

“Teaching Sensible Science” Heads West

Michael D'Aleo

In October 2007 a new cycle of the “Teaching Sensible Science” course—the first on the West Coast—began at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California. Present were 18 experienced class teachers from British Columbia, California, Colorado, Oregon, and the state of Washington. This group represents the largest enrollment to date in the program, now in its third cycle.

Many teachers attend this course expecting that there will be series of demonstrations and experiments illustrating the various phenomena covered in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. This is a central part of the course, with Lylli Anthon (from the Halton Waldorf School) and Bob Amis (from the City of Lakes Waldorf School) leading these demonstrations and discussions each afternoon. The demonstrations themselves, however, are only one part of the course. The development of accurate and appropriate concepts that arise out of the students' own thinking activity is as important as the accurate recapitulation and review of the phenomenal observations themselves. Helping teachers develop clear and accurate language to describe concepts before the teachers, in turn, help students is a critical and often overlooked activity in the sciences.

The morning sessions, led by Michael D'Aleo (from the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs), are dedicated to understanding how subtle yet rich a phenomenological approach to the world can be. As a result of this work, many of the teachers begin to experience that a sense-based approach to science not only has implications for

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a scientific understanding of the world, but that it can also be applied to the everyday experience of our own lives and those of our students. Drawing on diverse sources that include statements by Leonardo da Vinci and the Buddha, lectures of Rudolf Steiner, and the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, David Whyte, Mary Oliver, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, we begin to develop an appreciation for the living science of interactions between a human being and the world. Going beyond a basic worldview in which self, a cold detached observer, is isolated from the outer world, we find that science offers deeper connections in which the active participation of an observer in the world is not only encouraged, it becomes a requirement.

Seeking for balance, the final element of the course includes the experience of various aspects of this work in eurythmic movement led by Barbara Richardson (from the Center for Anthroposophy). The eurythmy provides not only an artistic balance to the active thinking in the morning and afternoon sessions, but also allows the participants and presenters to experience truths uncovered in conversation as actual realities of the interactive aspects of our world.

Though this West Coast offering is barely begun, there is already interest in holding a further round of the program in the Pacific Northwest during the 2008–09 school year. Those interested in deepening their understanding and classroom teaching of sense-based science should contact Michael D'Aleo or the Co-Directors of the Research Institute.

News from the Online Waldorf Library

Marianne Alsop

The past months have seen continued interest from all over the world in Waldorf education. Each day brings requests for both general and specific information. In recent months, graduate students in the Philippines, New Zealand, South Africa, and North America have contacted OWL with research questions. Waldorf and public school teachers request lesson-planning help, parents new to Waldorf/Steiner education ask pointed questions about statistical outcomes.

The OWL strives to offer a comprehensive archive of free articles on more than 50 subjects through our Focus Search page. New articles are added weekly as are journal articles from national and international Waldorf and Steiner publications. Recently added, and easy to find on our home page under “Recent Additions,” is the online edition of *Living Education*, published by the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship in the United Kingdom. Also of interest to site visitors is the link on the home page to Goethean Science Education and The Nature Institute, including all back issues of its newsletter, *In Context*.

The appeal of biodynamic wines has brought a number of inquiries about biodynamic farming and gardening. The OWL now offers the full text of *The Agriculture Course* by Rudolf Steiner, provided as a link by the Rudolf Steiner Archive, also on the home page.

On our Helpful Links page the OWL visitor can find a web site that offers the full texts of books in the public domain. The Baldwin Online Children’s Literature Project offers Waldorf teachers and homeschooling parents a number of specific subjects, and online books for Kindergarten through Grade Six.

The OWL will soon have a dedicated page listing all currently available online books in the “Foundations of Waldorf Education” series. These works by Rudolf Steiner created the basis for Waldorf education and are a must-read for students in Waldorf teacher education programs. Currently these online books can be found through the Focus Search page by clicking on “Online Books” in the “Resource Type” category.

Our database of books available in English and information on where to purchase them also continues to increase. Visitors to the site can find books in print through the Focus Search page by selecting “Book” under the Resource Type and clicking any subject listed.

The work of the Online Waldorf Library is to facilitate the exchange of information about Waldorf education. I welcome your interest, questions, and comments on how the site can continue to be improved to meet your needs.

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