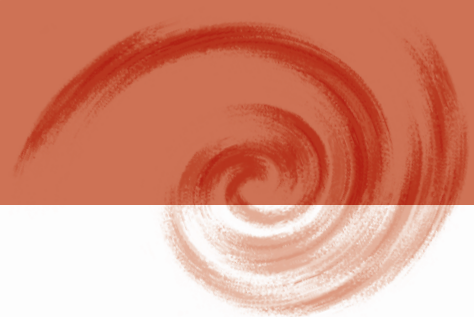




Report from the Co-Directors

David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin

During his closing address to the International Kolisko Conference this past summer in Sweden, Christof Wiechert, Leader of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum, divided the first century of Waldorf education into three distinct periods.¹ The first phase began with the original Waldorf School in 1919 and lasted some 30 years into the early 1950s; he characterized this period as “the descent of the Waldorf pedagogical impulse into the world.” During this time Waldorf education took root, first in Germany, then spread to other parts of Europe and, gradually, to other continents, starting with the United States in the 1920s.

Then came a second phase, which Wiechert characterized as the “age of pedagogical heroes.” During this time a gradually increasing number of Waldorf schools were shepherded by strong and often beloved individuals, who served essentially as self-reliant leaders surrounded by dedicated circles of teachers and parents. This phase, lasting somewhat more than 30 years, carried Waldorf education into the late 1980s.

Now, we have entered into a third and final phase of Waldorf education in this century in which individual heroes have either passed away or, at least, handed on the leadership of their schools to a new generation of teachers—and to a growing number of administrators. These groups face the task of leading their schools, not simply as single individuals, but in strong circles of collaboration. The key to success in this third phase, according to Wiechert, is that all of the colleagues in a school, not only those designated as its leaders, feel part of this circle of leadership. Otherwise, there is the risk that schools will attempt to hearken back to earlier—but by now outdated—forms of governance, or that the impulse of Waldorf education will simply withdraw from the field of education altogether and await another century and a new set of impulses.

Wiechert’s clarion call for a more intensive collaboration among Waldorf school educators underscores the importance of Waldorf

researchers sharing their insights, as well as their unresolved questions. Indeed, the purpose of this Kolisko conference of teachers and physicians—held every four years in the name of Eugen Kolisko, the first Waldorf school doctor—is to further collaboration among Waldorf educators, on the one hand, and physicians and therapists, on the other. At Wiechert’s prompting, some 40 conference participants interested in how Waldorf school graduates fare after high school met twice during the week-long gathering to hear initial findings of a joint survey of Waldorf alumni in North American and Europe. Results of this survey, which involved some 550 North America and more than 2,000 German and Swiss Waldorf school graduates, are previewed in this issue of the *Research Bulletin* and will appear later this year in a separate monograph.

This is only one of several collaborative projects under way between the Research Institute and the Pädagogische Forschungsstelle (the research arm of the association of German Waldorf schools, based in Stuttgart). An additional joint research venture, still in its early phase, concerns the effects of testing and other forms of assessment on children. It is planned that the collaborative work will result in a paper in support of children everywhere in the world who are confronted by high stakes testing. Alternative methods of student assessment from Waldorf schools will also be explored. If you have contributions that you would like to have considered, please contact us.

On the North American continent, the Research Institute continues to sponsor individual research projects and surveys, some of which are described in this issue, and to facilitate a new cycle of “Teaching Sensible Science,” a program for Waldorf school class teachers designed to deepen their teaching of science in the elementary grades. Beyond these special projects, the Research Institute provides ongoing support to teachers in the form of the Online Waldorf Library—www.waldorflibrary.org—and its own

website—www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org.

With the steady backing of the Waldorf Educational Foundation, the Waldorf Schools Fund, a small circle of individual and anonymous donors, and a growing number of supporting members and individual subscribers, the Research Institute has been able to stimulate new research projects within the Waldorf school movement and reach out to like-minded groups engaged in the educational issues of our times. The next cycle of projects includes:

- Further analysis of the Survey of Waldorf Graduates (Phase III)
- Survey of Waldorf school parents
- Research into the teaching of grammar
- Publication of a new set of education lectures by Rudolf Steiner, not previously translated, *Education, Teaching, and the Practical Life* (see excerpt in this edition of the *Research Bulletin*)
- Commissioning of articles by Institute Research Fellows

- Research on the effects of testing on children
- Joint publication with the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN) and the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) on research in Sweden and Germany on first grade readiness and school entry.

The Research Institute for Waldorf Education has several projects worthy of funding beyond the foundation grants that we currently receive. If you have the desire to support and further these efforts, a tax-deductible donation would be gratefully received.

1. Christof Wiechert, Lecture at the International Kolisko Conference, Järna, Sweden, August 2006.