

Establishing Successful and Healthy Teacher and Parent Relationships In Waldorf Schools

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"The real enemy is fuzzy thinking on the part of the good, intelligent, vital people and their failure to lead, and to follow servants as leaders. Too many settle for being critics and experts. There is too much intellectual wheel spinning, too much retreating into "research", too little preparation for and willingness to undertake the hard and high risk tasks of building better institutions in an imperfect world, too little disposition to see "the problem" as residing *out there* and not *in here*. (Greenleaf, 45)

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore both Waldorf and non-Waldorf research on current practices used to support the parent teacher relationship and then adapt it for use within the unique organization of the Waldorf School. I explored structures that could be used in the Waldorf School to facilitate teachers and parents embracing and appreciating each other in true collaboration within a supportive learning environment. I looked at current communication practices and organizational systems used to support parents in a Waldorf and non-Waldorf School. In my analysis I noted a discrepancy between the desired expectations of parents and current practice in schools.

I have shown the need for Waldorf teachers to reflect on their attitudes toward parents as well as review the administrative and organizational practices that impact parents in our Waldorf Schools. My research indicates that the Waldorf teacher is instrumental in creating a fully enrolled, collaborative Waldorf School with committed parents. In order for this to happen Waldorf teachers, in their pivotal role, need to embrace the parents in their community. By sincerely involving our parents we will be ensuring a strong foundation for the children in our care and the healthy future of our Waldorf Schools. From my analysis of the research, field notes, school sampling and interviews I have also compiled a source book that will help support teachers in the Waldorf School toward this goal.

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Establishing Successful Parent Teacher Relationships In the Waldorf School

Mastery does not mean having a plan for the whole, but having an awareness of the whole. You cannot predict the course of the year, but you can know, from the beginning, the purpose and requirements of the thing that you are composing. This is true for people composing an organizational endeavor as it is for people composing a piece of music. In my work with people, we try to stop and listen for the whole that they are trying to create, in the same way that, before an act of composition, the composer must stop and listen: What is it that is trying to be born? (Senge, 157)

Introduction

“Dreamy . . . warm . . . innocent . . . magical . . . beautiful . . . loving . . . like home” These are some of the romantic qualities that parents are often overheard expressing after visiting a Waldorf School for the first time. These are among the qualities that attract and result in families enrolling in a Waldorf School. After a few months, or maybe a year or two, the romance fades away and the realities start to appear. And just like any romantic partnership, this is when true collaborative work begins. Because of the unique organizational structure of Waldorf schools, without concerted effort to maintain awareness, the schools can unknowingly undermine true collaboration between teachers and parents. It is with this paper that I hope to provide a source for Waldorf teachers to support their relationship with the parents.

In both Waldorf and non-Waldorf schools, parental expectations for school are *particular* to their child. On the other hand, the teacher has a *universal* expectation of school. The intended meaning of universal in this paper is meant in terms of the goal to teach a collective group of children, not one particular child. Put in another way, Rudolf Steiner was most concerned with the cultivation within the student of the capacity to form social relationships. Developing this capacity, while at the same time protecting the students individuality is seen as key in moving society to a place where the contradiction between the individual and the collective is resolved by cultivating the capacity within each individual to be aware of their connection with humanity and also within creation. These differing expectations are at the heart of parent and teacher relationships and are therefore the foundation of the collaboration between the teacher and parents. My primary purpose of writing this paper is to collect and synthesize Waldorf and non-Waldorf sources of information supporting the partnership between the teacher and the parents.

This study explores the parent teacher relationship in the Waldorf and non-Waldorf school by analyzing results from field notes, journal articles, books and interviews representing over 15 Waldorf schools in the United States. Another source of cutting-edge information that informed the subject matter was gathered via the internet from professional organizations supporting the parent teacher partnership.

In this highly technical information age parents are often *overly* informed, and therefore are very concerned about their *need* to be well informed, or the insufficiency of knowing what it is exactly that needs to be known (what did I miss?). We are already the most *over-informed* and *under-reflective* people in the history of civilization. With this in mind, the Waldorf teacher is meeting new parents who are hungry for knowledge and ready to experience all a Waldorf school has to offer.

This can be an opportunity for the teacher planning for a 1st grade. With all the implications this implies, the teacher will need to seriously consider the relationship he is building with his parents. Perhaps the teacher will learn to welcome and engage not merely the commitments to bring heaven to earth but also the competing commitments

we have to keep hell *off* earth. It is of paramount importance for Waldorf teachers to remind themselves periodically that most parental efforts emanate from love. New parents are hopeful for the future. The exposure to new and unfamiliar information can create anxiety as well as excitement for new parents in the Waldorf classroom. The teacher is in an enviable position of fashioning a new way to disseminate knowledge due to the complexity and richness of the spiritual basis of Waldorf pedagogy.

As the teacher in a Waldorf classroom, whether it is the Kindergarten or the grades, your primary purpose is to succeed in bringing the child to fulfilling their own destiny and to help the children in your care to meet their spiritual and educational requirements. However, you can't make the error of forgetting the parents within your plans. This can be stressful and add pressure to a teacher's work. One needs to use rationality and assertiveness but also be empathetic and nurturing with the parents. As a Waldorf teacher, are you aware that research overwhelmingly concludes that the attitude, activity and behavior of the family affect student performance more than any other factor? (Johnston, 36) Given that parents are undoubtedly the most important figures influencing their children's well-being and lives, Waldorf schools should be open to these natural partners.

Parent involvement in schools is one of the most heavily researched areas in the last ten years. But despite the crucial evidence supporting parental involvement, parents are the most underutilized assets of a school. Children are brought to our school by the parents, we need to be respectful and meet their needs. (Head Start, EDC)

Research shows that for children to reach their fullest social and academic potential, they need:

1. Close and caring relationships with their peers and teachers.
2. Opportunities to practice and benefit from pro-social values.
3. Challenging relevant curriculum, and
4. Close cooperation and communication between families and teachers presented in as a unified front to the child. (Child, preface)

“The informal education that the family provides for their children makes more of an impact on a child's total education than the formal education system. If a family does its job well, the professional can then provide effective training. If not, there may be little a professional can do to save a child from mediocrity.” (Hart, 391)

Parents test and judge the teachers' actions and comments to assess whether they are truly welcome in the schooling process. Negative judgments and classifications of parents are often a result of teacher's feeling that parents challenge their motivations and their level of caring for their child by questioning their expertise. They felt that parents fail to support their authority on discipline practices, or reared children according to standards and values differing from those of the school.

One of my Waldorf teacher friends relayed this story of his interview for a 1st grade position at a Waldorf School. When all of the questions had been asked and the conclusion to the interview was in sight, the Chair of the College of Teachers asked him if he had any questions for the teachers. In deed, he had prepared a few, but there was only time for one, which was, “What is your biggest challenge working at this school?” There were various answers from the teachers, such as; time, balance and money – but the most frequent response, which also had the largest impact, was “*the parents*”. In this school, parents are seen as the biggest challenge!

In the Waldorf school we must nurture and establish collaboration and mutual respect among the teachers, parents, children and the larger community as a whole. It is in this pivotal role as the teacher we model collaborative leadership. We must nurture and establish collaboration otherwise the children in our care, the parents in our classes, and the colleagues in our profession will question their commitment to their school and to the Waldorf education movement.

Incoming Parents

As more and more parents seek private education, Waldorf education becomes an option. Parents have the increasing means to provide private education for their children, are well educated themselves and therefore shop around or fall into Waldorf by word of mouth. Waldorf education is the fastest growing education movement in the United States. Parents learn quickly that Waldorf schools encourage a particular parenting style that may impact family life. Most parents who write the check to send their children to a Waldorf school also ‘sign on the dotted line of a contract’ to be a Waldorf parent and are likely to be supportive in this collaborative family-school bond.

Most of the policy and research discussions on school-family relations exalt the partnership ideal, taking for granted its desirability and viability. But at the same time, family-school relations are relations of imbalance, where most families are powerless. The social class of the family can be a determining factor in school outcome and success based on the level of education and resources of the parents. The socio-economic base of most of the private, tuition funded Waldorf school parents presupposes *at least* a middle class parent base. Most of these educated, involved parents expect to participate, in some way, in their child’s schooling.

Although the College of Teachers in the Waldorf school wish to see the money paid for tuition as a gift for educating their children, the parents see it as money paid for a benefit or service and thus hold the teacher accountable for the education of their child. This gap between parent and teacher could be an area of divisiveness. (Every Waldorf teacher should be aware of this and plan accordingly to include this topic in a parent evening discussions.)

One parent, from the Lexington school, has written very thoughtfully about the tuition he pays and wisely describes it as “somewhere between an investment and a gift. It is at a

balancing point on the continuum between my right to expect accountability from the faculty and to have my expectations met, and their right to be trusted to make sound decisions in all of the domains affecting my child's developing mind, heart, and soul. It is perhaps our greatest responsibility as Waldorf parents to find where we stand on that continuum and then act energetically and in good faith to have our expectations met." (Eastman, 28)

Either way the parent is choosing a private school and paying tuition, in other words *it is their choice* to purchase the best education for their child. That is what being a good parent is all about, doing the best for your child. And they believe Waldorf is that choice. They believe that the Waldorf teacher has their child's best interests at heart.

Becoming A Waldorf Teacher

Now that you are ready to take on the challenges of a Waldorf teacher, all your education will come into use! But acting on the basis of esoteric insight is completely different than reading about it in books and studying it in classrooms. Now you will be working on the basis of insights you have obtained on your own, insights that don't live only in your thinking but have also become realities in your feeling and willing. You decide for yourself how to act and you also know you are yourself responsible for your actions. You can no longer push this responsibility off on others, on a method, on Rudolf Steiner or anyone or anything else. You determine for yourself what is right and what is not. These choices have a moral character. (Lievegoed, 64)

Throughout our teacher training we ask our selves: how can I work out of the life of the will, the life of action, out of what I want to *become*? And thus we have decided to *become* Waldorf Teachers. That can only happen in a karmic relationship, it doesn't matter to what. This does not mean you should only work with people whom you experience as your pals. No, you also have karmic relationships to people with whom you experience conflict, your enemies. The question is: in karma, how can you accomplish something? That is only possible by doing something, by performing a deed. You act on the basis of an intuition and then you look in all inner quiet at what the effect is of the action. (Lievegoed, 89) Remember, your actions will be observed by every child and every parent in your class.

Just being in the enviable position as the upcoming 1st grade teacher, the parents have a fervent curiosity about you. And in order for the parents to trust you, it is your responsibility to develop that deep, intense interest in them, which is how trust first forms. "You can't help another person if you don't submerge yourself in his or her destiny and experience all joy and sorrow with him or her." (Lievegoed, 67) Practice listening! The understanding that the relationship between parent and teacher is vitally important for the children, along with the knowledge that the relationship is long term should be the motivating force to initiate and maintain a collaborative relationship with parents. Perhaps the most simple, yet most powerful, recommendation is make the parent

The most important source by far of new enrollment is the current parent body. People talk about their children's schools. If parents are happy with their experience, and if they are comfortable recommending the school to others, this is the strongest possible basis for the school's growth. Another equally, crucial part is developing the true partnership that is the basis for the health of our Waldorf schools. If this internal partnership is being cultivated, parents will see themselves as stakeholders in the life of the school in a deeper way and will actively participate in building the enrollment of the school." (Entin, Renewal, 30)

As we learn more about anthroposophy in the Waldorf pedagogy during teacher training, we may start to understand the need to strengthen parent education, because some parents may have the very same questions about the philosophy from which the pedagogy arises that we may have. An approach that addresses the realms of thinking; feeling and willing through artistic activities will help nurture the parents as well. Study and discussion can help create and support a positive and constructive environment in which the education of the whole child is sustained. And as the teacher you set the examples.

Can you gauge the environment you are stepping into and feel confident that you are able to respond appropriately? Along the way you should assess your schools gesture or attitude towards parents. You may encounter conflicts or resistance, but how you deal with this can help growth.

The History of Family Involvement in Schools

There is a growing momentum in non-Waldorf education to open new avenues for school-parent collaboration focusing on partnerships. As well, there is a growing research base indicating a positive relationship between these efforts and children's educational outcomes. One author captures the rationale for these programs: They can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work. However, the main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life. (Merz, 60)

Evidence from research supports the needs for successful inclusion and involvement of parents in a variety of roles and areas and recognizes the many advantages of having parents as collaborators in the education of their children. According to the research the primary factor for children's educational success or failure is parent interest and support. Well-implemented school-community practices yield positive results for the students and the parents. Effective parent involvement correlates with students' increased positive behaviors and emotional development. Parents who become involved in their children's schooling also tend to develop positive attitudes towards their child's teachers and parent and communication improves. (Pena, 2) Parent involvement can run the gamut from

bake sales to substitute teaching. In some public primary schools, parents sign up to volunteer in the classroom one hour every week.

Despite the numerous advantages of parental involvement, concerns of families and school personnel continue to exist. Many schools pay only lip service to meaningful school family collaboration. Often discouraged at certain levels. In the majority of [Waldorf] schools nationwide, parent involvement is not encouraged and policy decisions are made without parent input. (Pena, 3)

Parents deserve to be informed and involved in the process of change, but not in control of it. Parents in *partnership* with schools is much more productive than parent power in schools. Parents have great influence on school success by giving attention to their children's needs and interests. The greatest influence on learning is not simply the methods used, but the ability to motivate a love of learning.

Perhaps there is no other factor for which most new teachers are less prepared in Waldorf teacher training than working with parents and other adults in the school community. Compared to other teacher training programs that have minimal programs at best, Waldorf teachers are sorely lacking in training and experience! Most Waldorf educators enter schools without an understanding of family background, the concepts of caring, or the framework to making partnerships, most teachers and administrators are unprepared to understand, design, implement, and evaluate practices of partnerships with families of their students. Given the lack of attention to this area in both Waldorf and non-Waldorf undergraduate and graduate education, teachers cannot help but feel uneasy about parents and unprepared to invite parent collaboration. The feeling of uneasiness leads to a reluctance to try. For this reason, professional development and in-service professional development is needed. (Lazar, 3)

It is the philosophy or assumptions behind the parent-involvement program that are important, not the structure, scope, or nature of specific activities. *When the assumption is that the school's program is "correct" and need only be supported by parents to be successful, the *Gesellschaft* (socially acceptable) mission of the school is not challenged or modified. The hierarchical structure of the school is not disturbed, and the school culture does not connect with sub-communities. Since *most* parent-involvement programs are of this type, they can be expected to have little impact on school-community connections. *When the assumption is that the school's program is open to negotiation with parents*, there is likely to be more opportunity to involve community members in re-creating the program and mission, in challenging the school's hierarchical structure, and in developing authentic connections between school and subcommittees. (Merz, 65)*

Does Your Waldorf school have a traditional approach to parent involvement? Is it a place where the school feels the need to "buffer" or "protect" itself from the interference of parents? Parent involvement in this school would go no further than the traditional models of a Parent Council, parent conferences and limited volunteering opportunities set by the festival schedule and your child's teacher through the class coordinator. And of

course, tuition payments. Hierarchical relationships, with teachers often dominating over parents, have been so much a part of our culture that they are almost never questioned. (Lazar, 2)

As one Waldorf teacher and administrator, a veteran of 30 years, reflects, “I will have to admit that the aspect of this education most lacking was parent contact. A comment I heard throughout my career as justification for the shrouds of secrecy in a Waldorf School was, ‘they serve as buffers between the parents and the teachers.’ I am sure that some of the College of Teachers believed that rationale. I never figured out why we needed those buffers.”

Ironically, parental attitudes towards education can be so powerful in a Waldorf school, that these very parents are willing to make a sacrifice to put the child’s growth and development before their own needs! At its most fundamental level, parent involvement communicates a set of values to the children in the school that: “education is important and we will cooperate with the school to see that you succeed.” (Johnston, 18)

The dramatic effect that family participation has on school achievement is well documented. Virtually all of the relevant studies indicate that there is a strong “curriculum of the home,” manifested in conversations, daily routines, attention to school matters, concern for their children’s progress, and recreational and leisure activities, that can enhance or impede school performance. (Johnston, 14)

The perpetuating attitude that “teachers should teach and parents should parent” can be a strong feeling that parents receive in a Waldorf school despite the well-meaning actions of the College of Teachers. This feeling of the parents may be the result of a lack of understanding of Anthroposophy as the basis for the pedagogy. Teachers already come across as “teacherish” because of their reliance on educational jargon, which makes forming a relationship difficult. But the addition of Anthroposophical “spiritual language” and foreign-based pedagogy is an additional stumbling block to effective communication for many parents in a Waldorf school. This, along with the misguided approach that the parents will learn about the foundation of their child’s curriculum on a “need to know” basis can establish an “us versus them” gesture in the community of “we have all the knowledge.” So, how do we establish a positive relationship with the parents? How can we lessen parent’s anxiety?

To increase parent involvement, teachers must first change their attitudes regarding parents and recognize the advantages of parents and teachers working collaboratively. Schools need to establish a welcoming climate and an open-door policy so that any parents who have questions can feel confident about coming to the school for answers. (Pena, 21)



Ideally, the Waldorf educational community should be based on the mutual responsibility between parents and educators to enhance learning for the students. Because ultimately, teaching and parenting is more an attitude than a technique.

Parent As Partner

Found in one Waldorf school brochure, “Partnership is one of life’s most challenging jobs.” To admit this prior to the parent’s commitment to a Waldorf school is allowing them to enter into a relationship with teachers having no false expectations. No collaborative relationship is paved with pastel fairy stones and silks, but the ability to admit that it takes work to establish a positive, collaborative relationship sets both parties off on the road to mutual understanding in support of the child. Healthy relationships are cooperative relationships.

The age old art of chumming with the parents is a way to build rapport and gain information from them. Simple small talk, about weather, traffic, a local event, any of those hundreds of things that adults use to make contact with one another, is appropriate at the beginning of the relationship. But eventually it is necessary to begin talking about the child. An inviting question could be, “What has Ben said about his school activities?” During this phase, teachers should ask open-ended questions in order to get the parents talking about their child and to share information that may help the teacher with the student in school. Again, we need to lessen parent’s anxiety.

What the parent is attracted to is the voice of the caring teacher, his commitment to their child and the warm and friendly atmosphere of the Waldorf classroom. This initial sensitive and romantic impression must be maintained and nurtured throughout the eight years the Waldorf classroom teacher spends with the parents. Although the relationship changes and grows, that initial attraction must be renewed at the beginning of each school year in order for the relationships between the child’s teachers and parents to maintain a positive team. “For the school to continue to be safe, the child needed to know that the parents trusted the teachers.” (Meier, 24) They must know that the teachers care.

The Waldorf School is built on the power and frequency of individual school/family relationships. This fact would imply that the College of Teachers would hope to bridge the gap between parents and school in part by hiring teachers who “think like parents,” in particular like the very parents whose children attend our Waldorf School. (Meier, 24) In fact, the College of Teachers and the school itself exhibit the community-like qualities of trust, personalized relationships and belonging-ness. This is the very quality that attracts many parents to Waldorf Schools. These external relationships with parents are just as important as intra-school relationships. Parents are an integral part of the home-school partnership and the primary decision makers concerning their child’s care and education.

Parent-teacher interactions are emotional practices that are inseparable from teacher’s moral purposes. Sue Lasky, a researcher, also states; “they are shaped by influences of

culture and relationship and inextricably interconnected elements of status and power” (843). Positive, honest and clear communication is suggested as the foundation to building personalized relationships with parents. Waldorf schools should hire teaching staff based on these skills. Personalized relationships lead to increased social support, bonding with the school and suggest a sense of attachment, commitment, and belief in Waldorf education.

Walker and MacLure found that parent-teacher communication during parent conferences was bound by silent rules of discourse. They likened it to the discourse between doctors and patients. The teacher was in control, choosing the topics of discussion, dominating the interaction and talking about students from their perspective. Bernhard found that a combination of fear and the cultural tendency to defer to the authority of teachers often prevented parents from asking clarifying questions. Phtiaka found that **a single incident could create the conditions so that a parent is no longer willing to communicate with a teacher.** Each of these pieces of work has identified tangible barriers involving power that can block parent-teacher communication. (Lasky, 844)

Teacher – parent relationships that are robust and multifaceted require commitments and conditions that can allow emotional understanding to occur between individuals in a Waldorf school. Yet a great deal of the history, culture and organization of Waldorf teaching makes achieving such understanding difficult or impossible. (As seen in the organization of the hierarchy of a Waldorf school, the teacher as authority figure, and by virtue of their expert status and specialized training) In many ways, there *is* the potential for complexity, understanding and compassion that can develop when teachers and parents are engaged in a relationship, and not merely a string of interactions in a Waldorf school.

As one graduate of Waldorf teacher training put it, “I can’t believe I am seen as and considered an expert after only one year of training. This is not an attribute I use to describe myself, but one that the parents express to me in their comments like, “well, you’re the expert, tell us ...”. I am learning too, and I have to constantly remind my parents of this fact.

It is now widely accepted by policy makers and educators that when parents are involved in their children’s education, children are more likely to succeed in school. (Baker, 1) Waldorf and non-Waldorf Schools are alike, as they often make assumptions regarding how parents want to be involved or why they are not involved and are often made without parent input. Often holding a one-dimensional concept of parents. The omission of parents from the discussions concerning their needs continues to limit the role of parents and can be a grave error in judgment for the future of their school. Increasing parent involvement requires time to gain the trust of parents and to inform them of how they can be involved.

Parents recognize that some teachers feel threatened by having them involved at the school. Teachers need to understand that parents are not there to judge their teaching but merely to provide assistance where possible. As some observations have demonstrated,

some teachers simply do not value parents and judge them negatively, often treating them in a patronizing manner. Teachers should recognize that all parents simply want their children to be successful. Teachers and parents must truly value each other, as each has knowledge and expertise to contribute! (Pena, 16)

If we are truly interested in establishing a dialogue with the parents in our Waldorf Schools, we need to understand what parents think can be done. Here are some parent suggestions:

1. Clarify how parents can help.
2. Encourage parents to be assertive. (Not afraid to speak to the teacher)
3. Develop trust.
4. Build on home experiences.
5. Use parent expertise.

By virtue of their positions, Waldorf teachers have both the ability and the professional responsibility to facilitate home-school collaboration. Waldorf schools are faculty run and managed, all the decisions are made by the faculty. They are central to parental involvement in the educational process. Researchers consistently report that teachers' perception about parental involvement is not congruent with the perception held by parents. Parents would like shared leadership in guiding decision making. Decisions that directly affect their child should be shared with parents. Waldorf schools that support the partnership between teacher and parent create a common philosophy and approach to meeting the child's needs.

In order to gain the trust of the parents, teachers need to practice listening to parents with a receptive silence. Try to be attentive with deeper levels of the soul, to perceive the speaker's feelings. As I have experienced working along side teachers with deep soul hygiene, this can be unsettling to the novice parent. Miha Pogacnik in The Dance of Change, gives a fitting description of this, "learning to listen can be awkward. Have you ever been in the presence of someone who listens closely to you? It feels disturbing, like being stared at. People in society are not used to living at that level of awareness. Who dares inwardness?" (Senge, 155)

Qualities to be aware of during your conversations with parents:

1. Open ourselves to others.
2. Tone of Voice. This more than anything else conveys our inner relationship to what we are saying.
3. Be Aware of Hidden or Obvious Power Structures. You know the parent, so remember who they are and be conscious of your role.
4. Be aware of our ability to think and judge out of which our contributions to the conversation arise. Ask the question, "Do you see it this way?" to clarify. Often our words are seen as authoritative and we need to practice having an open conversation with our parents.



5. Our ability to modify our speech so that it is appropriate to the particular group of which we are a part. Can we speak like adults to the parents and not like kindergarten teachers do with their children? This is a common parent grievance.

6. Look for the objective truth.

7. Lead the conversation towards trust. (Adapted from Zimmerman, 111)

‘Effective leadership depends on the teachers ability to endure feelings, and learn from them, instead of reacting with immediate sentiments. To build this capacity you must endure processes, like listening to a piece of music that starts to disturb you in the middle. If you make it to the end, a revelation may occur. (Senge, 154)

The following list of ideas was compiled to encourage positive parent teacher collaboration before the start of the school year in a Waldorf School.

1. Parents are your most valuable resource.
2. Seek a class coordinator who will help you set the tone or character of collaboration for the rest of the parents.
3. Provide a detailed orientation packet (Appendix B))
4. Send an overview letter to the parents in August (Appendix A)
5. Schedule regular parents evenings at the beginning of the school year. If parents have been unable to attend parent evenings it is in the best interest of the teacher and child, for the teacher to take on the responsibility of communicating to the parent the events of the evening. If this is a pattern with a parent, to miss scheduled evening information nights, then the teacher should become aware of possible issues with a parent that would need to be addressed.
6. Many parents and teachers find it helpful to have weekly homework instruction sheets for parents to sign. This may not be needed in the first grade unless there are specific items the child needs to collect or work on at home with the parents. The sheet lists an overview of assignments for the week. The parent needs to sign it and the child returns it to school every morning. That way no one is caught off guard by a child’s difficulties and the parent and teacher have a base of common understanding of what is expected from each participant.
7. Make home visits in the summer to set the tone, and in January to make suggestions related to the classroom, nutrition or bedtimes. (Note on home visits: parents are impressed that teachers care enough to visit and are more likely to volunteer as well as improve their performance at home in order to support their child in the classroom.) Project Head Start programs have been doing this for years with great success! See www2.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/ for more information.
8. Give parents the option to meet with you if needed prior to the start of school or during the first month for a more in-depth, individualized meeting that focuses on their child’s unique needs. Mention this in your August letter to the parents.
9. Encourage parents to share strategies to establish consistency between school and home. As one teacher suggested, “make sure you have a ‘how do you do this?’” meeting, because if you don’t plan it then you will be flooded with as many questions as you have students.”

10. Be flexible in your schedule in order to meet with parents. Parents feeling they are always the ones that need to be the flexible ones and alter their work schedules can create resentment and may be viewed as non-cooperation.

11. Imagine a school where you were awarded incentive pay for your exemplary work with parents.

12. Avoiding parent contact increases the likelihood that miscommunication and conflict will occur.

13. As Meier aptly puts it, “Crises are part of the life of such school and are too often covered up rather than learned from.” (25)

One concern that parents in most Waldorf schools have is in the teaching of reading and specifically delayed reading. I am suggesting that a way to alleviate or diffuse parent’s nervousness, or to pro-actively diffuse this trigger issue and to demystify the reading process, is to share concrete examples to help the parents understand what skills are needed in reading instruction and awareness based on current mainstream research. (Appendix D)

We all hope that we have the privilege to work with cooperative parents that support us in our classroom and at home. But the reality is, as Waldorf teachers we have chosen a profession that has as its underlying pedagogy, a philosophy that nurtures the child to become an individual in community with others. It is within this community that we find our parents – and sometimes we may have conflict.

Parent Teacher Conflicts

Teacher-parent relationships in a Waldorf school are robust and multifaceted and require commitments and conditions that can allow emotional understanding to occur between individual adults. Good confrontational skills are key as an adult. As some conflicts are of no consequence while others are important, it is imperative that teachers respond to parent’s questions and concerns in a consistent heart felt manner. Yet, a great deal of the history, culture and organization of teaching makes achieving such understanding difficult or impossible. The consistency in the conditions that elicit negative and positive emotions in teachers indicate that teachers who did not develop relationships with parents tended to hold standardized, somewhat one dimensional, almost stereotypical views of them, where parents are judged according to norms of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ parenting or; goes along with our philosophy or against it. We would hope that as Waldorf teachers in our long-term commitment to the children we would be able to work through conflicts. When parents and teachers are consistent in their moral understanding of what’s best practice for the children, this promotes positive emotions. Alternately, when there was a lack of congruency, teachers felt their efforts were being subverted. (Lasky, 850)

At a Waldorf school children feel valued as individuals. They view their teachers as part of an extended family that plays an integral part in their life. They feel comfortable in expressing their individuality. When parents are nurtured at the outset they are more likely to support one another and not role model behavior that manifests in the classroom

The ways in which teachers and parents have worked together in Waldorf School needs to be reevaluated and looked at freshly. Some better ways need to be found in which the path is more open, that all voices are respected. We need to find a way to know that all involved in a Waldorf school are essential. The College of Teachers will come to realize that if they sacrifice the parents, then they are harming themselves. A way needs to be found in which the College works with class parents until their needs are met and they are comfortable in their role. The parents and the teachers need to learn how they hurt each other, even unintentionally. The College must learn that it is more important to be present for the children and parents than to be right. The College needs to find the strength to carry the parents in a new light.

According to observations and interviews with both parents and teachers, attitudes towards teachers swayed parent involvement. Although the teaching staff and parents valued parent involvement, each group tended to be influenced by different factors. Teachers felt that parent involvement represented additional work. For parents, parent involvement varied according to their personal feelings toward the teaching staff or other parents. Parents who refused to be involved with the Parent Council because of personal feelings toward one of the organizing parents or teachers avoided other parent involvement activities. That behavior demonstrated the strong influence of the perceptions of leaders and their abilities to be inclusive on parent involvement. (Pena, 13)

One study I read with fascination was about the comparison of conflict management styles between teachers and business managers. The results of the research found no major arguable differences. Based on the findings, the authors suggested continuing education for teachers (but not the managers) to learn intentional ways of dealing with conflicts, both with colleagues and with parents. By intentional they mean the business managers may assist teachers to better determine which style of conflict management fits the situation. *Rather than viewing conflicts with parents as evidence that those parents don't support the teacher, the research sharing resulted in teachers recognizing the value of processing conflicts as a normal and acceptable part of the teachers and parents moving towards the goals they share about the well being of the students.* (Cornille, 6) Conflicts should be seen as opportunities for growth and change in Waldorf schools and justify the necessity of a trained facilitator and mediator on staff.

Suppose you have a challenging relationship with a parent. Try the following suggestion from Bernhard Lievegoed. If you can decide to cooperate with that parent, simply because you recognize that they objectively have something to do with the project you want to undertake, no matter how different his ideas about it may be from yours, then tremendous power can emanate from that decision. Based on that inner resolution, you perform a conscious deed in the direction of that person. This involves a conscious action. Unconscious actions never come from a clear intuition, but from some stimulus out of the past. For instance, you approach someone like that and you say: I know we don't like each other, that we would like nothing better than to be in each other's way as much as possible. But for the business, wouldn't it be better for us to accept each other? Such a gesture, provided it is based on the *real will to cooperate* with the other, can bring

about miracles. It can even result in close friendships. And *nothing is so fascinating as a friendship with someone who is totally different from yourself.*”

Ask yourself these questions about your basic attitude. Honest answers to such questions can present us some insights into our teaching persona:

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1. If you have any hint of perception problems be proactive and nip it in the bud by contacting the parent.
 2. Are you alienating the parents with ‘Waldorfspeak’ or anthroposophical terminology? The Waldorf educational ideas are the *philosophical (not religious)* foundation upon which the pedagogical work of Waldorf schools are based. Remember, using this language may imply a lack of flexibility which is may be experienced by the parent as rooted in the past and unwilling to change, and which seems unhealthy to people searching for answers in a rapidly changing world. (Entin, 9) One parent stated recently, “Steiner is dead, my children are alive now. If the teacher wants me to continue to support this educational approach then he needs to speak in current educational language I can understand.”
 3. Are you balancing your feelings of sympathy and antipathy with a student or parent?
 4. Are you demeaning a student’s family values? Teacher’s beliefs in ‘teacher as expert’ can create a perceived hierarchy of knowledge, value, and status that affects a teacher’s willingness to collaborate with parents as equals. (Lasky, 857)
 5. Are you arguing with parents on how to best raise their children? It is a very common occurrence for a Waldorf parent to feel disapproval from a teacher for home-related choices such as clothing choices, leisure time choices, scheduling choices, video games, etc.
 6. Are you being petty in order to remind the student or parent who’s the boss? Unless it’s affecting the classroom situation, why does it matter if the child wears fleece, reads a book you wouldn’t choose, or sees the latest movie during vacation? Be careful here, because some Waldorf teachers appear to give the parent the impression they would like to “micro-manage” their home life! (Does your school have a media free policy used to support the home/school relationship?)
 7. Ask them for their ideas and how they handle situations. One experienced teacher shared this picture; “I have met so many young teachers who have walked into situations where they felt the need to be an authority on so many complicated and value-laden issues. It is better to gather some facts and pose the issues as dilemmas. Such as, ‘We have so much information about the harmful developmental effects of media exposure to children, how can we as shepherds of your son/daughter help them develop in the most healthy manner possible,’ versus, ‘please sign this no media contract.’”
 8. Are you accountable to those you serve? The accountability we owe parents is a matter of access to us as teachers. The primary choice of communication with

parents should be face-to-face, secondary should be the telephone and the last choice should be by notes. (Writing notes is less desirable because they are open to misinterpretation.)

9. Do you hold up to the standards of work and competence you expect from your students? You set the standard from day one!
10. Do you role model how to work harmoniously with your colleagues, including the administrative and support staff? Maybe we need to have a more critical ear to what we say to parents, wondering how we would hear it as parents and how the children may interpret the relationship as well. (Meier, 27)
11. We need to allow room for lots of answers, and not being afraid to tell the truth. (Meier, 38) Waldorf education is about community and everyone has something to offer. Just because it is not what you would offer does not mean it is invalid. Many parents shared stories with a recurring message from the teachers, "I have been told I do not know my son by some of his teachers. Never say that to a parent, even if it's true! A teacher may know a child differently than a parent, but not better."
12. Are parents shut out when they don't agree with the majority?
13. How do you respond to criticism? Do you admit when you were wrong?
14. Do you have the best interest of the child at heart, or are you more concerned with your collegial reputation? In other words, does your comfort matter more than the children's?
15. Do you have integrity?
16. Are you practicing soul hygiene?
17. As a teacher, how honest are you about your weaknesses or failings? Are you willing to open your doors and reflect on the truth?
18. Be cautious that you do not point your finger at the parent and blame them for their child's difficulties in the classroom. Are you using them as a scapegoat for not doing your job?
19. Are we putting our families in unnecessary distress? One parent shared this story from their exit interview, "the college chair told me that since I was withdrawing my child from the first grade for being bullied, that my child would be 'karmically' distressed for the rest of their life because I didn't let them work it out in this classroom, with this group of children."
20. DO YOU HAVE *COURAGE* TO FOLLOW THE *TRUTH*?

.....

In a conflict situation, something has happened and one of the parties will not play the game of supporting the others projections. If both parties have sufficient maturing they can begin building a relationship based on honest communication and take responsibility for their own process. In the case of the parent and teacher being unable agree, they need to find a way to work out a solution in the best interest of the child. No relationship is without conflict and it is not the responsibility of the maturing child to sort out the unresolved tensions between school and family. (Meier, 52)

“Today we understand better that the many, often subtle ways in which schools can undermine family support systems, can undercut children’s faith in their parents as educators and in their community as a worthy place.” “Given the good intentions of the [Waldorf] teacher this may not always be easy for the teacher to notice. The assumption of the teacher’s expertise and their concern lest the parents “mis-teach” children this or that school skill can widen the very gap we are so busy trying to close. **We complain later when they wearily pull back, if not altogether out, but what has our role been in this withdrawal?** We are determined to keep exploring new ways to make connections.” (Meier, 26)

Conflict resolution training and other means of creating positive and non-adversarial relationships between parents and teachers might be useful practices for more effective parent-teacher communication. It is in this endeavor that we receive support and collaboration as teachers from the professionals in our Waldorf school community to building healthy relationships based on recognition and esteem.

Salutogenesis and Parent Teacher Relations

Salutogenesis is a loosely defined term, meaning “origin of health”. It is a term that has been increasingly heard in the last few years to describe a new direction in research that addresses the source of health in relation to body, soul and spirit. This is opposite of the current method of looking for the source of illness – pathogenesis. The research includes the economy, industry, and education and its relation to the health of the individual. The goal of salutogenesis is to overcome conflict and meet varying conditions by becoming stronger, this transformation and gift leads to our own “true self”. As teachers we wish to promote the health and well being of the children in our care as great an extent as possible by continually asking ourselves, “how should I act so that this child or parent can express their better nature.”

As the child becomes stronger and overcomes obstacles and challenges, whether it be an illness, relationship or educational issues, they are setting a foundation for health. Michaela Gloeckler, M.D. a leader in the Anthroposophical movement states that, “When someone feels needed and wanted health arises. This alone is one of the first basis of salutogenesis.” She explains further:

“An Education aimed at the child, helps to provide age-appropriate boundaries and allows the child to experience itself and develop. Here it is important for the child to be provided with examples in its environment by means of which it can learn to take up challenges and cope with obstacles. Children should have the opportunity to measure their own forces through their disputes with trusted adults, to be able to experience and stabilize their own capabilities. A good education is one that is characterized by honesty, love and respect for the other. In this regard, honesty provides the basis, because important as love and autonomy are, they lack foundation if they are not accompanied by honesty, which is so to speak, love on the level of knowledge. Through clear thinking,

which is what health really means on a spiritual level, the child learns to place itself within the context of the world and to find its place there.”

In a recent edition of Anthroposophy Worldwide, Thomas Jachmann reported on a conference in Germany convened to study up-to-date neurobiological insights along side views from spiritual science, salutogenesis and education. One of the unanimous conclusions was, that “trusting relationships based on recognition and esteem are a prerequisite for learning.” When a positive relationship is established with a teacher, it is the basis for a feeling of safety and security in the child. Conversely, when a child is under stress, whether it be from insecurity or fear they regress. “When a child does not receive recognition from the teacher, this undermines the child’s prerequisites for health.”

What is needed in the Waldorf school is for each teacher to have the courage to recognize the current boundaries of their psychological and physical endurance. After they recognize the boundaries, then expand them by tapping into their truths and gifts. This ability will help to maintain stability and integrity of character. This goal is accomplished with insight and the increased ability to differentiate between the negative, evil or destructive and learn to take responsibility for our actions.

Confirming the importance for a strong cooperation between parents and teachers, Eckhard Schiffer, a doctor known for his research on educational topics and salutogenesis, contributed to the discussion. He describes the three essential feelings needed for basic health as “coherence.” “These feelings concern the perceptibility and understandability of the world, and the trust that one will be able to master one’s own strength -or with support. Such trust develops only out of a stable, loving, appreciative relationship with one’s parents and teachers. Speaking about fear he declared aptly, “Fear makes smart people stupid.” (Jachmann)

In one case, a Waldorf school had a series of meetings in order to stem a sudden decline in enrollment. Out of this meeting, the underlying theme was “fear.” Such as, parent’s *fear* and frustration of not learning about significant issues in the class from the teacher. Parents feel they cannot safely voice criticism to teachers for *fear* of lack of confidentiality. Parents *fear* that academic and learning issues are not properly or fully addressed. Teachers *fear* of the parents. Through clear thinking, clear communication and truthful candor, those who lead will be able to let go of the status quo and resolve issues. It is a very sad state when open hostility erupts between people who ultimately have the same goals.

The ability to converse with new parents and embrace their unique gifts while at the same time helping the parents embrace the gifts of the teacher and the “being” of the school should be the mission statement of an Admissions Director in a Waldorf School. Heading into the age of the Consciousness Soul the role modeling of the AD is to ultimately serve the evolution of Waldorf education. The AD’s ability to see the details within the larger worldview is a gift that will help the parents and teacher’s come together.

“People in the school community have to see that communicating well with families is part of their professional job.” Says Joyce Epstein, director of the Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University. In New York City, the school district is hiring a full-time Parent Coordinator for every school in the city. That means 1,200 coordinators, plus a support network. This decision came after months of meetings with parents revealed that MOST felt unwelcome and uninformed. The goal is to change the mindset of teachers from seeing parents as nuisances to recognizing them as potential partners is key. (Paulson)

Community life and spiritual experience are two things that human beings long for in our time. Waldorf teachers are well versed in the fact that the Anthroposophical Society was founded to be an example of a community conceived on the basis of social idealism, tolerance and striving. An example of another successful Anthroposophical organization that supports children is the Camphill schools. Their founder, Karl Koenig “understood how the living experience of the spirit achieved through *human encounter* by nature creates community and how community in turn supports *human encounter* and living experience of spirit.” And now, “more than ever there will be a need to understand how *human encounter* forms the basis for spiritual experience and community life.” (Lyles)

One established Waldorf school is still struggling with enrollment after 30 years. The same issues are never resolved and they lack the ability to create a culture of friendliness and warmth among teachers and parents. Their challenges are clear to outside observers. Lyles states, “When not understood and met, this longing [for community life] can change to feelings of impotence, frustration and despair that in turn spawn endless conflict and [escalate into] untold violence between people. It is almost as if one way or the other humans meet and undergo experiences of the most intense nature. The only question is will they be experiences that foster human bonds or destroy them?” We need to practice compassion.

As we have learned through our foundations in Anthroposophy, during the first seven year period the child learns through feelings. The child can feel the intentions of parents and teachers and becomes irritated and disconcerted if their intentions contradict the way they speak. This kind of learning slowly transforms itself into sensing and reaching out during the second seven year period. As the researcher, Georg Kuhlewind, reminds us, all learning is feeling. Learning is possible only through the child’s living connectedness with the world. (Jachmann)

Are we connecting in a supportive, healthy manner?

School-wide Support for Parents and Teachers

Waldorf schools are created by the communities in which we live, as the conscious embodiment of the way we want our next generation to understand their world, and their place in it. It calls on our most critical faculties to sort out what that message ought to be and how the teachers who represent Waldorf schools can symbolize such ideals. If

mutual respect is the foundation necessary for educating and raising our children for the future, then it must be the foundation of Waldorf schooling. Making it so is a humbling and endlessly stimulating task. And hopefully it is largely a joyous one!

What is the fundamental gesture of your school? One of the common by-products of the Waldorf School is the unfamiliarity of the closed circle of ‘College of Teachers’, to the parent on the outside. They can or may appear to be insular, cult-like and threatened by change, especially to the parent population who is increasingly well educated and works in a professional environment. “It can appear that there is ‘no one in charge’ and that it is ‘impossible to get an answer’. On the other side is the perception that, despite what is presented as a system based upon ‘consensus’ or ‘decision by committee’ (which is bad enough!), there is a feeling that, in fact, the school is dominated by a small group of faculty members who ‘always get their way’ and who ‘know how to manipulate the system in their favor’. **Parents can experience frustration and ‘burn-out’ – often leaving the entire institution and taking their children with them because decision making can take forever and people who know less than they do have the final say on what can and can’t happen.”** (Entin)

In Torin Finser’s book, *School Renewal*, he tells the story of Sarah, a Waldorf schoolteacher who suffers from burnout. In one detailed description we get a picture of the gesture of her school from the point of view of the parent:

“But there were other currents at work. Many parents had come to resent the attitude of certain teachers, who seemed to say, “We accept you on our terms only.” Some parents experienced this as a condescending manner, as if the teacher were the highest on the food chain and knew best in every subject. Further, the parents found that communication was sorely lacking, events and policy changes were shared late and often in an inarticulate manner. It seemed that the faculty made decisions to please the teachers and often failed to think of the parents. Calendar dates and times were changed at will, causing tremendous hardship to working mothers and fathers. At the board level, the faculty seemed grateful for donations and volunteer time, but when there was a real issue, such as a budget line item for scholarships, the parent members of the board felt that their views were discounted. There were numerous former board members in the community who spoke openly about the power and control issues at the school.” (21)

If the College of Teachers is working in a secretive way and doesn’t support or communicate with the parent body then the parents resort to gossip, suspicion and fear as their only recourse, which undermines the school and manifests itself in observable tensions and stress. This stress may be the beginning of deep-rooted ramifications that are seen for years to come. Some of which are; bullying -teasing behavior issues in the classroom, rampant parent gossip and dissention, decreasing enrollment, decreased annual giving – all culminating in a Waldorf school’s reputation being affected adversely. Kim John Payne, a consultant to Waldorf Schools on Social Inclusion (Bullying Issues), made the following comment to the teachers in one Waldorf School, “Parents show considerably greater interest in their children’s school experience than the teachers

appear to take into account. This is a striking waste of potential. My recommendation is that staff should be willing to recognize parent's interests and exploit and develop it."

It is always at the detriment of the relationship between the College member/teacher and parents to assume a monopoly on knowledge and intuition. The College of Teachers needs to know that they do not have the market on this ability. There are others in the Waldorf school community who have developed these skills from other paths in life and are able to readily assess a situation and read the truth.

One parent describes the actions of the College of teachers as Oz-like, "Don't pay any attention to that man behind the curtain." There is a desire on the school's part to weave a beautiful, romantic picture around those who would come to the school, but have an intense inability to honestly answer questions with real information.

Because the Waldorf movement is growing quickly, there is a shortage of trained teachers. While immersed in teacher training we are told that schools across the United States are waiting for a fresh crop of teachers to join them in the field. But are they all qualified to manage a classroom of 30 children along with the accompanying 60 parents? When you are a parent, you hope that the College of Teachers will hire the most qualified person to teach your child. But often compromises are made during the hiring process. Issues such as salary and housing, or cronyism may come into play. Who will pay the price for these sacrifices? It is the children. When choices are made that affect the children, the parents are the first to observe the effects on their children. This often sets into motion a crisis situation that eventually leads to the replacement of the teacher. How can we spare our children and parents this crisis? The following quote is from a non-Waldorf book about servant leadership, it addresses the issue in a straight forward manner:

"Some institutions achieve distinction for a short time by the intelligent *use* of people, but it is not a happy achievement, and eminence, so derived, does not last long. Others aspire to distinction (or the reduction of problems) by embracing "gimmicks": profit sharing, work enlargement, information, participation, suggestion plans, paternalism, motivational management. There is nothing wrong with these in a people-building institution. But in a people-using institution they are like aspirin – sometimes stimulating and pain relieving, and they may produce an immediate measureable improvement of sorts. But these are not the means whereby an institution moves from people-using to people-building. In fact, an overdose of these nostrums may seal an institution's fate as a people-user for a very long time. An institution starts on a course toward people-building with leadership that has a firmly established context of *people first*. With that, the right actions fall naturally into place. And none of the conventional gimmicks may ever be used." (Greenleaf,40)

The College of Teachers who work in a Waldorf School in the 21st century and in the Age of the Consciousness Soul - must actively maintain procedures for sharing their work processes with the parents in a forum where all are objective listeners- this open forum is necessary for mutual respect. These internal management structures and

procedures in the Waldorf School need to be changed and updated to provide greater transparency and accountability. Details of which can be found in Torin Finser’s book, School Renewal. As one current Waldorf Administrator explains, “People can’t somehow recognize a problem if they lack a sense of what to do about it if they did see it. It’s kind of a protection, but not a very productive one. Instead it only compounds existing problems, which is why [this Waldorf school] has so many.”

One seasoned Board member relayed this example, “During my tenure, it became apparent that the school was using 2 constitutions, one that was non-profit (to show the community and AWSNA) and the other was a business with 4 teachers as the majority owners who also happened to be in the college. To make a long story short, the other teachers are like employees afraid to confront the owners, the administrator is their employee, and the parents who worked so hard believing their efforts would form community are all devastated.”

I propose that Waldorf Schools commit to supporting an in-house, professionally trained mediator/facilitator who would help balance the needs of the parents with the goals of the College of Teachers. Where all feel heard and mutual trust is established. They must have the innate instinct for asking the right question at the right time, a sense of when to reach out and touch a hand or shoulder. So much of their job is the human skill of engaging the parent, eliciting detail and gaining trust. In this role, you just have to find the level on which someone is going to relate to you and want to talk. Deborah Meier in, The Power of Their Ideas, also supports the use of an external mediator, if needed, which should be seen as a sign of strength, not of defeat. You may use it to help with crises, but then may choose to establish a regular relationship with an individual that both families and the school could use comfortably when they need an objective ear.

The school’s Admission Director is a natural liaison to the new parent in the school community. The person in this position would ideally have mediation and facilitation training. Therefore it is ideal to include the work of Parent Coordination in the full-time job description. The Parent Coordinator would work closely with the College of Teachers and oversee the implementation of the following guiding principles. According to Howard Johnston, “Opportunities for parent participation in the life of the school are almost endless. They are limited only by the imaginations of the school and the community. But for any of that to happen, certain conditions must prevail.”

Your mission in everything you do, is to ask ‘What message does this send to the student about how the parent and school work together?’

Support family involvement as an integral and funded part of the school’s services. Create a vision of the school as a community and set goals and benchmarks for the year. One author even went so far as to suggest that staff salary increases could be linked specifically to the expectation that certain home-school relations will be conducted. (CDP)

Provide teachers with ongoing and regular scheduled in-service training and information to help them work with families. Staff development activities should focus on the ways to work with families served by the school. Help the teachers establish a broad range of approaches for effective two-way communication with the families of all the students the school serves. Administrators need to provide teachers with time to plan and work with parents in order to increase parent participation. Approaches can often be recommended by parents who work in the school or by panels of parents who are served by the school.

As Abraham Entin stresses, the early childhood program is the gateway to the entire institution and the decision of a parent on whether or not to place their child in this program can have reverberations for up to 11 or 12 years. Those responsible for the middle school must take an active interest in how the school is presented to and perceived by those who consider the school for their young child, for that child ultimately will determine the size of their 7th or 8th grade.

When your nursery and kindergarten program consistently loses families because mothers are frustrated by teachers who do not listen or respond to their questions or concerns, they move on to another school when making a choice for first grade. New parents crave educational materials, sources of information and most of all, conversation about the Waldorf way of life – but often follow through is lacking. When asked why they were not planning to send their young children on to the Kindergarten and first grade, three mothers shared the following: “the nursery teacher gives strong opinions about nursing, food and other home life issues that we mothers want to learn more about. But when it comes right down to it, she never helps us understand or shares articles and information that would help us make the decision to send our children to this school. We have so many questions, but we never get real answers. How can we knowingly place our children in a school where our questions are ignored? We would like to be treated as an active participant in the life of the school and receive bulletins and news on a regular basis so as to make an informed decision, but we are treated like second-class citizens. The Mother & Child teacher is not warm, friendly and encouraging to us new mothers, so why should we stay?”

Provide for family involvement at all levels of schooling. Define roles at each level, elementary, middle and high school, and encourage different forms of participation appropriate to each level. Find ways to coordinate teacher and school schedules to the work schedules of today’s families. Not only should specific school functions be scheduled to accommodate parents (such as early morning or evening parent conferences), but other opportunities should be provided for working parents to serve the school: building playground equipment, helping out with stage shows, or tutoring to name a few. In short, parents should be able to participate in the life of the school even though they work during normal school hours. “Although it may be impossible to meet the needs of all parents or to get all parents involved, considering the factors that influence parents can lead to increased parent involvement.” (Pena, 17)

Parents participate in activities that meet their needs. The parents need to be considered when planning parent activities. First, Waldorf schools need to create a hierarchy of

Create or improve a Mentor Program at your Waldorf School. It is a network to link all new families with experienced parent representatives. Increasing parent involvement requires time to gain the trust of parents and to inform them of how they can be involved; this is a natural link for parents to get their feet wet, so to speak.

(Ideas from personal notes as well as Johns Hopkins University, Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships)

Waldorf schools need to establish a welcoming climate and an open-door policy so that any parent who has questions can feel confident about coming to the school for answers. To support this welcoming climate, efforts are being made in Waldorf and other schools to encourage parents to spend time on the school premises through the creation of drop-in parent centers, cafés, craft groups, knitting circles and for various activities and on-site workshops. (Baker, 2) Parents need a place within the school where they can meet, share information, work and relax. Ideally, parents will have a room similar to the teachers’ lounge, as well as a space for communications within each classroom. (Berger)



There is an increasing amount of literature and research, which indicates that there are two main ways that human beings learn, by observing others and by trying things for them selves. (Meier, Johns Hopkins, Cornille, Lasky and others) As Waldorf teachers we need to have the courage to consciously embrace the parents in our schools and become the role models that we want our children to emulate.

After many years of service in a large Waldorf High School, the Admissions Director explained, “It all comes down to the parents, because without them we have no school. No matter how clear you think you are being, you can always be clearer. The phone is the best method of contact – better than email. And last but not least, Parents want to hear from us, contacting them right away makes a big difference.”

Conclusion

While the research confirms that parents are integral to their child’s success in school, true collaboration between parents and teachers exist more often in rhetoric than reality in Waldorf and non-Waldorf schools. In theory parents and teachers seem to agree on the importance of parent involvement and collaboration, but the fact is, that more solutions must be sought and strengthened in Waldorf schools to convert the rhetoric into a functioning partnership between parents and teachers. The people who join together to create a conscious, healthy Waldorf school community should be volunteers not captives.

I feel that it is essential to the Waldorf school movement that our teachers are aware of current research in the field of education outside of the Waldorf Educational movement. I have become aware, more and more, how isolated and insolated Waldorf teachers can

become in their own pedagogy and quotes from Steiner. Whether your specialty is early childhood, care group, math, languages, organizational or administrative work, as a professional it is imperative that you actively research or at least acquaint yourself with current research practices. There are numerous sources on the internet, and professional publications of which you may subscribe that will keep you abreast of what your professional colleagues are learning and researching. Teachers are learners too.

The Waldorf Teacher Training community needs to actively support and encourage collaborative collegial and parental relationships and should have a resource book similar to Parents as Partners in Education: The School and Home Working Together by Eugenia Hepworth Berger. This book is used as a required reading by professional teacher trainers in non-Waldorf universities and colleges to support new teachers. The Waldorf community needs a similar book written from the perspective of anthroposophy and Waldorf pedagogy to support Waldorf teachers. In lieu of a Waldorf written book, several important chapters from Parents as Partners could be used to discuss this topic during Waldorf Teacher Training classes.

We need teachers as professionals in our Waldorf schools who are able both to start the processes of learning and to detect already existing processes that prevent learning and change, what Robert Kegan refers to as “the active, ongoing immune systems at work in every individual and organization.” My wish is that you have learned something in this paper that can help you begin building a relationship with the parents in your classroom of which you are proud to role model to the children with whom you share a mutual love.

**That good may become
What from our hearts we would found
And from our heads direct
With single purpose.**

From the Foundation Stone Meditation by Rudolf Steiner

The absolute bottom line was expressed with simple eloquence by an aging welfare recipient who is raising the two young children of her daughter, killed by an overdose of drugs, She said, “When I send them to school all I really want those teachers to do is just be nice to them ...just be nice and kind. After all, they’re all I got.” (Johnston)

Don’t we all.



August Letter To Parents

Dear First Grade Parents:

Hello and Welcome to a great year of learning and growing! I hope you have all had a wonderful summer!

I am looking forward to a great first year with your children and I hope you are too! I am also looking forward to getting to know you and establishing a partnership that will last for eight years. In this partnership, I hope we can develop a close relationship in helping your child grow and prosper throughout the years.

I have enclosed a copy of my teaching philosophy and classroom policies for your review. I will review them briefly during our first parent evening, but please take the time to read them beforehand. Bring your questions and I will try and answer them. Please use them for reference throughout the school year. I will occasionally refer to them in classroom newsletters and parent evenings.

As part of our Waldorf School philosophy, we visit each of our families to get to know every child in their natural environment. I will be calling you to schedule a mutually convenient time to visit, if I have not already done so. I am looking forward to meeting you and your children at your home!

As part of working with each of our families, Mary Smith from the Parent Council Mentor Program will be contacting you this summer to set up a mentor for all new parents to our school. If you would like to volunteer to be a mentor to a new family, please call her at home.

We will also be having our back to school First Grade Family Social will be Saturday, August 27th. Please see attached flyer. I am looking forward to seeing everyone together as a group for the first time so we can chat and get to know each other and perhaps talk about, what else, but our children!

As you become a part of the school community, you will be asked if to participate in various ways. One way is by being a Class Coordinator or a Parent Council Representative. I encourage everyone to call and inquire, you will not be asked to commit or sign up. Please read through the Handbook attached, you will get a better idea of what these positions require.

Please call me with your questions. I will be glad to have a conversation. I'm looking forward to September!

Sincerely,

First Grade Teacher

Attachments:

School calendar, Handbook, Parent Council

First Grade Handbook

The pillars of my teaching philosophy are:

Surrounded in the Waldorf curriculum the children are immersed in a rich web of experiences that slowly awakens their love of learning. My primary goal is to instill a love of learning, so the process of learning can continue regardless of circumstances.

These are my guidelines in working with parents and students:

These relationships include everyone, avoid competition, and respect differences but lessen hierarchical divisions between older and younger students, staff members and students, and teachers and parents.

1. Emphasize the relationships that form and foster a sense of community.
2. Emphasize that asking questions are a part of learning.
3. Emphasize that making mistakes is part of learning.
4. If you don't understand, it is my fault, not yours.

Role Of Teacher:

1. Teach 1st grade according to the Waldorf Pedagogy (educational philosophy).
2. Support your child in learning.
3. Support the parent as a leader in the child's development and education.

Role of Parents:

1. Prepare you children to be refreshed to attend school every day.
2. Limit media exposure. (We'll discuss this in a parent evening)
3. Provide balanced, nourishing food in their lunch boxes every day
4. Dress them in warm and well fitting clothing. Provide a hat for the child to wear to school every day.
5. Attend class parent evenings.

Role of Class Coordinators:

1. Support teacher in coordinating parental support.
2. Implement phone tree as needed.
3. Include as many parents as possible in classroom activities.
4. Encourage and support positive parent interactions.

Ways to Contact Me:

School Phone Number: 555-1313

Home Phone Number: 555-1212

Email address: first grade teacher@ internet.com

Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays 3 – 4 pm in the classroom

Please try to respect my family time and leave messages at the school. You are welcome to leave messages in my mailbox at school, or hand them to me at drop off and pick up. I will respond to you within 48 hours. On occasion, as you may know, personal family situations may arise and I may not be able to respond in a timely basis, please know I will either get back to you as soon as possible or ask someone at the school or the class coordinator to contact you.

Because it is very busy at drop off and pick up time please limit conversations with me. It is very easy to be distracted with the children preparing for transition and I may forget

our conversation easily. You are assured a thoughtful response when you hand me a written note.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures:

Please have your child ready to start the school day by having their inside shoes tied by 8am. Pick up will be at the back door at 3pm. We may be outside playing, depending on the weather.

Play dates:

Please arrange play dates prior to drop off and hand me a note prior to pick up time, sharing your child's plans so that I do not forget who will be picking them up at the end of the school day. If there is an emergency, or if plans change for pick up during the school day, please call the office and leave a note, other wise your child will be sent to aftercare because they do not have permission to go home with some one other than normal car pool arrangements.

Birthday Parties:

Please be conscientious of children not being invited to your child's party. The ideal situation would be to invite the whole class, until 3rd grade, or all the girls or all the boys. I am trying to form the class and this policy supports the children as a group. Please mail ALL party invitations from home, unless the whole class is invited. I also ask the parents to counsel their child not to discuss it in school to spare another child's feelings being hurt. I am not advocating that all the children be invited, because it can be overwhelming. But what I am asking is that parents be sensitive to the children who are excluded. Birthday parties are a greatly anticipated event for young children. Be aware that not all the parents would wish to have their child attend a roller skating or rock and roll party, so if you wish to have all attend, make sure that your party theme is known.

Play ground and classroom social philosophy:

In order to include all children in the classroom social structure and minimize children feeling left out, I base my classroom social philosophy on the book You Can't Say You Can't Play by Vivian Gussin Paley. It is a very helpful in encouraging positive social relations among young children in the classroom and is available at Amazon.com. I will implement the social rule "you can't say no to play" and arrange desks to support new friendships.

Class Coordinators:

The teacher and the class coordinator in a Waldorf school elementary classroom set the tone for communication between the teacher and the parents. The class coordinators start the phone tree for announcements and reminders, organize festivals and coordinate with the school's Head Coordinator for school wide functions.

First Grade Newsletter:

A newsletter will be sent home when we have a new block, a field trip or other pertinent and interesting information to share with the parents. We will include a section for parent questions as well as a column for parents to share information or to communicate among themselves.

Parent Conversations:

I am required by school policy to document phone calls and meetings with parents when substantive issues are discussed. A copy of my report will be sent to the parent with the closing sentence: "If your recollection of our conversation/agreement differs from mine please contact me, otherwise I will assume we are in agreement." This step is necessary

to avoid miscommunications. (You may create a form with time, date, parent question/concern, teacher response, plan, etc.)

Parent Council:

The parents in the 1st grade choose two or three members to represent the class in the Parent Council. The Parent Council is the parent's vehicle to take an active part in participation in supportive of the community of the school. See attached flyer for specifics.

School News:

Our Waldorf School publishes a newsletter for parents. The News includes announcements of events, a calendar and short reports from each classroom. The news is sent home with the children on Thursdays.

First Grade Parent Evenings:

A forum to learn about the current Block, study a specific topic, visit your child's desk, ask questions and get to know other parents. We will have Parent Evenings regularly throughout the year. I will have a written schedule with specific dates at our first meeting. If Parent Evenings need to be postponed due to my illness, weather or other school events, they will be rescheduled.

Mentor Program:

The Mentor Program is a network used to support and link all new families with experienced parent representatives. It is managed by the Parent Coordinator, and organized by representatives from the Parent Council.

School-wide Grievance Procedure:

If a person has a complaint, they are first encouraged to go directly to the faculty or staff member involved. Any faculty or staff person approached with a complaint they are not a party to will not get involved in a personal discussion. Instead, they will refer the complainant to speak with the person directly involved. If they cannot go directly to the person, then they will be referred to the Parent Coordinator.

Social Inclusion Policy:

(This is one example from a Waldorf Handbook) We have a zero tolerance policy for bullying and teasing and any other significantly disruptive behavior. If this behavior is observed the child will be warned, if there are two incidents in one week the child will be sent to the office. The parent will be notified by phone. If the class teacher feels the child cannot return to class then the parent will be called to take the child home.

It is the class teacher's responsibility to be aware of these children at all times. As a result, it is a class teacher's responsibility to leave written instructions for a substitute or specialty teacher who may be unaware of the student issues. As well, the class teacher must inform the parents when the class teacher is absent, in some situations the child may be asked to remain at home when the class teacher is not in school.

Open Door Policy:

Parents are welcome in the classroom at all times. A class schedule will be posted outside the door, please be aware that in some learning situations a parent may be a distraction for some children, if this is the case, then these parents might want to check with me for the best time to visit. Be advised, I may put you to work!

Media Issues: (write your own)

Bibliography: (list sources and titles for your parents)

Home Visits: Describe summer and winter visits to your parents to learn about the child. As a teacher you will need to really thrash this out, prepare questions, let your parents know what is to be expected and the purpose of the visit. You may wish to ask your teacher mentor for help if you are inexperienced, they may have helpful suggestions.

Lists of Items Needed for Classroom:

- Class coordinators
- Reading group helpers (not until 2nd grade)
- Costume designers
- Newsletter editor
- Various items for the classroom. I will provide a detailed list at our first Parent Evening.

Create a checklist for your first Parent Evening, such as;

1. Are you interested in helping or volunteering in the classroom? Circle your response.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Depends on what I would be doing. Call and ask me.
 - Depends on my schedule. Call and ask me.
2. Are you able and interested in doing the following, circle all that apply;
 - Sewing
 - Special projects. Call and ask.
 - Food / snacks
 - Newsletter
 - Festivals
 - Reading to class
 - Recess help

(Compiled from Berger, field notes and interviews)

Class Evening Suggestions

- Use humor.
- Show your interest in the parents.
- Make sure that parents are considered to be an important part of the learning-teaching team and that they are recognized as having much of worth to contribute.
- Create an agenda for each meeting.
- Start and conclude the evening with positive messages about the children.
- Give ample amounts of recognition to parents for their support. We all want to be recognized for our good deeds-both large and small.
- Discuss the children's artwork on the walls and how it fits in with the curriculum.
- Allow parents to ask questions throughout the meeting in order to clarify their understanding.
- Show respect for parents who do not follow or understand anthroposophical vocabulary as quickly as others. You may ask your teacher mentor how your school helps support an understanding of anthroposophy.
- Ask a parent to be an informal note-taker and then compose a review for your newsletter or a recorder for the meeting minutes for those who were unable to attend.

Reading Instruction

I have provided a basic outline of one model of a non-Waldorf, well rounded and thoroughly researched approach to the teaching of reading. These examples may be used to chart and compare to the Waldorf methods taught in teacher training in a parent evening, or to give specific responses to individual parents questions or concerns. As you read through these descriptions you can see where effective Waldorf methods are used and can be compared or supported with non-Waldorf terminology. There are nine components to reading skills according to the Learning First Alliance. For more details please visit www.learningfirst.org

1. **Phonemic awareness.** One of the most important foundations of reading success is phonemic awareness. Phonemes are the basic speech sounds that are represented by the letters of the alphabet, and phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are sequences of phonemes. Phonemic awareness is demonstrated by the ability to identify and manipulate the sounds within spoken words. Children can be taught to hear that cat is composed of three sounds: /k/, /a/, /t/. Children can learn to assemble phonemes into words as well as break words into their phonemes even before they are writing letters or words.

Giving children experience with rhyming words is an effective first step toward building phonemic awareness. Hearing rhymes, and then producing rhymes for given words, requires children to focus on the sounds inside words. Later, more direct instruction on the individual sounds that make up words is needed. The goal is to have children start their more formal instruction in reading with a comfortable familiarity with the sounds that letters represent and with hearing those sounds within words.

2. **Phonics and decoding.** A proper balance between phonics¹ and meaning in their instruction. In recent years, most educators have come to advocate a balanced approach to early reading instruction, promising attention to basic skills and exposure to rich literature. However, classroom practices of teachers, schools, and districts using balanced approaches vary widely.

Some teachers teach a little phonics on the side, perhaps using special materials for this purpose, while they primarily use basal reading programs that do not follow a strong sequence of phonics instruction. Others teach phonics in context, which means stopping from time to time during reading or writing instruction to point out, for example, a short, a or an application of the silent e rule. These instructional strategies work with some children but are not consistent with evidence about how to help children, especially those who are most at risk, learn to read most effectively.

The National Academy of Sciences study, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, recommends first-grade instruction that provides explicit instruction and practice with sound structures that lead to familiarity with

spelling-sound conventions and their use in identifying printed words. The bottom line is that all children have to learn to sound out words rather than relying on context and pictures as their primary strategies to determine meaning.

Does this mean that every child needs phonics instruction? Research shows that all proficient readers rely on deep and ready knowledge of spelling-sound correspondence while reading, whether this knowledge was specifically taught or simply inferred by students. Conversely, failure to learn to use spelling/sound correspondences to read and spell words is shown to be the most frequent and debilitating cause of reading difficulty. No one questions that many children do learn to read without any direct classroom instruction in phonics. But many children, especially children from homes that are not language rich or who potentially have learning disabilities, do need more systematic instruction in word-attack strategies. Well-sequenced phonics instruction early in first grade has been shown to reduce the incidence of reading difficulty even as it accelerates the growth of the class as a whole. Given this, it is probably best to start all children, most especially in high-poverty areas, with explicit phonics instruction. Such an approach does require continually monitoring children's progress both to allow those who are progressing quickly to move ahead before they become bored and to ensure that those who are having difficulties get the assistance they need.

Notes

- 1 The term *phonics* is used in this document, as it is widely understood by educators to mean instruction that focuses on teaching the alphabetic principle and the sound-symbol correspondences.
3. **Fluent, automatic reading of text.** Good decoding skills help lead to fluent, automatic reading of text, aiding comprehension. Elementary teachers need knowledge of word recognition strategies, the relationship of reading fluency to comprehension, features that are related to the difficulty level of text, and the identification of children who would benefit from extra practice in fluency development. Professional development activities should foster teachers' skills in determining reasonable expectations and helping children select texts that will increase their word recognition speed.
4. **Vocabulary.** Children's vocabulary can be built by teaching specific words that appear in students' texts, giving students opportunities to use these words in a variety of contexts, and teaching students dictionary skills. We want students paying attention to and liking words. While research shows some benefit of direct instruction on vocabulary development, it also finds that vocabulary growth is heavily influenced by the amount and variety of material

children read. Nevertheless, the power of home and school reading for vocabulary building are strongly influenced by the support and encouragement that students are given for attending to and learning about new words as they read. A good practice, for example, is to ask students to note three new words of their own choice in the course of their reading and then to set aside some time to collect, discuss, and revisit such words, extending and clarifying their usage and meanings. In addition, vocabulary will be boosted as children become fluent in using and understanding multi-syllabic patterns.

5. **Text comprehension.** The undisputed purpose of learning to read is to comprehend. Although facilitating comprehension is not easy, teachers should model and discuss comprehension strategies early on. These may include self-monitoring, using graphic and semantic organizers, asking and answering questions, building knowledge of story structure, and summarizing. These and other strategies can be taught in professional development activities using teacher modeling, practicing, coaching and mentoring.

6. **Written expression.** Creative and expository writing instruction should begin in first grade. Writing, in addition to being valuable in its own right, gives children opportunities to use their new reading competence. Research shows invented spelling to be a powerful means of leading students to internalize phonemic awareness and the alphabetic principle. Still, while research shows that using invented spelling is not in conflict with teaching correct spelling, the National Academy of Sciences report does recommend that conventionally correct spelling be developed through focused instruction and practice at the same time students use invented spelling. The Academy report further recommends that primary grade children should be expected to spell previously studied words and spelling patterns correctly in final writing products.

7. **Spelling and handwriting.** Research at the elementary level suggests that accurate letter formation and spelling, are associated with longer, better, more organized written compositions. Students learn spelling and handwriting more readily when they receive explicit instruction in these skills and use them in the context of frequent, purposeful writing assignments from first grade onwards.

How does a teacher accomplish that? Teachers need to understand the process of learning how to spell, the difference between learning how to read and learning to spell, the organizing principles of the English spelling system, and the relationship among transcription skills, spelling, and writing fluency.

Effective teachers of writing know how to tailor instruction, coordinate timing and sequencing of spelling lessons to complement instruction in word recognition, and build fluency, accuracy, and automaticity in transcription to support composition.

8. **Screening and continuous assessment to inform instruction.** Frequent observations and assessment of developing readers, and the use of the information gained for planning instruction, is the most reliable way of preventing children from academically falling behind and staying behind. Assessments must be valid, reliable and feasible for the classroom teacher.

Teachers need to know how to use a variety of efficient, informal, validated strategies for assessment; determine which assessments are appropriate for different purposes and levels; interpret assessment results; use results to improve instruction; and communicate results to parents. Professional development should include supervised practice of assessment, opportunities to view and respond to expert modeling, and team discussion of assessment results in relation to goals and standards.

9. **Motivating children to read and developing their literacy horizons.** Although all of the components discussed so far are important in learning to read, children must develop a genuine enthusiasm and appreciation for reading if they are to become the lifelong readers and learners we want them to become. Successful teachers of beginning reading provide an atmosphere that generates excitement about reading, which makes it more likely that children will read. Children who are read to often and encouraged to choose from a wide variety of reading materials are more likely to become good readers than children who do not have these experiences. Teachers can benefit from learning strategies for fostering independent reading of quality literature as much as from any other area of professional development.

Compiled from High/Scope ReSource, Spring 2002 and Every Child Reading from the Learning First Alliance.

Waldorf School Parent Council

(This is one example of a Waldorf Schools Parent Council set of By-Laws)

The mission of the Parent Council is to foster a creative energy and environment, which supports all members of the school community throughout the classes and activities of the school, allowing the life of the school to become warm and inviting to all its members.

With this mission statement in mind, we, as members of your Parent Council, have been making a concerted effort to strengthen, focus and vitalize the Parent Council, in essence to breathe new life into it. We want to tell you about these efforts, and share with you our vision for the Parent Council.

We feel that the Parent Council has great potential to be an active force in our school community, both in planning events and in drawing fellow parents into these events. Our ideal is a two part one. First the Parent Council is an organization, which organizes valuable fundraisers, parent education opportunities, and other events, which can enhance community life at our school. Second, the Parent Council representatives have an important role to play in involving other parents in the planning and enjoyment of these events.

The Parent Council is also an organization, which can and should facilitate communication between parents and the faculty and administration. Our monthly evening meetings are attended by the Administrative Coordinator, the Chair of the College of Teachers, a faculty representative, the Director of Development and the Director of Admissions/ Parent Coordinator. These representatives speak with us about issues they have been confronting that month. They actively and sincerely seek our feedback, comments and ideas. A summary of these discussions is included in the monthly minutes or our meetings and printed in the school newsletter following the meeting. Additionally, Parent Council representatives can share information at class meetings. Importantly, if you as fellow parents have questions or concerns, share them with your Parent Council representative – your thoughts and ideas will get passed along! Our ideal is that in the coming years, the Parent Council, by facilitating such open communication, can enhance the educational, social and extracurricular opportunities at this Waldorf School.

The by-laws of the Parent Council reflect these goals and allow us to accomplish them.

BY-LAWS OF THE PARENT COUNCIL

Section 1 – Defining the Parent Council

It is the Association of this community that is comprised of parents, teachers and anyone that supports the school. The Parent Council is the governing body of this community Association. The Council shall consist of:

1. The class representatives.
2. A representative of the Board of Trustees.

3. A representative of the College of Teachers.
4. The Parent Coordinator (Admissions Director).
5. A representative of the administration. (Administrative coordinator, development director or admissions director if not also parent coordinator)
6. The Executive Committee.

The Parent Council shall make all procedural decisions for governing the Association including the distribution of funds. A majority of the council shall be a quorum for voting purposes. The Parent Council oversees the operations of the school store.

Distribution of all funds raised including the funds raised from the school store will be apportioned to the school (after an allocation for budgeted Parent Council operating expenses) as follows:

1. One half to the school's operating budget.
2. One quarter to tuition aid.
3. One quarter to the wish list as determined by the Parent Council.

Funds will be distributed in July of each year.

Each year the council shall prepare a proposed budget for the following school year, which includes an operating budget and fundraising amounts.

Section – 2 – Class Representatives

There will be at least two Class Representatives from each class, each Kindergarten and the Nursery. New representatives shall attend the June Parent Council meeting. Incoming Kindergarten, Nursery and First Grade Representatives will attend the October meeting. The duties of the representatives shall include:

1. Attend all Parent Council meetings.
2. Report Parent Council activities at class meetings.
3. Being a member of a sub-committee of the Parent Council.
4. Being accessible to class parents, keeping confident about issues raised.
5. Gathering input from parents to bring to the Council's attention and pass information on to the administration of the College of Teachers.
6. Directing concerned parents to the school's Parent Concerns Procedure (in the Parent Handbook).

Section 3 – The Executive Committee

A six member Executive Committee shall preside over the Parent Council. The Executive Committee is comprised of a Chairperson, a representative to the Board of Trustees, and a representative to the Development Committee, a Treasurer, a Secretary and an Ex-officio member of the Administrative staff. All Executive Committee members are expected to be a member of a sub-committee of the Parent Council, with the exception of the Chairperson.

The Chairperson:

1. Organizes, plans and presides over the Executive Committee and the Parent Council meetings.
2. Helps coordinate the calendar of events and gets them incorporated into the master calendar of the school.

3. Keeps abreast with all activities that the sub-committees are actively engaged in, meeting with the Chair of each sub-committee on a regular basis.
4. Exhibits a strong, visible connection to the Association.

The Representative to the Board acts as a liaison to the Board of Trustees, attends all Board meetings and serves as a resource to the Board cultivation committee. The representative to the Board provides written communication to the Board on parent Council activities and related information and attends the Joint Advisory Committee meetings.

The Development Committee Representative attends Development Committee meetings and acts as a liaison between the Development Committee and the Parent Council. The Development Committee Representative is a member of the fundraising sub-committee of the Parent Council.

The Treasurer keeps an accurate recording of all monies received by and transferred from the Parent Council.

The Secretary records Executive and parent Council meetings minutes and submits a summary of minutes of the parent Council meetings to the Executive Committee and to the school newsletter. The Secretary is also responsible for keeping a record of attendance for each meeting.

The Ex-Officio Representative from the Administration is a member of the current administrative staff who facilitates communication and exchange between the parents and administration.

The terms of each office are from June to June for two years.

The Executive Committee members should be a Parent Council Representative for one year prior to becoming an Executive Committee Member.

Nomination and Election of the Executive Committee

At the April meeting, The Parent Council shall select a Nominating Committee of 2-3 members. Any member of the Parent Council may submit nominations to the Nominating Committee for the following year's Executive Committee. The Nominating Committee shall create a ballot including all nominees' names, and will also nominate individuals for positions for which no nomination has been received. The Parent Council at the May meeting shall vote the ballot on by a written vote.

Section 4 – Meetings

The Parent Council shall meet monthly at the discretion of the Executive Committee. All meetings shall be announced in the school newsletter prior to the meeting and shall be open to all parents.

Section 5 – Sub-Committees of the Parent Council

1. Fundraising – a committee chartered to coordinate all fundraising activities for the school, including the school store.
2. Parent education – a committee chartered to sponsor educational opportunities about Waldorf Education and school related topics.
3. Social/Enrichment – a committee chartered to sponsor social gatherings on a school wide basis, assist faculty with festival occasions and mentor new parents.

Each sub-committee will appoint a Chairperson to oversee all activities and who will report to the Chairperson on a regular basis.

Section 6 – Adoption and Amendments

Adoption:

1. These by-laws shall be sent by mail to all parents and will be adopted unless objections have been received from at least 10% of the voting body within two weeks of the mailing date.
2. These by-laws shall be submitted to the Board of Trustees and will be adopted with a simple majority voting in favor.

Amendments shall be made after:

1. A parent vote with at least 40% of parents voting and a simple majority of those votes in favor of the change.
2. Submittal to the Board of Trustees with a simple majority in favor.

(Compiled, in part, from Pine Hill Waldorf School letter to parents, April 16, 2002.)

ROLE OF ADMISSIONS DIRECTOR / PARENT COORDINATOR

The Parent Coordinator would have the dual role of Admissions Director, but other wise would have no other paid or volunteer positions that would conflict with these duties.

Besides the current professional responsibilities of an Admissions Director, these additional roles would be included:

1. Be **Waldorf Teacher Trained** (imperative to communicate both with parents and teachers)
2. Attend **Mediation training** to become a trained mediator.
3. Attend **Facilitation training** to become a trained group facilitator.
4. Be a member of the **College of Teachers**.
5. Be an Ex-Officio member of the **Board of Trustees**.
6. Attend all **Parent Council Meetings**.

Build Support and Gather Information

- Review existing committees, leadership structures, and decision-making processes to understand the impact of school policies and procedures on the enrollment function and to communicate that impact in appropriate school forums.
- Present ideas at open meeting for teachers, parents, administrator, Parent Council and other school staff. Avoid turf confusion by building relationships with all groups.
- Solicit volunteers to help in the effort. They would include other teachers, parents, and possibly the Development Director.
- Collect responses from Parent Survey.

Help develop and participate in events and procedures to help new families become an integrated part of the school community.

Prepare school packet.

- Creates, prepares and distributes an information packet to new parents. This packet would include such things as the school calendar, a map, a list of clubs and activities, photos, information about Parent Council, etc.

New Family Bulletin Board.

- Features new students and their parents, teachers and other school staff members. The board could include photographs, artwork and information about each person.

Retention

- Create and participate in activities, which directly enhance enrollment and give current parents an opportunity to reaffirm their reasons for choosing Waldorf Education. Oversee the Parent Council Mentor Program.

Strategies for Increasing Parental Involvement

1. Conduct an initial needs assessment through surveys, interviews, orientation and brainstorming meetings, phone calls, social gatherings, or other forms – and ask parents what they would like to see happen at the school.
2. Send home several different and inviting announcements, letters, and brief reminders about each event.
3. Initiate a personal outreach plan. Ask Class Coordinators to call other parents to extend a personal invitation to an upcoming event.
4. Establish a parent's room or lounge that is the hub of information for the parents. Encourage parent volunteers to create a welcoming environment, provide coffee, and establish a schedule of informal gatherings, such as the Parent Council tea.
5. Prepare a glimpse or photo of new families to include in the weekly newsletter. This could be coordinated with the bulletin board.
6. Involve parent volunteers in all initial planning for activities and events; ask for their input, suggestions and assistance.
7. Oversee with the Parent Council to provide childcare for parents with younger children.
8. Oversee with the Parent Council to provide food or snacks as part of activities for families.
9. Invite individual parents to play specific roles and become actively involved in planning and organizing activities at the school.
10. Make sure that you do not impose anything on parents.
11. Offer information, workshops, and support for parents to help them learn more about what goes on in school and how they can reinforce what is being learned at school, both academically and socially.
12. Use teacher conferences as conversations with parents, not one-way reports.
13. Provide training for teachers to prepare for parent conferences.
14. Offer parents many ways to experience what it's like to be in a caring community of learners.
15. Conduct or coordinate an Exit Interview when a parent decides to leave the school. Perhaps do another one after one year. Use this information to gain insight into school practices that may affect future enrollment.
16. **Conduct an interview with parents who inquire, but do not choose to enroll, to gain information of school practices that may affect future enrollment.** A parent volunteer may do this, as it could be less threatening to a parent.

A pattern of activity and organization was evident in research presented in Involving Parents: A Handbook for Participation in Schools. Seven critical practices were found with effective parental involvement.

1. **Provision of Coordination for activities.** Effective parental involvement included scheduling, varied personal contacts and knowledge of who could get the job done. Persons hired as parent coordinators provided most of this coordination. The attitude of the coordinator was critical; when the coordinator regarded parents as unqualified or as lesser folk, parents had negative attitudes towards any involvement. However, when the coordinator treated parents as

concerned partners in the education of the child, many more positive attitudes and outcomes were noted.

2. **The assessment of needs and resources.** Much of this assessment was informal, but effective projects determined the needs of child or parents or the school and the efforts that parents could realistically contribute, *before beginning activities*. This kind of assessment focused on the energies of participants on solving problems and provided criteria for judging the success of activities.
3. **Specification and communication of parental roles.** This specification was important for both teachers and parents. For administrative staff, the specification gave them a clear idea of what they could expect from the parent in a specific activity. Parents could clearly determine what they would be expected to do if they participated. For many parents, interactions with school personnel had often been negative and they did not feel comfortable in school; a clear understanding of what they would be doing in school helped to allay discomfort. In instances where roles were not clear, confusion often led to misunderstanding between parents and staff.
4. **Recruitment, selection and assignment of parent participants.** Recruitment was most successful when it allowed the parent to talk to someone knowledgeable about what kind of association best suited the parent and the school. Assignment involved the matching of parents to specific staff. Schools and projects used a variety of methods ranging from the personal knowledge of the coordinator to the development of parent questionnaires to match parents with jobs and staff.
5. **Training parents and staff.** When training provided participants with the specific skills, techniques and strategies needed to get the job done, much higher levels of success were evident. Not only the parents, but also the teachers and other staff benefited from training that showed them the best ways to work with involved parents. When training was absent or minimal, much time was wasted with attendant frustration for both parents and staff.
6. **Establishment of communication channels.** This was most effective when it occurred at several levels and when it was a two-way process. Such communication enhanced problem solving and was an important source of cross-fertilization. Without good communication, it was difficult to recruit parents and the benefits of parental expertise were not realized.
7. **Support on-going activities.** This included publicizing the benefits of parental involvement and recognizing individual parents with awards. Publicity and recognition helped to attract new parents and retain present participants. When such recognition was absent, parents felt that people did not appreciate what they were doing or that their contribution was meaningless. In both cases, parents tended to withdraw from involvement.

Common to all seven “vital ingredients” was the willingness to monitor and evaluate parental involvement activities. Such monitoring often led to improvements and better understanding, and the ability to react to changing needs and priorities. Methods included informal and formal surveys of parents and staff along with periodic meetings of participants to discuss ongoing activities. There were no successful parental involvement programs when schools were not wholeheartedly committed to parental participation.

(Lyons, xi)

Compiled with input from Child Development Project, Entin and Lyons.

Helping Your Child's Teacher to Communicate

Suggested Guidelines
by Eugene Schwartz,
Sunbridge College

These Guidelines may be copied and distributed to parents and teachers in Waldorf schools. Permission to reprint in a school's newsletter should be requested from the author at Sunbridge College, 914-425-0055.

Most of your meetings will be with your child's class teacher. Although, as your child goes up the grades, she will spend a lot of her class time with "specialist teachers," e.g., in Handwork, Eurythmy, German, Orchestra, etc., it is the responsibility of the class teacher to be aware of your child's progress in all of her classes, and it is he who will come to know your child and your family best. Since Waldorf teachers also shoulder a lot of the school's administrative responsibility, parents are sometimes unclear about whom to address when there are major problems. Your school should provide you with a clear description of its "channels of communication."

Parent Conferences

1. Parents and the class teacher should meet at least once a year; twice a year is good in first and second grades; much more frequently if there are difficulties.
2. In the course of the meeting, the class teacher should share with you:
 - Main lesson books, form drawings, paintings (and, in later grades, compositions and written math work) done by your child. She should be able to give you a picture of your child as it manifests in this work. Make sure that the teacher insists that every child complete his main lesson book, and that specialist teachers follow suit: work left incomplete weakens the children's will.
 - Samples of *other* children's work, so that you can get a sense of your child's work *in the context of the whole class*.
 - A clear description of your child's progress in writing, reading and arithmetic (early grades) and, in later grades, a sense of your child's progress in cognitive abilities (grasp of science phenomena; grasp of historical concepts, etc.). Ask for concrete examples.
 - Problems and challenges faced by your child, and steps and you and the teacher can take to remediate them. A date should be set at this meeting to review your child's progress.

3. Be direct in your dealings with your child's class teacher. Don't hold back a deep concern or justified criticism just because the teacher looks stressed, or tired, or ill, or overworked — Waldorf teachers are often *all* of the above! As in other human interactions, the worst problems grow from those minor misunderstandings that are allowed to fester.
4. Where there are *persistent* tensions or misunderstandings between you and the class teacher, request the presence of a senior faculty member (faculty chair, College member, etc.) in the meeting.
5. You should request a short written memorandum of the meeting to be sent promptly to you; if you do not agree with the memo's content, advise the teacher in writing.
6. **Avoid "Parking Lot Meetings" with your child's class teacher and do not stop to chat with him when you are delivering your child to school or coming to fetch your child at the day's end!** At such times, the teacher is still responsible for his children, and he is attuned to *their* level of consciousness, not to the mindset required for an adult conversation. The best meetings between parents and teachers are those that are scheduled and prepared in advance.

Other Communications

1. The teacher should provide parents with hours in which she can be reached by phone at home. Please respect those hours; teachers need a home life, too.
2. In the first three grades, help your child's teacher create a class newsletter. Items might include notes about current main lessons, class events, parent gatherings, advice on seasonal activities, poems and songs that the class is learning.
3. Help your school create a handbook with addresses and phone numbers of the whole parent body, school guidelines and policies, etc.

Parent Evenings

1. In the first three grades, there should be four parent evenings a year; after that, three meetings may be sufficient.
2. Meetings should begin and **end** promptly — 7:30 to 9:30 is a good time span. If a parent asks an important question at 9:29 (which is not uncommon), the teacher should invite those who wish to pursue this question to stay on to discuss it, but announce that the scheduled meeting has ended. If parents experience meetings going overtime again and again, they will stop coming, as well they should!

3. In every meeting, one of the class's specialist teachers should appear to make a presentation about the subject she is teaching, and to answer questions concerning her classes.
4. Meetings should have three or four segments, which may include:
 - An on-going presentation of the developmental stage at which the class stands — this, after all, is the foundation upon which Waldorf teaching rests.
 - A description of the main lesson blocks covered since the last meeting.
 - An opportunity for parents to have a “hands-on” experience of a subject, e.g., painting, form drawing, eurythmy, Spanish, math etc.
 - A presentation by a specialist teacher.
 - A discussion of the class's social challenges, and the way in which the teachers are meeting them.
 - At least half an hour for questions.
5. All of the children's recent class work should be on display. Parents would do well to circulate around the room, to see their own child's work in the context of the whole class. In the absence of letter or numerical grades, this is the only way to judge “where the child stands” in a Waldorf setting.
6. Don't judge a class teacher's effectiveness in the classroom on the basis of her parent evenings. After all, she has chosen to be a teacher of *children*, not of adults, and the presence of the parent body may be intimidating. A person who is stiff or forgetful or boring when standing before adults may actually be vital and inspiring when placed before a group of children!

Written Reports

1. Parents should know how many written reports they will receive each year and *when* they will receive them. Except in emergency situations, do not tolerate late reports; they are often an indication that the teacher is experiencing difficulties in other areas of life as well. It is essential that the class teacher is available to discuss the report after you receive it, and not already on vacation; for this reason, reports that arrive in July should be unacceptable.
2. The written report should hold no surprises! If the teacher tells you something in writing that she has not already conveyed to you orally (in a parent conference, by phone etc.), there has been a serious lapse in communication. Review the year with the teacher and discuss ways in which such a lapse can be prevented in the future.

3. Beware of the euphemisms and flowery language that can readily creep into a Waldorf report. Ask the teacher to write in clear English — if your child ever transfers to another school, these reports will be the only records available. What follows is a highly exaggerated version of the euphemistic extremes to which a teacher might go:

A Guide to the Generic Waldorf Report

or,

How To Read Between The Lines

The Report

Dear Mrs. Smith,

Your daughter Lana is a child of unusual depth, one who possesses an almost preternatural sense of the interplay of her own body and soul.

On almost any occasion she is able to give a powerful outer expression to her innermost feelings and concerns.

Yet Lana also evinces a concern for her classmates. She often demonstrates a sensitive awareness of their needs, and doesn't hesitate to share her insights with me.

In our fourth grade class work, Lana's approach keeps us all aware of the essential viability of the oral tradition. Lana steadfastly remains true to the direct and therefore quintessentially human transmission of information.

Its Interlinear Translation

Dear Mrs. Smith,

Your daughter Lana is a severe hypochondriac.

She is also a crybaby.

And furthermore, Lana is the class tattletale.

Lana refuses to read or write.

It is a joy to watch Lana work on her Main Lesson books. Every illustration is allowed to go through a true ripening period, for she will not proceed until she is certain that she has penetrated her creations with the fullness of her being.

Lana has never completed a single Main Lesson book.

It has been an especially satisfying experience to get together with you in our parent-teacher conferences. Your lively interest in *all* of the children in the class and your insights into their interrelationships with Lana have been stimulating and helpful.

As far as you are concerned, Lana's problems are always the *other* children's fault!

4. Before the school year begins, your child's class teacher should send you an outline of the main lesson blocks that will be taught that year. At the year's end, she should include a more detailed description of that material that was actually covered in those blocks. If any blocks were shortened, lengthened or left out altogether, an explanation should be provided.

For a more extensive discussion of many of these points, as well as their social ramifications, see my books *The Waldorf Teacher's Survival Guide and Adolescence, the Search for the Self*. Both are published by Rudolf Steiner College Press, Fair Oaks, CA, and are available in the Sunbridge College Bookstore.

Permission to reprint these guidelines was received from the author for the sole purpose of inclusion within this document.

Survey to Support School and Family Partnerships

This survey can be used to begin asking the questions necessary for your school. In no means does this survey cover all the areas necessary to effectively receive feedback from all parents. As well, you may need to do a phone survey to get a larger response.

Guiding Questions.

1. What programs do the parents want?
2. What are their top priorities?
3. Would this topic be the best choice for meeting this priority?
(Many upper school parents would like to see more math and English basics rather than a second language)
4. Would this format and time be appropriate?
5. What ideas do we have for speakers and other supporting services?
6. What reactions did the parents have to the last program?
7. How can we encourage participation?
8. What follow-up programs are needed?
9. What long-term goals should be established?
10. How can we foster better linkage between home and school?
11. Does this activity ensure that all families can participate fairly regardless of economics or religious beliefs?

We are in the process of building a program to strengthen the sense of community at our school. Please help us think about our school's strengths and weaknesses in providing a sense of community for children, parents, teachers, and other staff members. Rate each statement by circling the number closest to your opinion.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = don't know 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

Students

You feel a sense of belonging in classrooms and in the school?	1 2 3 4 5
You feel cared for by other students, teachers, and adults in the community	1 2 3 4 5
You have the opportunity to practice "helping" behavior?	1 2 3 4 5
You receive "helping" behavior from other students?	1 2 3 4 5
You have the opportunity to interact with older and younger children?	1 2 3 4 5
You have the opportunity to take responsibility for their physical environment?	1 2 3 4 5
You feel safe in the schoolyard?	1 2 3 4 5
You feel safe from bullying or teasing while at school.	1 2 3 4 5

Parents

Parent involvement is important for student success in school.	1 2 3 4 5
This school views parents as important partners.	1 2 3 4 5
You are informed about what takes place in the classroom.	1 2 3 4 5
You have opportunities to develop trusting relationships with teachers.	1 2 3 4 5
You attend parent / teacher conferences regularly.	1 2 3 4 5
You attend activities that their children are involved in.	1 2 3 4 5
You find the school a welcoming place.	1 2 3 4 5
You are aware of ways positive social behavior is fostered in the school.	1 2 3 4 5

You want the school to help foster their children's growth as caring people.	1 2 3 4 5
You are concerned with your children's learning goals.	1 2 3 4 5
You find that the school provides opportunities for parents to support their child's learning.	1 2 3 4 5
The school does a good job communicating with parents.	1 2 3 4 5
Teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways.	1 2 3 4 5
Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent involvement practices.	1 2 3 4 5

Teachers

My child's teachers involve the students in helping determine the school environment.	1 2 3 4 5
My child's teacher's encourages students to take responsibility for their learning behavior.	1 2 3 4 5
My child's teacher's structures way for students to work cooperatively and help each other.	1 2 3 4 5
My child's teachers have a positive, collaborative relationship with other colleagues.	1 2 3 4 5
My child's teachers have the opportunity to interact with parents informally.	1 2 3 4 5
My child's teachers support school wide activities and participate freely.	1 2 3 4 5
My child's teachers enjoy working together to plan cross-class or school wide activities.	1 2 3 4 5
My child's teachers feel valued for their contributions.	1 2 3 4 5
My child's teacher mostly contacts me about problems or trouble.	1 2 3 4 5

Non-Teaching Staff

The staff has positive, collaborative relationships with colleagues.	1 2 3 4 5
The staff has the opportunity to interact with the parents informally.	1 2 3 4 5
The staff supports school wide activities and participates freely.	1 2 3 4 5
The staff feels valued for their contributions.	1 2 3 4 5
The staff has opportunities to get to know students as people.	1 2 3 4 5
The staff has the opportunity to understand and contribute to the school's mission.	1 2 3 4 5

School Community

This school community values education for all students.	1 2 3 4 5
The school has a clear vision that is shared among parents, teachers and staff.	1 2 3 4 5
This school is known for trying new and unusual approaches to improve the school.	1 2 3 4 5
The school is a clean and safe environment for students and staff.	1 2 3 4 5
The school involves itself in the greater community surrounding it.	1 2 3 4 5
The school feels like a warm, inviting and inclusive place.	1 2 3 4 5
This parent community supports the school.	1 2 3 4 5
Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best school climates for teachers, Students and parents.	1 2 3 4 5

Compiled with Child Development Project ideas and from other collected sources.

Collected Teacher Suggestions To Support Parent Teacher Collaboration and To Avoid Burn-Out

1. How you are seen is your responsibility.
2. Treat parents well no matter what.
3. Greet the parent positively every time you see them.
4. Never ignore a parent.
5. Don't assume you know more than the parents.
6. Remember the parent is there for the child, not to boost your ego.
7. Role model graciousness and good manners in front of the parents.
8. Lower the anxiety.
9. It's all about the child.
10. Create a partnership around the needs of the child.
11. Team with the parents.
12. Positive group work with the parents.
13. Remember what components of your classroom cause parents to request your classroom.
14. Be analytical about your work.
15. Learn to say no.
16. Explain the politics to the parents so it doesn't feel so overwhelming. In this way the power in numbers can help joining the parent council.
17. Always project the way you want it to be!
18. Don't give out your home phone number! Make another plan to communicate with parents.
19. Try to explain the complexity of your job to the parents; this will increase empathy and support from the parents.
20. Do not lower your standards for the lowest common denominator.
21. Discuss up front the differing roles for parents and teachers.
22. Your goal is to get the students and the parents to support your learning environment.
23. If you know those parents whom don't feel a part of the process, identify them. Get the right hook to bring them into the classroom, to become involved. It's always the child who benefits.
24. Delegate with deference and respect.
25. Commit yourself to reach out and respect your parents.
26. In the parents you find the most disconcerting, find the common thread so you can both work together for the child. Remember the voiceless underclass.
27. Remember what it is like to be a parent.
28. Defend your idea as to how something benefits the children and it will improve the relationships with your parents.
29. Extend empathy and compassion towards parents.
30. Discord over parent involvement occurs when teachers contact parents only in dealing with the student's academic problems and bad behavior. Researchers have linked involving parents only in those instances to high rates of student absences, development of negative attitudes and low ratings of the school by parents.

31. Open and conclude the conversation with a positive comment about their child.
32. Be conscious of parent cliques. Cliques can directly influence parent involvement. The result can be that the same parent cliques make the decisions for all the parents.
33. Parent involvement should not be an extra burden on the teacher, but a support. The teacher's attitudes influence the parent's attitudes and actions.
34. Do you as a teacher support the Parent Council, so they in turn feel enthusiastic about supporting you?
35. Do not patronize the parents just to lessen your job load and make them disappear. This will cause more problems in the future and undermine the parent teacher partnership.
36. Parents judge the teacher's actions and comments to assess whether they were truly welcomed into the schooling process.
37. Assumptions regarding how parents want to be involved or why they are not involved are often made without parent input. The omission of parents from the discussions concerning their needs limits the role of the parents. This also has implications for Class Coordinators who don't involve the other parents.
38. Be aware and empathetic to parent's schedules and plan meetings and events accordingly to accommodate as many parents as possible.
39. Use interactive homework assignment books to increase parent involvement and communication.
40. Go beyond a string of episodic interactions with parents and develop the potential for complexity, understanding and compassion by engaging in a relationship.
41. When parents and teachers interact only sporadically, they cannot really develop trust, mutual respect, shared meaning or shared purpose.
42. *For every little thing a parent does to help you, whatever, send a handwritten note to their home, or acknowledge it in the class newsletter!*

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