

Gateways

A Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America

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From the Editor

Stephen Spitalny

Just after Michaelmas this year, I visited Sequoia National Park and stood in front of the world's largest living thing. It is a huge sequoiadendron giganteum (sequoia tree) that has been named "General Sherman." Standing there is a very humbling experience, both because of the immensity of the tree, and also its age. It is nearly three thousand years old. I had a powerful feeling that this tree and its sisters and brothers were silent witnesses to all that has come to pass during their lifetimes. The strange thing was that they weren't completely silent as I stood there. What they said was articulated by a teenage boy standing near me. He said, "They are probably looking at us and asking, 'How could you let these things happen in the world? Why are you people so strong AND so stupid?'"

The trees are watching, and they are wondering when we human beings will wake up.

Johannes Hemleben once offered seven tree meditations. The Saturnine tree (of which sequoia is one) speaks thus:

O, Man, feel the responsibility for the need of
your time, and of all mankind,
With inner devotion take hold of the work that
life puts before you.

This Michaelic mood of serving the world, both humanity and the natural world, with intelligence and devotion is what is called for. Not just the trees, but all of nature is asking us to step forward and take responsibility for our own actions and to prevent further destruction of all kinds to our brethren and the earth, our home.

Human beings are so clever and so powerful. It is essential that a balance is found and conscience shines brightly. Michael also waits for us to step forward. And then nature and Michael both become helpers in the work of transformation, both personal and planetary. We have so much ability and faculty; let's exercise our moral muscle, too.

Meadows speaks, in Christopher Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners*:

The human heart can go to the lengths of God,
Dark and cold we may be, but this

Is no winter now. The frozen misery
Of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move,
The thunder is the thunder of the floes,
The thaw, the flood, the upstart spring.
Thank God our time is now when wrong
Comes up to face us everywhere,
Never to leave us till we take
The longest stride of soul men ever took.
Affairs are now soul size.
The enterprise is exploration into God.
Where are you going? It takes
So many thousand years to wake,
But will you wake for pity's sake....

The mighty call of our time is to wake up to the social needs of the world and do something. Every little step is a step. It's obvious that is the main work with the children and their parents. And to wake up to the needs of the earth.

As kindergarten teachers, we can be examples for adults in our institutions as well. What about walking to school? Or bike riding? How many of us drive by ourselves in a car each day? What if we brought the dishes to faculty meeting, and brought them home to wash so there would be no need for paper plates, etc. All of our actions do have an effect, a result, a consequence.

Where are we going and can we wake up? I hope so. So much is counting on it. Picture ripples in a pond. Make ripples! Daily ripples. We have to be awake to make the choices that create those ripples, and become aware of the results of our actions and then our choices are sounder.

I am reminded of what Professor Dumbledore said to Harry Potter in *The Chamber of Secrets* (Yes, I read all the Harry Potter books); "It's our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

This issue is filled with much to provoke thinking and offers perspectives on various aspects of the work with the young child. The fall bounty of this issue offers much to read as the weather gets cool. To describe all of its wonderful contents would take up the whole issue. Nonetheless, I mention the following: Susan Howard has written a chapter for an upcoming book on mentoring,

and it is an overview to consider what a Waldorf early childhood program looks like. What are the essentials? Joan Almon again offers considerations on the play of the child to enrich our thinking and observing. She has also submitted an update on the work of the Alliance for Childhood. Joyce Gallardo visited a Pikler-type center for at-risk children in Equador and she shares her experiences with us here. Andrea Gambardella shares her thoughts on observing children from the perspective of the four lower senses. And we have conference reports, comments by readers in response to past articles and more. What a wealth fills our pages this issue. I have again offered some thoughts in the realm of fairy tales in hopes that it will stimulate the reader to share insights of her or his own. Please send me your comments, questions and your own articles around this theme of fairy tales.

And please send me your articles, questions and comments about any other aspects of the work with

the young child. Your thoughts could be included next time. Thanks to all who have submitted articles; the ones we were able to use as well as the ones we had no room for or that just didn't seem to fit with the rest of the contents of this issue. Thanks for all the articles you all are working on at the moment as well!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Whitsun Letter

Susan Weber

I am writing to share my delight in reading about Ruth Ker's work with older children in the kindergarten. Her descriptions took me back immediately to my mixed-age kindergarten teaching years, and memories of individual children arose over and over.

But my greatest joy was not in these memories, as wonderful as they are. My delight was in Ruth's delicate tapestry of the subtle elements of a Waldorf early childhood program for older children. One after another, Ruth articulates, with living examples, the pedagogical elements of Waldorf early childhood education. These gossamer threads shine with the radiance of the life forces and powers of true imagination that identify such a program. Her equanimity, positivity and openness to what the children in her care need, to the subtle processes of human development that the older kindergarten child undergoes, are the hallmark of the blessing that this education can bestow upon the incarnating individuality.

Ruth's understanding of rhythm and breathing, her inclusion of the fruits of the past decade's study of remedial education, movement

education, the contemporary situation for children in their process of incarnation – all these underlie the description in her article. But they are all invisible, because like every master teacher, Ruth has made the work her own through the penetration of the daily details as she has thoughtfully studied, observed, and reflected upon the most fundamental principles of Waldorf education.

I emphasize this point because I believe that Ruth's article unknowingly addresses a deep concern of my own, the current tendency toward divisiveness among practitioners of Waldorf early childhood education. Rather than one stream arising out of our observation and study of the nature of the human being, his life between death and rebirth and death once again, we now hear and speak of Pikler- or RIE-influenced programs, of "hybrid" programs, to name a few. I suggest that rather than look for labels to differentiate approaches, that we look instead to the whole, to the fundamental sources of Waldorf early childhood education, and then determine whether our work as teachers is

striving in this direction. Whether our work is with infants, toddlers, three-, four-, five- or six-year-olds; whether we are providing out of our best insights providing care for the mornings, full days, fuller days; whether we work at home, within an established Waldorf school or a new initiative, in another setting altogether; whether we begin the day indoors or out – none of this is in any way the defining characteristic of our work. Let us not be distracted by the material external picture of our individual working situations. Without the fine soul – touching that Rudolf Steiner describes in the teachers’ meditations, without carrying the profound picture of the nature of the human being that he describes, none of our work is Waldorf education. And if we do work out of these places, all of our work is Waldorf early childhood education.

Let us put aside the question of caring for infants outside the home for once and for all. Let us, rather, discover through courageous observation and study how we can best support the family in which such care is needed. Let us truly engage in the cultural conditions of our times to see what families actually experience in their daily lives. There are Michaelic individuals throughout the earth who work on behalf of the incarnating human being, who have tremendous insights to offer to us as Waldorf educators. It is our privilege and responsibility when possible to meet them, to develop working relationships with them. These opportunities serve us well to extend our insights, to offer contrasts that enable us to become clearer about essential elements of our understanding and practices. To close our door to new ideas out of fear – whatever that fear may be – will not strengthen the Waldorf movement. I have heard Suzanne Down for many years quote Adola MacWilliam, acclaimed curative educator: “Don’t say ‘no’, say ‘oh!’”

I believe that Adola is merely offering us each an admonition to practice the fundamental exercises of which Steiner tells us that if anthroposophists worked with these only, in sufficient intensity, no further esoteric teaching would be necessary. So doing will open our hearts as well as our thoughts. These capacities will enable creative, non-judgmental discourse to arise among us as colleagues, and also with the parents of the children in our care and with the parents who are

considering bringing their children into our care. Just as we fully anticipate that an architect working out of the stream of anthroposophy will be firmly grounded in the traditions of architecture through time as well as in the contemporary insights of other practitioners; just as Jaimen MacMillan has crafted a rich approach to movement that has enriched the experience of Waldorf students throughout North America and beyond through his depth of understanding of many, many forms of movement; just as our anthroposophical physicians study far beyond the bounds of Rudolf Steiner’s work and make good use of allopathic approaches when they are needed, let us too find interest in the various insights of early childhood educators who work outside of Waldorf education. Let us find our own insights and questions through the exploration of their work, as we all the while deepen our understanding of the human being out of the insights of anthroposophy.

We need to take risks, we need to “experiment” with various rhythms, movement possibilities, outdoor environments, age groupings. Hopefully our intercollegial dialogue will forever be enriched by our differences, our courage to bring something that raises a question and extends our insights. Nothing in Waldorf education is meant to be codified or formulaic. How could it be, in any external material way, based as it is upon our deepest possible striving to understand the human being as a spiritual, re-incarnating individuality engaged in particular experiences in an earthly life?

In the mood and substance of Whitsun, I invite us all to abandon labels, brand names, and tendencies toward fragmentation: to bring our work forward out of our unifying insights and our courage to meet the conditions of our situations with fresh ideas. I invite us to look outward at the cultural conditions of the twenty-first century and honor the journey of those currently experiencing earthly life as female or as male, as infants or as adults. I encourage the Waldorf early childhood movement to create a diversity of approaches that leaves the “Waldorf catalogue” far behind as our insights into true human needs grows ever richer and deeper. My plea is that we waste no valuable energy or resources on questions regarding whether infants ought to be cared for out of the home, whether mothers ought to work out of the

home, and acknowledge that they are and they do. Better questions need to be:

- How we can support these choices with full respect?
- In what creative ways our programs and forms can help (or whether we might be hindering?)
- Who else is doing work that can bring insights and new possibilities to our striving

Let our individual voices unite, not divide. Let us be unafraid of creative tension and even conflict as we explore and articulate our insights. Our identity as Waldorf educators arises from our inner commitment to strive to understand the human being out of Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy. Let us allow all other labels to fall away.

Clean-up Time and Gnomes

Nancy Foster

Occasionally when I visit kindergartens, I hear a particular song which accompanies clean-up time, and recently there was a lovely anecdote in Gateways which involved this same song about a "dusty gnome" who calls on us to clean our home. I would like to pass on an experience I had many years ago when a master teacher from a European Waldorf school came to Acorn Hill to teach a course. I no longer recall which teacher it was, nor how this topic arose.

In any case, this teacher told us, with some indignation, of a song she had heard in American Waldorf schools involving a dusty gnome. None of us knew the song, but she impressed upon us that a gnome cannot be dusty! She said it is against the very nature of the gnomes, and that if we refer to elemental beings, it is essential to be truthful as well as unsentimental. This made a deep impression on me at the time. Later, our faculty worked with Rudolf Steiner's lecture cycle, *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word* (now, I believe, published with a different title) in which he speaks in detail about the elemental beings and their connection with the kingdoms of nature. My understanding of the gnomes is that they possess the capacity for instant comprehension, without our human necessity of thinking through things to reach an understanding. They can also move swiftly through matter, like light. This is a very incomplete description of the gnome's nature, but does hint at the reason for

Susan Weber is the founder and Director of Sophia's Hearth Family Center in Keene, New Hampshire. She is a member of the WECAN Working Group on RIE/Pikler and Waldorf early childhood education and is North America's representative on the International Association's Working Group on the Very Young Child. She is a former teacher at the Monadnock Waldorf School and director of early childhood training at Antioch/New England Graduate School.

our teacher's statement that a gnome could not be "dusty."

A few times I have suggested to teachers that if they wish to use the clean-up song about the gnome, they could change the word "dusty" to "busy;" this fits into the melody but might be more true to the nature of the gnome. This is something to consider. To this I would add a remark made by another master teacher, when her advice was asked about turning off the lights as a signal to begin clean-up. "Well," she said, "you can certainly do that. However, some day you will realize you don't need to have any signal at all. You will just clean up." Perhaps we do not always need a song for clean-up time, but can just go about our work with the children.

If you are interested in pursuing the topic of the elemental beings, their relationship to humans, and our responsibility to them, I recommend the lectures mentioned above as well as Marjorie Spock's book, *Fairy Worlds and Workers*. In these times of profound concern for the health of the Earth, our attention to, and respect for, the elemental beings is more important than ever.

Nancy Foster is a longtime Waldorf teacher from Acorn Hill Waldorf Kindergarten, an educator of teachers and parents and an author.

Essentials of Waldorf Early Childhood Education

Susan Howard

Is there a Waldorf early childhood “curriculum?” Are there specific activities – perhaps puppet plays or watercolor painting, for example – that are required in a Waldorf program? Are there certain materials and furnishings – lazured, soft-colored walls, handmade playthings, natural materials, beeswax crayons – that are essential ingredients of a Waldorf setting? What is it that makes Waldorf early childhood education “Waldorf?” Rudolf Steiner spoke on a number of occasions about the essentials of education and of early childhood education. His words shed light on what he considered fundamental:

*Essentially, there is no education other than self-education, whatever the level may be. This is recognized in its full depth within Anthroposophy, which has conscious knowledge through spiritual investigation of repeated Earth lives. Every education is self-education, and as teachers we can only provide the environment for children’s self-education. We have to provide the most favorable conditions where, through our agency, children can educate themselves according to their own destinies. This is the attitude that teachers should have toward children, and such an attitude can be developed only through an ever-growing awareness of this fact. (Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*)*

Thus the essential element in early childhood education is actually the educator, who shapes and influences the children’s environment, not only through the furnishings, activities, and rhythms of the day, but most important, through the qualities of her own being and her relationships: to the children and other adults in the kindergarten, to the parents, to daily life in the kindergarten, and to living on earth.

These qualities, which include attitudes and gestures both outer and inner, permeate the early childhood setting and deeply influence the children, who take them up through a process of imitation. The results of such experiences appear much later in the child’s life through predispositions, tendencies, and attitudes toward

life’s opportunities and challenges.

Viewed in this way, early childhood education demands an ongoing process of self-education by the adult. If we again ask, what makes a Waldorf program “Waldorf,” the answers might be sought less in the particular activities or rhythms or materials and furnishings, and more in the extent to which these outer aspects are harmonious expressions of inner qualities, attitudes, capacities, and intentions of the teacher – all of which can have a health-giving effect on the children, both in the moment and for the rest of their lives.

Those of us who are committed to this path of Waldorf early childhood education, whether as early childhood teachers or mentors, may actively ask ourselves how qualities essential to the healthy development of young children are living in our own early childhood groups, in our own daily lives, and in our own inner practice.

Rudolf Steiner spoke on a number of occasions about experiences essential for healthy early childhood education, including the following:

- Love and warmth
- Care for the environment and nourishment for the senses
- Creative, artistic experience
- Meaningful adult activity as an example for the child’s imitation
- Free, imaginative play
- Protection for the forces of childhood
- Gratitude, reverence, and wonder
- Joy, humor, and happiness
- Adult caregivers on a path of inner development

The following brief descriptions of these qualities and related questions are intended to serve as a stimulus to dialogue and self-reflection.

Love and Warmth

Children who live in an atmosphere of love

and warmth, and who have around them truly good examples to imitate, are living in their proper element. (Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*)

Love and warmth, more than any programmatic approach to early education, create the basis for development. These qualities are expressed in the gestures that live between adult and child, in the children's behavior toward one another, and also in the social relations among the adults in the early childhood center. In other words, they form the social community of early childhood education. When Rudolf Steiner visited the classes of the first Waldorf school, he was known to ask the school children, "Do you love your teacher?"

Questions we can ask ourselves as Waldorf early childhood educators include the following:

- Are love and warmth living in the atmosphere?
- How are they expressed in the gestures that live between adult and child?
- How are they expressed in the children's behavior toward one another?
- How are the social relations among the adults caring for the children?

Less apparent within the day, but also of great significance, are these same qualities of love and warmth in relations with colleagues outside the classroom, with the parents, and with the wider community:

- How are the relations between the early childhood educators and the parents?
- How are the relations with the other colleagues in the early childhood groups and in the rest of the school? How do we work with conflict?
- Are the children surrounded by a community which offers love and warmth and support?

Care for the Environment and Nourishment for the Senses

The essential task of the kindergarten teacher is to create the "proper physical environment" around the children. "Physical environment" must be understood in the widest sense imaginable. It includes not just what happens around children in the material sense, but everything that occurs in their environment, everything that can be perceived by their senses, that can work on the inner powers of children

from the surrounding physical space. This includes all moral or immoral actions, all the meaningful and meaningless behaviors that children witness.

(Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*)

Early learning is profoundly connected to the child's own physical body and sensory experience. Thus the physical surroundings, indoors and outdoors, should provide nourishing, diverse opportunities for the child's active self-education. By integrating diverse elements, and bringing them into a meaningful, understandable and harmonious order, the adult provides surroundings that are accessible to the young child's understanding, feeling, and active will. Such surroundings provide the basis for the development of a sense of coherence. The child unconsciously experiences the love, care, intentions and consciousness expressed through the outer furnishings and materials of the classroom. The inner qualities offer a moral grounding for the child's development; the environment is "ensouled" and nurturing.

The adult shapes not only the spatial environment, but also the temporal environment, creating a loving, lively yet orderly "breathing" through rhythm and repetition. Through this healthy breathing process, the child gains a sense of security and confidence in his or her relationship with the world. Here we can ask:

- Does the environment of the early childhood program offer these qualities of order, care, transparency, and meaning? What is expressed through the outer furnishings and materials?
- Does the space offer diverse opportunities for nourishing experiences in the realm of touch, self-movement, balance, and well-being?
- Are the activities of the day integrated in time into a healthy flow, in which transitions are as smooth and seamless as possible?
- Are there opportunities for lively, joyful physical movement as well as for more inward, listening experience? for large-group, small-

group, and solitary experiences?

Creative, Artistic Experience

. . . [I]n order to become true educators, the essential thing is to be able to see the truly aesthetic element in the work, to bring an artistic quality into our tasks. . . . If we bring this aesthetic element, we then begin to come closer to what the child wills out of its own nature.

(RS, *A Modern Art of Education*)

In the early childhood class, the art of education is the art of living. The teacher is an artist in how she perceives and relates to the children and the activities of daily life. She “orchestrates” and “choreographs” the rhythms of each day, the week, and the seasons in such a way that the children can breathe freely within a living structure. In addition, the teacher offers the children opportunities for artistic experiences through song and instrumental music, movement and gesture (including rhythmic games and eurythmy), speech and language (including verses, poetry, and stories), modeling, watercolor painting and drawing, puppetry and marionettes.

Here we may ask:

- How do the arts live in the kindergarten, in the teacher, and in the children?
- How is the rhythmic flow of time formed?
- Is the teacher engaged artistically in the domestic arts and work processes?
- How is creative, artistic experience of the child fostered through the furnishings and play materials of the kindergarten?
- Is the play of the children creative and artistic in its imagery, its social interactions, and its processes?
- Is the teacher’s work with individual children both practical and imaginative? What kinds of imaginations inform her work?
- Is the teacher herself engaged in creative artistic endeavors? Is she striving to deepen her own understanding and experience of what it means to be artistic?

Meaningful Adult Activity as an Example for the Child’s Imitation

The task of the kindergarten teacher is to adapt the practical activities of daily life so that they are suitable for the child’s imitation through play. . . . The activities of children in kindergarten must be derived directly from life itself rather than being “thought out” by the intellectualized culture of adults. In the kindergarten, the most important thing is to give children the opportunity to directly imitate life itself.

(RS, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*)

Children do not learn through instruction or admonition, but through imitation. . . . Good sight will develop if the environment has the proper conditions of light and color, while in the brain and blood circulation, the physical foundations will be laid for a healthy sense of morality if children witness moral actions in their surroundings. (RS, *The Education of the Child*)

Real, meaningful, purposeful work, adjusted to the needs of the child, is in accordance with the child’s natural and inborn need for activity and is an enormously significant educational activity. Thus, rather than offering “thought-out,” contrived projects and activities for the children, the teacher focuses on her own meaningful work through activities that nurture daily and seasonal life in the classroom “home:” cooking and baking, gardening, laundry and cleaning, creating and caring for the materials in the surroundings, and the bodily care of the children.

This creates a realm, an atmosphere, of freedom in which the individuality of each child can be active. It is not intended that the children copy the outer movements and actions of the adult, but rather that they experience the inner work attitude: the devotion, care, sense of purpose, intensity of focus, and creative spirit of the adult. And then, in turn, each child is free to act as an artist-doer in his or her own right, through creative free play and active movement, according to his or her own inner needs and possibilities.

Here we may ask:

- How does meaningful adult activity live in the group, both indoors and out?
- Does the caregiver seem able to devote herself inwardly and outwardly with enthusiasm, in an artistic way, to real life activities and adult work?
- Does she appear engaged artistically in a creative process?
- Are her work activities truly meaningful and purposeful, in a logical sequence that the child can grasp?
- Do the children imitate the adult's work through their play (not necessarily her outer actions, but perhaps more important, the inner gesture of her work)?
- What qualities are expressed in the children's play?

Free, Imaginative Play

In the child's play activity, we can only provide the conditions for education. What is gained through play stems fundamentally from the self-activity of the child, through everything that cannot be determined by fixed rules. The real educational value of play lies in the fact that we ignore our rules and regulations, our educational theories, and allow the child free rein.

(RS, *Self-Education in the Light of Anthroposophy*)

And then, a seemingly contradictory indication:

Giving direction and guidance to play is one of the essential tasks of sensible education, which is to say of an art of education that is right for humanity. . . The early childhood educator must school his or her observation in order to develop an artistic eye, to detect the individual quality of each child's play. (Untranslated lecture by Rudolf Steiner, Feb. 24, 1921 in Utrecht, Holland)

Little children learn through play. They approach play in an entirely individual way, out of their own unique configuration of soul and spirit, and out of their own unique experiences in the world

they live in. In addition, the manner in which each child plays may offer a picture of how he or she will take up his or her destiny as an adult.

The task of the teacher is to create an environment that supports the possibility for healthy play. This environment includes the physical surroundings, furnishings, and play materials; the social environment of activities and social interactions; and the inner/spiritual environment of thoughts, intentions, and imaginations held by the adults.

We may ask the following questions relating to the children's play in the kindergarten:

- What is the quality and duration of the children's play? Is it active, dynamic, healthy, creative? Are the children self-directed and deeply engaged, socially and individually?
- How does the early childhood teacher reconcile these two seemingly contradictory challenges: to give free rein to the child at play, and to guide and direct and provide the conditions for healthy play to develop?
- What are the themes and images of free play in the kindergarten?
- Do the play materials offer diverse and open-ended possibilities for creativity, social interaction, and bodily movement?
- Are there opportunities for a wide range of play activities outdoors? How are the children active outdoors, compared with indoors? How much time is there for indoor vs. outdoor play?

Protection for the Forces of Childhood

Although it is highly necessary that each person should be fully awake in later life, the child must be allowed to remain as long as possible in the peaceful, dreamlike condition of pictorial imagination in which his early years of life are passed. For if we allow his organism to grow strong in this non-intellectual way, he will rightly develop in later life the intellectuality needed in the world

today. (RS, A Modern Art of Education)

The lively, waking dream of the little child's consciousness must be allowed to thrive in the early childhood group. This means that the teacher refrains as much as possible from verbal instruction; instead, her gestures and actions provide a model for the child's imitation, and familiar rhythms and activities provide a context where the need for verbal instruction is reduced. Simple, archetypal imagery in stories, songs, and games provides "digestible" experiences that do not require intellectual or critical reflection or explanation.

Here we may ask:

- Does the atmosphere in the room foster an imaginative, not-yet-intellectually-awakened consciousness in the children?
- Are the children allowed to immerse themselves fully in play without unnecessary instruction and verbal direction from the adults?
- Are play processes allowed to run their course, or are they interrupted?
- Does a "group consciousness" prevail in group activities, instead of singling out individual children for special privileges and offering choices and having children take turns?
- Do the sequence and rhythms of the day carry the children along, or do the children ask what is coming next?
- Does the teacher invite children to participate in activities such as rhythmic circles or finger games through her own activity, or does she wait to see if children are "ready" or verbally explain what is coming?

An Atmosphere of Gratitude, Reverence, and Wonder

An atmosphere of gratitude should grow naturally in children through merely witnessing the gratitude the adults feel as they receive what is freely given by others, and in how they express this gratitude. If a child says "thank you" very naturally – not in response to the urging of others, but simply through imitating – something has been done that will greatly benefit the child's whole life. Out of

this an all-embracing gratitude will develop toward the whole world. This cultivation of gratitude is of paramount importance. (RS, The Child's Changing Consciousness)

Out of these early all-pervading experiences of gratitude, the first tender capacity for love, which is deeply embedded in each and every child, begins to sprout in earthly life.

If, during the first period of life, we create an atmosphere of gratitude around the children, then out of this gratitude toward the world, toward the entire universe, and also out of thankfulness for being able to be in this world, a profound and warm sense of devotion will arise. . . upright, honest and true. (RS, The Child's Changing Consciousness)

This is the basis for what will become a capacity for deep, intimate love and commitment in later life, for dedication and loyalty, for true admiration of others, for fervent spiritual or religious devotion, and for placing oneself wholeheartedly in the service of the world.

Here we may ask:

- How do gratitude, reverence, and wonder live in the kindergarten?
- Do they come to natural expression from adults and children?
- Are they spontaneous, sincere and un sentimental?

Joy, Humor, and Happiness

The joy of children in and with their environment must therefore be counted among the forces that build and shape the physical organs. They need teachers who look and act with happiness and, most of all, with honest, unaffected love. Such a love that streams, as it were, with warmth through the physical environment of the children may be said to literally "hatch out" the forms of the physical organs. (RS, Education of the Child)

If you make a surly face so that a child gets the impression you are a grumpy person, this harms the child for the rest of its life. What kind of school plan you make is neither here nor there; what matters is what sort of person you are.
(RS, The Kingdom of Childhood)

Here we may explore the following questions:

- Do happiness and joy live in this group of children and their teachers?
- How is the teacher's earnestness and serious striving held in a dynamic balance with humor, happiness, and "honest, unaffected love?"
- Are there moments of laughter and delight in the room? How does humor live in the community of children and adults?

Adult Caregivers on a Path of Inner Development

For the small child before the change of teeth, the most important thing in education is the teacher's own being. (RS, Essentials of Education)

Just think what feelings arise in the soul of the early childhood educator who realizes: what I accomplish with this child, I accomplish for the grown-up person in his twenties. What matters is not so much a knowledge of abstract educational principles or pedagogical rules. . . . [W]hat does matter is that a deep sense of responsibility develops in our hearts and minds and affects our world view and the way we stand in life. (RS, "Education In the Face of the Present Day World Situation," June 10, 1920)

Here we come to the spiritual environment of the early childhood setting: the thoughts, attitudes, and imaginations living in the adult who cares for the children. This invisible realm that lies behind the outer actions of the teacher has a profound influence on the child's development.

The spiritual environment includes recognition of the child as a threefold being – of body, soul and spirit – on a path of evolutionary

development through repeated earth lives. This recognition provides a foundation for the daily activities in the kindergarten, and for the relationship between adult and child.

In addition to the questions we have already pondered above, we may ask:

- How is the teacher actively engaged in inner development as an early childhood educator, and as a human being?
- How is she cultivating a relationship to the children on a spiritual basis?
- How is the teacher working with her colleagues to foster an environment of spiritual striving and a deepened study of child and human development?
- Does the teacher strive to approach her work in such a way that the children in her care are not burdened by unresolved issues in her personal life?
- Do goodness and moral uprightness stream from the being of the teacher? Is her inner and outer activity in coherence with healthy social and ethical values? Is she striving to be an example worthy of the children's imitation?
- Does the teacher love the children? Does she work to create healthy, caring relationships with their parents, with colleagues, and with the community? Does she love the earth, and the world into which the children are incarnating?
- How does she see her relationship to the past, the present, and the future of our human journey?

This is the very challenging realm of self-knowledge and the activity of the individual ego of the adult – a realm where it is difficult to be objective in our observations. Yet ultimately it is this realm that may affect the development of the children most profoundly. It is not merely our outer activity that affects the developing child; it is what lies behind and is expressed through this outer activity. Ultimately the most profound influence on the child is who we are as human beings – and who and how we are becoming.

Conclusion

The so-called "essentials" described in this chapter are qualitative in nature. For the most

part, they do not characterize a body of “best practices;” instead, they describe inner qualities and attributes of the teacher that foster healthy development in young children. These qualities can come to expression in a wide variety of ways, according to the age range and particular characteristics of the children in a particular group; the nature of the particular program (a kindergarten or playgroup or extended care program, for example); or the environment and surroundings (urban or rural, home or school or child care center, for example).

Many practices that have come to be associated with Waldorf/Steiner early childhood education – certain rhythms and rituals, play materials, songs, stories, even the colors of the walls or the dress of the adults or the menu for snack – may be mistakenly taken as essentials. The results of such assumptions can be surprising or even disturbing: a “King Winter” nature table appearing in a tropical climate in “wintertime,” or dolls with pink skin and yellow hair in a kindergarten where all the children in the school and the surrounding culture are brown-skinned and black-haired. Such practices may express a tendency toward a doctrinal or dogmatic approach that is out of touch with the realities of the immediate situation and instead imposes something from “outside.”

There is a parallel concern at the other end of the spectrum from the doctrinal or dogmatic. The freedom that Waldorf education offers each individual teacher to determine the practices of her early childhood program can be misinterpreted to mean that “anything goes,” according to her own personal preferences and style. Here too, there is the danger that the developmental realities and needs of the children are not sufficiently taken into consideration.

Each of these one-sided approaches may be injurious to the development of the children. As Waldorf early childhood educators we are constantly seeking a middle, universally human path between polarities.

Rudolf Steiner’s advice to the first Waldorf kindergarten teacher, Elizabeth Grunelius, in the early 1920’s, could be paraphrased as follows: Observe the children. Actively meditate. Follow your intuitions. Work out of imitation.

Today we are challenged to engage in a

constant process of renewal as Waldorf early childhood educators, actively observing today’s children in our care, carrying them in our meditations, and seeking to work consciously and artistically to create the experiences that will serve their development. Our devotion to this task awakens us to the importance of self-education and transformation in the context of community. Our ongoing study of child and human development, our own artistic and meditative practices, and our work with Anthroposophy, independently and together with others, become essential elements for the practice of Waldorf early childhood education. Here we can come to experience that we are not alone on this journey; we are supported through our encounters with one another and with spiritual beings offering support toward our continued development and toward the renewal of culture Waldorf education seeks to serve.

Susan Howard is the WECAN Coordinator and a member of the Coordinating Group of the International Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Association (IASWECE). She directs the part-time early childhood training at Sunbridge College and is a member of the WECAN Mentoring Task Force. This article will appear in a forthcoming publication by the Mentoring Task Force.

The Healing Power of Play

Joan Almon

When I began teaching young children in 1971, I was untrained and unsure of myself as a teacher, but I was convinced of two things: There was a spark of spirit in every human being and there had to be a way of keeping it alive in children; and there was a way for a classroom full of twenty three- to six-year-olds to play deeply and harmoniously with each other and not sink into chaos.

It took me some years to realize how closely related these two realities are—spirituality and play. It is hard to put into words, but there were many days in my kindergarten when I experienced the deep hum of children at play and think, this is as close to heaven as you are likely to get in this lifetime.

Over the years, I saw many individual and cultural differences in how children play, but I was especially struck by the universal quality of play. Play is one of the core experiences of life, and is intimately connected with children's growth, health and well-being.

I recently heard a well-respected early childhood educator, Gillian MacNamee of the Erickson Institute in Chicago, say that she sees play as one of the four essential indicators of a child's health, along with the ways they eat, sleep and handle toileting. Given this central role of play in children's development, we need to do everything we can to support it and encourage it, especially in these times when it is disappearing from many children's lives.

Another core aspect of early childhood that is closely related to play is the child's ability to imitate adults at work and translate that work into their own drive to play. Nowhere did I see this as vividly as on a visit to a Waldorf school in Tanzania some years ago. There were two kindergartens in the school. One of the teachers was new to Waldorf education. She had only started a month before and was not yet in a training course. She was very gifted in playing with children individually, but she did not know how to help a group of twenty-five children play. As I passed her room, I could hear the sounds of chaos, sounds I recognized from my own early days as a teacher.

On the morning I visited her kindergarten, I told the teacher that I liked to sew while visiting

a classroom and wondered if she had a doll to be sewn or a cloth to be mended. She looked very puzzled, and said: "Oh, I do all of that work at home, in the evening."

"No, no," I blurted out, not very tactfully. "In a Waldorf kindergarten, we do that work in front of the children to inspire their play."

There weren't many supplies in the kindergarten, but the children were making little pom poms with yarn and cardboard. There was a basket with a jumble of short yarn pieces in it. When the children came in, I was sitting at a table, making tiny little yarn balls, singing a song about winding the yarn, and putting each ball down in a circle when it was finished.

The children seemed spell-bound by the gestures, mood and music. The whole group gathered around and watched intently. When the last bit of yarn was rolled up and the circle was complete, the children turned like a flock of birds and flew into every part of the room to play. They made a bus out of chairs, built little shops where they sold all sorts of things, and created homes for their babies. The teacher was astonished, but it was a simple picture of how children are inspired by real work and transform it into creative play through the power of imitation.

Sometimes imitation is weak in a child, and the child has difficulty playing. Then it is good to involve the child with real work—baking, cleaning, woodworking or whatever needs to be done. Usually, after a short time of working, the child wants to play and has ideas for play. In the most extreme situation I faced, I brought a child to my worktable for ten minutes every day for six weeks. By the end of that period, he was playing beautifully.

The relationship between imitation and play puzzled me greatly when I was a new teacher. Rudolf Steiner speaks often of imitation, but I could not grasp it at first. It helped to observe imitation in very young children who are learning to speak. They imitate the language that surrounds them without anyone actually "teaching" them. But where does this capacity come from?

It was a great help to find Rudolf Steiner's

explanation of the origins of imitation in a passage that is now included in WECAN's book, *On the Play of the Child*. Rudolf Steiner gives a picture of how human beings interpenetrate with higher beings when we are in the spiritual world before birth and after death. We learn from them, not by standing apart from them while they lecture us but by entering deeply into their being. We breathe into them and learn directly from them. This gift of entering into the other we bring down to earth with us. We experience it strongly in the first seven years, and we call it imitation. It is much more profound than simply copying or aping another. It goes to the very heart and soul of who we are as human beings, uniquely individual yet capable of being at one with the world around us.

“Children carry their prenatal experiences in the spiritual world into physical existence after birth. In the spiritual world, we human beings live in the beings of the higher hierarchies; everything we do arises out of the nature of the higher hierarchies. There, we are imitative to a much greater extent because we are united with those beings we imitate. Then we are placed into the physical world, but we continue our habit of being at one with our surroundings. The habit of being at one with the beings in our surroundings, or imitating them, continues. We continue to imitate those who are responsible for our upbringing and who are to do and feel only what we should imitate. It is extremely healthy for children to be able to live not so much in their own souls, but in the souls of the people around them...”¹

In another set of lectures, Rudolf Steiner explains that this capacity to enter deeply into the hierarchies remains with us in early childhood and serves as the basis for a deeply held religious life in early childhood. This is not a religion children are “taught,” but rather it is a foundation for their religious life on earth. It is then built upon, shaped and formed by their family and religious community. Rudolf Steiner describes this foundation of religious experience in this way:

Only on the basis of this knowledge can we correctly understand what expresses itself in the life and activities of children under seven. They simply continue in their earthly life a tendency of soul that was the most essential aspect of life before birth. In the spiritual realm, one

surrenders completely to the spirit all around, lives outside oneself, all the more individually, yet outside of one's self. One wants to continue this tendency toward devotion in earthly life – wants to continue in the body the activity of pre-earthly life in the spiritual worlds. This is why the whole life of a small child is naturally religious.²

In other places, Rudolf Steiner gives indications that kindergarten teachers are like priests in the kindergarten. But one can easily misunderstand this indication. Normally, the priest is at the altar, looking up to the spiritual world and guiding the congregation toward the divine. Young children, however, have just left the world of the divine and are finding their way to the earth. Our task is to help them find their way while recognizing that the divine world works strongly into the earthly. We stand not at the usual altar but at the worktable baking the bread of life, sewing, gardening and much more.

There is a difference for the children in whether we experience the earth merely in its most external, materialistic way or whether we recognize the hand of the divine in the creation of all that is earthly. It is not necessary to speak about these things with the children, although occasionally something about the angels or God can be said, and these good beings also appear in some of our verses and songs. For the young child, our inner mood and gesture speak much louder than our words. If we hold the divine in our heart, and if our own inner practices are directed toward the spiritual, then the children feel at home on the earth in a way they never can if they are surrounded by a purely materialistic view. Deep in their being they know there is a spiritual world and are seeking an earthly experience that mirrors it. They look to us to understand this reality and they grasp it through imitating our inner mood.

The importance of the inner mood of the teacher was brought home to me often in the kindergarten. There were days during playtime, for instance, when there was a nervous energy in the room. The children were playing, but in a superficial way. I would look around the room wondering who was disturbing their play. Usually, no one was upsetting anyone else, yet there was a

noticeable tension in the air. Finally I learned an important lesson – that when I experienced that nervousness I needed to first look at myself. Often I had become inwardly agitated and had lost my calm focus. When I took a deep breath and became centered again, the whole class settled down into their play.

Side by side with the child's capacity for imitation stands another important capacity: it is a deep wisdom that guides each step of their development. Every healthy infant knows when to turn over, when to sit up and when to walk. How does it know what to do? No one instructs it, nor does the child learn these things through imitation. Rather, there is a deep wisdom in each child that guides it along its path of physical growth and development. This same wisdom is at work when children play; it helps them choose the play scenarios they need for their next steps of development, including ones they need for healing. Children often use make-believe play to resolve problems that are troubling them. They may not be able to express the problem in rational language, but they can express it in play.

There was a little boy who came into my mixed-age kindergarten when he was about four years old, and the first thing I noticed was that he had an unusual voice. His use of language was well developed, but his voice was that of a very young child. It didn't fit his age of development. I watched his play, and everyday he played in the same way. He took seven or eight wooden stumps and built a small circular house. Then he'd go into the house, and cover it with a cloth roof and spend the whole play time in it. The house had no doors and no windows. I spoke with his mother to better understand what was happening in his life. She was very concerned, and said he had been fine up until age three. Then a baby sister was born, but at first he accepted her well. When the baby was about six months old, however, something changed in the little boy. The baby was at a very cute stage and everyone responded strongly to her and not so strongly to the older child. Then he began to regress. He developed baby speech and insisted on drinking from a baby bottle again.

One day when I looked into his play house. I saw that he was curled up in a tight little circle and realized he had made a womb for himself. He had

gone back as far as he could, as if he was still inside his mother. I was concerned, but at the same time had a sense that he knew what he needed and that our task was to protect him so he could have this experience. My assistant and I made sure no one disturbed him in his play. For about two months he played in the same way each day. The rest of the morning he participated in our kindergarten activities, and seemed quite fine, although the baby language continued.

Then, one day, he left a little opening in his house, not a very big one, but it proved important. A couple of days later, he made a bigger opening, and then he went out looking for a friend. He chose a lovely boy named Bill and brought him into his house with him. There they played for a few days, but the house was rather cramped. Then it began to grow with more stumps, cloths and other building materials. Over time it grew big enough for other children to come inside and play. Gradually, the little boy's voice came back to normal. He had worked something through with that remarkable wisdom children have that guides their play.

Sometimes, however, children get caught in patterns that are not so healthy and one sees this in their play as well. They may start out in a healthy direction, but then get stuck in certain patterns. This happened to two little boys, Brendan and James. They were good friends and had played together for several years. Now they were five and you could see their intellect waking up. They became very interested in arithmetic, for instance, and would throw arithmetic problems at each other over the snack table.

They entered a very intensive phase of play with each other. Each day they took a number of playstands and built a house for themselves. They would not let any other children in, and they used many ropes to weave a kind of spider web over their heads, back and forth from one playstand to the next. At first I marveled at their intensity, but after a few days I became uncomfortable. It seemed they were retreating into an ivory tower and cutting themselves off from others.

After four or five days, I made the difficult decision that I would put the ropes away. When they entered the room and looked for the ropes they came to me and asked where they were. I simply said the ropes were resting that day. I expected a

storm of protest and even tears, but instead they seemed relieved and did not argue with me. They continued to play with the play stands but in a much less intense way. They gradually let other children enter into their house. Their play became quite social again.

A few days later they again asked for the ropes. I wasn't sure what to do. I could see that something had changed, and they were in a new stage, but I was concerned that they might revert back to their old play. Yet I trusted their process of growth and decided to give them the ropes. Now a whole new play developed. Playing with other children, they took the ropes and used them as telephone wires, connecting all the play houses in the kindergarten, connecting all the children in a huge labyrinth of ropes. The ropes were still a picture of their mental activity, but now with a strong social impulse.

It is not always easy to discern what is healthy and what is not in children's play, but as Waldorf teachers we can cultivate discernment through our inner work, our schooling path as adults. There are many wonderful exercises that Rudolf Steiner has given us that help us develop our inner capacities. One that I especially love is the exercise of observing that which is blossoming and growing in the plant world and that which is fading and decaying. You can do this observation out in nature or with flowers in your room. You observe the tight form of the bud, so closed yet full of potential life. Then gradually it opens, and opens wider and wider. Then the petals begin to thin, to turn brown, perhaps, to curl back and fall off the flower. Over and over you do these observations and gradually you sense in a child: "This child is in a budding, opening process, or this child is drooping and not thriving. Or perhaps this child is fading, but it feels appropriate, as if it is shedding an old skin and making way for a new one." There are no recipes for these judgments, only an inner awareness that comes in part through experience but is heightened through inner exercise and study.

When one sees how powerful play is for children's normal development and how they use it to work through difficulties, one can only be grateful for this enormous gift that every child possesses. At the same time, one needs to be very concerned that so many children are not playing anymore.

There is not much research about the decline of play, although Sandra Hofferth at the University of Maryland is compiling some data at this time, but there are many anecdotal reports. A professor of early childhood education in Boston told me of a workshop she did at a NAEYC conference. It was a year after 9/11 and she was asking the teachers if they saw an increase in violent play in their kindergartens. There was an uncomfortable buzzing in the room as they began to speak with each other. She asked what was wrong, and one teacher spoke up and said: "The problem is not that we see more violent play, the problem is that we no longer see children playing at all." She asked if others had a similar experience and about 90% of the two hundred teachers put up their hands.

In the Alliance for Childhood, we followed up on this story with a small study in which experienced public school kindergarten teachers in Atlanta were asked about play in their kindergartens. They explained how play had disappeared over a ten year period – first the play centers became learning centers, but the children could still explore freely in them and play. Then each learning center had goals and objectives, and the children had to focus and work on the learning goals. Child-initiated play had disappeared, but the teachers said something else that was equally disturbing. Several remarked that if they gave their children time to play, the children did not know what to do. "They have no ideas of their own."

Having worked with five-year-olds for years, I found this astonishing. Fives are usually brimming over with ideas. Their mothers would tell me how the children woke up in the morning announcing what they would play that day in the kindergarten. How is it possible that they have no ideas of their own?

There are many factors that contribute to such a change: the huge amounts of screen time children have today; the over-abundance of organized after-school activities that rob them of free time to play; the fact that most early childhood programs are increasingly academic and take children away from the experience of play. It is also the case that many adults today did not play freely when they were young and do not appreciate play; they are even fearful of it.

Waldorf early childhood educators have rich

experience with children's play and are in a unique experience to share their insights—in workshops and courses, in the classroom with visitors observing, in play days organized for community children, in articles for local papers and magazines.

It is vital that play remain a central part of childhood. It contributes to all aspects of children's development—physical, social, emotional and cognitive. Also, there are physical and mental illnesses that result when play disappears, and they can be serious in nature. For the sake of the children today, their future and that of our society we need to do all we can to protect play and restore it.

Endnotes:

1 From Education as a Force for Social Change, August 9, 1919, pg. 11. Quoted in On the Play of the Child, WECAN (Spring Valley, 2004) pg 10.

2 From Roots of Education, April 16, 1924, pg. 60. Quoted in On the Play of the Child, WECAN (Spring Valley, 2004) pg 11.

Joan Almon is a co-founder and the U.S. Coordinator of the Alliance for Childhood. She is the Co-General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in America. Joan taught kindergarten for many years at Acorn Hill in Maryland. She was the co-founder and chairperson

of WECAN from 1983-2001, and is the previous editor of this newsletter.

The Name of “John” and the Fairy Tales

Stephen Spitalny

This is the second in a series of article looking into the depths of fairy tales and trying to shed light on some of what can be found within. The editor asks that others offer up their own thoughts, comments and questions on this theme as shared knowledge that there is not a “one and only way” to understand stories, or any other aspect of our work with young children.

There is nothing of greater blessing than for a child than to nourish it with everything that brings the roots of human life together with those of cosmic life. A child is still having to work creatively, forming itself, bringing about the growth of its body, unfolding its

inner tendencies; it needs the wonderful soul-nourishment it finds in fairy tale pictures, for in them the child's roots are united with the life of the world. (Rudolf Steiner, The Poetry and Meaning of Fairy Tales)

As an underlying thought to give a context to the following, the perspective of the author is that a fairy tale, a true fairy tale, is a picture of the human being, of each one of us. The characters depict various aspects of the human organism and psyche and all the characters are contained within each of us. The stories offer guidance through life's challenges and a path toward the reconnecting of one's souls and spirit as carried by the physical body during life on

earth.

For many years I have thought about the following question: Why is the name John so common in fairy tales? Or any of the many variations of the name; Johannes, Hans, Hansel, Evan, Ivan, Vanya, Ian, Giovanni, Jean, Juan, Sean or Jack. In the Grimm's tales: The Griffin, Iron Hans, The Miller's Drudge and the Cat, Faithful John, Hansel and Gretel, Hans in Luck. Or the Russian tales: The Crystal Mountain, The Three Kingdoms and Ivan the Simpleton. "Jack" stories abound in English and American tales. The name John and its many variations are widespread in fairy tales from around the world.

The John character in the fairy tales is faithful, giving and honest. He is sincere, gentle and patient. Usually though, he is described as simple and lazy and unlikely to succeed in the world. Yet it is John, out of his purity and selflessness who meets success when others do not. John bears a natural, innocent wisdom that carries him where the old wisdom no longer holds true.

Often the third son, the simpleton, can be a picture of the working of the Consciousness Soul, the newest, youngest aspect of the human soul to develop and the part of the individual human being where soul and spirit meet. One could then think of the two older brothers as Sentient and Intellectual Soul members of the human being. The Consciousness Soul brings a new capacity into humanity, a capacity to discover one's own individuality and an inner freedom to create new community. These capacities can seem unimportant and impractical at first, even lowly qualities, to others. The youngest son has innocent wisdom and a pure heart, as opposed to his clever brothers. With a warm heart, the youngest son comes to truth and facilitates deep transformation of the human psyche. It is with this aspect of the human soul that spiritual reality is perceivable.

John is quite frequently the name of that third son in the stories.

Then she took her faithful John by the hand and led him to the carriage. They drove away together and went straight to the little house John had built with the silver tools. It was a big castle now, and everything in it was silver and gold. Then she married him, and he was rich,

so rich that he had enough to last him the rest of his life. (From Grimm's The Miller's Drudge and the Cat)

The deep knowledge and golden wisdom that is the fabric of true fairy tales is palpable. As one carries the fairy tale images inwardly, more and more the underlying spiritual truths can reveal themselves. In ancient times, initiates at the various mystery centers experienced true knowledge of the spiritual world. This information was embedded in images, as stories that could speak of these truths, not to the intellect but to the heart of the listener. In long ago times, the intellect was not as developed as it is today, and so for the average person to have access to that truth, it had to be woven into story. The stories spread from the mystery centers out into the diverse cultures of the earth. Troubadours, minstrels and storytellers carried the stories on their travels and shared them throughout the lands as they wandered and told the tales.

One can try to picture a sheath of spiritual knowledge surrounding the earth, and anyone who could access that sheath was privy to the spiritual wisdom available there. The initiates and shamans and various wisdom bearers throughout the world shared access to this etheric sheath. When they "received" information in this way, it was cloaked in the trappings of the culture familiar to the recipient. This is why there is an archetype behind the story, but the actual stories have differences in the details. Those archetypes live in the etheric sheath, and as they incarnate into culture, they take on details and trappings from that surrounding culture. The true fairy tale gives information of the path an individual can take to unite the various aspects, the bodies of the human being so a balanced path in life can be attained. Fairy tales are a guide to the uniting of souls and spirit and body in the individual, yet given as story. In our time this information would be offered as a book, perhaps *How to Marry Your Own Soul and Spirit*, or a lecture, *Overcoming the Sentient Soul by Allowing the Consciousness Soul Its Voice*. In olden times, when the intellect was in its infancy, the guide to becoming a more evolved human being was story. This fairy tale character was able to see the goddess that was hidden to others.

Said Thandiwe, "You may be clothed in torn

zebra skins and covered with ashes, but those cannot conceal your splendor. In your eyes I see the bright gleam of rivers, ponds, lakes and seas. In your eyes I see one who greens the earth and nourishes the crops. Such beauty far surpasses the charm of well oiled skin and the jingling of bracelets and cowry shells. You are my bride. You are the Rain Goddess.”

When the Rain Goddess heard these words, she knew she had chosen wisely. “Let the ceremonies begin,” she said. Soon the villagers were dancing and feasting, celebrating the marriage of Thandiwe and the Rain Goddess. When the sun dipped behind the hills and the stars sparkled silver beads in the night sky, the heavens shone their blessings on the marriage.

Thandiwe and the Rain Goddess rose up into the heavens, hand in hand. They journeyed to the Rainbow House, high up in the heavens. And there they live to this day and will always live. (From an African tale *The Marriage of the Rain Goddess*. Perhaps Thandiwe (tahn-dee-way) is another variant of John?)

As the stories incarnated into the cultures of humanity, various esoteric groups adapted the details to help refine the process of individual development. One of the last groups to adapt these ancient spiritual stories were the Rosicrucians. As early as the seventh century, they brought in the element of esoteric Christianity to widespread fairy tales. One can look to Rudolf Steiner for more background about the Rosicrucians (see references at end of article). The true Rosicrucians have worked outside the main stream of the Church, yet they are connected to the deepest truths of the working of the Christ Being on earth. Their inner teachings were about the possibility of awakening the higher ego in each individual, by which one is connected with the guiding spirit of humanity. In historical Christianity, there have been two widely known streams. Peter began the Catholic stream, and we can see Paul as connected to the various Protestant churches. One could name a third stream the John stream to which the Rosicrucians belong. This could also be called Johannine Christianity, the streaming of the future. This youngest stream has yet to come to

maturity and be recognized for the deep truth and conscience which it represents. So from this angle, we can see John as the youngest brother to Peter and Paul, not yet valued for the capacities he brings.

Says the fairy to Jack at the end of Jack and the Beanstalk “If you had looked at the gigantic beanstalk and only stupidly wondered about it, I should have left you where your misfortune had placed you, only restoring her cow to your mother. But you showed an inquiring mind, and great courage and enterprise, therefore you deserve to rise; and when you mounted the beanstalk you climbed the ladder of fortune.”

And thus Jack was able to rise into and see the spiritual world.

What does the name John offer about the role of this character in the human being? Who is John?

Two famous beings named John immediately come to mind, both play major roles in the biblical stories of Jesus Christ. Rudolf Steiner has offered profound insight on the subject of the two biblical Johns and their connection with each other. Further, Steiner explained that John was evolved to a level that allowed him in full consciousness to experience his own connection to the Christ Spirit and become the representative for all humanity in that connecting. John showed the path that is possible for any one of us to undertake, the path of true awakening and connection. Through initiation, John became the bearer of cosmic wisdom, the Divine Sophia, and his task was to tell the truth to those who had ears to hear. (That in itself harkens to the essential role of story, to bring the truth to those who are ready to receive it.) Thus the name John grows from a proper name to a symbol which characterizes him who has become or is to become the herald of the Ego. (Karl Konig, “The Two Disciples John”).

John is one who is able to cross the threshold to the spiritual world consciously, to truly awaken and see and recognize the spiritual within the material world. He has developed a spiritual organ, and its name is conscience.

Ivan found the water of life and sprinkled it on his brothers. They rubbed their eyes. “How long have we slept?” they asked. “Without me

you would have slept forever,” said Ivan Goroh, pressing them to his heart.
(From the Russian tale Ivan Goroh and Vasilisa Golden Tress)

The more ancient name for John offers some interesting insight into the name itself. In Greek, IOANNES, and phonetically in Hebrew, Jehohannen, and also in the German Johannes, we hear a particular order of vowel sounds contained in the name; the sounds ee, oh and then ah. In the last lecture in a series entitled The Easter Festival and its Relation to the Mysteries (Dornach, April 1924), Steiner described how the pupils and initiates of the Ephesus Mysteries experienced the cosmos as a form of light, and within the light of the sun, the sounds J O A (ee, oh, ah), which had effects on the pupil.

And in this feeling of the [sounds] J O A one felt oneself as the very sound J O A within the light. Then one was truly HUMAN - resounding ‘I,’ resounding astral body, clothed in the light-radiant etheric body. One was sound within the light. And so indeed one is as cosmic Human Being and as such one is able to perceive what is seen in the surrounding Cosmos, just as here on Earth one is able to perceive through the eye what takes place within the physical horizon of the Earth.

So one can see the ancient power which still lives in the very sounding of the name John whether or not we are even aware of its possible effects on the children we work with.

From other perspectives, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the relation of cosmic activity and the formative quality of spoken sounds. Steiner articulated that certain sounds are connected to particular planets. In reference to the vowel sounds in the more original forms of the name for John, ee is connected to Mercury, oh to Jupiter and ah, Venus. Our Earth phase of evolution began under the rule of Mars. At the turning point of time, the Mercury phase began. That is where our earth is at present. Next will be Jupiter, and then Venus phases. Ioannes is a name sounding us from the present moment toward the future, when deep spiritual mysteries will be awake in the consciousness of all human beings, and humanity

as a whole will become the tenth hierarchy. So we can consider the name John as a picture of the archetypal human being after spiritual awakening by the highest spiritual beings. He has the possibility of healing the earth and transforming it into the star of love.

John lives within all of us as a potential, and it is our birthright in this time. Yet it can only be awakened individually out of our own freedom and will-engaged activity. Fairy tales offer a roadmap to our own awakening and hence to the transformation of our world.

Steiner quotes Ludwig Laistner (1848-1896) in his lecture “The Poetry and Meaning of Fairy Tales.

The fairy tale is like a good angel, given us at birth to go with us from our home to our earthly path through life, to be our trusted comrade throughout the journey and to give us angelic companionship, so that our life itself can become a truly heart-and-soul enlivened fairy tale.

Suggested reading:

Grosse, Rudolf. The Living Being Anthroposophia.

Konig, Karl. “The Two Disciples John.”

Prokofieff, Sergei O. The Cycle of the Year as a Path of Initiation

Ibid. The Mystery of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist at the Turning Point in Time.

Spitalny, Stephen. Who is John and Why Are Fairy Tales So Often Named After Him?

Steiner, Rudolf. The Poetry and Meaning of Fairy Tales.

Ibid. “The Last Address”

Ibid. Turning Points in Spiritual History

Steve Spitalny is a kindergarten teacher at the Santa Cruz Waldorf School. He is the editor of Gateways and WECAN regional representative for Northern California. He served on the WECAN Board for many years.

Observing the Young Child

Where did you come from, baby dear?

Out of the everywhere and into the here. . .

And how did you come to us, you dear?

God thought about you and so I am here.

George MacDonald

When Waldorf early childhood colleagues are together, we are always talking about the children in our classes, care groups, and homes. We carry these children in our hearts and have a deep desire to serve them. I have heard many stories, and have a few of my own, that demonstrate how a single school year, a few months or sometimes even a more brief encounter, are evidence of the help and support teachers can offer children in this life-phase of their journey on earth. There seem to be children coming to our classes who are more individualized than in decades past, and the face, the movement/activity of childhood is changing. And it occurred to me, like in the MacDonald

poem, God must be thinking a lot about us

because these children are finding their way to

us in increasing numbers. At the February 2006

WECAN conference at Sunbridge College, among

mounds of sparkling snow, I witnessed over three

hundred teachers who were up for the challenge of

wanting to know better how they might serve these

children of today.

I had the good fortune to be in the Remedial Teacher Education course at Sunbridge College, and this past summer I listened and participated in the fruits of my colleagues' research and projects.

I presented some of my own work and invited my fellow students to work with ideas I had shaped for observing the four foundation senses in the young child's movement, expressive speech and play. As a teacher educator, I am engaged in organizing information and giving opportunities for direct experiences to new teachers so that they might have a good foundation for observation and child study, an essential component for better serving

each child. Reading visible movement can yield important information for understanding the invisible in the child.

In studying the works of Rudolf Steiner, Karl Konig, Audrey McAllen and others, there is emphasis laid on the healthy development of the four lower senses (touch, life, self-movement, balance) as being the foundation for health in the four middle (sight, smell, taste, warmth), and four higher senses (hearing, thought, language, ego). The young child integrates and organizes the information from its own activity (movement) and sense impressions establishing a basis for life-long learning. Observing our children is the scientific side of our work. Understanding more about the twelve senses and how they are always interacting can broaden the viewpoint for some of what we see and hear in our children. This objective observation must then be joined with our response and our spiritual activity of thoughts and meditations for us to really “see and hear” what the child is revealing to us through what we observe.

It is hoped that preparing adults to be with

children through the presentation of case studies of children exhibiting phenomena that demonstrate disturbances in these senses will support the new teacher. These objective descriptions (case studies) are a tool for building mental pictures of the child in one’s imagination. This faculty of imagination is critical in the teacher’s reflective practice for gaining insight at the subtle, spiritual level that can affect true understanding. In the first two to three years of teaching, new teachers often experience stress in managing situations during class time. It is hoped that the pictures and case studies will arise in the new teacher as images and ideas of how to beneficially approach a child in the moment of incident. For the experienced teacher, there can be greater meaning when related areas in the study of human development broaden our context, and in turn deepen our insight.

What I have outlined below is a work in progress. I reviewed observations from my own classroom experiences and harvested from other Waldorf early childhood teachers of children ages three to six years. I invite the reader to join me in this research

and let me know if you find these descriptions to be true, or not. I would welcome additional examples from the reader's observations in the young child's movement, expressive speech and play.

I used each of the four foundation senses as a category (touch, self-movement, life, and balance) and then applied movement, expressive speech and play phenomena as three observable aspects for each of these categories. These phenomena provide vocabulary and understanding for what the teacher is seeing and experiencing with the atypical child exhibiting challenges in the indoor and outdoor classroom setting and through social interaction. The teacher might observe one or many of these as possible indicators of the need for support in the child's sense of life.

Touch

Movement. Avoids new touch experiences, or certain textures are avoided (water, sand, mud, rough wood), tactile defensive; the child does not like to be touched; is very particular about clothing, wears too loose or too tight, wears clothes a season

behind (likes soft, well-worn clothes); touch must be firm and not slight; may exhibit under-sensitivity.

Speech. Speech sounds may be slurred or not articulated with precision; strong negatives in expression.

Play. Avoids being touched by others; frequent posturing for kind touch by adults or children; strokes face and arms with soft things. [note: with tactile defensiveness, the behavior can be paradoxical they avoid unexpected or unsolicited touch, but crave touch and will seek firm pressure on their own terms]

Self-Movement

Movement. The child bumps into things and people; "crashers and bangers;" continually misjudges spatial needs going up/down steps, sitting into a chair; child in constant motion; has many bruises due to bumping into things, boundary-less sense of self; difficulty remaining upright.

Speech. I do not yet have enough observations

In Search of Nurture

The International Waldorf/Steiner Childcare Providers' Network

Margaret Ris

Introduction

The Worldwide Initiative for Early Childhood Care undertook to establish a global network of caregivers. Responding to a mandate from the International Waldorf Kindergarten Association (now known as the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education), we sought to strengthen linkages between Steiner-based caregivers and mentors worldwide.

We devised a questionnaire, had it translated into German, Danish, Spanish and Russian and distributed as widely as possible. Caregivers responded by sending us back basic information about their programs (childcare, parent education, playgroups, etc), the ages of children in their care and a profile of their professional training, education and work experience. They also shared their personal philosophies and motivations and the particular problems and challenges they faced. They were also asked to indicate whether they felt they needed mentoring or whether they could offer it to others.

By April 2006, we had received one hundred fifty-five responses from twenty countries and six continents. Nearly half of the respondents came from North America, the rest originated from Europe (Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, Spain, United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden), plus Ukraine, Latvia, Chile, Argentina, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Nearly ninety-five percent of respondents gave permission to share their information via a secure website.

In North America, the largest number of responses came from teachers of Parent-Child programs or Nursery/Kindergartens; the next largest group ran home day cares. Fewer worked in institutional day care settings or ran playgroups. Many offer parent education sessions. The majority of caregivers have been trained, although some informally, and eighty percent have worked in the field for more than five years. Many have dedicated over twenty years of their lives to the care of young children. A significant number (twenty percent)

work alone.

We discovered that outside of the US and Canada, most caregivers we heard from work in institutional day care centers. The vast majority have earned a training certificate or professional diploma related to childcare or education. They state similar motivations and challenges as their North American colleagues, but more of them wrote openly and warmly of Steiner's ideas of anthroposophy being the main guiding principle for their work.

Respondents across the board felt they needed more training to be able to work with children and parents. They consistently voiced the difficulty of working long hours and the need for support for new programs. Over half of them requested mentoring. Fortuitously, more than half of the respondents offered to act as mentors for others.

Voices

Additionally, we have been given a picture of how caregivers across the world are using Steiner's understandings of the human being to inform and transform their work. Steiner gave definitive indications for a wide range of human endeavours, among these: education, medicine, farming and the arts, and he encouraged others to develop their own capacities of imagination, intuition and inspiration in their chosen fields. In his lifetime, however, the domain of child care rested squarely with mothers who stayed in the home and were supported culturally by close-knit communities, common practices and healthy traditions. Unlike the elements of curriculum he specified for each grade in Waldorf education, Steiner left little in the way of a specific framework of indications for the daily care of the young child. Among followers of Steiner's teachings, this area of research is still in its infancy.

Yet today, in an era when empowering women in the workplace is a progressive agenda and women are achieving more workplace parity, when families everywhere find it necessary for both parents

to work to maintain fiscal stability, even more children require day care so their single parent can work to support them. One can only question: Who is advocating for the children? Who is keeping the needs of the child as a spiritual being at the forefront of concern? How can the profession of caretaking be elevated to an art? And how can mothers and fathers be supported in order to best support their own children?

Although specific writings from Steiner on the subject of infant and child care are limited, many caregivers we heard from use his broader writings on the nature of the human being to inspire their practice. Some also use complementary approaches such as those of Emmi Pikler, Magda Gerber and others to create new models of professional caregiving.

A survey of the responses highlights a number of common themes.

1. Many, many caregivers across the spectrum share the deep conviction that their work with children serves an important need in today's family structure. Many feel passionate about protecting childhood from overstimulation, sensory overload and unintended neglect. They recognize that our changing times require attention to the influences on early childhood. They feel an urgency about this work and its importance to the future:

"I am choosing this work because that I saw that many children in the kindergarten are tired, ill, nervous, unhappy, physically and psychologically neglected." A.S., Belgium

"I feel the protection and healing of childhood in our present age is of great importance for the future." F.C., Wales

"Many children in our community (Great Lakes, Canada) are at risk. I returned from work in the third world and found I was needed in Canada." M.G. Canada

"I feel strongly that the children we teach now must be prepared to meet challenges in their future that we can only guess at." E. S., USA

"In South American countries...we have a large diversity in economic, cultural, social and religious

aspects. This situation makes us work deeply in the social realm to find the best future for our children and humanity." M. W., Argentina

Overwhelmingly, these caregivers feel passionately that the protection of childhood is critical to our future. They sense that environmental and societal influences on childhood are robbing today's children of their physical and emotional wellbeing and will have eventual impacts that we cannot predict.

2. Respondents feel it is very important to serve and educate parents.

"I am most interested in exploring with parents of young children the qualities and conditions of authentic relationship." A. B., USA

"Parents have no other place to come together as community and create a network of support for themselves with others of like mind." S.W., USA

"Parents are vulnerable at this time." Y. H., South Africa

"My reasons for this work . . . to nourish parents so that their children are nourished."

"Through my work I would love to nurture a greater recognition of the spiritual mission of parenthood and encourage parents to support one another and have the courage to trust their intuition." E. T., UK

"It seems forgotten that the . . . mothers themselves are spiritual beings." C. T., Yukon, Canada

"I want to help mothers, to be there for them, to be on their side." M. J., Switzerland

They are aware of the inestimable influence parents have on their children. They are also aware that competing societal influences, isolation and insecurities play on parents' vulnerabilities. They recognize that parents are stressed in a new way, and they seek to educate and nurture the parents. The primary concern of the caregivers for the children expands into concern for the parents. They view both as spiritual beings at differing stages of

development, with different but interrelated needs.

3. These caregivers work out of love for children and out of their own spiritual convictions:

“This work chose me.” K. B., USA

“I would like to find a way to better myself while bringing light into the world.” C. C., USA

“This work is the most intensive, most beautiful work I have ever done.” M.L.N., Switzerland

“I love to empower parents and free babies.” M.P., USA

“It became more and more clear to me that the first seven years are the most important, the most precious, the most awe-inspiring, exciting years. . .and that the first three are even more intensively so.” C.C., Denmark

Many caregivers feel a deep sense of purpose and fulfilment in this work more than a normal “job.” They mention feeling a sense of “calling” for this work, a deep resonance at being a part of something that is larger than they are.

4. To a lesser extent, they take on the work for practical, tangible reasons: to increase the enrolment base at their Waldorf Schools, to make an impact on a child care system, or as a way to support their own young family:

“We regard these parent-child sessions as the best way to inform and practically introduce parents to Waldorf education.” U.E., Wales, UK

“I am an advocate for young children and want to impact in a positive way the day care system in our area and beyond.” S.D. California, USA

“Right now being at home with my children as part of this program...and working for myself fits into our family balance best.” H.S., USA

While caregivers may have concrete reasons for undertaking the work, their motivations usually involve bettering the systems in which they are

involved.

5. They are deeply aware of the dilemmas and difficulties of working with parents to protect the sanctity of early childhood and to counteract the influences of media and consumerism:

“Where do parents learn how to parent? . . .Parent education does not exist in any fully conscious way in our world. . . a parent education that honors the mystery and offers growth from observing.” N.A., USA

“Helping parents face consumerism and the drug companies is a real concern of mine.” C.B., USA

“The interest of the parents for small children is disappearing. This is widespread.” A.W., Germany

“Parents are more difficult to work with due to high rate of divorce and other difficulties.” P.W., USA

“I am dismayed by the screen obsession of our time (TVs, computers, videogames). I struggle to remain calm in what I believe is a battle to protect the innocent.” K.H., Canada

“I cannot prevent (the children) from watching TV or computers, etc. what else do they need to grow up strong and healthy?” E.S., Chicago, USA

These caregiver-educators are clear-eyed in their assessments of society’s problems that impact the arena of caregiving. They show courage and conviction in tackling what is really impacting children’s lives.

6. They hold profound questions about the forces and capabilities they need to do their best work:

“What kind of forces do I need to strengthen the children in a large group on long days?” L.M.K., Germany

“How can we support mothers morally?” S.M., Japan

“Do we make it too easy for parents to leave their

children to be cared for by others?” C.R., Austria

“How do we remain open to parents without becoming their parents?” C.C., Denmark

These caregivers express real courage to “live with the questions.” One can sense a willingness in their responses to seek inner answers for deeply perplexing and vexing issues of our times.

7. They articulate challenges which are practical and/or emergent in this evolving field:

“We offer childcare in a school. Yet when the child turns three, programs are only on the school schedule. . .will we expand to offering childcare year round after the child is three? What will the salary and vacation schedule be? The kindergarten teachers are not caregivers and are used to holidays and summers off.” M.R., Canada

“It is a challenge working with three other caregivers in the room. It is not like being a teacher/ego and requires deep attunement to each other.” M.R., Canada

“ I wish to foster reverence and allow natural religiosity, but most families actually value their secularity and are cautious with anything that smacks of religion. We must take little steps with our festivals and daily rhythms if we do not wish to contradict the family. “

“I believe everything has to be redone in France for young children.” Mme. L., France

“I am not happy with the “unprofessional” status of being a day care mother.” R. S., Germany

“It is difficult financially to make this work.” L.H., USA

They long to create structures of respect and recognition for their work, which is often underappreciated and underpaid, yet increasingly essential in today’s society. Especially in the US, many providers face space and funding needs. Government support for child care particularly in Europe is measurably higher than in the US and other countries. More North American caregivers

mention feeling isolated and seek to maintain balance in their work and wish for more training in special needs assessment.

Universally, caregivers feel they need more training and support both individually and within the movement as a whole. Specialized training for work with children from birth to three is especially sought by those outside of North America:

“There is no training for this parent-child work in the UK. . .there are particular skills that I need for parent-child work and I have to go outside the Steiner movement to get them. This is not necessarily a bad thing!” D.M., UK

“With the changing demand of society and high demand for child care before kindergarten, we cannot offer this kind of care yet. . .the training of carers for children is highly essential.” U.E., Wales, UK

“I wish to gain more education/information about early year education.”

“Personally, I need more resources more puppet show training, more singing training in mood of the fifth. I wish I had a mentor.” K. C., USA

“We wish to be included in your international network so we can receive and participate in sharing information in Spanish. We warmly greet you and await your response.”

There is widespread need to support caregivers with professional training opportunities and ongoing mentoring. Large scale conferences lend legitimacy and recognition; regional and local workshops and seminars provide more accessibility and the chance for ongoing exchange.

When we link individuals with peer support and professional development options we will strengthen the caregivers themselves and the movement in general. Healthier children and families will result from lending these caregivers the support they need as they nurture and care for children and families.

Next Steps

IASWECE's website may be expanded to include an on-line resource for those who wish to use it. Use of a contact management system (with user name and password) could enable users to access all of the information directly from the database without involvement of the central secretary. The body of responses can also be practical for those who train and support these dedicated caregivers. Presenters who design workshops, trainings and conferences, can use the information voiced by these caregivers and parent educators to tailor programs to their needs and facilitate exchange among them.

In Conclusion

The network project has several uses: First, it will link caregivers and those who mentor them. This will be accomplished by closing the loop with caregivers, sending a "welcome" letter, letting them know they are now part of the main IASWECE data base and including a list of available mentors in their area and information about existing chat rooms they can join for electronic support. Other aspects of the network's future possibilities will evolve over time.

A secondary application of this information is to provide a "snapshot" in time of an emerging field of Steiner-inspired childcare. We see in it a picture of caregivers worldwide linked in a common commitment to improve the future by attending to the present. They recognize that "as the branch is bent, the tree will grow," so they work tirelessly and devotedly to create optimal healing and respectful care for children from their earliest days. These educators and child care professionals are responding to our changing world by finding ways to protect and preserve childhood, while accompanying, educating and nurturing parents. It is the task of those who are given to train and advocate for these caregivers to create a hierarchy of support for them as they embrace the parents and children who share our common future.

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Margaret Ris has worked for a number of years at the Waldorf School in Lexington, Massachusetts, in the nursery and as a parent-child teacher. She joined the International Association's Working Group on the Very Young Child to work on a worldwide networking project for childcare providers.

An Update of the Alliance for Childhood

Joan Almon

When the Alliance for Childhood formed in 1999, we had one major goal in mind: to address the declining health and well-being of children and help restore many of childhood's healthy essentials such as play, the arts, story telling and strong relationships with caring adults. I often ask myself, how are we doing?

There is certainly a much wider recognition now than there was then of the growing stress children face and of problems like obesity that plague many children's lives. The awareness is not yet deep enough, but the beginnings have been made. We are working toward a "tipping point" when the public awakens enough to the problems and becomes committed to taking action. Impossible? We don't think so, but it is certainly challenging.

Meanwhile, we are working on several fronts: the excessive use of computer technology and other media in children's lives; the commercialization of childhood, and most actively now on the restoration of creative play in childhood.

We often hear that children don't know how to play anymore. The Alliance takes this seriously, and we realize that getting adults to value play will not be enough, important as that is. We also need to find ways to help children play again in many different venues: in homes, schools and neighborhoods, in parks and in children's museums, in zoos and all the other places where children go for fun and recreation.

Fortunately, we had met a highly creative playworker from London, Penny Wilson, at a play conference in Baltimore. Playworkers are trained to help children of all ages play. They work primarily in Adventure Playgrounds, and these often resemble a big Waldorf kindergarten where school-age children are free to build and play creatively within boundaries of safety. For an overview of Adventure Playgrounds and links to organizations and playgrounds, go to <http://adventureplaygrounds.hampshire.edu/>.

At the same time that we were trying to find a reason to bring Penny to the U.S., we heard from the head of a parks department in Franklin Park,

a small community outside Chicago. The parks director is committed to play and wanted to make his programs far more playful. The result is that we have invited Penny to the States twice to help train staff in the Franklin Park parks department as well as individuals from nearby children's museums, local zoos, and other venues. The reports from Franklin Park are very heartening as the staff brings creative play into their programs, and the children and parents are responding deeply. We've just received a grant to bring Penny over two more times this year.

We have also grown deeply concerned about recent developments in early childhood education. Virtually all public kindergartens are now highly academic with no time for child-initiated play or hands-on learning. The trend is moving strongly into preschools, and at both levels schools are using scripted teaching more and more. In this approach teachers are not only handed a curriculum, they are handed a daily script for part of their day and must follow that script to the letter. They are even told what questions children are most likely to ask during a particular lesson and how to answer them.

The Alliance is planning a campaign to help restore creative play and hands-on learning to preschools and kindergartens. Part of this campaign is based on a Call to Action we issued last year and which has been signed by many leading authorities in this country. You can find it and other new materials at our website at www.allianceforchildhood.org.

We have also commissioned two studies about the status of play vs. academic instruction in kindergartens and preschools in the New York area. One is a qualitative study being conducted by professors at Sarah Lawrence College. They will visit a number of public schools this year, including one in the South Bronx where Susan Kotansky and Monica Alexandra are bringing Waldorf approaches to young children. After the researchers visited Susan's preschool last spring, they sent a jubilant email saying, "Play is alive and well in the South Bronx!"

We will have more to report on this campaign

as the year progresses, and we hope that Waldorf teachers and parents will take part.

On a personal note, I miss my work within Waldorf education very much but also feel gratified that the work of the Alliance is progressing well. With our new focus on play there may be increasing ways to work together. I'm looking forward to focusing on play at the February WECAN Early Childhood conference in Spring Valley and hope to see many of you there.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

Sharing Impressions of England

Nancy Blanning

A summer holiday trip to England had me reciting verses and songs from the kindergarten Wynstones collections. I was actually seeing things I had only imagined. One Wynstones song kept coursing through my mind as I saw "bracken" for the first time.

Yellow the bracken, golden the sheaves,
Rosy the apples, crimson the leaves,
Mist on the hillside, clouds grey and white,
Autumn good morning, Summer goodnight.

Bracken (if you share my unfamiliarity with it) is a tall, vigorous, fern-like plant that grows on the hillsides. But unlike the ferns I know, these are huge. A hike took us tramping through a hillside of bracken, as tall as my shoulder. We literally had to whack our way through with a stick, so thick, sturdy, and abundant were these tall "fern trees." Our English friend guiding us said that though they seemed like a small forest in the height of summer, in the autumn they would all fall flat to the ground, covering the hillside like a yellow carpet. When I saw a photograph of autumn bracken, I experienced with my eyes what the song describes. The color is a golden yellow. The plants are completely collapsed to the ground. To see it grow and regenerate the next spring must be a very heartening and encouraging experience. I found myself wanting to change the words to

"sheep on the hillside." Once out of the cities, every hillside is dotted with sheep, everywhere. It was explained that this is necessary not only for raising the sheep but to keep the forests back. If the sheep and cows did not openly graze on meadow land all the time, soon the land would become reforested. This is such an amazing contrast to the semi-arid, ethereal thinness of Colorado! I think holding these images in our minds as we speak and sing these pictures to the children has a healing and supporting effect, even if they do not physically "see" what is being described in their own environment.

I also happened upon an old book describing a farm child's experience of the festival, seasonal year in simpler, pre-mechanized times. Some of these seemed to enlighten my understanding of images we use in the kindergarten. Clara's Country Year, by Ralph Whitlock, describes a time much simpler than our own. Although the exact date is not specified in these descriptions, farming was the major occupation, labor done by human effort with the assistance of farm animals. Technology and mechanization were long off. It was still a time when the year was marked by rhythmic festival celebrations, reflecting traditions and wisdom from times past.

Reading about "Wassailing the Apple Trees—January 16," made me think of an apple verse in an orchard autumn circle in Nancy Foster's Let Us Form a Ring. She credits the verse as "traditional English."

Here stands a good apple tree.
 Stand fast at root,
 Bear well at top,
 Every little twig, bear an apple big:
 Every little bough, bear an apple now.
 Hats full! Caps full!
 Three-score sacks full!
 Hello, boys, hello!

The tradition described is that on this wintery, cold night, all the family went out into the apple orchard. Bread had been toasted crisp during the day. A young member of the family was lifted up to reach the tree branches where s/he placed pieces of toast, soaked in apple cider, into crooks of the tree branches. Others poured cider from a jug over the trunk of the tree.

Then the adult men fired off their guns, others beat on pots and kettles, making as much noise as possible “to make sure the spirits of the apple trees are paying proper attention to what we have been doing.” This was all done to assure that the apple trees would bear well in the growing season. Then everyone sang this song:

Old Apple Tree, Old Apple Tree,
 We wassail thee, and hope that thou wilt bear;
 For the Lord doth know where we shall be
 Till apples come another year;
 For to bear well and to bloom well
 So merry let us be,
 Let every man take off his hat and shout to
 thee,
 Old Apple Tree, Old Apple Tree,
 We wassail thee and hope that thou wilt bear
 Hat fulls
 Cap fulls
 Three bushel bag fulls,
 And a little heap under the stairs.

A Wynstones version:

Here stands a tall apple tree.
 Stand fast root,
 Bear well top,
 Pray, God send us a howling crop.
 Every twig

Bear an apple big.
 Every bough
 Bear an apple now.
 Hats full! Caps full!
 Three score sacks full
 Hurrah! Boys, Hurrah!

The next festival description that struck a familiar chord is “Pancake Day—Shrove Tuesday.” On this day, traditionally all perishable foods and fats are eaten up—eggs, milk, butter, flour—in a feasting before the long fast of Lent. Making pancakes was the traditional way to use up these ingredients. Part of the festival day was the annual village pancake race. The women of the village would gather at the church with their frying pans. Each had a pancake in her pan. On the given signal, women would all race ahead, tossing the pancake up in the air and catching it back in the pan. The first one over the finish line, having successfully tossed and caught the pancake three times, was the winner.

One wonders whether this custom was not inspiration for Christina Rossetti’s poem often used in the kindergarten:

Mix a pancake,
 Stir a pancake,
 Pop it in the pan.

 Fry the pancake,
 Toss the pancake,
 Catch it if you can.

Holding the picture of these women racing across the church yard to win a prize for her family brings this picture alive. We could perhaps turn it into our own little game on Shrove Tuesday with felted “pancakes” being tossed and (hopefully) caught.

A harvest festival custom of “The Corn Dolly” prepared the way toward the new growing season. While we make our own corn husk dolls in America, in British terminology, “corn” refers to all grains in general—wheat, rye, barley, and oats. “Corn” as we know it in America, is referred to by the British as “maize.”

The story goes that the men harvested the last standing grain with their heads bowed, eyes fixed

firmly on the ground, not looking at the stalks of grain. They knew that the “Corn Goddess,” a very powerful spirit who put life into the grain, lived in these fields. They knew she had been able to escape from their harvesting through a gap in the hedge from one field to the next as they progressed to the last field. But once in the last field, there was no escape. The harvesters covered their faces so she could not see who it was who cut the stalks of her last refuge and on whom she might take revenge. The harvesters took some grain stalks from the last sheave and plaited it into a “kern baby” or “corn dolly.” The plaited corn dolly is placed as an honored presence at the village harvest festival and celebration.

On Plough Monday, the first Monday after Twelve Night, the last of the Holy Nights, the fields were ploughed for the first time since harvest. The corn dolly was placed in the first turned furrow and buried there. This was to return her to the cornfields where she gives life to the seed and produces the harvest. She was in the last stalks of the standing grain. Now as dolly made from those last stalks, she goes back into the soil after the new year to start her work all over again. Perhaps our corn husk dolls’ ancestress was this corn dolly, a very powerful and revered image.

Nuestro Hogar

A Sheltering Environment for the Very Young Children at Risk Inspired by the Insights of Dr. Emmi Pikler

Joyce Gallardo

In the brilliant morning sunshine of la sierra (the highlands), the fields and gardens along the road leading to Nuestro Hogar in Pifo, Ecuador sparkled greenly, while the distant peaks of the Andes were royally adorned in soft purple hues. “It is a perfect morning for a walk,” said Maria del Carmen Vasquez, director of Nuestro Hogar, as she greeted me warmly at the top of the road. She and the older children went for a long walk every morning at the same time, regardless of the weather, Maria del Carmen told me.

As we walked along the path to the house, I saw the three older children run to the gate to greet her. “They know of your visit and are very excited,” she said as she squatted down to greet each child at his

A traditional “Harvest Shout” from this time is one we might find home for in our harvest circles.

Well ploughed,
Well sowed,
Well harrowed,
Well mowed.
And all safely carted
To the barn
With never a load thrown!
Hip, hip, hip hooray!

Nancy Blanning is a remedial and therapeutic teacher at the Denver Waldorf School and prior to that, taught 17 years in the preschool/kindergarten. Nancy is a member of the WECAN Board and is a WECAN regional representative for the Texas/Mexico/Southwest/Rockies

eye level, taking his hand or touching him lightly on the shoulder. She spoke softly and clearly as she told them that she had come to take them for their walk. “This is Senora Gallardo, our visitor. She has brought us bread to eat and flowers to decorate our house.”

The children very gently touched the roses I had brought and wanted to smell them in turn. Their eyes lit up as they smelled the fresh-baked bread. “Para el almuerzo,” (for lunch) I told them. I noticed that their speech was limited and that they basically repeated key words from sentences which Maria del Carmen spoke, e.g. pan (bread), flores (flowers). I watched as they gaily went off on their walk, stopping frequently to touch the long, waving

leaves of the corn stalks growing along the edge of the garden. The children know and love this lush organic garden well, for they help the adults harvest and prepare fresh vegetables from it daily for their meals.

Eleven children live with their caretakers in the house known as *Nuestro Hogar*, Our Home, located twenty-five km east of Quito, the capital city of Ecuador. Maria del Carmen, who is Ecuadorian and her husband, Etienne, who is French, have owned this organic farm for twenty years. When the private school where Maria del Carmen had taught for many years closed its doors, she and Etienne, who was an administrator at the school, worked together to realize the dream of creating a home on the natural, healing environment of their farm for children birth-four years who were living in situations of extreme vulnerability. With their own resources, they specially designed and built this beautiful two-story home of wood and natural materials to receive the children. Maria del Carmen worked tirelessly for two years with government agencies in Ecuador to legally create a foundation, known as AMI, *Amigos de la Vida*, Friends of Life, a non-profit organization, of which *Nuestro Hogar* is a part.

AMI is part of a network of diverse institutions of the Metropolitan District of Quito. Within this network they have an opportunity to demonstrate the uniqueness of *Nuestro Hogar* and possibly influence policies affecting the lives of young children in Ecuador. They have translated pamphlets from Loczy into Spanish and made them available to the general public. Together with the Metropolitan District of Quito, *Nuestro Hogar* organized an international conference in 2005 entitled *Early Childhood – A Social and Political Responsibility*. They are planning a second conference in 2007.

Nuestro Hogar is a way of life for Maria del Carmen and Etienne – a synthesis of years of experience working with children. “It is not a methodology nor a school of thought,” they told me during a previous visit here. “We share what we are and what we have.” Maria del Carmen added emphatically, “This is not a charity. We work out of a conscious respect for the dignity of humanity and we honor the life of our children. *Nuestro Hogar* is a demonstration that it is totally possible

to treat all children, and especially these children from marginalized sectors of our society, with unconditional love, respect and dignity during this most delicate stage of childhood, birth to four.”

Nuestro Hogar was inaugurated in January, 2004. The caregivers had been trained for six months. The inspiration for their training came out of the work of Loczy, the residential home for children in Budapest, Hungary founded in 1946 after World War II by pediatrician Emmi Pikler. Loczy is not only a model for the respectful care of young children in residential homes in Europe and now in South America; it is becoming a model for Waldorf early childhood educators in Europe and the U.S. for our work with children from birth-three. Many of the insights of Emmi Pikler are compatible with those of Rudolf Steiner. Maria del Carmen and Etienne have visited Loczy and have attended trainings there, *Nuestro Hogar* is endorsed and recognized by *L’Association Internationale PIKLER (Loczy)*.

I was struck by the many similarities to Loczy in the physical environment of *Nuestro Hogar* and in the manner in which the caregivers here walk slowly and deliberately amongst the children, speaking in soft, clear, gentle voices to them and always stooping down to their level. There were low, little fences and gates separating the play areas outdoors. Sand was mounded high in the sandbox, inviting children to come dig. Two children were climbing up the jungle gym. Since the climate is temperate all year round, the children spend most of their time outdoors. In the house, there were low wooden tables and stools for play and for eating. The children’s little wooden beds were beautifully handcrafted, as were their neat little cubbies. The indoor play area was inviting, clean and well-ordered. Hardwood floors and wood ceiling beams shone softly in the sunlight that streamed through the windows. The delicious aroma of lunch cooking wafted through the house. It felt inviting – like a home where people lived and loved.

As I sat as unobtrusively as possible on a little stool in the corner of the room, I observed Galo, who was almost three, trying to put on his shoes. He was grunting and whining loudly in his struggle. His caregiver encouraged him in a soft voice, but did not offer her help. He managed to get one shoe on and struggled with the other, all the while receiving encouragement from his caretaker. Finally, the two

shoes were on with a bit of help from the caretaker at the end, and Galo ran off happily to play.

Another child was struggling to put on his sock. Proudly, he showed me that he was able to do it.

Outside, two children were watching the gardener dig and rake the soil. A little bird hopped across the mat where a baby, ten months old lay on his back playing with his hands, half in the shade, half in the sun. Maria del Carmen told me this morning that this baby had been found in the trash when he was newborn. His caregiver came to announce to him that she was going to pick him up. She took him tenderly in her arms and tied a bib on him. She gave him food from a glass to drink. Some children watched from the other side of the fence. They, too, were thirsty. The nurse gave her undivided attention to the baby and spoke quietly to him as he drank. When he was finished drinking, she put him down in his crib, announcing to him first what she was going to do.

Diego had been whining and crying all morning. He didn't want the caregiver to leave his side. She told him that she had to go into the house to help another child. He continued to scream and cry, and the caregiver spoke to him in a low, calm voice, stooping down to soothe him with her words and her hands.

Another caretaker called the children inside to fetch their bibs and bring them to her to tie. When the bibs were on, each child was given freshly-made pineapple juice in a plastic pitcher to carry outside to drink. The children sat down together at a table on little stools they had carried out for themselves, and poured their own juice into plastic glasses that were already on the table. One little girl sat by herself at a small table on a wooden base with a bench. She was not yet ready to join the other children at the table, so was given her own special table. (This is also done at Loczy.) The caretaker sat nearby.

Afterwards, the children washed their hands with a washcloth in a small rubber basin. The caretaker helped them to dry their hands, giving her whole attention to each child in turn. She untied their bibs and the children brought them inside to hang on a hook where all the bibs were hung. Luis proudly collected all the glasses and pitchers, put them into a basin and carried it into the house, with the caretaker close by.

A peaceful, calm environment such as this, with predictability, consistency and continuity have not been a part of these children's young lives. When they arrived, they manifested signs of aggression, boredom, hyperactivity, lack of concentration and other mental and physical difficulties as a result of the often stressful and unprotected environment into which they had been born. This lack of protection and nourishment of their lower, physical senses of life, touch, movement and balance have profoundly affected the children. Here at Nuestro Hogar, they have come to rely on the rhythm of each day to always be the same. At Nuestro Hogar, indoors and out, in the work of the adults and in the play and movement of the children around them, there is a rhythmical, orderly hum of activity that is nourishing and healing to the damaged lower senses of these children. Etienne strongly feels that the farm work that goes on around the children is fundamental to this healing process. The children see and know that the adults care for the land, the animals and the plants with consistency, love, and devotion, and the adults also care for the children with consistency, love and devotion.

Galo goes running gleefully to his caretaker when she tells him that she is going to change his diaper. He knows that this is his own special time with his caregiver and that she will be there just for him. She tells him what she will do, step by step. He anticipates her every move and cooperates with her. Galo repeats the words, pie, pene, agua, toalla (foot, penis, water, towel). . . as the caretaker tells him what part of his body she will wash. As she dries him gently with the towel, he repeats again as she tells him how she will dry him. She diapers and dresses him slowly with a firm but delicate touch as he stands, talking softly to him all the while.

Luis came up to hug the caregiver's legs when she stood up. She laughed, "Oh Luis, you are hugging my legs!" and bent down to give him a hug. He hugged her, smiling, and she told him she was going to stand up. He let go and ran off.

The verbal communication of the caregiver with the children is not only important, but essential here at Nuestro Hogar. The role of the adult is most crucial in the development of the speech in the children, as many come with neurological damage, self-destructive tendencies, and emotional and psychological problems. "The older children did not

speak when they arrived,” Maria del Carmen told me. “If they did say something, it was an imitation of the violence they had experienced around them. Several months passed before they made sounds, or spoke syllables or elemental phrases. It has been a process. . .” “In time,” she continued, “with consistent demonstration of unconditional love and the building of trust in their relationships with the adults around them, the children were able to begin to utter sounds. We tell the children what we are going to do and we do it. We do what we say. We do not employ therapy at Nuestro Hogar for speech difficulties. Through respectful caregiving and unconditional love and acceptance of the child, he develops trust and confidence in himself and in the adults around him. Speech development naturally follows.” Recording of this development is meticulous. A careful record of the children’s growth and development is kept. The caretakers record their daily observations of each child out of their daily experiences with them.

One of Nuestro Hogar’s objectives is to first support the process of the reintegration of the families of the children who live there, rather than first seek adoptive families. They try to locate children’s families and strive to develop relationships with parents. Conversation and short visits are encouraged in the beginning of the process. Workshops for families and professionals focusing on child development from pre-natal to birth, the authentic needs of the child from birth to four, and the child with special needs are held at Nuestro Hogar. The parents may observe how their children are cared for with respect and dignity and observe the caring relationships between children and caregivers here. Later in the process, the parent’s visit with their child is facilitated, with Maria del Carmen always present. It may take months before the return of the child to her family can actually take place. In some cases it may not take place at all and another solution must be sought. The way is very carefully planned with a social worker and with Child Protection Services and other institutions.

The older children returned with Maria del Carmen from their morning walk. It was lunchtime and the younger children were already seated at the table waiting. I waved good-bye, “Adios, ninos. Adios.” The bread I had brought had been sliced

for the meal and was in the center of the table. One of the children turned toward me with a big smile on his face and pointed to the bread. “Pan!” he exclaimed, as he took a hearty bite of his slice.

The sun was high in the sky when I left. The fields and gardens along the road to Nuestro Hogar shone even more greenly and the mountain peaks were royally cloaked in deep purple. That was in early July. Now, back home in North America, I am inspired daily in my work with the young children in my care by what I saw at Nuestro Hogar. . .the courage, sacrifice, dedication and spirit of generosity of a true Michaelic deed.

Joyce Gallardo is a member of WECAN’S RIE (Resources for Infant Educators) / Pikler Research group and completed the RIE I training this summer. She is in her third year of Spacial Dynamics training. Joyce is the director of Los Amiguitos, a home-based nursery-kindergarten in Harlemville, N.Y.

A Report from Kolisko, Mexico

Andrea Gambardella

The Mexican colonial city of Guanajuato and the Colegio Yeccan, a Waldorf School in Guanajuato, hosted the North American Congreso Kolisko (conference) in August. The Congreso Kolisko was held in a hotel conference center that was once a monastery where vast halls with high stone walls gave us ample room for lectures and meetings. When an almost daily thunderstorm coincided with a lecture, it pounded the roof and rumbled with a great voice through these spaces. Going outside once the rain subsided I encountered how quickly everything dried off, which it gave me the sense of how precious water is in the semi-arid hill country of this inland state. Guanajuato is a charming town and was a welcoming place for the gathering. About two hundred fifty teachers, doctors and therapists attended. Nearly half were from Mexico, another larger group from South American countries and a small group from the US, Canada and Europe. Lectures were simultaneously translated.

Guanajuato is the capital city of the state of Guanajuato, and the Congreso was opened with words of welcome by both the mayor and the governor. I was heartened by the governor's remarks that love, freedom and justice are needed in an effective education. He is a former university president and spoke of his commitment to education as a critical agent for change. Octavio Reyes Salas, the General Secretary of the Mexican Anthroposophical Society, also welcomed participants and proved to be a hero of many needed details throughout the weekend. A Kolisko conference is an active dialogue gathering. Interest groups meet following the lectures to take up points from the keynote and work with them. I attended the group for early childhood educators in English; another much larger group met for Spanish speakers. In the English section group, there were a few teachers from Mexico schools and initiatives, Norway and the USA. I introduced myself for WECAN to the Spanish language section later on in the week. Our group was led by Joan Almon of the Alliance for Childhood and a Waldorf school doctor from Germany. Here in this small group representing different cultures, we met

with common issues in parent work and parent education, working with challenging children and finding a balance in ourselves as teachers.

Dr. Michaela Glöckler gave five keynote addresses on "The Medical Foundation of the Waldorf Curriculum." Her lectures spanned the child's life from birth to age twenty-one. Each day she presented aspects of the body's maturation and growth describing how that is observed in activity, soul activity and what is needed from the relationship of the adults. With each age she emphasized that the teacher must ask:

1. What are the age-specific intentions of the child?
2. How is each child managing its age-specific life-situation? As a teacher, how do I find where the child is meeting and not meeting milestones, and where is support needed?
3. How can the teacher deepen understanding of the child's development, so that the child finds a partner for its development?

Of special interest for Gateways readers, Dr Glöckler shared how the child in the first three years parallels Christ's three years from the baptism to Golgotha. In Christ's call of "I am the path, the truth and the life" (John, 14:6) we see the child take on walking (the path) in the first year, speaking (the truth) in the second year, and the birth of fantasy (the life) in the third year. In the first year, the child is drawn to uprightness to achieve its human destiny; in the second year, the child is only capable of speaking the truth. She points out that because we adults have all experienced this in our own childhood we have access to this reality. And in the third year, the birth of independent spiritual activity with the blossoming of imagination is the only way one can come to true self-direction in self-thinking, which is true life.

Dr. Bruno Callegaro presented on child observation, diagnosis, and how to support the child's needs. He pointed out the boundaries between the pedagogical and the remedial and medical professionals. The doctor works from the

past into the present, and the teacher works with the present for the future. Pedagogical diagnosis is different from the medical, however, the teacher and the doctor can meet on common ground through the observation and descriptions of the physical body. The physical descriptions are the same across the professions and here is where we meet as natural scientists. Descriptions of behavior will be different because the description includes the person describing. These descriptions can be fruitful, but we must accept there will be different points of view and that these differences must not be feared, but welcomed. Dr. Callegaro recommends that a child study process follow this sequence:

1. Describing the physical – here everyone can find agreement.
2. Reproduce/imitate the child's movements and reproduce/imitate the child's speech – by trying this, the group can come to trust and find confidence in the observations of the physical and reach greater understanding. (Here he believes it is also possible for a sense of peace to enter the group because they meet a common understanding. This peace can enhance our social workings when sharing differing behavior descriptions.)
3. Describe behavior – this allows for different points of view to be appreciated.

Dr. Callegaro brought the challenges of autism,

ADD and Dyslexia. He shared stories of the children he observed and interacted with who taught him core issues of these conditions. He expressed gratitude for the obstacles children and adults face as true inspirations for our development as teachers, doctors and therapists. Our role is not to eliminate these obstacles but to see how they translate as gifts.

The Medical and Pedagogical Sections at the Goetheanum have a companion publication for the conference, Education- Health for Life: Education and Medicine working together for healthy development. There is a Spanish language volume as well.

Andrea is teaching at Sunbridge College as program director of the full time Early Childhood Teacher Education program. She is a WECAN board member and the Mid-Atlantic representative and previously taught at the Waldorf School of Baltimore.

The First Seven Years: Physiology of Childhood

By Edmond Schoorel
Rudolf Steiner College Press, 2004
Reviewed by Stephen Spitalny.

If you have ever wished that someone who had fully digested Steiner's Study of Man would focus on the first seven years of the child's life and expand and deepen our communal understanding by writing a book on that theme, then consider your wish fulfilled. Dr. Edmond Schoorel, a Dutch pediatrician, has written such a book. Originally published in Holland, it has been translated and published in English and is available now. As Rena Osmer says on the back cover, "This book may well become the new study text for Waldorf early childhood educators." Dr. Schoorel looks

at all aspects of early childhood and penetrates it with his deep understanding. The workings of the four bodies of the human being, the developing and function of the senses, the workings of the etheric all receive in-depth treatment in a clear and accessible way. In particular, Schoorel examines Steiner's admonitions in Study of Man to teach the children how to breathe, and how to sleep. So he looks at much of child development, and the activities that can support that in the light of breathing and/or sleeping.

One example that caught my attention right away is the description of the polarity of naughtiness and curiosity, the former being an awake and antipathetic activity, and the other a falling asleep into something as sympathy.

Also fascinating is the description of a kindergarten group as an organism having its own ether body. This organism is created out of the individual children, the habits and “norms” that prevail and the design that created the kindergarten that comes from teacher, parents, institution and tradition. And this kindergarten organism must obey the etheric laws.

These include: each single part has an influence on the whole; there must be equilibrium between maintaining form and adjusting to changing circumstances...[The ether body is] a form-giving entity that works between the polarities of substance and form, aiming at proper development, and using time processes. (p.81)

In his preface, Dr. Schoorel says this book is written as a travel guide for the developmental processes of young children. This book is not about education, but about the landscape in which education takes place.

Calendar of Events

Workshops and Conferences

Restoring Play to Preschools and Public Kindergartens, February 2-3, 2007, in New York City. Contact www.allianceforchildhood.org.

East Coast Early Childhood Conference with Joan Almon and Fred Donaldson, February 9-11, 2007. The theme this year is the Healing Power of Play in the Life of the Child and the Adult. There will be a wide array of workshops, as well as puppetry, and folk dancing. A meeting of child care providers and directors will also take place during the conference. Contact Sunbridge College at 845-425-0055 or info@sunbridge.edu.

Mid-Winter Eurythmy Workshop, Life Questions/Life Themes with Christina Beck and Barbara Schneider-Serio, February 10, 2007. The theme for this course will be developed out of the questions and interests of the participants. Beginners and all levels of experience welcome. For information contact Christina Beck, 845-356-2492, or email info@eurythmy.org.

The First Seven Years is a profound example of what one can do with applying a sort of “Study of Man thinking” to a particular phase of child development, and is filled with challenges to the reader’s thinking to find ways to support the child as he or she travels the highways and byways of early childhood.

This book, rich with its descriptions of the landscape of the first seven years and the mapping of various roads and scenery along the way, is an invaluable resource for Waldorf early childhood educators, caregivers and parents. I am grateful that it arrived in my mailbox, and recommend it to all of you. But don’t merely put it on your bookshelf. Read it. Use it. Refer to it. Share it with colleagues and parents. Study it with others.

And send a thank you note to Dr. Schoorel for writing it and Steiner College Press for publishing it when you start to notice your copy’s dog-eared pages, underlines and high-lightings.

Teachers Conference, February 17-21, 2007, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA. “Overcoming Abstraction: Pathways to a Living Relationship to the World” with Craig Holdrege, and Cynthia Aldinger for the Early Childhood mini-conference. Our modern culture tends to cultivate abstract thoughts that cut off both adults and children from the richness of actual experience. What can Waldorf educators do to overcome this propensity toward abstraction? How can we help our students ground their lives in living experience and make our thinking, observing and discerning more flexible and alive? Contact 916-961-8727.

The Path of Self Knowledge Themes from Macbeth, Eurythmy Spring Valley Mini-Tour, February May 2007 The Faculty of Eurythmy Spring Valley will be traveling this winter, bringing classes and mini-performances. In the workshops offered on tour, Barbara Schneider-Serio, Christina Beck and Jennifer Kleinbach will explore the nature of choice, forms arising out of our actions, and the transformative insight found in gesture and movement. For information on the tour itinerary call Christina Beck, 845-356-2492 or email info@eurythmy.org.

org.

Educating the Will, Sunrise Waldorf School in Duncan, British Columbia is hosting a teacher's conference February 18-22 on strengthening the child's will through practical activity with Dorothy Olsen, Nancy Blanning, Ruth Ker, Jack Petrash and Bernard Graves from Hiram Trust. Contact Ruth Ker at 250 748-7791 or email rmker@uniserve.com.

Transforming Ourselves for the Sake of the World, March 30-April 1, 2007, with Rena Osmer, Cynthia Aldinger, and others in Tampa, FL. Call Barbara Bedingfield at 727-581-6195 for information or to register, call Beth Hartwell at 727-518-2208.

Nursery Rhymes, Puppetry and the Development of Speech, March 28-30, 2007, with Suzanne Down and Cynthia Aldinger at Rudolf Steiner College LifeWays training in Fair Oaks, California. This training segment is open to public enrollment. Contact Rudolf Steiner College, 916-961-8727 or admissions@steinercollege.edu.

LifeWays Introductory Seminar, April 13-14, 2007, London, ONT with Cynthia Aldinger, Connie White and others. Contact: Connie White at connie39@sympatico.ca

Nurturing and Nourishing Children and Caregivers, April 13-16, 2007 with Freeport, Maine with Elizabeth Sustick, anthroposophical nurse. The weekend includes the nurturing arts, movement, and the creation of a "heavy baby doll." This session of LifeWays training also has open registration for \$250 including materials fee and lunches. Contact: Susan Silverio, East Coast LifeWays Director, 207-763-4652, silverio@tidewater.net.

Waldorf in the Home, April 21-22, 2007. Annual spring conference with Joseph Cornell (Sharing Nature with Children), Suzanne Down, and 45 workshops on Waldorf education, parenting and home schooling. See www.waldorfinthehome.com.

LifeWays Introductory Seminar, April 21-22, 2007 in Austin, Texas. Contact: Jean Dordek at 512-441-5253.

LifeWays Introductory Seminar, April 27-29, 2007 in Kansas City, MO. Contact: Beth Cooper at 816-756-5340.

Trainings

New LifeWays Training, June 11-22, East Troy, WI, with Cynthia Aldinger, Mary Schunemann and others. Contact: Cynthia Aldinger at 405-579-0999 or ck.aldinger@sbcglobal.net.

New LifeWays Training, June dates TBA, Sarasota, FL. Contact: Rena Osmer at 772-287-1118 or rena@steinercollege.edu

Childcare for Infants and Young Children, July 2-13, 2007 at Sunrise Waldorf School, Duncan, BC. Sponsored by the West Coast Institute for Studies in Anthroposophy. Part one of a two-part series offered by Bernadette Raichle, Dr. Johanna Steegmans, Marjorie Thatcher and others. Part one includes the archetypal home and family of today, the supporting role of anthroposophical child care, artistic and practical applications. Part two in July 2008 with further courses on principles and practice to support infants and the very young child. Contact Marjorie Thatcher at 604-985-3569 or info@westcoastinstitute.org.

Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Training 2007-2009. New program begins July 2007. A part-time program designed for those with a background in Waldorf early childhood education. Each year - three weeks in the summer, one week in the fall and one week in the

The Child in the First Three Years, July 2007, at Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, New Hampshire. This summer begins a new cycle of the 13-month part-time training course for early childhood teachers, parent-toddler & parent-infant group leaders, childcare providers, parents and expectant parents. In addition to the part-time training, Sophia's Hearth Family Center invites participants in four five-day courses: July 2-6, Nurturing the Young Child in the Early Years with Susan Weber and Jane Swain; July 9-13, Helle Heckmann, "Creating Programs for Young Children"; July 9-13

An Introduction to RIE (Resources for Infant Educators) ; and July 16-20

Advanced Insights from the Pikler Institute An Experiential Course in Child Development with Ute Strub. Please contact: 603-357-3755, info@sophiashearth.org, or <http://www.sophiashearth.org> for information on all course offerings.

Puppetry Workshops and Trainings

For all puppetry events listed below contact Suzanne Down, 1-888-688-7333, www.junipertreepuppets.com, suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com,

New Puppetry Trainings Beginning:

Juniper Tree Puppetry Three Part Certificate Training Course, new series beginning June 25-July 5, 2007, Chicago, IL. A serious training in the healing art of story and puppet theater, part one: pedagogical theme with strong emphasis on early childhood.

Eight Week Full Time Story and Puppetry Training Apprenticeship, April 14-June 8, 2007, Vancouver Island B.C. A full immersion in the art of storytelling, puppetry, story creation, puppet making, therapeutic, artistic, and pedagogical focus.

Professional Development Training:

Elements of Therapeutic Early Childhood Education, June 18- 22, 2007, Pacific Northwest location TBA with Nancy Blanning and Suzanne Down. The wisdom of the life processes and fairy tales for therapeutic circle journeys and the process of ensouling our puppets with healing archetype, solo marionette presentation.

The Curative Clock and Therapeutic Puppetry, July 9-13, 2007, New England location TBA with Adola McWilliam (master Camphill curative education trainer)and Suzanne Down. A profound look at the karmic journey through the twelve signs of the zodiac and the twelve poles of human condition and practical therapeutic tools to bring balance to these tendencies.

Weekend Events

Puppets for World Change, January 28-29, 2007, San Diego, CA. Easy solo marionette, technique for multicultural stories that bridge the beauty of cultures with the universality of the human being.

All Hawaii Early Childhood Puppetry Conference, February 20, 2007, Maui, Hawaii. What opens the heart to puppetry, and how do we fill it with magic and meaning, ensouling our puppet work with wisdom and archetype.

Northwest Therapeutic Arts and Renewal Series: The Healing Wisdom of the Fairy Tale and Archetypes in Marionette Theater, March 10-11, 2007, Vancouver Island, BC. An introductory weekend.

Northwest Therapeutic Arts and Renewal Series: Introduction to the Healing Art of Early Childhood Puppetry, April 14-15, 2007, Vancouver Island, BC. An immersion in story, puppets, magic, and meaning.

Northwest Therapeutic Arts and Renewal Series: Healing the Eye and Heart with Color, May 26-26, 2007, Vancouver Island, BC. Natural dyeing silk, wool, and felt and creating story characters that sing with colors.

Classified Advertisements

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See www.heartwoodarts.com for carved Waldorf toys and more. Call Bill Bloom at 707-277-0130.

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Art Work: Erika Merklung
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Past issues of *Gateways* are available online with many articles posted at <http://www.waldorflibrary.org/gateways.html>. The most recent issues will not be posted online. Hard copies of current issues and back issues can be ordered from WECAN.

Seeking Your Contributions

- *Articles based on your experiences, observations or research.
- *Practical activities such as stories, circle times and crafts.
- *Book reviews of books that are resources for our work as early childhood educators.
- *Reviews of books that support our work.
- *Articles about or interviews with the elders in the Waldorf early childhood movement.
- *Websites that support early childhood work.
- *Your comments and questions about *Gateways* and past contents.

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It is preferable that articles be sent on disk or emailed as an attachment to publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

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