

Reading in Waldorf Schools, Part III: Beginning in Sound and Form

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Children, and Lessons, as Musical or Sculptural Flowforms

Warm flow, movement, and rhythmic circulation are the means by which the human spirit builds and sculpts an embryo and a growing child, washing out unneeded hardening elements. Teachers join in this awe-inspiring work of nature and spirit by meeting a child—who is made up of a much higher percentage of water than an adult—with moving, breathing lessons that embody musical flow and that shape sculptural forms. In almost all of his major lectures on education, Rudolf Steiner speaks of lively new processes by which to teach writing and reading.¹ Each time Steiner approaches the subject, he does so undogmatically and from a new angle. For me, a key to all his suggestions about method is the way in which movement magically congeals into visible form. Both of these elements, movement and form, are accompanied by sound. Steiner's demonstration to teachers in Switzerland illuminates these three principles using two different approaches:

We must give [the child] an opportunity to give vent to this innate artistic drive by, for example, letting him run a curve (see diagram).

When we draw the child's attention to the fact that his legs have run such a curve on the floor, we lift up his will activity into a semiconscious feeling. The next step would be to ask the child to draw the curve he had run into the air, using his arm and hand. Now another form could be run on the floor, again to be "written" into the air. Thus the form that in the first instance was made by the entire body of the running child is subsequently reproduced merely by the use of his hand. The teacher asking the child to pronounce words beginning with the letter "L"



could follow this. (The German word for *run*, *laufen*, begins with "L".)



Gradually, under his or her guidance, the child will find the link between the shape he has run and drawn, and the sound of the appropriate letter "L."

Only after the experience of his own inner movement is the child led to the drawing of the actual letters. This would be one way of proceeding, but there is also another possibility. After the change of teeth, the child inwardly is not only a musician but, as an echo from earlier stages, he has remained also an inner sculptor. Therefore one can begin by talking to the child about the fish, gradually leading over artistically to its outer form, which the child will draw. Then, appealing to his sense of sound, one directs his attention from the whole word "fish" to the initial sound "F," in this way relating the shape of the letter to its sound.²

In many other lectures, instead of movement, Steiner starts with a visual, sculptural image, such as fish, bat, bear, mouth, or wave. The teacher introduces the image in a story. As part of this presentation, the teacher sketches a letter-like image of the image, a noun, on the blackboard. Students sound the whole word and then its signature first letter—for example, "F" for fish. The single letter is abstracted from the image and simplified into a symbol to be copied and practiced alone, in whole words, and even in sentences, right from the start.

The preponderance of Steiner's lectures sketches out this second, "sculptural image mode" of introducing letters. This has resulted, in my experience, in many teachers' emphasis of nouns and images, neglecting, to a degree, examples of

1. For a comprehensive collection of key excerpts, see Roberto Trostli's *Teaching Language Arts in the Waldorf School*, published by AWSNA Publications.

2. Steiner, *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education*, 1986, pp.147–50.

the “musical movement mode.” Yet children in their essential beings are living verbs and moving flowforms.

We must lead [the child] in harmony with what wants to flow from his own being. The right way of introducing the child to reading and writing is to allow the formative forces—which up to his seventh year have been working upon the physical organization and which are now being released for outer soul activities—to become actively engaged.³

I suggest, therefore, that teachers develop many more letters from actions, as Steiner shows with *run* above. In conjuring up the Russian witch Baba Yaga’s hut, for example, which stands on chicken legs, the noun or image of *legs* immediately comes to mind. One can nicely extract the two leggy letters LL side by side standing and lifting up the hut. But why not use the movement or verb mode, and emphasize the word and action *LIFT*? Let the verb be stressed and resound in an alliterative verse, learned by heart and chanted daily (at least for a while):

Two Little Legs LIFTED the Log hut
Legs that were LEFT from you guess what!



Of course, the children then point out the L-words in the verse, nouns such as *Legs* and *Log*, but at least the teacher has started in the verb mode where the action and children reside. Many other verbs that lend themselves readily to image making include jump, kick, slither, flicker, pound, zigzag, curl, hold, leap, and yell.

Moving

No matter how teachers start a letter—whether it

is with the “sculptural image” or the “musical action” approach—there should always be a lot of flow and movement. Gross motor activity translates into the small motor actions of painting and drawing, and, finally, into writing letter and word forms. The first alphabet study of a Waldorf school first grade purposely begins with three to four weeks of movement translated into form drawing, an action geometry that captures body actions in letter-related forms. Children learn to “read” a language of universal forms that they act out externally and then gradually internalize as symbols. The next step is to read what they themselves have produced by hand, their own hand-writing. This method anchors reading healthfully in the whole body, even in the legs:

We teach them to copy the writing. Make sure that what they see passes through their hands, so that they not only read with their eyes but also form what they read with their hands. In this way they come to know that they themselves can give form to whatever is on the blackboard. We do not let the children learn to read unless they can form what they see with their hands, both handwritten and printed letters. We thus accomplish something that is very important—children never read with their eyes only, but the activity of the eyes passes mysteriously into the whole activity of their limbs. Children then feel unconsciously, all the way into their legs, what would otherwise pass only through their eyes. Our aim is to interest the whole human being in this activity.⁴

Reading has the tendency to isolate people in their heads as passive, superficial onlookers. Steiner wanted to avoid educating human beings who abstractly “inhabit the world with only the head, and the rest of their being merely trail[ing] along behind.”⁵ Using the hand in writing in the right way pulls reading into realms of will and greater body engagement. Steiner recommends that a “painting-like” style be taught in which children take an artistic delight in thoughtfully seeing each form they shape. He suggests that first graders paint the letters in order to develop, in flowing watercolor, a graceful stroke in handwriting. Wet watercolor painting not only harmonizes

3. Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness and Waldorf Education*, 1988, pp. 83–84.

4. Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers*, 2000, p. 6.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

with a child's watery, dreamy state of being, and helps young eyes to adjust to making forms on paper, but also nurtures what Steiner calls a sense of life or vitality, *Lebenssinn*. This sense, he says, later metamorphoses into the higher sense of thought or concept as part of a child's development. Painting is thus a suitable artistic medium for forming and apprehending letter symbols which become, in their final essence, concepts.

Aspects of Steiner's approach to flowing writing are reminiscent of Japanese brush calligraphy and painting, which are characterized by a spiritual lightness and grace, and which he recommends as an activity in eighth grade Asian geography.⁶ Steiner opposes handwriting that is mechanical, thoughtless, and comes too rigidly "out of the wrist." In his opinion, such handwriting is a symptom of cultural hardening that traps human beings in fixed forms and, thereby, interferes with the flow and development of imagination in life. In my experience, changing one's handwriting in a more artistic direction can have positive, centering effects on a personality. One's handwriting bears a personal stamp and is a seismographic printout of one's soul. As graphologist Joen Gladich of *The Write Approach* points out, "My handwriting is me [sic]."⁷ According to Steiner, the activity of handwriting, like form drawing, is closely connected to the flowing life forces that sculpt our physical form. Handwriting can be a powerful educational tool in the development of children.

Karl König, founder of the Camphill Communities for the mentally challenged, offers remarkable insights into why it is wise to ground reading in handwriting and eye-hand coordination. He reminds us of the interrelated motor nature of the eye, hand, and larynx. All of these move because of muscles; all three appear to communicate with each other through the motor areas of the brain. Between them there exists a special cooperation and connection:

[T]he eyeball... is surrounded by seven muscles.⁸ These turn the eyeball in every possible direction. The eyeball is, in point of fact, the

ideal joint. The interplay of these seven muscles brings about the music of the interplay of movement of the eyeball, and ... [in writing] this movement concert has to transform into the active movement of our fingers. The fingers, hand and lower arm are simply the muscles of the eye when writing just as much as the eye muscles are used when reading. I transfer actively this process into my hands. The fountain pen which I hold in my fingers is like the eye. So in a way we see that the activities of writing and reading are similar. The primary activity lies in the larynx as a motor organ. It is a tube which is moved by muscles and the result is speaking. [T]his same motor ability when going into the hand can produce writing or when going into the eye becomes reading. This is the basis of the motor activity of these functions, and we understand that hearing is related to reading and writing. Where do we find hearing in the activity of reading and writing? When we listen to someone speaking, it is not only the realm of sense perception, of knowing or comprehending knowledge, but though rather diminished it is also an activity in the realm of motor action. When we listen to someone, we repeat the words that are spoken actively, though involuntarily in our larynx. Our larynx moves in concordance with what we hear and we must be aware of the fact that if this would not be done we would not be able to understand.⁹

When children first read sentences on their own, many naturally rely on a finger to point to one word at a time as their hand moves across the page. They also tend to read aloud before internalizing and reading to themselves. As their eyes follow a line of writing, their larynxes vibrate, and they feel compelled to mumble the words aloud as they read, while following the text with their hands. Eye, hand, and larynx differentiate functions over time but are, at first, clearly related in the new act of reading.

Steiner felt so strongly about firmly developing the language arts in the beginning from its motor foundation and "right down into the legs" that he even recommended doing some writing with the feet. This was another way neurological-ly to anchor an otherwise academic process in the

6. For more on Japanese painting and painterly writing, see *Practical Advice to Teachers*, Lecture 5. 11, p. 149, and Gisela O'Neil, "The Teaching of Handwriting," typescript available at the Rudolf Steiner Library.

7. Gladich and Sassi, 1991.

8. Some physiologists say that the eye is controlled by six muscles, but the point is unchanged. —ed.

9. König, 1957, pp. 31–32.

whole body—most specifically in the organs of movement that give birth to language. On several occasions he made teachers aware of how speech and language, specifically, have their roots in our hands, arms, and legs, our organs of movement and will. What is more, he showed how a child's lower sense of self-movement metamorphoses into her higher sense of language or word. Language researcher Johannes Kiersch sums up Steiner's remarkable findings:

[Early language acquisition] achieves its individual form not through participatory imitation, but through the type of motor activity peculiar to early infancy. In several lectures of 1923 and 1924, Rudolf Steiner describes in what subtle ways the human capacity for speech is predisposed by the occurrence of certain leg, arm and finger movements. Thus he maintains that the structuring of language in sentences is anticipated through vigorous, regular movements of the legs, good pronunciation through harmonious arm movements, and the sense for the modulation of speech through the child's experiencing the life in her fingers.¹⁰

Current research increasingly shows how bipedality and hand activity in particular play a crucial evolutionary and developmental role in building up the unique brain of *Homo sapiens* and how gestural limb activity is intimately entwined with speech and other higher functions.¹¹ According to John Ratey, of Harvard Medical School,

[M]ounting evidence shows that movement is crucial to every other brain function, including memory, emotion, language, and learning.¹²

Whether the activity is maintaining body temperature, dancing like Mikhail Baryshnikov, or learning to read, movement cannot be separated from other brain systems. A lot of brain function is essentially movement.¹³

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Because of speech's origins in movement and gesture, it is valuable and natural for children in the early grades to activate and refine their motor

abilities to facilitate academic skills in language arts and math. To this end, Steiner created educational eurythmy, an art of movement that is an amazing support to the learning of writing, reading, and many other capacities. Through it, a child's entire body becomes a vehicle for expressing all the letters and sounds of the alphabet, making visible both musical flow and sculptural forms in space. The whole body learns to dance,

sing, and speak. Our higher sense of language—of the word—resides in our whole body and is a metamorphosis of our lower sense of movement. We are shaped and made human by the word.

Sounding

Both the “musical action” and “sculptural image” approaches to writing and reading are related to the sources of eurythmy. They are translated by a teacher into what Steiner calls “sounding picture-like letters,” artistic syntheses of moving sound and formed image. We make an immediate connection between breathed sound (lung-larynx-ear) and hand-drawn pictorial letter (hand-eye coordination) in learning letters. Children feel the experience in their lungs:

[W]e strike a chord with which the souls of children happily vibrate, because they are then no longer interested in the external aspects but see, for example, how a breathed sound is expressed in reading and writing.¹⁴

By drawing or writing a letter that resounds with sound, children recapitulate an organic evolutionary process:

When the art of writing arose, things were different. In certain areas, pictorial signs were used, and a kind of pictorial painting was employed. Later, this was standardized, but originally those drawings copied the process

10. Kiersch, 1997, pp. 34–35.

11. Wilson, 1998.

12. Ratey, 2001, p. 148.

13. Ibid., p. 55.

14. Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers*, 2000, p. 5.

and feeling of the sounds; thus, what appeared on paper was, to some extent, a reproduction of what lived in the soul [as sound].¹⁵

Further, sounds reverberate not only in breath and soul, but also in the high water content of children's organisms.¹⁶ Water is an incredible conductor of sound. The flow of fluids in the body sensitively resonates to penetrating sounds, which blend with and affect our body-forming life forces. In the flowing process of writing, particularly cursive writing, we externalize our inner experience. Every word or sentence we write is a formed river of sound waves, streaming from left to right (or, in other cultures, in other directions, depending on inner experience).

Research shows, further, how alphabet sounds sculpt beautiful, jellyfish-like forms in the air (usually invisibly, right under our noses) and how musical tones produce remarkable water forms. Johanna Zinke, for example, has photographed and filmed distinct forms generated in the air when speaking each of the alphabet sounds. Pronouncing "B," for instance, or "O," consistently produces particular moving forms in the air. These are visible if the speaker has inhaled some nontoxic smoke and speaks into still air. Similarly, Hans Jenny and, most recently, Alexander Lauterwasser have photographically recorded stunning sound forms in water and other flowing media.¹⁷

The power of linguistic sound to shape children as "flowforms" of water and air should not be underestimated. Steiner recommends "chiseling" the consonants when telling fairy tales to children in the early grades to produce a magical atmosphere. In my own teaching, I found that artistically sculpting my speech in this way made me more present in the story, and I could sense how this conscious speech-formation translated directly into child-formation. With young children as my teachers, I also came to experience what Steiner meant when he pointed out that "every [letter] sound corresponds to an expression of life; consonants imitate an external world and the vowels express inner soul experience."¹⁸

Articulated, meaningful sound becomes for a human being the all-permeating integrator and bridge between the world outside and the soul inside.

In first grade, I therefore gave my children daily and vigorous "alphabet sound baths" that I am convinced reverberated profoundly in their water-filled organisms and on the lyre of their souls. Regular, rhythmic recitations of sound verses and songs helped them to appreciate the wonder and beauty of language and to differentiate letter sounds and combinations, including the subtle nuances of short vowels. Individual children, for example, took turns coming to the front of the room and pointing with a "magic" stick to alphabet pictures and symbols above the blackboard. Full of anticipation regarding what a classmate might choose, the rest of the class then burst forth into a full choral recitation of a verse to accompany the chosen letter. For weeks on end, first graders never tired of unleashing waves of speech and sound to fill the room. Stormily, they bellowed the W-verse, with waving arms, in surging rows of seven-year-old bodies:

The waves of the water washed against the
whale
Waiting for the wind and the ships to sail.

The classroom became a moving sea of sounding form. When they then wrote down the little W, it still felt alive and undulating with the sea and the breath of the wind. And when we read what we had written, it was never silent but always aloud. Reading with children in grades 1–3 needs to resound through their entire airy and watery beings.

I might also add that all the vowels, as well as the consonants, resounded in verses and stories. Mighty angels intoned the long vowels and little angels called out the short ones. Working with the idea that vowels especially "express inner soul experience," I emphasized in my approach less the "visual-sculptural image" aspect and drawing—which work so well with the consonants as reflections of the outer world—and much more the feelings and moods provoked by the subject matter. For example, while the angels in one of my stories sing the long vowel "E" sound

15. Steiner, *The Roots of Education*, 1997, pp. 52–53.

16. See Auer's Part 2, *Research Bulletin* Vol. XII, # 1.

17. Zinke, 2003, and Lauterwasser, 2007.

18. Steiner, *Human Values in Education*, 2004, pp. 56–61.

in the heavens, a child on earth gleefully swings on a vine. I later made up a sound verse for my class chorus:

Eee, he shrieked in glee from tree to tree.

Or, his sister suddenly comes upon the most beautiful field in the world and experiences a feeling of tremendous wonder, captured in the sound “O”:

O, how the yellow flowers glow in the meadow.

As a class teacher, however, I discovered that working with the vowels in the English language is not as straightforward as in German. I had to consult eurythmists and experienced colleagues about their approaches and am still researching ways to organically present vowels in English. I hope to summarize my findings in a future article.¹⁹

From Sound to Form

Another warming aspect of each school day occurs when a teacher tells a story, knowing it by heart. On such occasions we find ourselves, students and teacher, sitting around the glowing fire of imagination. Both teacher and children flow into and bond in a unifying inner space, “once upon a time and far away.” And the light, warmth, and atmosphere of this inner space are conjured up and permeated by the musical sound of the teacher’s enthusiastic, winged words.

Steiner gives a whole array of artistic means for a teacher to shape her speech so that it can powerfully resound in and shape a child’s receptive fluid organism and language abilities. Listening intently to a story, told live and soul-to-soul, the children exercise and deepen capacities of listening and hearing that are more intense than usual. Listening attentively and deeply to the teacher’s voice every day, year after year, becomes the practicing ground for listening openly to others in later life, and also for listening deeply within oneself. This listening within leads to the inner voice that grows as a child matures into adolescence. Attentive and open listening can

then take on the character of what Steiner calls a capacity for inspiration in life—being attentive, open, and developing the inner muscle to be inwardly still so that something new can be inspired and heard within. It is a preparation for the deeper voice of conscience.

The entire creative process of a lesson becomes a fusion of the creative qualities of imagination, inspiration, and intuition—the last being the ability to flow into a subject with full loving engagement, absorption, and compassion. Such vital human capacities are at the heart of what Waldorf education strives to cultivate in children. These are ever more difficult to achieve because of the hectic pace and superficial distractions of modern life. Their development stands behind the teaching and learning process and informs it at its deepest levels. A long-time British class teacher, teacher educator, and researcher, Brien Masters, beautifully describes how these three qualities apply, in particular, to the details of a class teacher’s preparation of the consonant letters from sound to form:

After a few preliminaries, such as choosing letters of the alphabet and deciding in what order they are to be introduced to the class, the Waldorf teacher needs to become active in certain creative spheres: in the first place, connected with sound and form. Through inwardly listening to the sound that the consonant makes, the teacher arrives at what might be termed the creative essence of the letter. From that, and from the images arising from words in which that essence is expressed (or, in which the sound is incorporated), the teacher moves from sound to form—from a creative force to something of a personified image. . . . In striving to discern the essence of the sound of the letter, the teacher is having to develop and exercise Inspiration. In striving to impart being (personification) to the essence that has been discerned, or discover being within it, the teacher is having to develop and exercise Intuition. And in striving to derive an image of that essential being (the focal point of the story that is subsequently drawable on the board and in the child’s book), the teacher is having to develop and exercise Imagination. . . . Through the abundance of the teacher’s creativity, through which the child’s first meeting with literacy is ushered in, the child is kept

19. For more on the special approach to vowels, see Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers*, 2000, pp. 68–69; Aeppli, 1986, pp. 29–33; and McAllen, 2002, pp. 53–55.

buoyant on the stream of the spirit of the letter.²⁰

These three aspects of a teacher's artistic striving then readily metamorphose and translate into the children's creative activities and learned capacities. Recitation stimulates inner picturing in storytelling and listening, play-acting (which embodies moving images), painting and drawing, and, finally, flowing handwriting of letter symbols, proudly admired and read.

Steiner gives an especially illuminating example of how a teacher "moves from sound to form," as Brien Master's describes it, and how a letter-form can congeal slowly out of imagination:

Suppose... we give the child an imaginative idea of the movement of the wind. This is the better way with little children, though, of course there are many possibilities. We describe the on-rushing wind and let the child imitate its sound and so come to such a form as this [below]. . . . Thus by holding fast in painting the form of definitely shaped objects, movements or even activities, we can develop nearly all the consonants.²¹



Here the teacher conjures up an image with resounding words and strongly emphasizes the sound of the subject made visible in an eight-part form drawing sequence that ends in the conventional symbol "S."²² In my previous example, "Waves of Wind" shaped into the form "W," but here the hiss of the wind's sound vibrates into "S."

This approach adds another way to introduce letters, one closely related to the "action-movement-musical" mode. We find, then, at least four kinds of emphasis in Steiner's approaches to the consonants:

1. Emphasizing a visual sculptural image. For example, Fish, Bear, Mouth, Dome, Wave, or Water give F, B, M, D, or W;
2. Emphasizing an action, a "musical-movement" image. For example, *run*—in German, *laufen*—gives L;
3. Emphasizing a sound image. For example, the "hiss" of wind gives S; and
4. Emphasizing a moral and aesthetic attitude, for example, taking baths and cleanliness—hearing a word from the teacher who simply writes it on the blackboard for children to see, pronounce, copy, and practice saying its first letter sound—B for bath.²³

All of these approaches contain visual, kinesthetic, and auditory aspects, but their predominant character depends on what sensory—or even moral and aesthetic experience—the teacher chooses to stress to the children that day. In my mind, a varied diet of approaches is healthiest for a well-rounded human cognition that includes intellectual-head intelligence (imaging, picturing), emotional-heart intelligence (mood-creating sound), and volitional-will intelligence (action). Imagination, the core of human cognition, is not just fed by visualization, but embraces a rich complexity of other sensory modalities, including experiences of movement and hearing.

Flowing Organically

The Waldorf school approach is thus intended to honor the natural state of a child up through grade 3 as a predominantly moving, sensing, and imagining being who needs to "gently abstract" herself in a particular way from the unity with the world that is characteristic of early childhood. Our method moves from speaking and moving, through imaging, painting, and drawing, to handwriting and what we may call "hand-reading." Listening to the warm, winged words of a teacher, acting out rhythmic body motions, creating pictures, and artistic handwriting help make this separation gradual and organic. These activities keep the child flowing into and connecting with abstracted letters and words, which have been artistically ensouled, warmed through with life,

20. Masters, 2002, pp. 34–38.

21. Steiner, *A Modern Art of Education*, 1972, p. 137.

22. The shapes Steiner depicts remind one of the geometric sound patterns discovered by the scientist Chladni and reproduced by Waldorf school sixth graders in their first physics block. Salt is sprinkled onto a metal plate that is caused to vibrate by the stroke of a cello bow. Beautiful forms result. Steiner saw in this acoustic phenomenon a picture of the formative power of sound in organizing the material world out of the spirit.

23. See Steiner's *Practical Advice to Teachers*, Lecture V, for an explanation of this interesting aesthetic, moral approach. Children in his day needed to be encouraged to bathe more.

and which still tingle with action. According to Steiner, breath and blood will pulse differently in children who learn to read in this way, keeping them young, fresh, and buoyant. They will not read mechanically, but with soul, with an animated voice, and they will not write mechanically, but with a graceful hand. They will not be subject to the hardening effects of premature intellectual development, sophistication, and sexual ripening characterized by psychologist David Elkind as “growing up too fast” with “nowhere else to go.” The state of childhood is given its proper time and space and is thus protected by organism-appropriate artistic writing that leads into reading.

To meet the challenge of making reading organism-appropriate, Steiner created an artistic method that allows a child to neurologically recapitulate in a healthy manner the way in which humanity historically abstracted alphabet letters out of pictures. For developmental reasons, the Waldorf school pictographic method first exposes the six- or seven-year-old's tender, still forming nervous system to moving, sounding, and forming picture images, using storytelling and drawing or painting. Teachers guide a child to discover a conventional alphabet form in an image or action. She then abstracts the symbolic form out of living picture and experience. The emergent letter, although a skeleton of its former fullness, still retains some of the warm, ensouled magic of its birth. Children listen, imagine, move, recite, paint, draw, write, and then, finally, read what they themselves have physically produced and written. From moving and sounding through picture forming to writing to reading is the active, hands-on, hearts-on Waldorf school way. This multidimensional, multi-sensory process neurologically anchors the conventional alphabet and writing in a child's soul, brain, and organism through full-bodied engagement.

The conventional skill of reading is developed in Waldorf schools, above all, out of movement upon which all the brain's highest functions depend. This is done in a dreamy, artistic way because that seems to be the best condition for

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neural networks to knit together to support lasting capacities. The Waldorf school reading method allows more time for a child's forming brain to adjust to the considerable new demands of language development in grades 1–3 (when the speech areas are established, usually on the left side of the brain, by age nine or ten). It does not

subject a child's soul and brain too rapidly and intensely to the cool web of machine-printed symbols. Pushing the activity of reading too quickly on young brains can cloud or even blind the mind's eye, and can be obtained only at a sacrifice of other valuable capacities.²⁴

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child's natural imaging ability, a right-brain trait, is ingeniously strengthened and enhanced, while, at the same time, the language abilities of the left-brain are being firmly established. Waldorf school students learn to move easily back and forth between their right- and left-brain hemispheres, a real asset for later life in any profession in which one needs to be both logically organized and, at the same time, flexibly creative. These students remember and comprehend much more readily what they read because they can imagine it fully. They do not usually require stopgap reading comprehension measures and techniques, necessary with children whose inner sight or hearing is dimmed or even blinded—and who cannot picture sequentially what they read. Every day in regular Waldorf school recall and review exercises,

24. Interestingly, this method, in my experience, avoids aggravating dyslexic tendencies in certain children, especially with its emphasis on imaging and form drawing. Dyslexics, as quintessential “mind's eye imaginers” are often the casualties of standard reading approaches. In my view, they are evolution's resistance fighters and heroes in our overly intellectual time. At great emotional cost to themselves, they resist society's tragic deadening of childhood imagination and other capacities. Dyslexics do not allow normal, intense reading techniques to sabotage their inner picturing capacities with rapid-fire reading and writing techniques (See Davis 1994, *The Gift of Dyslexia*). Form drawing and modeling exercises in reversed mirror images, symmetry, and spirals, with their multidirectional dynamics, have been found to be valuable for these children. Such action geometry works on the sense of balance in relation to sight as well as to the sense of hearing. Some dyslexic tendencies have been related to disturbance in the inner ear.

Waldorf school pupils recollect what they are able to see or hear in the rich memory of their mind's eyes and mind's ears. A sense for imagery, metaphor, and the musicality of language is systematically cultivated throughout the grades. Language does not cool down and dim imagination, but warms the mind with words that sing and take wing.

Ideally, Waldorf school graduates themselves take wing into life, inspired and with their eyes—and ears and hearts—all open. They have the capacities to imagine change and to respond to new conditions intuitively and creatively. They are able to make refined judgments affecting their destinies, and they are able to discern how best to incarnate their deepest heartfelt intentions. Learning to read—to read books with warm interest, to read the world and themselves perceptively—helps them on their way.

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