

Report from the Co-Directors

David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin

Since the publication of the last *Bulletin*, the leit-motif for the work the Research Institute for Waldorf Education has been “reaching out.” Late autumn and Easter saw trips and presentations in Germany and Switzerland. In Stuttgart we met and had fruitful conversations with the Board of the Pädagogische Forschungsstelle—the European equivalent of the Research Institute. We also visited Kassel and met with leaders in the phenomenological scientific work at the teacher training seminar there. We presented the *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II* at the world leadership gathering of the Pedagogical Section and gave a course on “Will-Developed Intelligence” at the eighth World Teachers’ Conference, both events at the Goetheanum.

During these visits we established many key connections, among them contacts that will help inform schools in North America about international investigations concerning Waldorf education. We extended our cooperation with the European Union of Waldorf Schools through meetings with Christopher Clouder; we initiated an exchange of conferences based on phenomenological science in high schools with colleagues from the teachers seminar in Kassel, Germany; and we exchanged research information with Professor Christian Rittelmeyer from the Georg-August University in Göttingen, Germany, and Dr. Dirk Cysarz from the University of Witten/Herdecke, Germany. Rittelmeyer’s research focuses on the brain and its role in learning, and Cysarz specializes in researching heart and breathing rhythms and the effects of artistic therapies within anthroposophical medicine (see his article in this issue of the *Bulletin*). Watch for forthcoming articles on rhythms and brain research in future AWSNA publications. These visits to Europe also allowed us to deepen our work with Christof Wiechert and the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum.

We have completed the *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase III*. This publication includes synopses, comparisons, and analyses of the three

major studies of Waldorf graduates and an evaluation of Waldorf methodology. The studies were conducted in Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, and North America. This third phase of our survey features constructive criticism offered by Waldorf graduates and suggestions on how schools can use this information in their processes of self-assessment and renewal. Finally, we have updated the popular pamphlet *Results of Waldorf Education* to include the most current information from the surveys. Both survey follow-up and pamphlet will be available this summer at the website of the Research Institute,

www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org

and in hard copy from AWSNA Publications.

Pressed into action by the dangers to children resulting from the 2002 Act—No Child Left Behind—a team of Waldorf educators representing the United States and Germany, led by the co-directors of the Research Institute, has written a white paper on high-stakes testing in which we offer alternatives to quantitative assessment and underline the importance of honoring the developmental stages of childhood. This paper, with a more detailed research document on the effects of state-mandated tests, can be read on both websites of the Research Institute—

www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org

and

www.waldorflibrary.org.

In cooperation with the Waldorf Curriculum Fund, the Research Institute is working to make available valuable out-of-print titles on, or related to, Waldorf education. These titles will be available as electronic books that can also be downloaded from both websites. Soon to be released will be three fruits from the first efforts:

- *Waldorf Curriculum Studies: Science in Education*, a collection of fifty-eight essays from the periodical *Child and Man* on the topic of

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science in the Waldorf schools. These essays, originally published by the Rudolf Steiner Fellowship in the U.K., provide an invaluable resource and inspiration for both class teachers and high school specialists on many topics in science related to Waldorf school curricula.

- *The Gospel of Hellas*, by Friedrich Hiebel, a study of Ancient Greece long treasured by experienced Waldorf school teachers. We are delighted to make this publication available for a new generation of teachers.

- *Handwork: Indications by Rudolf Steiner*, by Hedwig Haucht, the original handwork book written by the first handwork teacher in the Stuttgart Waldorf School. This profusely illustrated volume contains many examples arising from her conversations with Rudolf Steiner.

A symposium on the teaching of grammar, sponsored by the Research Institute with the help of a grant from the Waldorf Educational Foundation, was held this spring under the direction of Anne Greer, who, with fourteen experienced Waldorf teachers, explored advances she has developed in a phenomenological approach to grammar teaching. Her report on this symposium can be found in this issue of the *Bulletin*. The results of Greer's effort will appear in a source book to be published next autumn by the Research Institute and made available through AWSNA Publications.

Research on parenting in Waldorf schools across North America, conducted by Martin Novom, continues. Novom is conducting surveys of Waldorf parents in order to generate a database of sufficient size to draw conclusions about the changing role of parents in Waldorf schools. This research will be valuable to schools in their assessment of parent participation and the most effective ways to manage the volunteer culture so important in our work.

In collaboration with Rudolf Steiner College, the Research Institute is working to host a colloquium on physics teaching from October 16–19, 2008. The working title of the gathering is “Physics, Phenomena, and Personal Growth in Waldorf Education: What? Why? And What Else?” We hope that every Waldorf school with grades through at least six will plan to be represented. Proceedings from the colloquium will be published by the Research Institute and made available through AWSNA Publications. Contact Rudolf Steiner College for more information on this colloquium.

The third cycle of the popular course for class teachers on “Teaching Sensible Science” is underway on the West Coast with the largest enrollment to date. Word is getting around about the thoroughness of this AWSNA/Research Institute project for improving science teaching in our elementary grades. Further rounds of this course are being planned for the East Coast and the Midwest, to start next year, beginning with a week in Saratoga Springs, New York, from February 14–20, 2009.