

More Online!

David Blair

Readers may be interested to look at three articles that are to be found in their entirety on the website of the *Research Bulletin* (<http://www.waldorflibrary.org/ResearchBulletin.htm>). The first is Saralea Chazan's study of the Children's Developmental Play Instrument (CDPI), reviewed in this issue by Renate Long-Breipohl. Though not prepared by or for Waldorf teachers, the study does reflect a growing scholarly interest in childhood play and its role in learning. Perhaps after reading Dr. Breipohl's review, one might be inclined to follow the above link to examine the actual study more closely.

Also of note is a study of *Why Peer Discussion Improves Student Performance on In-Class Concept Questions*, by M.K. Smith, W.B. Wood, W.K. Adams, C. Wieman, J.K. Knight, N. Guild, and T.T. Su. This is also a non-Waldorf inspired work but not without thought-provoking implications for Waldorf teachers as well as anyone practicing or studying education. The basic premise of the study might be summarized in this way: Students learn better (measured in the study by greater success on in-class tests) when they engage each other in discussion of a topic, rather than simply receiving a presentation from a teacher or lecturer. The study was also designed to examine the role of discussion in learning, specifically to identify how students benefit from such discussion. That is, do they just learn better when a peer explains something to them instead of the teacher, or is something more mysterious at work? According to the carefully designed study, the latter seems likely, because students in those discussion groups with no participant having a previous understanding of the topic had similar success to groups that

contained student "plants" who had already demonstrated understanding of the material and who were therefore placed in a group to help promote successful results. According to the findings, students weren't simply copying the wisdom of others in the groupings but were finding solutions on their own quite successfully.

Finally, readers may want to take a look at Peter Glasby's review of a Kolisko Conference workshop that took place in Sydney, Australia, on the topic of *Adolescents: Their Relationship to the Night and Senses in Connection with Their Own Development*. This intriguing workshop report makes one wish, first of all, that one had been present to benefit directly from the imagination and planning of the presenters. Of special note was the effort to imbed the theme of the course (night learning) into the work of the participants during the course of the workshop itself. Taking as its starting point Rudolf Steiner's statement to the first Waldorf teachers that we must teach the children how to sleep, the course tried to answer more deeply the questions: What is taking place in the night and how is it related to what has come before in the classroom and what will follow the next day? Specific examples were examined in relation to the science curriculum and the phenomenological study of physics in particular. Weaving together practical classroom experiments with thoughts of Steiner's and Goethe's as well as biographical sketches from the life of Helen Keller, the group was asked to consider the relationship between their daytime experiences with the 12 senses and the complementary journey at night into the 12 zodiacal directions of space. The report also establishes interesting connections

with the Rittelmeyer and Guttenhöfer articles in this issue of the *Research Bulletin* on the human body as resonance organ and the form of the main lesson, respectively. There is much food for thought, though as a report from a conference, one accompanies the workshop members through the activities without, of course, coming to conclusions that might have been more fully appreciated had one been present.

Among many powerful quotations cited is this one:

When we look up to the wonder of the starry world, when we contemplate the whole process of the universe with its glories and marvels, then we are at last led to the feeling that all of the glory that lies open to our view in the whole universe that surrounds us only has meaning when it is reflected in the admiring human soul.

— J.W. Goethe