

Self-Review for the Teacher

• Sally Schweizer

Sally writes, “Some years ago I began to write down questions I had asked myself regarding my work with children and the adults surrounding them; it made it easier not to forget things, as I wanted to feel I was doing the best I could and improve where I knew I was not. Since having the joyful, rewarding and challenging task of being an early childhood advisor for the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, I have extended them and occasionally offered them to a colleague. Now I have been asked to pass on these contemplations to Kindling [our sister publication in the UK].”

The being of the teacher is more important than the doing. —Rudolf Steiner

The teacher’s example is vital: who we are is soaked up by the child.

Am I aware of my own being as a moral example, of my movements, my inner gesture, my thoughts, my speech, and how and what I said? Do I constantly seek to renew my work?

Do I love all the children unconditionally? Am I open to all of them equally, to their strivings and difficulties? Do I have an imagination of their higher being, in their presence as well as in my meditation? Do I remind myself of their tender sense-being? Am I kind and joyful, understanding and attentive to the children’s needs? Do I pay enough attention to care and detail in my work with the children? Have I noticed individual children enough, especially the quiet ones?

Was I appreciative of the helpers, children, parents, and my colleagues? Did we make the visitor feel welcome and cared for? Did I allow my helpers, colleagues, and parents to make suggestions and help me, and even to know

better? Did I happily ask them for help? Did I accept criticism with humility and use it to expand my thinking? Was there a moment to help parents in a friendly and humorous way not to spoil their children—for example not to dress them or carry their things?

What conscious opportunity for imitation did I offer? Did I remember that the children copy *everything*? When did I use gesture rather than my voice? Was there a dreamy mood of the fifth in the room? Were there fun, joy and sparkle in my kindergarten? Was there inner warmth? Was I too serious or whispering unnecessarily, or too noisy or talkative? Did I listen to the mood in the room or was I too busy? Did I *have* to be so busy? Am I trying to do too much? Was one of the adults sitting as a quiet, constant pole?

Was I aware enough of the children's dream consciousness and did I give enough opportunity for development of the will? Was I actually authoritative and instructive on occasion? Did the children come out of freedom to what we did, out of free flow, of their own free will? Did I engage them enough in preparing and *ending* every activity: break, painting, tidy up time, drawing, and leaving the cloakroom tidy, thereby bringing everything to a conclusion, developing conscientiousness, responsibility and other aspects of the will? Were they active enough or did they have to be needlessly passive? Did the children have to sit in silence or wait unreasonably? Did I expect too much or too little of them? Did I give enough boundaries, firmness, and consequences? Did I use playful ways and humor? Was there enough fun and activity for the boys, especially the older ones—rough and tumble/workbench/big building/ropes? Was there enough for the older children: errands, proper responsibility, and special tasks? How was my time-keeping? Did the morning flow from one

activity to another with rhythm and without breaks or authority?

Is my room beautiful? Are the plants watered and do the flowers have fresh water? Are shelves, lampshades and cupboards clean? Are cupboards, shelves and drawers tidy and attractive? Have I checked that cushions, veils, dolls and puppets are clean and mended? Is there no damaged furniture, and are other playthings in order: no knots in ropes, broken pinecones or play stands? Are the crayons clean and block crayons still as blocks? Are outside playthings and tools put away, clean, mended, and tidy? Did I attend to the children's clothing indoors and out (warmth, suitability, logos, slippers)? Have I attended to health and safety aspects: attendance register/gates/matches/candles? What about toilet time, including checking and if necessary properly cleaning between children? Hand-washing before food preparation by both children and adults? Rinsing of washing up? What else can I do to enhance the children's habit life?

Have I found time for myself and practiced some artistic activity every day?

The Three "R"s: Reverence for each other, Reverence for ourselves, Reverence for the environment. Do I practice these in myself, and with others?

I hope some of these questions may be useful to others in their vital, joyful, rewarding and challenging task of being there for the young child.

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