

Waldorf School Graduate Research Phase II

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*T*he Research Institute for Waldorf Education is currently undertaking the second phase of its research project concerning Waldorf high school graduates. Phase II will focus on the post-high school lives of Waldorf high school graduates. This second phase, designed by Douglas Gerwin and David Mitchell, will examine a wider range of life experiences and in greater depth than did Phase I. It will survey former students with regard to college and university graduations and types and levels of degrees earned. It will also collect data on occupations and careers, personal interests and activities, relationships to studies and work, the self-perceived quality of personal relationships, and major changes in physical and emotional health.

In addition to comparative data, Phase II will collect a sampling of anecdotal comments from employers and professors about their working relations with Waldorf high school graduates. All respondents' identities will be kept in confidence. The survey will also provide an international comparison between North American and German graduates of Waldorf schools; its results will be compared to a recent study of German Waldorf school graduates.

Phase II of the survey will be conducted in an electronic, on-line format. Each graduate will be sent an individualized, coded link to the website on which the survey is posted. We estimate that the actual survey should take on average about 30 minutes to complete.

Several challenges had to be mastered in order to use an electronic format. First, a host site for the survey had to be found, and then

the instrument construction software had to be mastered. Second, the survey had to be electronically constructed and tested, with glitches worked through and corrected. Now, in addition to traditional contact information, e-mail addresses for each contact have to be procured from schools. Once contact information has been gathered, e-mail addresses can be uploaded, links coded anonymously, and mailings and results more easily sent, tracked, and processed. We hope in the end to invite between five and seven hundred graduates to participate in the survey.

The previous issue of this journal contained the results of Phase I of the Research Institute's Waldorf graduates survey. That phase of the research project focused on college and university acceptances of Waldorf graduates during the past ten years, as well as alternate paths pursued by those who chose to defer college enrollment. The survey showed that not only are Waldorf high school graduates accepted by the finest schools in North America, but those choosing to defer higher education for a year are engaged in a wide array of creative and unique programs and activities. This information has already proved valuable to guidance counselors and development officers, dispelling myths and providing concrete evidence of the success of Waldorf high schools across the continent.

The support and cooperation of North American Waldorf high schools will continue to be essential to the success of this work. Introductory letters have been sent to twenty-seven high schools describing the survey and requesting thirty-six student contacts per

school—six contacts each from the graduating classes of 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002. Also requested, in the case of younger high schools, were six additional years before 2002, and, for older high schools, five contacts per decade prior to the 1990s. As noted in the Phase I report, some schools have excellent, up-to-date records reaching back for decades while others have had to generate this information anew as a result of our request. It is heartening, however, to report that all the schools contacted appreciate the value of this project and have pledged their support and cooperation.

The electronic version of the Phase II survey will have been designed and tested by the time you read this. Also by that time we plan to have sent out invitational e-mails to graduates and will, we hope, have started to collect data. We expect the survey collection window to be open for two months, from around Christmas 2005 through mid-winter 2006. We aim to have publishable results by early summer, in time for the start of the 2006–2007 academic year. As with Phase I, these results will give us a comprehensive overview of our graduates and will provide our high school admission directors, class advisors, and college counselors with a broad picture of Waldorf graduates and the influence of Waldorf education throughout life.

