



Editor's Introduction

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Anyone familiar with Rudolf Steiner's instructions for anthroposophically guided education knows that its primary key is meeting children *where* they are, which begins by a deep observation of *who* these children are. This will also be our starting point in the current issue of the *Research Bulletin*.

The art and practice of observing children closely in order to detect and support their so-called "special needs" is the topic of this issue. Of course, all kids are special and so are their various needs—or, as one of the authors featured in this thick volume, Jeff Tunkey of the Aurora Waldorf School, states as a guiding principle: "All children need support!" Precisely. And a recurring conclusion of the articles offered here indicates that by getting better at supporting students with "special needs," teachers get better at supporting all students' needs.

We open the issue with Steiner's original instructions to teachers. More accurately, we open with a selection from Christof Wiechert's recent introduction and commentary to a newly reconstructed record of Steiner's conversations with the teachers of the first Waldorf School. The full transcripts of these meetings, demonstrating Steiner's educational vision in practice, as he was guiding the newly minted faculty in the *Freie Waldorfschule* in Stuttgart, will be published at a future date on our Online Waldorf Library website, along with Wiechert's detailed and extremely valuable commentary. We are very pleased to be able to provide here a taste of what is still to come.

Steiner also sketched out the course for working with children whose needs differ from age-appropriate expectations in the remedial work he conducted with Otto Specht, a child considered "uneducable" by his parents. Closely observing and addressing the deeper sources of Otto's physical and mental impediments, Steiner devised a set of remedial practices that allowed the child not only to catch up with his age group at school but also to continue later in his adulthood to study medicine and to eventually follow a successful career as a physician.

Steiner's close remedial work with Otto Specht, his instructions to the first Waldorf faculty, and many of his numerous lectures on the child's development continue to serve as the source for more recent remedial practices. These practices continue to develop as

Waldorf education further deepens and expands, as do the needs of the 21st century child.

In order to offer a ready-to-hand and rich toolbox for tackling a variety of needs and cases, we have assembled both original articles, published here for the first time, as well as previously published work, describing the outcome of recent research and protocols for tested practices. Of the latter category, you will find here several articles reprinted from a uniquely valuable collection, *Helping Children on Their Way: Educational Support for the Classroom*, compiled by Elisabeth Auer and published by Waldorf Publications in 2017. These include essays, several of which composed by multiple authors, that offer a thorough introduction to forming and maintaining a "Care Group" within the school (Elisabeth Auer, pp. 20-27); supportive practices for reading and writing in the lower grades in an article that also provides rich information about the Orton-Gillingham approach (Linda Atamian, pp. 53-60); therapeutic practices using music, art, eurythmy, and Spatial Dynamics (Juliane Weeks et al, pp. 80-85); and a host of physical and behavioral conditions described and accompanied by manual-style prescriptions for action offered by bestselling authors Kim Payne and Bonnie River ("Incarnational Disrhythmia: Hyper Motoric and Inattentive Challenges, Cumulative Stress Reaction, Sensory Overwhelm Issues, Non-Verbal Disorder, Oppositional Defiance" pp. 86-102). We highly recommend consulting further with the many other articles contained in *Helping Children on Their Way*, which is available from Waldorf Publications.

The first article devoted to this issue's topic, Jeff Tunkey's "Lenses on Teacher Development" (pp. 10-19), emphasizes in its very name that the ability to recognize the unique needs of exceptional students, whatever makes them such, is part of a Waldorf teacher's responsibility, hence of Teacher Development. This article, excerpted from Tunkey's recent and highly recommended book, *Educating for Balance and Resilience* (SteinerBooks/Bell Pond, 2020), is based on many years of guiding budding teachers at the Aurora Waldorf School in Western New York and in other institutions. It is, of course, also based on the author's decades-long experience of working with young students in the classroom. The result is a set of protocols to address the needs of a wide variety of students, presented with the insights of Tunkey's own personal-professional journey.

Another set of articles serve as an introduction to and an advanced description of Audrey McAllen's invaluable contribution to Waldorf education: The Extra Lesson.

Drawing on Rudolf Steiner 1909-1911 Berlin lectures, later translated into English as *Wisdom of Man, of the Soul, and of the Spirit*,¹ McAllen, a lifelong Waldorf teacher working in England, sought to address specific learning challenges in children by aligning a child's bodily movements with patterns of the earth's movements. Explained in her own words: "The Extra Lesson Concept doesn't focus on the soul of the child, but it works with the spiritual laws behind the architecture of the physical human body, and with the spirit of the earth. The exercises integrate the movements of the child into the universal movement patterns of the earth." Audrey McAllen's intensive work is presented in the book, *The Extra Lesson: Movement, Drawing, and Painting Exercises to Help Children with Difficulties in Writing, Reading, and Arithmetic*, originally published in 1974 and quickly becoming legendary among many Waldorf teachers. The book was since translated into multiple languages and was followed by several other volumes in which McAllen approaches elements of children's sleep, speech, handwriting, and drawings as realms through which to observe and address challenges and impediments.

An introduction to Audrey McAllen's method of the Extra Lesson is included here (pp. 28-31), in a reprinted essay by the Dutch educator and Extra Lesson specialist, Joep Eikenboom, who was a student and later a collaborator of Audrey McAllen and is the author of *Foundations of the Extra Lesson: Beyond What Is Seen in the Exercises* (Rudolf Steiner College Press, 2007). This introduction is further expanded in the following article, which is accompanied by a gallery of case studies from its author's, Connie Helms, years of working with the method with children, adolescents, and adults ("Supporting Adolescents with the Extra Lesson" pp. 32-39). Next comes a focus on the use of Extra Lesson in the screening of young students' admittance to the first grade and their later assessment in the second grade, written by Maggie Scott and Elizabeth Auer ("Extra Lesson: First Grade Readiness Screening and Second Grade Assessment" pp. 40-44).

An extensive case study, as much insightful about the inner process of the teacher as it is about the special needs of her student, is offered in Alla Markh's "The Case of Nathan" (pp. 45-52). The author, reporting on her experience as a class teacher at the Halton Waldorf School, in Ontario, writes a detailed account

of her work with a student on the autism spectrum. Wary at first of the ability of an independent Waldorf school to offer the kind of intensive, remedial support that the public school system can provide, Alla turned to the inner resources unlocked by Waldorf teacher training. These include the kind of close observations that produce a deeper, multidimensional vision of the child, and the meditative "night work" a teacher does in search for insight and understanding. The step-by-step descriptions of this progressive work, and the personal tone in which the author describes her own process, make this essay into an especially rewarding reading for any attentive teacher. Alla, too, recognizes that the work with exceptional students provides better tools to working with *all* students. She writes: "[T]he capacities, skills, and abilities I developed throughout this work are transferable to working with other children—observing and understanding them better, and developing towards them an unconditional love fostered by understanding."

Two programmatic articles on remedial work in reading and writing are offered in Jennifer Militzer-Kopperl's "The Remedial Staircase" (pp. 61-71) and Virginia Berg and Renee Schwartz's "Sparking Curiosity Through Spelling" (pp. 72-79).

Militzer-Kopperl is the founder of *Renewal of Literacy*, a program aiming to further support language arts instruction in Waldorf schools and which follows the work published in her books *The Roadmap to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 1 through 3* (co-authored with Janet Langley) and *Continuing the Journey to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 4 through 8*. In the article written for this issue, Militzer-Kopperl presents her remedial approach to reading challenges as a progressive "staircase" that proceeds from removing individual impediments, to strengthening the student's capacities, to adjusting academic instruction, to addressing constraints stemming from the student's environmental settings.

Virginia Berg and Renee Schwartz combine their experience in the lower grades (Schwartz) and the upper ones (Berg) to lay out a set of activities aiming to spark students' curiosity into the origins of words, coaxing them into investigations that would strengthen their capacities of spelling and comprehension. The authors introduce multiple resources that come from wider pedagogical circles while adhering to the Waldorf principle of curiosity-driven education.

Several of the contributors to this issue are members of the Association for Healing Education, whose mission is defined in the following terms: "To serve the

¹ A different English translation of the same lectures was later published under the title, *A Psychology of Body, Soul and Spirit: Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, and Pneumatosophy* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1999).

community of schools and educators who address the individual needs of children in Steiner schools and other environments. To support and further develop methods in Waldorf pedagogy, Extra Lesson, and therapeutic education which are based on insights of Rudolf Steiner into the nature of human development in order to recognize and remediate hindrances which inhibit children from reaching their full potential." We encourage readers to explore further the resources offered by the Association for Healing Education (AHE) at www.healingeducation.org.

Capping the contributions to the topic of student support is a heartfelt tribute to a leading figure in the international Waldorf movement, a thinker and teacher who has made significant contributions to this field: Henning Köhler. Köhler, who passed last April, devoted his lifework to therapeutic and curative pedagogy guided by anthroposophy's insights. Of the numerous books he had written, two were translated into English and were published by Waldorf Publications: *Working with Anxious, Nervous, and Depressed Children: A Spiritual Perspective to Guide Parents* (2000) and *Difficult Children – There Is No Such Thing: An Appeal for the Transformation of Educational Thinking* (2013). The tribute, written by Nancy Blanning, Laurie Clark, Stephanie Hoelscher, Holly Koteen-Soulé, offers a glimpse into the insight, influence, and personality of Henning Köhler, to whom the authors refer as "a companion to the companions."

Toward the end of this issue, you will find Patrice Maynard's response to a statement made in the previous issue of the *Bulletin*—a response we very much welcome as a way for our community of readers to engage in public dialogue on these pages. Addressing the relationship between AWSNA member schools, or official and accredited independent Waldorf schools, and the Waldorf-inspired initiatives seeking their place in the charter or public education spheres, Patrice offers here a detailed history of this relationship while renewing her call to a full separation of School and State.

Despite the dragging of pandemic-related impediments, activities continue in the Online Waldorf Library and the Research Institute for Waldorf Education—reports on which are to be found nearly at the end of this issue. At the very end, you will find an index of all the articles published in the *Research Bulletin* since its first volume, dated January 1996. These articles could be downloaded from the Research Bulletin tab at waldorflibrary.org/journals/.

We wish you all pleasant and inspired reading. Our hope is that this volume of the *Bulletin* would help expand and deepen the kinds of support offered at our schools.

Submissions

Submissions to the Research Bulletin should be made as Word document attachments sent to theresearchbulletin@gmail.com. You are welcome to suggest topics and themes for specific articles by writing to the editor at the same email address.