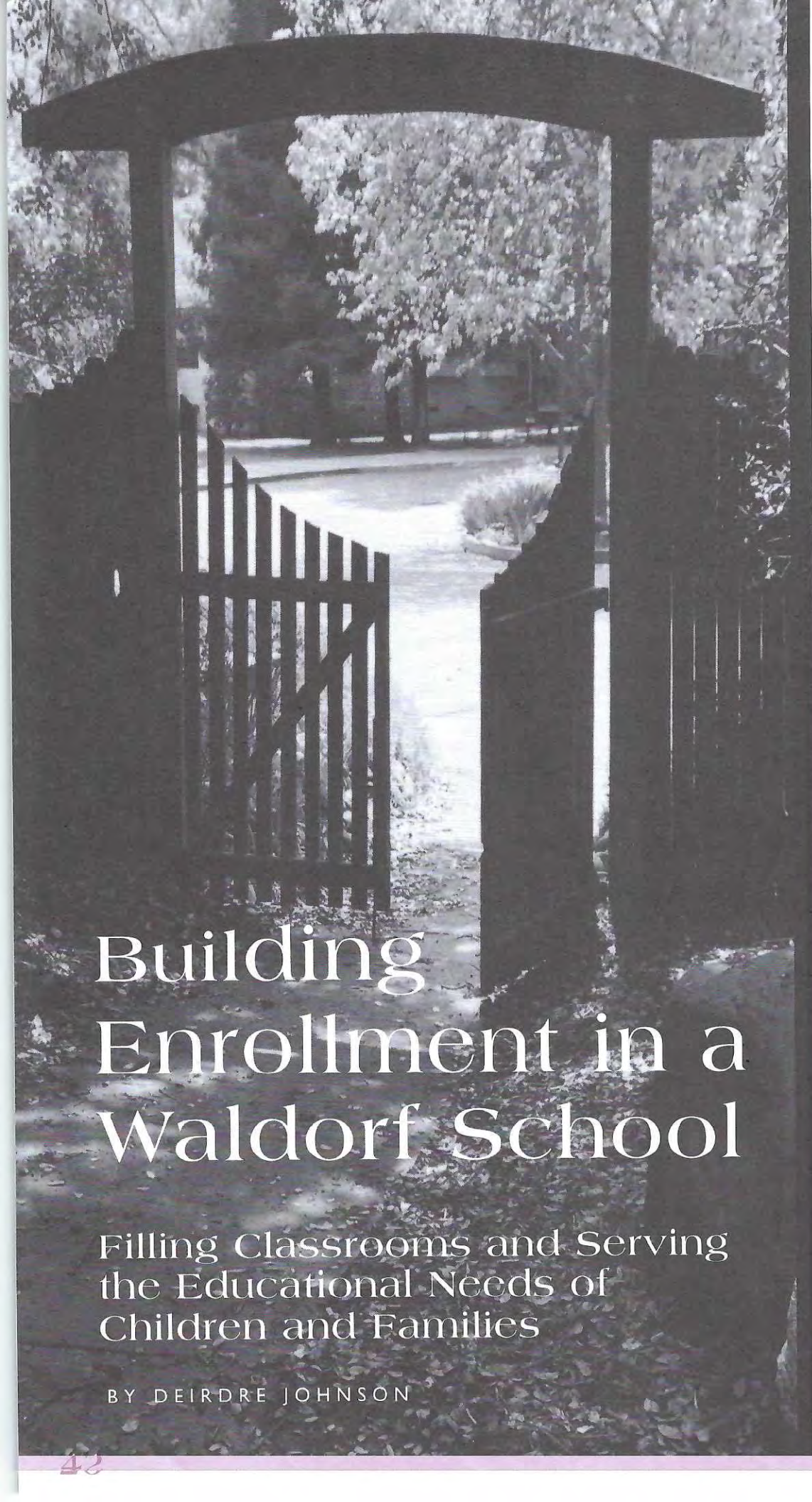
Are you a Waldorf parent and sometimes find yourself mystified by the artwork your child brings home? Are you unsure about the meaning of those watercolor exercises in blue and yellow and the significance of color circles? Do you wonder why sometimes all the children's paintings look more or less the same?

Or are you a Waldorf class teacher with modest talent and training in art and unsure of how exactly you will present the painting curriculum to your class?

If you answer yes to either of these questions, *Painting in Waldorf Education* will be an invaluable resource for you.

The book begins with a section on painting in education that includes information about the effects colors have on people, about color theory, and about art materials. Then long sections on the kindergarten and elementary grades and on the high school deal with the painting curriculum for each year from kindergarten through grade twelve. The authors explain exactly what the painting and drawing exercises are meant to accomplish at each stage in the development of the child and the adolescent. They also provide basic painting exercises for the teacher to use with the students.

Accompanying the book is a CD-Rom with 70 colored plates. Plates 1–62 show wet on wet watercolor paintings, black and white drawings, and veil painting, all by students. Plates 63–70 are color wheels by the artist/teacher Julius Hebing. The striking beauty of these plates alone attest to the value of the painting curriculum in Waldorf Education.



Building Enrollment in a Waldorf School

Filling Classrooms and Serving the Educational Needs of Children and Families

BY DEIRDRE JOHNSON

Deirdre Johnson has been working in admissions and enrollment in Waldorf schools for many years. From 1986 to 1990 she was admissions officer at the Waldorf School of the Peninsula (Los Altos, CA), and from 1995 to 2002 she was enrollment coordinator at the Sacramento Waldorf School. Currently, Deirdre is director of admissions at the Camellia Waldorf School in Sacramento. Here she shares some practical advice on how to build enrollment while serving the real educational needs of children and families.

—R.E.K.

Early in my career, when a parent called to inquire about our school, I tried hard to “sell” the school and the education it offered. In time, though, my approach changed, and the following interaction between myself and the parent of a child about to enter kindergarten became typical:

Parent: My preschooler is very bright. I suspect she may be gifted. She's already reading, knows her colors, and can write her name. I want a school that will challenge her intellectually and academically. I've heard good things about your school. Tell me about your program.

Enrollment coordinator (Me): We may not be what you are looking for. Ours is a holistic, age-appropriate program that integrates the arts with academics, and our kindergarten is totally nonacademic.

Parent: Really?

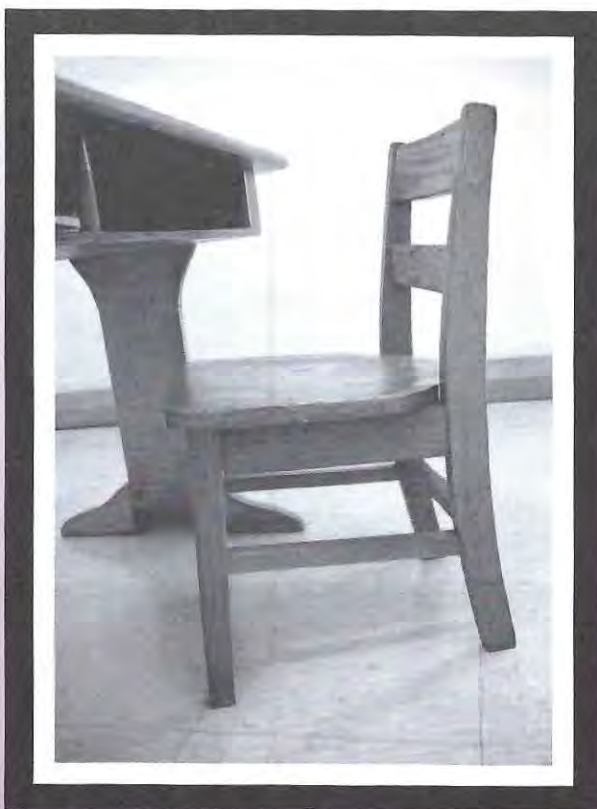
Enrollment coordinator: Yes, we delay the introduction of writing, reading, and arithmetic until first grade. We allow the children plenty of time to learn to read. We believe that by cultivating the imagination in the early years, we are nurturing the capacity for creative problem solving in later years when it's developmentally appropriate. Along the way, our students learn two foreign languages, instrumental and choral music, painting, drawing, handwork, and gardening, and they have plenty of time for active play.

Parent: That's exactly what I want! Send me your information. When can I come see your school?

The course and outcome of the conversation may at first be puzzling. But a clear process has taken place. The parent gives a description of what she understands to be the best education available, an education offered by most other private schools in town but not the Waldorf school. I then describe Waldorf Education. The parent immediately recognizes that this education, previously unknown to her, may in fact be better than what she thought was the best available. (I think she is right!)

I abandoned my hard-sell approach for several reasons. One is that it isn't very effective. When we try to sell someone something, we often create a resistance. The other person may feel that his freedom is being impinged upon. This "selling mode" often feels like arguing, trying to change someone's mind against her will. Paradoxically, not trying to sell something and only indicating its scarcity can be the most effective marketing. Parents who learn that the class they are interested in has only one opening usually become very eager to apply.

Also, I realized that, in the long term, it is in the best interest of the school, the child, and the family to find an educational environment that is truly appropriate, even if it turns out to be another school. In effect, in my enrollment work I developed from a salesperson into an educational counselor. I learned that Waldorf Education or a particular Waldorf school may not be the best choice for every family or student. I informed myself about other schools in the area that could meet needs that our school could not, and I often referred prospective parents and students to them. I viewed my aim not as filling our own classes but as helping to find a good fit between family and school, putting the needs of the child foremost.



This approach also benefits the school. Good word of mouth is the best advertising for a school. Having students for whom the school is a good fit, who thrive, and whose parents are happy with the school creates a positive image in the community. It does a school no good to have a child and family become part of the school and then to leave dissatisfied and disenfranchised. Having students whose needs are not met creates dissatisfied parents and negative feelings toward the school. Bad word of mouth can really hurt a school, and it is very hard to counteract. Since each class has limited openings, it makes sense to fill them with students who will be well served.

Being aware in recruitment and in the admissions process of the school-student fit and of the likelihood of a student's success can really help a school. In the 1990s, the Sacramento Waldorf High School was underenrolled and had a high attrition rate. At that time, our recruitment efforts focused on students in local private schools that went up to the eighth grade. Also, we placed new students according to their last year of school, not taking into account their chronological age.

I realized, though, that the students who benefited most from our program and who stayed to graduate were those whose elementary education had been in a Waldorf school. And, our high school counselor noticed that many of the students who left didn't have a background in the arts and were younger than the students who had attended a Waldorf school.

We therefore shifted our recruitment efforts away from grades 1–8 private schools in our immediate area to grades 1–8 Waldorf schools a little farther afield. We then began to apply the same age requirement to applicants from non-Waldorf backgrounds that we did in our kindergarten and lower school. Also, we looked for experience in art, music, and foreign language in the applicants. Attrition went down and enrollment soared. In 2003–2004, four new high school classrooms were added to the campus to accommodate the increased high school enrollment, and all high school classes are now double-tracked.

Working with Numbers

It is a good idea for the faculty of a school to come to agreement about what constitutes a full class. This number—the maximum number of students that can be in a class—should be communicated clearly both to the enrollment coordinator and to the board of trustees. The enrollment coordinator needs this

information in the work of recruiting and admitting students. The board needs it to keep the school's finances on track and to plan for the future.

Preschool and kindergarten classes include children of different ages. They should be large enough that each year there are enough school-ready children to fill the first grade. The question of class size should be reviewed each year. It is an issue that should be discussed with teacher candidates in the hiring process.

Statistics can be very helpful in enrollment work. Tracking the number of inquiries, applications, admissions, and acceptances, monthly as well as annually, can show patterns that will help in scheduling events and in ordering brochures and other informational supplies. Such statistical information is the basis of enrollment projections that the board needs for budgeting and planning. Working with statistics to produce reports helped me see what other types of information would be helpful.



Parents as a Valuable Source of Information

An enrollment officer soon learns that retaining students is the key to full enrollment. In my first summer as an admissions director, I was rejoicing over a new enrollment only to learn that another family with several children in the school was not returning. Oh, the heartache! Tracking attrition, the numbers and the reasons for withdrawal, is important. Well-conducted exit interviews with parents who leave the school before their child graduates can yield valuable information and reduce hard feelings for the departing family. Those who conduct the exit interviews need to be good listeners. The details of these interviews should be

confidential, but larger, systemic problems can be brought to the attention of the school's leadership. Exit interviews and attrition statistics are tools that can uncover problems that need to be dealt with in a school.

The parents of enrolled students are another valuable source of information. They can tell you who the competition is

(i.e., what other schools they considered), how they found out about the school, what caused them to enroll their child, and why they stay. This information is useful when considering how to present the school in advertising and outreach and in dealing with prospective families. The first three questions can be asked of families in the application/enrollment process. The last can be presented in a survey of enrolled families.

According to the 2003–2004 survey by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, there are over 4,500 openings for students in Waldorf schools in North America. The average Waldorf school, of those that reported to AWYSNA, has 48 unfilled openings. It is important that we find the right students for these openings, both for the schools and for the children themselves.

CREDITS: Photos by Hollie Wootan, taken at the Sacramento Waldorf School.

Book Reviews

Two Books on Education and Funding

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

The Social Mission of Waldorf Education

BY GARY LAMB

AWSNA Publications

Fair Oaks, CA, 2004

133 pages • \$12.00

Freeing the Circling Stars: Pre-funded Education

DR. CHRISTOPHER HOUGHTON BUDD

A New Economy Publication

Centre for Associative Economics, Canterbury, England, 2004

37 pages • \$ N.A.

Rudolf Steiner founded the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, over eighty years ago. At that time, he expressed three principles that still live within the Waldorf school movement: that schools be independent of government control, be privately funded, and be accessible to all children regardless of economic means.

Even in the first school, these principles were not easy to realize. There were compromises with the state authorities about the levels of achievement that students would have to demonstrate at certain points in their schooling. The Stuttgart school, however, was supported totally by private rather than government funds and managed to accept and educate children from all economic classes.

Since then, every Waldorf school has, from its inception, strived to realize these principles and has experienced the blessings and challenges connected with them. Because Waldorf schools are free of government control, teachers are free to form the curriculum they deem appropriate for their students and to present it in the manner they see fit. Teachers are unburdened by fear of criticism and censure from governing authorities outside the school and can imbue their teaching with moral and spiritual values. This independent approach to education has sent many thousands of independent-minded, creative graduates into society, human beings who have the potential to be a leaven for positive social change.

Lack of government support, however, has meant that in most schools finances are an ongoing challenge. Schools have to survive on tuition revenues and on a more or less continuous series of fund-raising events. Teacher salaries are usually lower than those of teachers in public schools. And while all schools try to include families of modest means, in fact many children lose the opportunity of a Waldorf schooling solely because of financial considerations.

In recent years, the charter school movement in the United States has presented a tantalizing option to Waldorf educa-

tors and to current or aspiring Waldorf parents—a Waldorf school supported largely or wholly by state funds. This option raises teachers' salaries and makes something approximating a Waldorf education available to families who could not afford an independent Waldorf school.

These benefits come at a considerable price, however. Teachers in many cases are not free to choose what they will teach and how they will teach it. Government support usually means that certain elements of Waldorf Education, particularly those elements with any spiritual connotation—the morning verses, the study of the religious traditions of humanity, teachers expressing even among themselves a nonmaterialistic view of the human being—must be eliminated. Also, the teacher may have received some training in Waldorf methods but have little or no understanding of the view of the human being and the world on which Waldorf Education is based. One may legitimately ask, Is what remains still Waldorf Education?

Gary Lamb's thoroughly researched and well-written book, *The Social Mission of Waldorf Education*, is a call to action for those committed to the independence of Waldorf Education. First, Lamb recounts the history of the Waldorf schools and their relationship to the state. He goes back to the founding of the Stuttgart school and demonstrates clearly that Steiner's intention was that the first school—and subsequent ones—be free of all government funding and control.

Lamb then explains that this resolve stemmed from Steiner's understanding of the threefold nature of the social organism, made up of the economic, cultural, and rights (government) realms. Education, as part of the cultural life, must be unencumbered in its task of educating children who are free and independent in their thinking and able to realize their individual destinies. The role of the economic realm is to make education possible, to provide the necessary funds without any conditions or demands placed on the teachers and the schools.

Regarding government supported Waldorf schools, Gary Lamb is unequivocal. These schools, he holds, are not and cannot be Waldorf schools. Inevitably, government funding and control take the heart out of Waldorf Education. Rather than seeking to get money from the state, Waldorf educators and parents need to dedicate themselves to making schools financially independent.

Lamb suggests various means to accomplish this. Some, such as parent-paid tuitions and donations from wealthy individuals and established businesses, helped support the first school in Stuttgart. Some other means were only envisioned by Rudolf Steiner. He hoped, for example, that new businesses, particularly those based in Anthroposophy, would

use revenue from new products and inventions to support the Waldorf movement. Steiner also envisioned a World Waldorf Association that, in the wider public arena, would promote the idea of an independent, universally accessible educational system and actively raise money for Waldorf schools. He also proposed that people with school-age children be paid at a higher rate for their work—have a kind of wage bonus—and thus be able to afford school tuition. In yet another plan thought of by Steiner, the state would require that monies be funneled directly into an educational fund not connected to the state, and that families have access to the fund to pay tuitions.

In any case, Gary Lamb is sure that the freedom of Waldorf schools can and must be compatible with financial stability and universal accessibility. In his opinion, the future of Waldorf Education rests upon it.

In the second part of his book, Gary Lamb traces the recent history of educational reform in the United States, describing how during the last twenty years federal control over education has increased and parental choice has diminished. He also demonstrates that the impetus behind the No Child Left Behind movement has come from the powerful corporate world, and that these corporations are interested in creating efficient workers rather than well-rounded, independent-minded human beings.

Waldorf schools in other countries, of course, are dealing with the same problems of freedom, finance, and accessibility. Many schools in Canada receive funding from their provincial governments and wrestle with government demands for a voice in the curriculum, for periodic standardized testing, and so on.

A similar situation exists in Great Britain, and in *Freeing the Circling Stars*, Dr. Christopher Houghton Budd, an economic historian deeply influenced by Rudolf Steiner's thought, addresses the current state of Waldorf schools in Britain, as examples with global relevance. Houghton Budd's line of thought and conclusions are quite similar to those of Gary Lamb. Teachers and schools must be free to educate children as they see fit. Government support inevitably brings control. Persons of means should supply the funding to make the education possible. Houghton Budd describes as a guiding image the "pre-funded" school in which teachers receive a living and which is able to accept every child regardless of financial means.

Gary Lamb and Christopher Houghton Budd represent one among a spectrum of opinions within the Waldorf movement on these issues. Other Waldorf educators argue that Waldorf charter schools, Waldorf-inspired magnet schools, and programs that help public school teachers apply Waldorf methods in their classrooms all bring some of the benefits of Waldorf Education to children who would otherwise be in a typical public school classroom. A half or three-quarters of a loaf is better

than none, they say, and the necessary evil of government influence can be minimized.

No doubt this discussion will continue for some time. Fortunately, the Waldorf movement seems large enough and sufficiently informed with basic goodwill and shared ideals to accommodate it.

Gary Lamb has been associated with the Waldorf school movement for over twenty-five years, as a parent, development director, high school teacher of economics, teacher training lecturer, conference organizer, and consultant. In 1992, he founded the Hope Through Education program, one of the first privately funded voucher programs in the United States. As editor and essayist for The Threefold Review, he wrote numerous essays on Waldorf Education and educational freedom. He is currently helping to establish an administration advisory service for independent Waldorf schools.

A full-length review of Christopher Houghton Budd's book Freeing the Circling Stars is available on the Web site www.talkingeconomics.com. The review is by Arthur Edwards.

From the Editor, continued

whole. The regions, with the help of freelance mentors and consultants, have taken on the task of helping schools in their development. Each region has a "regional representative" who communicates regularly with and advises the executive team. The eight regional representatives and the three leaders meet four times a year to plan and review the activities of the Association.

There is still of course a board of trustees, comprised of disinterested volunteers—persons not employed by the Association—who give advice and consent. The board bears ultimate responsibility for the organization.

The purpose of the new organizational structure—which at first sight may seem complicated—is to help the Association do better what it has for years done well, namely

- represent and advocate for Waldorf Education in the broader educational arena
- encourage and advise Waldorf initiatives and young schools
- help established schools meet challenges
- establish standards for member and accredited schools
- mentor teachers, and
- support teacher education

All these activities have a single goal: to serve children and parents in Canada, Mexico, and the United States by making a true Waldorf education accessible to as many families as possible.

In pursuing this goal, we at the Association—together with all those active in Waldorf Education—are, in an age of materialism and determinism, bearing witness to the spiritual nature of the child, the spiritual nature of the human being, and the spiritual nature of the universe. And we are working for the positive evolution of humanity and of human culture. Although beset by challenges, our work is important work.

For this reason, even this Sagittarian is glad for his fourteen years with the Association and can imagine a number more.

Book Review

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Goethe and the Power of Rhythm

A Biographical Essay

BY JOHN BARNES

REVIEWED BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) was one of the great universal geniuses of modern times. Best known as a poet, playwright, and novelist, Goethe was also a pioneering scientist. He developed the phenomenological approach to the study of nature, established morphology as an approach to botany and zoology, and made important contributions to mineralogy, to meteorology, and particularly to the study of color.

Goethe had a profound influence on Rudolf Steiner and, through Steiner, on Waldorf Education. Goethe's scientific method, which emphasizes the close observation of natural phenomena and the deepening and enlivening of one's observations through imaginative participation, is the basis of science study in the Waldorf elementary school. Also, Goethe's theory of color plays an important role in the Waldorf painting and art curriculum. More broadly, Goethe's phenomenological approach can be applied by teachers to deepen the presentation of every subject and also to aid teachers themselves in understanding their students.

In John Barnes's interesting and insightful essay about Goethe, he tells the story of Goethe's life and points out the underlying pattern of "death and rebirth" that characterizes it. Goethe almost died at birth and at the ages of 18, 37, 56, and 74 went through critical, life-changing experiences. At 18 he was at death's door, this time with a hemorrhaged lung; at 37 he suddenly left his post as a government minister in the duchy of Weimar and went to Italy; at 56 he lost his close friend, the poet Friedrich Schiller; and at 74 he again almost died from illness and also had an ill-fated relationship with the 19-year-old Ulrike von Levetzow. John Barnes observes that each of these crises was followed by a period of new artistic and intellectual creativity.

In the concluding section of the book, John Barnes relates this cycle of "breathing in and breathing out" in Goethe's life to a cosmic cycle—the 18.6-year interval



between moon nodes. The plane of the moon's orbit is tilted at a 5 degree angle in relation to the plane of the ecliptic, the sun's path through the zodiac. The points where the two planes intersect are called the moon nodes. Every 18.6 years, these nodes occur at the same location in the zodiac. According to Rudolf Steiner, our lives are deeply connected to the celestial bodies and to the spiritual beings who are manifest in them. The 18.6-year cycle of the moon's nodes is to some degree evident in the course of every human life.

In Goethe's case, the particularly powerful sequence of moon node crises allowed him, as John Barnes puts it, to build

a living bridge leading the creative human spirit to the creative spirit in nature. Through this cognitive breathing activity he laid the foundation of a science that encompasses, as living idea, the fullness of artistic experience and leads to a deeply religious view of the world. For, in the light of this science, there is nothing material that is not a revelation of the spirit, and there is no spirit that does not reveal itself in the material world.

At the heart of Goethe's experience lay the consciousness that the human being is a microcosm, the crowning achievement of creation into whom all the forces of nature have flowed. It was therefore his deep conviction that by developing the forces and faculties that lie within us, we will again find our way to a living connection with the creative forces in nature, in the macrocosm (p. 91).

The author, John Barnes, a former Waldorf class teacher, is editor-in-chief of Adonis Press, which specializes in the publication and distribution of books on Goethean science. The Adonis Press Web site is www.adonispress.org.