

Gateways

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From the Editor

Stephen Spitalny

This issue of *Gateways* is filled with many wonderful offerings to support our work with young children. Thanks to all of our contributors for providing a wealth of inspiration and taking the time to articulate in writing what they are doing and thinking. Thanks also to all of those who are starting to put their thoughts into writing, hopefully in time for the next issue. (This means you.)

Included in this issue is an article taken from an upcoming book published by WECAN, *You're Not the Boss of Me! – Understanding the Six/Seven-year-old Transformation*, and a section from a book jointly published by WECAN, AWSNA and the Research Institute entitled *Developmental Signatures: Core Values and Practices in Waldorf Education for Children Ages 3-9*. Both of these books deserve a place on the *Gateways* reader's bookshelf! They will soon be available from the WECAN office. The continuing work of Emmi Pikler is highlighted this issue with two articles articulating the connections of Waldorf early childhood work with the RIE approach. There is a sentence in one of these articles that bears repeating: *The Real Work May be in the Real Work*. This could be one of the keynote statements about our work with the children in our programs. These are just some of the wonderful contributions to this issue of *Gateways*.

When I first became editor of *Gateways*, I was worried that all of the articles would have to speak from one voice, the *official voice of Waldorf*, as it were. Or perhaps all the articles would resonate with my own opinions. This has not turned out to be the case, as shown this issue by an article on a St. Martin's Festival. My own inclination would be to leave all mention of saints out of kindergarten, even all elements that speak of specific religious traditions. Yet this is a different voice than mine, and this article presents a wonderful picture of a community-building festival with young children and their families. Included also is an article by this editor which he hopes you will find interesting. Please keep in mind, it is the author's perspective. There is no "one and only way."

Fall is now fully upon us in the northern hemisphere, and along with the showering of cosmic

iron, I feel the heaviness of world human need. What follows is a reflection of that heaviness, with specific examples, so be prepared.

So much is going on in our world. Sometimes it is hard to think that what I do on a daily basis with my kindergarten has meaning when I learn of situations that children in other parts of the world are experiencing and enduring. Two examples jump to mind: Northern Uganda and Zimbabwe.

In Uganda, children from five to twelve years old are at risk of being kidnapped and subjected to unthinkable experiences as their initiation into military rebel groups. The children not yet caught are living in fear, on the run, and hiding in basements and back alleys with no more than the clothes they are wearing. A movie called "Invisible Children" has been produced that is well worth watching. For more information, see www.invisiblechildren.com.

In Zimbabwe, it also is very hard to be a child, let alone to live there at all, for different reasons. It is a country not at war, yet the situation there is as so very dire. Basic commodities, fuel, electricity and drinking water are in all short supply and literally millions of people have fled to neighboring countries. Inflation is officially assessed at more than 6,000 percent (Can you even imagine paying \$1 for something in January, and the same item now costing \$6000?) and the unemployment rate is 80%. International donor agencies say more than a third of the country's population of 12 million will require emergency food aid in the coming months. An angry and increasingly desperate population is consistently prevented from voicing their complaints. All Zimbabweans are victims of economic and social collapse, but those who protest are targeted for police brutality, including mothers, who often take their babies to protests because they cannot afford to pay caregivers. This has resulted in babies being detained by the police along with their mothers. Some of the women are subjected to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment together with their children, as the police do not separate the mothers and their children when they suffer this treatment. You may find out about Zimbabwe aid organizations at www.ancient-ways.org and www.crisisgroup.org (enter "Zimbabwe" in Reports by Country link).

I sincerely hope that what we are doing with

the children in our care will one day lead to a better world for all, a world of cooperation and connection. In the meantime, I am doing what I can to raise awareness (hence this mention), and to financially contribute to those who are working to bring aid to these and other situations where so many children are so vulnerable.

Rudolf Steiner said in Lecture Three of *The Study of Man*, particularly in relation to younger children: “Education demands a connection in the teacher’s soul with the highest ideas of humanity. . .” — like compassion, empathy, and helping those in need.

To close, I offer a section of a Wendell Berry poem entitled “To A Siberian Woodsman.” One can easily replace the Siberia and the Kentucky of the poem with any number of locales throughout the world.

*I have thought of you stepping out of your doorway at dawn,
your son in your tracks.
You go in under the overarching green branches of the forest
whose ways, strange to me, are well known to you as the sound
of your own voice
or the silence that lies around you now that you have ceased to speak,
and soon the voice of the stream rises ahead of you,
and you take the path beside it.
I have thought of the sun breaking pale through the mists over you
as you come to the pool where you will fish, and of the mist drifting
over the water, and of the cast fly resting light on the face of the pool.*

*And I am here in Kentucky in the place I have made myself
in the world. I sit on my porch above the river that flows muddy
and slow along the feet of the trees. I hear the voices of the wren
and the yellow-throated warbler whose songs pass near the windows
and over the roof. In my house my daughter learns the womanhood
of her mother. My son is at play, pretending to be*

the man he believes I am. I am the outbreathing of this ground.

My words are its words as the wren’s song is its song.

Who has invented our enmity? Who has prescribed us hatred of each other? Who has armed us against each other

with the death of the world? Who has appointed me such anger

that I should desire the burning of your house or the destruction of your children?

Who has appointed such anger to you? Who has set loose the thought

that we should oppose each other with the ruin of forests and

rivers, and the silence of the birds?

Who has said to us that the voices of my land shall be strange

to you, and the voices of your land strange to me?

Stephen Spitalny
Santa Cruz, California

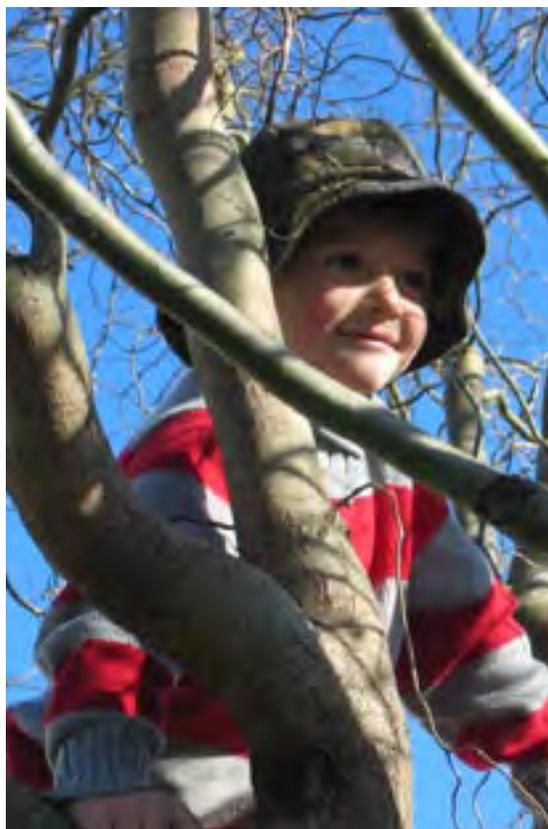


Photo courtesy of Stephen Spitalny

The Role of Handwork

Developing Skills and Meeting the Needs of the Older Child in the Kindergarten

Barbara Klocek

The long-expected You're Not the Boss of Me! – Understanding the 6/7-Year-Old Transformation, edited by Ruth Ker on behalf of the WECAN Working Group on the Older Child, will be published by the end of 2007. This comprehensive resource is packed with information and ideas about working with children who are going through the six-year-old change. Here is a sample from Section Four, "Meeting the Child's Needs: Suggestions for Working in the Classroom."

Should handwork have a place in the kindergarten? Does it serve the children in some way or does it keep them from play? What is appropriate in the class and why? Does handwork keep the children or teachers focused on product rather than process?

In my kindergarten I have found that there is a place for handwork. It serves the children by providing them with a means for exploring substances, as well as helping them to refine their fine motor skills. The exploration of texture, new materials, and tools unfolds in a mood and process very much like that of creative play. I find that the older children in the class love the challenges the materials give them. The younger children (the four- and young five-year-olds) do not participate in some of these activities, and this allows them more space for their own imaginative play while the older children are engrossed in the handwork.

If the older children are not given challenges, often they become restless and disruptive. By being presented with wood, yarn, wool, needles, and thread, they learn to work with their hands in new ways. I have also found that the children who are not drawn to fine motor skills are often the ones who need practice in this area. We need to balance the breathing tendencies of each child with the question, Does this child need a larger or smaller focus and movement experiences throughout the day, the season, or the year?

Working with the hands on a project unfolding over time develops skills and soul qualities (like patience, for instance). There is a satisfaction in participating in bread making, making our own sandpaper, learning to screw a vice on the table,

or to drill a hole for a peg. Carding wool, making a fingerknitted belt or their own puppet requires a focus that becomes strengthened by practice. This serves the children well as preparation for the challenges of first grade.

Just as we seek to create a balance of large/small and slow/quick movements to create a healthy breathing in our circles, so we need to look at our day to see that this breathing is in the activities we bring to the children. I have found the use of handwork brings a much-needed focus to the child who is restless or chaotic. It also brings the joy of creating to the children and begins to build a practice of patience and persistence. The ability to transform wood, wool, paper, yarn, and cloth can reflect the child's own developmental transformation. The children love to play with the materials and experience the alchemy of the changes that the materials and even they themselves experience. So how does this look in the stream of the year in the kindergarten?

In the beginning of the year we are very busy learning how to go through our day, making new friends, and exploring the wonderful kindergarten spaces. Making bread is a favorite weekly activity – wonderfully tactile, from the sifting of flour to the kneading of the dough. We do this as a two-day process, with the mixing the first day, rising of the dough overnight, and then forming and baking the next day. And what a favorite snack it is! In the winter we also make soup one day a week and have many helpers chopping.

In the fall it is traditional in our kindergarten to make swords for Michaelmas. For many years, every child was encouraged to make a sword. The younger children would like to start one but were usually not developmentally able to sustain their interest and attention. I was reluctant to work with only the older children initially because I wanted the class to form as a whole. Yet I have found that the older children love to be acknowledged and given individual tasks. Whether it is in tying shoes or in helping the younger children put on rain gear, the older ones thrive on helping and on

having challenging tasks. So for the last three years, only the older children have made swords. Making swords is a process that takes at least two weeks of sanding, rasping, drilling, painting, and oiling the wood. What a relief it has been to work only with the older children who have been “champing at the bit,” while the younger children watched with much interest and anticipation. The more eager younger ones were encouraged to work on three swords for the kindergarten during this time, to give them direction and a way to participate in this activity. This allowed for a much more sanguine way of working for these younger ones.

To ensoul the sword in the right way I created a verse for circle time:

*I will polish my sword,
so strong, so bright.
I will use it for the right,
not for some silly quarrel or fight,
but to drive away evil I will try,
and protect those who are weaker than I.*

During the week of the Michaelmas festival we all dye a golden silk with the marigold petals we have dried. In the story we tell, the children have heard how Michael gave a cape of light “to give you courage, strength, and might.” The older children are formally presented with their finished swords as a last activity on our Michaelmas Friday. A note goes home to the parents giving them the verse to help them carry the right mood with the sword. All of the children go home with a golden silk cape and a crown for Michaelmas, the older ones proudly carrying their swords.

Making crowns is a wonderful activity that happens several times throughout the year. These are simply made and I have heard from parents how they enhance dress-up play at home. In the fall when we are hearing a Native American Indian story, we make Indian crowns. These are made with a strip of felt tied with yarn in the back, on which the children thread six little wooden beads. A few children at a time are with me, while the other children are playing. This allows me to observe the child’s eye-hand coordination. With the older children, if there is difficulty with the task I often speak to the parents at our Thanksgiving conference time and ask them to help their child by giving them

opportunities at home to refine these skills.

We also decorate crowns again at wintertime, either for Three Kings’ or Valentine’s Day. They are made of different colored cardstock that I have cut into crowns. How the older children love to cut out hearts or use the hole punch for jewels, glue them on and, when dry, lovingly wear them.

Often for Christmas, we will sew a very simple gift for our parents. I cut out a square for a dream pillow, or a heart for a pocket full of love (stuffed with wool and lavender). I have heard of the opinion that children should not be sewing at such a young age, but rather it is better that they do fingerknitting instead. My experience has taught me that fingerknitting is much more difficult than sewing, and if one is not particular about the stitches, most children who are four-and-a-half and older love to sew. I am often asked to cut out a fish so that the child can sew a present to take home for his kitty.

After Christmas, I take the next six weeks to teach the older children to fingerknit. I have come up with a little verse: “Catch a little fish. Oh, it is so big. Pull its tail, and make it small instead.” Most children take to fingerknitting easily and then want to sew their fingerknitting into horse reins, a rug, a basket, and once, a child asked to sew mittens. This is a challenging activity for some children. In order to do fingerknitting children need to have the ability to focus and to pass through an important developmental stage of crossing the midline. Observing this task can help me to see some challenges that certain children may meet when they are in first grade. My observations may be something that I mention to parents if I am concerned.

From mid-February until Easter we all explore wool that comes from the sheep at our farm. I usually do the major washing but will sometimes wash some with the class. We then finger-card the wool and then card it with little inexpensive and sturdy dog brushes that work very well. On our walk day we visit the creek or Crystal Mountain and gather small and medium-sized stones. One day we wash and sort the stones by size and then, after carding a big basketful of wool, we start making balls. In the center of the ball I put a small stone, about nickel- or quarter-size, and around this I wrap the wool we have carded. The children can pick out two colors of colored wool, which I wrap crisscross over the forming ball. I then dip it into warm water

in a dishpan and drizzle some mild dish soap over the ball. I show them how to squeeze and roll gently at first and then harder as the wool begins to felt. It generally only takes about five minutes. However some children work much longer and enjoy the sensory touch experience.

If there is time before Easter we sometimes make seed babies (after we hear about them in circle time). These are made with slightly larger rocks at the core and a layer of white wool and then colored wool. They are felted by the children, and the next day they have opened and inside there is a little simple baby. I take the seeds home at night, cut them open a crack, take out the stone, and make a very simple needle-felted baby to put inside. We also make little felted rabbits for our Easter baskets (from roving tied in two knots, one larger for the body and one smaller for the head, leaving out the ends for ears with a layer of wool over it). These we felt very gently, stroking the little ears. After a rinse in the warm and cold water the bunnies are named and the children are told that tomorrow their eyes will be open. I take them home and put a little brown or blue yarn through for eyes and needle-felt the eyes a bit for strength. What fun we have with the bunnies until it is time for them to go home in Easter baskets!

I feel very strongly that needle-felting as an activity does not belong in the kindergarten. The gesture is too harsh. Imagine what children, who tend to unite with the adult's gesture, are experiencing with the quick, repetitive, piercing movement of the needle-felter. This can affect their nervous systems and elicit from them nervous gestures as well.

After the spring break the older children have special projects – a needle book and a puppet. First they pick two colors of felt and some colorful thick thread for the needle book. We do a blanket stitch around the edges of the felt and then twizzle two colors of yarn to hold the needle book closed. The twizzle is stitched on the back side of the book and each child receives one needle and six pins to put inside. With this they then begin their puppet. These are simple table puppets and the children can choose whatever character they wish to create. They take time to ponder this. I only say they must be human or angels, not animals. This project takes at least three weeks and I try to have them move

through the process at somewhat the same pace. This year I made the heads earlier myself, as this was a challenging step for some of them. When they are all finished we create a puppet show for the younger children in our class. I make up a story for all the characters. One year I had only royalty; another year there was no royalty at all. Once, six out of thirteen puppets were Michaels. Then the children can bring the puppet and needle book home. This project is met with great enthusiasm as the children come out of free play to make their characters. The choleric ones want to rush right through but we all work at about the same pace so we are all putting heads, bottoms, hair, and capes on at the same time. What a lesson in patience for some and a lesson in perseverance for others.

This project is such a symbol of the culmination of development at the end of the children's kindergarten years. They come to kindergarten as young children, usually participating inclusively with a "we" consciousness. As they near the end of the first seven years, they become more individualized, creating their own inner images. They choose their character for a puppet, create it, participate in a group puppet show, and proudly take it home with the needle book. This has helped them to be ready for the next step into the first grade.

These ideas are only indications of how one could work. It is most important that the gesture of handwork be a joyful mood of creating rather than something that is product-oriented. It can be a lovely social time, while sitting around and talking and working together. . .much like a quilting bee. This year a little five-year-old girl told me that she couldn't sew her Daddy's present because her mother did not allow her to use needles. I said I thought it would be fine if she were sitting beside me. She carefully stitched around the heart. When she finished she danced around the room singing, "I can sew. I can sew." I have experienced many such successes that have filled the children with confidence and dignity.

Barbara Klocek has been teaching kindergarten for many years at the Sacramento Waldorf School, and has also worked professionally as an artist and art therapist. A member of the WECAN Working Group on the Older Child, she contributed several chapters as well as illustrations to You're Not the Boss of Me!

An Archetypal Festival of Compassion and Brotherhood: Celebrating St. Martin's Day

Joyce Gallardo

We celebrate St. Martin's Day each year on November 11, when the days have grown short and the air is cold and damp. We carry our lanterns into the chill darkness, singing:

*St. Martin, St. Martin,
St. Martin rode through wind and snow.
On his strong horse, his heart aglow,
He rode so boldly through the storm.
His great cloak kept him well and warm.*

*By the roadside, by the roadside,
By the roadside a poor man arose.
Out of the snow in tattered clothes,
"I beg you help me in my plight,
Or else I'll die of cold tonight."*

*St. Martin, St. Martin,
St. Martin stopped his horse and drew
His sword and cut his great cloak through.
One half to the beggar man he gave,
And by this deed his life did save.*

For weeks we have been creating in our morning circle the archetypal pictures of St. Martin, who, as the song tells us, is courageous and compassionate, and of the beggar, who is helpless and in need. In Los Amiguitos Nursery/Kindergarten, the age range of the children is from twenty-two months to seven years. We also have our nine-year-old "graduate" who comes back once a week to bake bread with us. The children have been living in the process of the preparation for the festival and have a deep affinity to it. They all want to wear the red cloak of St. Martin and carry his sword, or to be the beggar shivering in the snow.

One day I invited a three-and-a-half-year-old boy to be the beggar. He drew back and said, "No!" His younger brother, twenty-two months old, who had not joined us in our circle but had been watching from the periphery each morning, piped up, "I be the beggar!" He sat down in the "snow" of a fluffy white sheepskin and became the beggar man in the

snow. The older brother was astounded and watched his younger brother intently as he sat in the "snow." As we sang, St. Martin came riding by, cut his cloak in two with his sword, and gave half to the beggar man. The beggar man went off into the shadows with the cloak wrapped around him and St. Martin rode away on his horse. The next morning the older brother was the first to volunteer to be the beggar in the circle.

When St. Martin's Day arrives, we assemble out of doors at 4:30 PM with parents and friends, our little lanterns glowing brightly in the approaching darkness. We wind our way through paths in the woods surrounding my home, singing our St. Martin and lantern songs. Suddenly, the sound of a horse's hooves are heard and over a hillock comes St. Martin (my husband, David), riding on his strong horse, his great red cloak flowing behind him. He appears as in a dream in the shadowy light.

There is a hush and then one child is heard exclaiming, "Look! It's St. Martin!" Then another, and another, "Yes, it's St. Martin on his great horse!" All eyes look up at the hillock and the beggar (our neighbor, Richard) appears from out of the shadow of a tall pine tree. St. Martin stops his horse, draws his sword, and cuts his great cloak through. He gently places one half of his cloak on the shoulders of the beggar man, who bows to him in gratitude and then disappears, barely visible, into the encroaching darkness. St. Martin gallops off on his horse and they are both gone, leaving us with a dreamlike, archetypal picture of compassion and brotherhood to carry in our hearts into the darkness of the months ahead.

The long line of lighted lanterns weaves its way in song back to the house through woods and garden paths, until we form a circle under the twinkling stars and sing a blessing for the meal that we will share together, provided by parents and friends. We place our lighted lanterns on a stone wall at the side of the house to light the way for any latecomers to the festival. Inside, everyone eats heartily of the delicious, warm food that awaits us. It

is a lovely social time. We revel in our camaraderie and friendship, in the community of children and adults sharing this festival together.

After the meal we go back outdoors. A fire is lit with great ceremony as we all gather around, and each child and adult offers a stick of wood to burn in the fire. From our own little flickering lantern light to the blazing, shared light of the bonfire, we experience the full circle from the solitary individual to the fullness of community.

Joyce Gallardo is the director of Los Amiguitos (Little Friends) Nursery/Kindergarten, a mixed-age Waldorf program in her home in Hillsdale, New York.

RESEARCH

Salutogenesis

Rainer Patzlaff & Wolfgang Sassmannshausen

The following is taken from the new publication, Developmental Signatures: Core Values and Practices in Waldorf Education for Children Ages 3 – 9. Jointly published by WECAN, AWSNA and the Research Institute for Waldorf Education, this volume is a translation of the first two parts of a three-part German study on the education of the young child. As Susan Howard says in her Foreword, “As we strive to adapt in insightful and meaning-filled ways to meet the changing cultural climate in which our Waldorf schools and kindergartens find themselves, and to articulate both to ourselves and to others what it is that we stand for, this study by our colleagues in Europe can serve as a helpful stimulus and support.”

Salutogenesis as a Foundation for the Educational Process

The interplay between the “I” and the threefold organization is not a routine occurrence in either children or adults. It is an extremely sensitive process prone to disruptions, requiring continual and renewed efforts to bring the whole organization into healthy balance. It is part of human freedom that these efforts can fail or be temporarily impaired. Herein lies the significant cause of illness.

Therefore, the goal of any true “art of education” must be to impart to the child the ability to meet the

challenges of this process and master the obstacles. When this is successful, we speak of “health.” By this we do not mean an absence of illness, but a possibility for the individual “I” to permeate the threefold organization in such a way that the full potential of the physical, mental and soul aspects can develop. Through this one gains the freedom to act according to one’s own “disposition and purpose.”

Health does not come about just by nature, so to speak. It requires certain conditions that need to be created and supported by education. In this, Waldorf education is in complete agreement with modern research. Investigations into salutogenesis (well-being and health) have resulted in the knowledge that health depends only in small measure upon biological factors and to an amazingly high degree upon certain mental/spiritual conditions that a person can or can learn to produce for him- or herself (Antonovsky 1993, 1997, Schueffel 1998, Grossarth-Maticek 1999). Specifically, this research into salutogenesis has identified three areas in which special conditions must be met for comprehensive good health.

The *physical-bodily organization* of the human being must gain the ability to deal with foreign substances coming from the outside so that they are either successfully transformed into bodily substances by the metabolic organs (as happens with food) or are successfully rejected by the immune system (as happens with a splinter or germs). This ability, as can be observed in infants and young children, can in no way be taken for granted. It has to be developed over time. Salutogenesis research has looked especially at the aspect of conflict and overcoming resistance, whereby the physical-bodily organization gains strength and the ability to assert its own form.

The *soul organization* is dependent on a strong experience of coherence, a secure feeling of connection with the world. This surely can come about only if the child has appropriate experiences that lead him or her to the absolute certainty that the world is a) principally transparent (understandable), b) manageable and pliant, and c) meaningful, so that also one’s own efforts have meaning, and it is rewarding to try and meet the challenges of life.

The *spiritual organization* is strengthened to

master problems through experiences of coherence. It is an unconditional requirement for developing courage and security in life. In wellness research this is usually referred to as “resilience” (Opp 1999). This means the individual can meet the hardships and adversities of life because he or she views them not as unchangeable facts, but as challenges that must be met. Resilience is rooted in the knowledge that one’s own forces will grow in strength through conflict and that challenges provide opportunities for self-development.

Self-assertion of the physical body, coherence, and resilience together form the foundation that makes it possible for the individual to put into action his or her own very personal impulses and plans in life, thereby becoming productive and creative. This autonomy does not come about through intellectual learning processes but from active interaction with the world through direct experiences of all kinds, from achieving mastery of the physical body, from free, imaginative play, and from meeting life’s challenges head-on. In short, self-education creates the foundation for health. Education that strives to provide the highest possible freedom for the individual to unfold his own strengths and abilities will therefore work in accord with the knowledge of salutogenesis down to every detail.

Developing a Healthy Physical Organization

Various measures can be taken to strengthen the physical organization. The responsibility for these measures lies mainly with parents, but should also be acknowledged in kindergarten and elementary school. These include body hygiene, nutrition and food, exercise and a healthy environment without pollutants and high noise emissions. There are other factors important to the healthy growth of children, one of the most important being, for example, the aesthetics of the environment, which are perceived entirely unconsciously by the child, but very strongly. The architectural design of the classrooms, colors and pictures on the walls, the materials used, the way they feel and smell, the acoustics, and so forth, all affect the child clear down into his finer metabolic processes. The effects can be either strengthening or weakening (Rittelmeyer 1994, 2002).

The structure of time also has an effect on the

child. Having a healthy rhythm to the days, weeks, months and years has an extraordinarily strong positive effect on a child’s mental constitution and physical organization. The younger the child, the stronger the effect. (There is more on this theme later on.)

Developing a Sense of Coherence through Direct Experience

First and foremost, the young child’s task is to form and permeate his physical organization. The child dedicates himself, though unconsciously, to this task out of his own impulse with the greatest intensity and from the first moments of life. Nevertheless, the child would not accomplish this goal without caring adults because standing, walking, and speaking are not genetically programmed. Rather these abilities are gained through interactivity, through example and attention provided by adults. Accompanied and encouraged by caring adults, the child builds up his sensory faculties through practice, gradually gains mastery over his muscles used for movement, and thereby gains freedom to move around and get to know his environment. All of these efforts result in the building of differentiated neural networks in the brain, and these in turn form the basis for what later appears as imagination and cognitive thinking (Eliot 2001).

Of significance for self-development is having a lot of direct experiences when interacting with the world, that is, experiences gained with and through one’s own body. The child must first be able to stand before he can understand the world. He must first grasp things physically before he can grasp them mentally. A child must smell things, taste, touch and handle them before he can experience the world as a manageable and transparent place. A feeling of coherence does not come about through intellectual comprehension but through hands-on activities. These experiences in turn affect the structure of the brain and the development of motor and sensory skills, all contributing to the child’s being able to make an increasingly stronger connection to his physical organization and his environment.

The lower senses (touch, movement, balance, well-being) play a special role which is not directed to the world outside, but to the inside, to one’s own body. They signal one’s position and movement in space (senses of movement and balance), coming

into contact with things and conditions (sense of touch), and perception of the internal organs as a whole (inner sense of well-being). Through movement in space, contacts through the skin, and the effect of gravity, the child experiences 1) his own body and 2) the spatial-material outside world in which the body exists. Here experience of the self and the world flow together.

Engendering a sense of coherence requires as many such dual experiences of self and the world as possible through the lower senses. And that is just what many children today are missing. Trust in one's own strength and the manageability of the world will not come about by talking to or cajoling the children. It happens by way of concrete, physical experiences through the senses. Cultivating the lower senses and movement are among the most urgent requirements in preschool, kindergarten and elementary education today. Complete development of sensory-motor skills is required to create the space for healthy soul and spiritual development. In this early phase, electronic media do nothing to promote development. They merely give the child the illusion of encountering the world and at the same time prevent any real encounters (Patzlaff 2004, Spitzer 2005).

Development of Resilience

What the child most urgently needs is a network into the immediate world, a social network of caring adults who set examples by their own behavior of what it means to stand in the world in such a way that one is not overwhelmed by the challenges of life. Through them the child learns to put events in perspective, master situations, be accepting and able to find meaning in events. Such experiences give the child a certainty that even those events that at first appear problematic can be put to rights. A positive attitude and joy in life are given their foundation, and these in turn give rise to the strength to meet today's challenges and grow from them.

A sense of coherence that is built upon resilience in this way promotes the motivation and ability for lifelong learning and development. A person who is accustomed to working through hindrances and opposition with courage, composure, a positive attitude and interest has the potential to realize his or her aims in life which he brought into this life from the world before birth. The basis for personal

autonomy is not intellectual learning and conscious reflection but rather the feeling and willing forces that have been strengthened by coherence and resilience. Early childhood is the crucial phase for fostering these qualities. The unconscious immersion into a supportive and nurturing social and physical environment gives rise to the development of the personality and the emergence in freedom of the unique individual.

Dr. Rainer Patzlaff and Dr. Wolfgang Sassmannshausen are the principal authors of the first part of the study commissioned by the German Association of Waldorf Schools and the International Association of Waldorf Kindergartens.

For full citations of the works referred to in the text, please see the bibliography of Developmental Signatures.

The Sistine Madonna Thoughts and Experiences

Stephen Spitalny

In this short article, I describe my personal experiences and ideas in relation to kindergarten work and the *Sistine Madonna*, painted by Raphael Sanzio in 1513/14. For context, know that I had the *Sistine Madonna* hanging on the wall in my kindergartens for many years and now I do not.

My first experience of the *Sistine Madonna* in a Waldorf kindergarten was when I arrived for an interview with my stepson's soon-to-be kindergarten teacher. I was still some years away from taking up kindergarten teaching. The *Sistine Madonna* hung on the wall above her as she asked many thought-provoking questions about his life. I was impressed by her interest and wisdom, and yet was put off by the image on the wall. It smacked of Christianity to me, and I was into spiritual pursuit, but not religion. I was willing to take a chance though, and he was enrolled.

It was still six years before I started a home kindergarten. As preparation, I went to various workshops and at one a participant asked one of the presenters why the *Sistine Madonna* was hanging on her kindergarten wall. The answer: "Because it's in all the Waldorf kindergartens."

I was deeply troubled by this answer, and began my personal research into the question. The idea of “Question Authority” lives strongly in me. I want to understand why I would choose to do something, so then I can be accountable for what I am doing and can explain those choices to others. So I began a personal quest to connect with this painting and to understand why I might want it on my kindergarten wall. I learned many wonderful and wondrous things over the years by attending lectures and workshops, and reading all that I could. Inspirations and insights came from Rudolf Steiner lectures I read, as well as from conversations with Rene Querido and Margret Meyerkort, and many articles and lectures. My meditative life included this painted image, and many insights came from that practice as well. My images and ideas about this painting are abundant and here will only be briefly touched upon.

An important element for me is the healing qualities of the painting, which Rene Querido described as a *yantra*. A yantra is an image that works on a person on many levels, even by its mere presence. Margret Meyerkort helped me to see the wonderful loving gesture with which the baby is held, an archetypal mother gesture. She pointed out the earlike, listening gesture of the painting itself, in the form and shape of the mother and her cloak. She especially helped me to see that the picture does not characterize a situation on the physical earth, but that the veils are pulled back and we get a glimpse beyond. Also, the colors of red and blue in her cloak and dress stand out as archetypal healing colors, especially helpful for the young child. The barefoot mother is carrying the child down through the clouds toward the material world as two saints look on, one looking away in deep reverence, and the other in sadness and resignation, pointing the way forward and downward to incarnation. The curtained veils are parted so that we can glimpse this holy moment. We can also see many faces in the clouds, awaiting their moment of becoming a child on their own path toward incarnation.

Raphael made this painting to depict Mary and her child Jesus, yet this is also a depiction of every child. Each comes from the heavenly world in a similar manner to this depiction, surrounded by angels and saints and the other spirits waiting to incarnate.

One can also see this painting as the path of the individual’s ego as carried by its soul toward conscious engagement in the physical world of earth and its own body (baby as ego, mother as soul).

There is a series of healing images that Dr. Steiner recommended in Munich in 1911 to Dr. Felix Peipers as a curative therapy – the so-called Madonna Series (*Madonnenbilder*). A key image in this series is the *Sistine Madonna*. This treatment was recommended for patients in Dr. Peiper’s hospital with “soul maladies.” Steiner also suggested that Raphael’s Madonna images could be used in medical work with children with soul imbalances. Notes that accompany the *Madonnenbilder* card set I purchased say that these images help one to experience a flow of energy through the movement of one’s attention drawn by the pictures. The five-pointed-star-like movement of etheric forces in the human body can thus be pictured, and by repeatedly viewing these images in the order given, balance and health in one’s etheric body can be restored. The *Sistine Madonna* in itself, as a “whole composition pictures the moving streams of the etheric body (pentagram).”

This is part of the secret of the healing power of the *Sistine Madonna*. The etheric star pattern is depicted in movement in this painting. There are many lectures and articles one can read to try and understand this mystery of the pentagram form, including Rudolf Steiner in Munich, August 20, 1911. Christof Andreas Lindenberg has also offered his thoughts as *Left and Right Orientation in the Pentagram*, and *Left and Right Orientation in the Madonna Series*.

In several lectures in early 1913, Steiner spoke about the importance of the painter Raphael and his mission for the world (January 30, 1913, Berlin and May 19, 1913, Stuttgart). Steiner at various times spoke about other incarnations of the painter Raphael, and the experiences he had in those other lifetimes, even in the very last public lecture Dr. Steiner ever gave (September 28, 1928, Dornach). His visual art of color and form was his medium for expression of the cosmic, spiritual realities that he was able to experience in earlier lives.

Perhaps the reader can begin to glimpse the depth of value and meaning I find in the *Sistine Madonna*. I continue to be inspired by it, interested in it, and helped to heal by it. It is an important

image for me, and I consider it as a friend and a comfort.

When I began my career as a kindergarten teacher at a Waldorf school, I proudly hung a print of the entire *Sistine Madonna* in glorious color. Over the years I visited other Waldorf/Steiner kindergartens and always was greeted by my friend hanging on the wall. Sometimes she was surrounded by draped cloths – silks of course – and I got a funny feeling. It seemed to me like a shrine or an altar.

Over the years a conversation about the painting on my kindergarten wall (with no added cloth decorations) came up only once among the children. An African American child noted to her friend, “You see that painting? That’s me and my mom.”

“No,” replied her “white” friend. “That’s me and my mom.” This interaction confirmed for me that the children see far deeply below the surface of things. But I know that grownups, who have the gift (and curse) of the intellect, have thoughts and feelings that might be simply based on the image itself. I regularly speak to prospective parents about Waldorf kindergarten, and often the question is asked, “But is this a Christian school? Why is that picture on your wall?” I get a sense of what some parents new to Waldorf/Steiner education feel about this image, based on these questions and bearing in mind my original experience of the *Sistine Madonna* in kindergarten.

Waldorf/Steiner education is a healthy and supportive developmental and spiritual approach for all children. I want our Waldorf/Steiner schools to be welcoming to all families, from all traditions and religions. I have already described some of my thinking about the painting, and I have articulated all of that and more to interested people. But I still knew that the feelings evoked by the painting could be a barrier to a family bringing their child, no matter what explanations I could offer. (There could be other barriers that bear considering – what might they be? This seems another worthy research question.)

While I was living with all of these ideas and experiences, I had a dream. I dreamed that I took the print down from my wall, and in the dream I felt a great relief. Shortly after, I described my dream to a colleague, as well as my new intention to eliminate the painting from my kindergarten for

the following school year. She suggested I consider the possibility of changing to a print that just had the central details of the painting, the mother and child portion. I decided to follow her advice, and procured a copy of the painting that only had the central image, and made a wonderful oval-shaped wooden frame for it, and there it was, all ready for a new kindergarten year.

She hung on my wall in that form for many years. Several years ago, I took her down. My thinking about what sort of an obstacle this image can be for parents grew too large, even as wonderful, and healing, and esoteric, and, and, and . . . as the painting truly is. My thinking is that the feelings of people, parents for instance, are powerful, and they are *not* ruled by thinking. Feelings arise out of responses to experiences, values, needs, and even self-image, and perhaps even past-life experiences. All of my best and wonderful thinking cannot change how someone feels. I want all the families of the world to come knocking on the door of Waldorf/Steiner education, and not find an obstacle to their child entering in a print hanging on the wall. So I have made my choice not to have this amazing image adorning my wall in kindergarten.

Rudolf Steiner mentioned how the education he offered is based on the *Christ impulse*. He described that lofty ideal as that which is uniting, that which creates a bridge between people. That which is separating and creates barriers is of another impulse, an adversarial stream. It seems to me this idea of the Christ impulse is sometimes changed into a notion of Christian education, with trappings from Christian tradition including festival life and the contents of wall hangings throughout the grades. Steiner said, in Bern on January 9, 1916 (*The Universal Human*, Lecture 4, pp. 85ff):

This is one of the meanings of the Mystery of Golgotha: the attainment of the unity of humanity from within. Externally human beings are becoming more and more different. The result will not be sameness but differences all over the earth, and human beings must exert all the more force from within to attain unity.... Such differences will always exist because human beings will only gradually be able to attain unity. At the same time, different groups will fight each other tooth and nail about everything concerning their outer life. These are setbacks from

earlier epochs that run counter to the Christ impulse, rather than in harmony with it.

Indeed, here we have a very profound meaning of this Christ impulse. Based on true knowledge, we can say Christ is our savior who keeps humankind from being fragmented into groups.... We have the right feelings for Christ only when we see in him the savior, rescuing humanity from dispersion and separateness; only then can Christ fill our innermost I. Christianity lives wherever people are able to understand this union of humanity through Christ. In the future, it will not matter much whether what Christ is will still be called by that name. However, a lot will depend on our finding in Christ the spiritual uniter of humanity and accepting that external diversity will increase more and more....

We have to be able to face calmly and courageously the increasing diversity in human nature, because we know that we can carry a word into all these diversities that is not merely a word of speech but one of power. Though there may be groups that fight against each other and though we may even belong to one of them, we know that we can bring something that will express: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" into every group. We know that this "Christ who lives in me" will not lead to the forming of groups; rather, it will bring about the spreading of the glory of the name "human being" over the whole earth....

You are called upon to help in this development, which will lead to something appearing to people in bright clarity, something we cannot yet express because we do not have words for it in our languages, yet something spiritual science works toward. When you feel you belong to such a spiritual stream, and feel at home in it, because you see that it is necessary for human

evolution, then you have a right understanding of our spiritual movement – you belong to it in such a way that you rightly understand the greatest of its goals based on your increasing understanding of the contrast between Christ and Lucifer-Ahriman. You understand that this contrast is vital and had to exist....

I am not suggesting everyone now immediately remove this wonderful image of the Sistine Madonna from his or her kindergarten walls. I ask though, that you consider the items you choose for your kindergarten from a personally thought-out



perspective. And you decide what images, what items and colors and shapes and materials you provide for the kindergarten environment that you are the priestess or priest in. I have chosen to have other images for my kindergarten walls (my kindergarten was a house long ago, and there are several rooms, all with walls). These images include a wonderful print entitled *Madonna with Flowers* by Brenda Joysmith (a dark-skinned mother and child in a field of flowers). This picture surely has a different mood, it is fully of the earth, and is still a

beautiful rendering of mother and child. (It can be viewed online at <http://www.joysmith.com/files/posters.asp>) I also have a large print of a page from the book *Grandfather Twilight*. There is a small print entitled *Amor de Padre* by Simon Silva. (I even have a poster in my coatroom exhorting the parents to read to their children every day.)

It wasn't a lightly-taken decision to remove the Sistine Madonna from my kindergarten walls. Something that has supported that choice for me and the children in my care is an understanding of the reality and working of flower essences. Rescue Remedy, for example, is a wonderful tool for regaining presence and calmness. Merely thinking

about the remedy and the flowers in it can give the same effect as physically adding a few drops of the liquid to your system. I do use the *Sistine Madonna* every day as an invisible hygienic elixir. I actively picture it and I especially call it up before my inner eyes when a child seems in need of its comforting qualities.

I have not seen in person the original *Sistine Madonna* by Raphael that has its home now in Dresden, Germany. Everyone I know who has, though, mentions a profound feeling of peacefulness that came over them. Even “non-anthroposophical” friends speak in glowing terms of the feelings the painting evoked in them. It is a special image that I will always carry in my heart, and I hope one day to set eyes upon the original.

And gazing at the sun-illuminated clouds there may dawn on us the realization that the picture of the Madonna and Child is a sense picture of the eternal super-earthly element in man, that is wafted to the earth from super-earthly realms themselves and meets, in the clouds, those elements that can only proceed from the earthly. Our perception may feel itself raised to the loftiest spiritual heights if we can give ourselves up – not theoretically, or in an abstract sense, but with the whole soul – to what works upon us in Raphael’s Madonnas. (Rudolf Steiner, January 30, 1913, Berlin)

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SUPPORTING THE ADULTS

Seven Important Aspects of Mindful Parenting

Chuck Barbieri

Usually Gateways does not include articles geared for parents, so the following is an exception. This article can of course be offered to parents, and it can also be a resource for early childhood teachers. In it we are reminded of some essential practices that we can continually attempt in our working with the children, all supporting the essential activity of connecting with each of the children. One could easily substitute the word “teacher” each time “parent” is used. – Stephen Spitalny

The task of parenting is one of the most challenging, stressful, demanding, and rewarding jobs on the planet. There is no instruction manual on “how to parent,” and all of the popular guidebooks mostly deal with specific behavioral challenges that children present to adults. Parenting is a subjective activity that is influenced by so many internal and external factors that oftentimes we do not have time or extra energy to consciously examine how we respond to children. Day after day our relationship with our children can become an “auto-pilot relationship,” where we merely react to external circumstances that are out of our control.

We have to come back to what we can control

and that is *our own* mind stream. We need to understand how to be ourselves with clarity and intention before we tackle all of the “doing” of parenting. Being with children is a profound transformative experience – it always presents us with the question, “What do I want to bring to this situation for myself and for the child?” Mindful parenting allows us to question our habits and habitual unawareness. It can allow us to realize that “whenever we believe that something besides our perception of an event or a person is angering us, we give our power away. You believe that the event or person has *made* us angry, happy, sad, or guilty” (Bailey, 2002, p. 99). Our task is to reclaim power and responsibility for our own feelings and then model that skill or behavior to our children.

So much of behaviorism only deals with external signs of behavior and how to change them into acceptable behaviors that fit into adult/parent expectations. If the goal of parenthood were to produce servile children, then this would be an acceptable parenting technique. Yet the primary task of parenting is to raise healthy, happy, independent, confident human beings who are capable of making

responsible choices in an oftentimes chaotic and complex cultural setting. We are sorely overdue to fundamentally examine and change our reactive, reflexive habits when it comes to parenting.

This article lists seven key aspects of mindful parenting, which deserve close scrutiny from all people who work or spend time with children. This is only a brief introduction to many important topics that dominate the parenting landscape. The list of websites, resources, and books at the end of this article will be a great starting point for a critical examination of these fundamental parenting issues. Then we can start moving the dominant parenting paradigm from punitive, temporary compliance/power and control relationships to relying on warmth, empathy, and building a transformative relationship with our children.

I. Discipline Begins with Adults, then Children

A few parenting books have recently been advocating a radical notion: Instead of focusing on what particular behavior you want your child to do or not do, you change your focus to your own self-control. Parents often react to children habitually as opposed to responding mindfully. ScreamFree parenting has a wonderful website devoted to “learning to relate with your kids in a calm, cool and connected way.” ScreamFree parenting’s primary premise is that “loving yourself first is the only true way to be scream free because it is the only way to truly benefit your children without burdening them with the need to benefit you” (Runkel, 2005, p. 201).

In the book *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline*, Becky A. Bailey (2002, p. 26) defines self-control as mind control. She writes, “It is being aware of your own thoughts and feelings. By having this awareness, you become the director of your behavior. Lack of self-control turns your life over to people, events, and things as you careen through life on remote control, either unconscious of yourself or focused solely on what other people are thinking and feeling.” This life on “remote control” is modeled and taught to children with our actions and words as parents.

The major premise of *Magical Parent, Magical Child* by Joseph Chilton Pearce and Michael Mendizza (2004) is that “the adult is transformed by the child as much as the child is transformed by

the adult” (p. ix). Parents need to realize that you can control how you react or respond to events much more easily than you can try to change how things or events happen to you. You can consciously decide how to be in a particular situation rather than simply repeating habitual actions over and over again.

II. Move Beyond Punishment-and-Reward Systems of Parenting

We still live in an era where it is legal to beat children with paddles in schools in twenty-three states! Punishments and rewards go together as a dubious, naively dualistic approach to parenting skills. Alfie Kohn in *Unconditional Parenting* has documented the effects of punishment and reward systems on children. His arguments, based on solid research data and practical knowledge, are very compelling in demonstrating the devastating effects of both punishment and reward systems as a technique in parenting.

“One basic need all children have,” Kohn argues on the book’s cover, “is to be loved unconditionally, to know that they will be accepted even if they screw up or fall short. Yet conventional approaches to parenting such as punishments (including ‘time-outs’), rewards (including positive reinforcement), and other forms of control teach children that they are loved only when they please us or impress us.” Evaluative praise is remarkably ineffective because such extrinsic motivational techniques actually erode the development of intrinsic sources of personal motivation. To base your parenting techniques on a reward and punishment system is to base your view of your child on conditional responses (either love-withdrawal or positive reinforcement) and judgments that can become “life sentences for children.” Kohn goes on to document what many research studies have shown: “When children receive affection with strings attached, they tend to accept *themselves* only with strings attached” (p. 23). This statement has been proven by scores of studies with people of different ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds and with a variety of different tasks and rewards.

Chick Moorman (2003, p. 120) makes the important distinction between evaluative, appreciative, and descriptive praise. Too often parents rely on evaluative praise to set up an

external, dualistic good boy/bad boy hoop for the child to jump through, rather than relying on beneficial descriptive and appreciative praise. I think many parents are just lazy and rely on unexamined habits in using such evaluative praise as “Good job, Johnny.” Parents need to exert the extra effort and attention to describe what is being praised, or to make appreciative comments.

Joseph Chilton Pearce convincingly argues that “day by day we accept the image we see reflected in the mirror of our relationships. People may talk about unconditional love and acceptance, but that is not what children see. Children see our punishments and rewards, our comparisons, judgments and contents . . . so early is our identification with external values that few ever discover or identify their authentic nature, their true self-worth” (2004, p. 89). In the book *Evolution’s End* (1991), Pearce came up with a shocking statement: “Punishment and rage break the child’s will, the capacity to overcome obstacles and explore the unknown, which is learning itself. They will leave him or her with no self-confidence, no faith in themselves and they will fumble or retreat at every little difficulty or challenge. That youngster will grow to be one of us, thinking one thing, feeling another, and acting in a way disconnected from both” (p.76).

III. Parent Talk: Your Words are Important

Language and how we communicate to our children directly impact a child’s self-esteem and also model the values that we act on. Recent research has also found that our language fundamentally affects how a child’s mind develops and grows. Allan Schore’s book *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development* demonstrates that when a toddler hears the words “no” or “don’t” (which is on average every nine minutes of waking life!) and sees the corresponding shaming look by parents, it brings “the shock of threat, interrupts the will to explore and learn, and produces a cascade of negative hormonal-neural reactions in the child. Shore then describes at length the child’s depressive state brought about as a result of these episodes of shame stress” (Pearce, 2004, p. 137).

In *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline*, Bailey concisely outlines to parents how to “focus on what you want to have happen instead of what you don’t

want.” Focusing on what you don’t want actually pits your body chemistry against your will power and undermines your chances for success (p. 31). The major focus of Bailey’s book is how to turn seven powers for self-control into seven steps in discipline skills, which then models the seven values for living. This book is clear and concise in guiding adults into how to be with children in many differing situations. Chick Moorman’s *Parent Talk* is another resource in this area.

IV. Children Need a Showering of Unconditional Loving Guidance

Children need to be loved unconditionally – that is a love beyond whatever mistakes, whatever parental expectations may get in the way. Our kids do not have to earn our love by the various methodologies we employ to seek control of their lives. Often there is confusion among parents that responsibility for children involves various punishment and reward systems of controlling behavior, rather than setting a priority to be responsible to our children by loving them unconditionally.

It is impossible to shower kids with love if we do not first care for or love ourselves. Many parents come to a false dichotomy: “If I care for me, I feel like a selfish jerk, like I’m doing something very wrong. If I focus on my kids, I sometimes feel like a doormat, busting myself to please and serve yet feeling much unappreciated for all the sacrifices I make” (Runkel, 2005, p. 193). The relationship we have with ourselves and the relationships we have with our children do not have to be power struggles pitting one against the other. The more we invest in taking care of ourselves as parents, the more we will approach parenting from a grounded, holistic perspective. We will be able to take on the many voices that parents must artfully embody and employ to raise healthy and happy children.

V. Children, Like Adults, Learn from Their Mistakes

How we view mistakes and conflicts has a direct impact on how children learn to view their own mistakes. The fact is that our children will make all of the big decisions in their lives on their own, as young and growing adults. Our task is not only to model how to make good decisions, but perhaps more importantly, how to respond and learn

from poor or bad decisions. Recent research, well documented in Joseph Chilton Pearce's *The Biology of Transcendence* (2004), extensively demonstrates how children with defensive personalities and habits are not in the position to truly learn from an experience. During defensive stances children use the fight-or-flight mode of survival and act to protect their self-esteem.

VI. Countering the Stress of Busyness and the Loss of Creative Play

Today we subject our children to many practices that are eroding the very foundation of childhood: creative free play. A recent article entitled "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds" in the journal *Pediatrics* conclusively documents how vital play is for children (Ginsburg, 2007, p. 3):

Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them. Play allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles, sometimes in conjunction with other children or adult caregivers. As they master their world, play helps children develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resiliency they will need to face future challenges. Undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills. When play is allowed to be child driven, children practice decision-making skills, move at their own pace, discover their own areas of interest, and ultimately engage fully in the passions they wish to pursue.

Over the years active and imaginative play for children have been replaced by adult errand activities or designed educational programs that leave no room for playing just for playing's sake without an adult agenda. Of course, we also have corporations spending over twelve billion dollars each year in order to increase the over twenty-eight billion dollars that American children from age four to twelve spend every year. Playing has come to be

defined as how children spend money for popular crazes or games that will soon end up at the garbage dump.

We now have decades of research to show us that creative and imaginative play boost "healthy development across a broad spectrum of critical areas: intellectual, social, emotional, and physical." It is vitally important to closely examine how we structure our children's lives. How much do we consider having daily rhythm, or seasonal and yearly rhythms? Rhythms help provide a sound and trusting atmosphere for a child to grow in. Adding many after-school or weekend classes produces overly stressed children who lose the capacity to play in a creative and imaginative way. The only thing left is to be entertained passively in front of a television. The Alliance for Childhood has a wonderful website that demonstrates how important play is to children and how it is threatened by our pathological culture.

VII. Put the Relationship First!

Parenting in our day and age has become less joyful because parents cling to ideas of perfection with consequential invasive control of children's lives. Yes, children need guidance and structure in order to develop into responsible, caring, and healthy adults. Yet so much of parenting has become preoccupied with getting compliance with children at whatever cost. *Magical Parent, Magical Child* is an amazing gift to all parents in discovering and engaging in the "optimum learning relationship" that transforms both the child and the adult. Pearce writes that "the true nature of children — their complexity and open-ended possibilities — places them well beyond our attempts to predict, manipulate and control. Eventually every parent and educator discovers this obvious fact, much to their dismay" (p. 10).

Parents need to focus on building a loving relationship, which is impossible to do if the adult is critically judgmental. Children cannot learn and defend themselves at the same time. The neurology of the brain makes this impossible. Defending oneself splits attention and energy. Let the consequence of the actions impact the child rather than having adults intellectually lecture a child as to why certain actions are bad choices. Pearce's whole book is based on the premise that true learning is playful and effortless, and that many adults have

no understanding of how to truly play in a loving, nonjudgmental way.

The fundamental core of a parent-child relationship is succinctly summed up by Pearce: “Nature designed us to love our children and allow them to love us. Love is the safe-space, in which both parent and child can play and where learning takes place naturally. A parent can’t teach love. They can only love and the child’s natural state unfolds in response to that love. A parent can’t love if he or she was never loved when they were children. *But* the natural state of a child will teach the parent to love in turn, if the parent is tuned in to that child” (p. xiii).

So the questions remain: How playful are we as parents? Do we really understand the value and significance of creative, imaginative play in childhood? How often do we ask for compliance for no particular good reason? How often do we transform our demands of “do this now or else” to asking the simple question “what does this child need right now?” How often do we ask ourselves how to *be* in a relationship before we *act* in a relationship? We need to ask these fundamental questions before we can get answers as to how to unconditionally love and guide our children.

Parenting Resources

Alliance for Childhood: resources can be found at www.allianceforchildhood.org

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The Kindergarten Apron

Annie Porter

Photographs by Euclides Santiago

As a Waldorf kindergarten teacher, I have considered the question of what to wear in the classroom from a number of different angles. Reflecting on one's appearance from the child's perspective does keep the question simple – anything eye-catching or out of the ordinary in our appearance draws their attention to us, and they comment appreciatively or frankly on what they see. Their attention then is on us and our "stuff," rather than their play or their friends. However, I have found that in practice, wearing clothing that hides one's anatomy and offers a flowing, softened form can hinder certain types of movement. Haven't many of us gotten tangled in our skirts crawling around the circle?

In addition, while many people in many professions wear work clothes that are not reflections of their own personal style, we in the Waldorf kindergarten are particularly concerned with working from a place of truth. Careful editing must be done when we strive to leave our personalities at the door. Leaving too much of ourselves outside of the classroom can result in an empty falseness not conducive to the kind of organic, inspired energy that we hope fills each classroom.

Most objectionable to me has been the impression that the Waldorf kindergarten teacher should look a certain way, and exude a certain Victorian primness. Here I find that the apron is an aspect of our kindergarten persona that serves us well. It not only functions to protect our clothing, but also can offer a way to soften and standardize our daily appearance. Those of us who may need to come to school some days in jeans or prints can still uphold a level of uniformity for the children, and not feel stifled by our "dress code." Wearing an apron may help us in our striving to bring our higher self into the classroom.

After experiencing a year of wearing no apron (which felt particularly unsatisfactory and bare) and a year of wearing a "uniform" apron along with many of my colleagues (which felt at times too

homogeneous), I have compiled my own thoughts and questions that I hope can serve to encourage teachers to bring consciousness to their use of an apron in the classroom. There is no definitive answer or golden rule about the kindergarten apron, and there is no official apron. Each teacher has to address the basic questions themselves: Will I wear an apron? Why? What kind? And where will it come from?

In this article I will make the assumption that the underlying aims of any Waldorf kindergarten classroom are recognized as consistent. These include, though are not limited to, qualities described beautifully in 1998 by Nancy Foster in a course at Sunbridge College:

- *To support or bring about dream consciousness*
- *To nourish the senses*
- *To help the child develop a healthy will*
- *To bring archetypal life activities to the child, rather than to "entertain"*
- *To provide a healthy rhythm and form*
- *To provide an environment of beauty and order, worthy of imitation*

Given these assumptions, this article will hopefully offer the teacher guidelines for considering:

- *the role of the apron in the classroom*
- *the child's experience of the appearance of the teacher*
- *resources for different types of aprons*

Why wear an apron at all?

A simple and true answer is to protect one's clothing – after all, we work in kindergarten, and certainly create all the messes of work. Many teachers also feel that our appearance should be considered as carefully as one would consider anything else to which the child's senses are exposed in the classroom, such as the color of the walls and curtains, or the type of lighting that we use. All of these elements in the classroom support the

“dream consciousness” of the child. An apron can be thought of as a facet of an environment of gentle stimulus.

I have also found that the simple act of putting on my apron is a step in my morning routine that helps me prepare myself for teaching. In donning the mantle of the kindergarten teacher, I am physically enacting the meditation,

*Dear God,
Make it so
That as far as my personal ambitions are concerned,
I may completely extinguish myself,
And Christ make true in me
The words of Saint Paul:
“Not I, but Christ in me,”
That the holy spirit may dwell in the teacher.
This is the true threefoldness.*

In this light, the apron can sometimes remind us to leave our egos, our personal dramas, and our afternoon list of errands at the door of our classroom. By freeing us from these burdens, our creative impulses are more accessible, our openness to inspiration more palpable, and our ability to see the children more vivid.

Some teachers also feel that an apron helps create a buffer between the great physical needs of the children and the teacher’s own etheric/physical bodies. I have certainly found that even the softest apron has a fortifying effect, creating a gentle armor, the layers of which support me as a pillar in the classroom.

What is the child’s experience of the teacher with an apron, or without?

Children who see their teacher caring for the tools of their trade experience a gesture of respect towards the work that fills the day – whether it be ironing an apron, hanging it up carefully at the end of the day, cleaning the gardening tools, or returning the thimble carefully to the sewing box. Through caring gestures, the teacher brings an example of purposefulness that offers a healing antidote to the fast pace of our lives that often overlooks process.

A teacher with an apron that is worn every day also offers to the child a comforting consistency. I have found that if the children in my class, who are used to seeing me wear the same two or three

aprons, catch sight of me now without one, they will invariably comment. It is surprisingly unsettling to them. Sometimes they ask me if I changed my clothes. I see in this how an apron lets them sleep a little longer: they are less conscious of my personal appearance. By offering consistency in my own appearance, I am not imposing my own subjectivity upon them. Nancy Foster, in her article on teachers’ clothing, even considers how the teacher’s astrality (expressed in his or her clothing) affects the etheric body of the child. This, to my mind, could be a question held by each teacher, depending on his or her own individuality, and also on the nature of the class.

An apron can also influence the posture, attitude, and warmth of the teacher, influencing the manner in which he or she moves in the circle, sits at the table, walks, stands, and interacts with other adults. This is an interesting experiment that each teacher can try, as an exercise in self-observation.

In addition, as kindergarten teachers, we are concerned with bringing the child archetypal images of the human being. Wearing an apron can also contribute to this effort, depending on the cut and color and shape.

Although I usually wear the same apron all week, and sometimes for weeks at a time, I do have another one clean and ironed waiting in the wings in case the one I am wearing doesn’t make it through the week. My experience has been that the children hardly notice the change, even though the aprons are different in style and color. I have also found that rotating in a third style satisfies only my need to vary my wardrobe. The children will inevitably comment on the change, essentially confirming that the shift had an awakening effect.

Resources for different aprons and considerations of styles:

When thinking about what type of apron to wear in the classroom, the kindergarten teacher may wish to bear in mind the following questions:

- *Does the fit, color, and drape affect my decision to wear an apron?*
- *Is there too much fabric?*
- *Is there too little fabric (not enough coverage)?*
- *Do I want a different apron for different activities?*

Or one for all day?

The following aprons offer an example of styles that I have worn in the classroom. All but one are easy to make, and the fourth can be purchased. All have advantages and disadvantages, which I will examine briefly.

APRON 1, figures 1 and 2

Attributed to Margret Meyerkort

I wore this pinafore-style apron every day for a few years. Almost all of the early childhood teachers in my school wore this, and were easily identified as a part of that group by parents and children. I found it comfortable, and loved the amount of coverage front and back, and the roomy pockets. I tended to wear longer, flowing skirts with this apron,

because the fullness of the pinafore accentuates the separateness of the legs when worn with skirts that are shorter than the apron. I also tended to wear the same outfit under this apron, because it covered so much of my clothing that consideration of my personal outfit was mostly functional. This apron has a definite sheath or mantle quality to it – the very act of donning it in the morning could be transformational.

It is fairly easy to make, although the pattern must be tailored individually to customize the shoulder width, skirt length, and pocket placement. This apron should be made from a lighter fabric to give it a soft drape, and therefore requires careful laundering, ironing, and hanging. The amount of fabric in this apron can offer children a wonderful place to nestle or hide; however, crawling and other circle maneuvers can be difficult.



Figure 1



Figure 2

APRON 2, figures 3 and 4

Simplicity pattern # 5201

This pattern for this comfortable pinafore-style apron can be found in pattern books or ordered online at <http://simplicity.com>. The pattern includes two different lengths and three different sizes, which run big. It is easy to make and has wonderful pleated pockets. As can be seen in figure 4, the back wraps completely around, providing

excellent coverage. Children love to hide inside the folds of this apron. The form it presents is archetypal and whole, with no waist to bisect or straps to crisscross. There is a lot of fabric, at least in the longer version, and the apron can be hot and somewhat bulky. A lighter weight cotton or linen mixed with a bit of rayon will give this apron the durability it needs, as well as a bit of drape. Again, sometimes I found it tricky to crawl in this apron.



Figure 3



Figure 4

APRON 3, figures 5 and 6

I found this apron in an antique market, and easily traced its pattern on a large piece of craft paper. There are no seams and no fastenings. The straps could be made from wide grosgrain ribbon, making it even easier to sew. I made a few of these – one from an old white linen sheet with a simple

embroidered edge, and one from a wonderful 100% cotton reversible fabric that gave me two aprons (with no pockets) in one. This apron is extremely comfortable. The straps do not tug on the back of your neck, as do many halter styles, and it is lightweight and easy to launder and iron. Movement is not a problem in this apron.



Figure 5



Figure 6

The shoulder straps are not adjustable (figure 6) and therefore must be custom measured. They criss-cross in back, which is a bold form, and for this reason you might choose a color for this apron that does not contrast greatly with the clothes you intend to wear underneath. Although this apron does not cover your back, it does provide a whole image from the front, with no bisecting waist.

APRON 4, figures 7 and 8
Styal Mill, England

I wore this pinafore-style apron very frequently. It is comfortable, practical, and comes in three different sizes, which tend to run big. It is easily dyed, and extremely durable. It stands up very well

to washing and needs only light ironing. Although there is a waist, the overall image is one of softness and wholeness. There are no straps tugging at your neck (figure 8), and very good coverage in the back. This apron offers the coverage of Apron 1 and 2, combined with the lightness and ease of Apron 3.

This apron comes from Styal Mill, England, a beautiful National Trust Site and working water-powered textile mill from the eighteenth century. The apron is made, worn, and sold at Styal Mill, and proceeds from the sale of the aprons go to the Mill. In the United States, a weaver and clothing designer named Candiss Cole sells the aprons. They may be purchased directly from her by emailing her at candiss@candisscole.com.

The first three aprons listed here can be easily



Figure 7



Figure 8

made. Although “figuring out” our own aprons may be an important process in itself, I am happy to offer assistance with ideas, measurements, yardage, or patterns. Please email me at annie.tjm@gmail.com.

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Extended Day in the Schools

Sharing Challenges, Raising Questions

Andrea Gambardella

Twenty-four teachers from ten schools and Sunbridge College gathered at the Kimberton Waldorf School for a day-long meeting on April 14, 2007. Schools represented were: Sheltering Arms Family Center, Acorn Hill, Baltimore Waldorf, Green Meadow Waldorf, Kimberton Waldorf, Susquehanna Waldorf, Richmond Waldorf, Shining Mountain Waldorf, Rudolf Steiner School/NYC, Garden City Waldorf, and Sunbridge College. Many of the teachers were working in the extended-day programs in the schools.

After introductions, participants divided into four topic groups: *Sleep and rest time*, *Programs in schools*, *Teacher and care provider*, and *Facets of care*. Following lunch and a meeting of the full-member schools, a final large group conversation offered reports from the topic groups. Presenters were teachers in the schools and programs: Lisa Gromicko, Lisa Miccio, Monika Gallardo, and Nancy Brown.

The main issues identified are the design of the programs, who are the care providers, and the financial issues of total cost of care.

The picture arose within the group plenum that many schools are designing programs using a fragmented concept, with different components morning and afternoon that are unrelated to each other. This fragmented approach has generated many issues that perpetuate social and program challenges between the lead teachers in the mornings and the care providers. It is evident there are relationship issues of collegueship, mutual respect, and acknowledgement. Some programs are designed by lead teachers but carried out by others, with restrictions on the nature of parent interactions with the care provider. There is a call to build the imagination for the whole day of the child, with some children only attending in the morning.

There was interest expressed in a training program focused on the young child's extended-day needs. Many schools rely on individuals who are untrained in Waldorf education or child development or care, and yet bring good intuitions and demonstrate interest in learning more in order

to serve the child in the whole of her day. Among the meeting group there is an interest in continuing this topic and including study of Steiner's indications for the young child in light of these extended-day programs.

Lisa Gromicko of Shining Mountain Waldorf School gave a topic presentation on sleep, drawing from Steiner and other research that offers practical indications for program design. Nancy Brown (Sheltering Arms) presented a wonderful history of childcare in America, putting these programs and attitudes into a context that also offered indications for program design. These kinds of research presentations, and *Gateways* articles such as Susan Howard's "The Essentials of Waldorf Early Childhood Education," are recognized as giving substantial guidance for schools as they form programs that will serve their communities. Indications for how to serve the young child will lead to how best prepare the adult for this work.

The finance design of the program is a big issue that concerns who the care providers are and how the program is formed. Most care providers are paid hourly and are part-time. Many schools create family groups including children older than seven out of financial need, rather than out of thought-filled intention. There is often an evident lack of commitment by the school for this program in the way finances are allocated, lack of support for staff, and the lack of a general attitude of regard.

In another vein are schools actively taking up the question and committing to all-day rhythms, with lead teachers taking on innovative ways to either extend their time with the children or create a rhythm that cooperates and smoothly transitions the children from morning to afternoon care. In the Mid-Atlantic region, Mountain Laurel School and Green Meadow Waldorf School are two examples. There are also some schools that have full-time, dedicated staff to direct and provide care that grounds the program and offers much-needed continuity. The author hopes these and other schools will send reports to *Gateways* of their successes and challenges as they try to work with a

healthy day for the child.

The schools with teachers present represent many Waldorf schools in acknowledging the need families have for care of their children after 12:00 or 3:00. There is still some wrestling in faculty groups around the appropriateness of providing care in the schools and encouraging families to keep children at home in the afternoons. For many schools it is an existential question, with enrollment declining when only a morning is offered. Other questions schools are asking are whether a full-day care program belongs in the schools; should these be free-standing programs as the requests for taking younger and younger children arise; how can a faculty and board hold and carry the health of an N-12 school

and build at the foundation for more care for the youngest children; and how can a program build health rather than contribute to exhaustion in the children?

For each school, the questions and concerns raised are somewhat individual to each circumstance. Yet, they all point to the future of Waldorf education, its continued relevance in a complex culture, and how to see with open eyes what the children are asking of us in this new century.

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WECAN Regional Rep/Board Retreat

Nancy Blanning

The inaugural meeting of WECAN representatives from the North American regions took place at the Lake Champlain Waldorf School in Shelbourne, Vermont, August 16–19. This gathering was funded by grants from the Waldorf Schools Fund and Waldorf Educational Foundation. Representatives were graciously and efficiently supported in all ways by the organization of Sueanne Campbell of the Lake Champlain Waldorf School, and housed in bed-and-breakfasts in the beautiful New England landscape. This gave refreshment to the long days of study and intense discussion of regional issues. The group also reviewed the new tasks WECAN has assumed, in collaboration with AWSNA, to become the oversight body for all Waldorf early childhood programs, even for AWSNA member schools. The first year of this process has shown areas needing attention and revision for the WECAN membership process to be supportive and as easy as possible for members. The diversity of early childhood programs – home, stand-alone preschool/kindergarten, birth-to-three, as well as full school classrooms – calls for flexibility to embrace each one fairly and appropriately.

WECAN also has a unique origin. It began as an association of individuals rather than programs. This special, noninstitutional character is one WECAN wants to honor and preserve as well. WECAN is striving to become more active

on regional levels to be aware and supportive of the unique character and needs of the different geographic areas. A fundamental question now arising within this impulse is how WECAN's members can have more participation in the forming and shaping of programs, policies, and activities. All these questions created a very full agenda for the group of thirteen participants.

Time was taken to “take the pulse” of the movement. Common observations and concerns were echoed by this group as were made in the spring WECAN Board meeting last April, and throughout meetings this last spring in the various regions. Regarding the children, teachers remark:

- *The children are more sensitive, more individualized at earlier ages, perhaps more intellectually awake but less secure in the foundational senses than in years past.*
- *More children are entering the programs with diagnoses or demonstrate behaviors suggesting something in the remedial spectrum.*
- *Children are overstimulated by everything in their environment, even without media. With media influence, it is more severe.*
- *Children are less able to play and lack imagination.*
- *The social “we” of the group is harder to create.*
- *Children hunger for and respond positively to “real” work and activities in the kindergarten environment.*

The children respond well in Waldorf programs when their hunger for authentic life is fed.

Regarding parents, it was observed:

- *Parents are longing for direction and support, but the day of the teacher as “authority” toward the parents has passed. The gesture of “parents as partners” is what is now appropriate.*
- *Parents are fearful for their children’s safety. They used to be concerned that their Waldorf children were being too protected from the “real” world. Now the fear of physical, social, or psychological injury or challenge is dominant.*
- *Tuitions grow higher and higher. Our consumer society views even Waldorf education as a “product.” Parents can be demanding in their expectations.*
- *Effective communication with parents is essential and not easy to achieve. Helping parents to understand and experience the premises and practices of Waldorf early childhood is paramount.*
- *Through the parent-and-tot programs, parents are literally entering the classrooms in a new way. This behooves teachers of traditional early childhood classes to find ways to involve and engage the parents in a satisfying way at these levels as well.*

Looking to ourselves as teachers:

- *Teachers are asking for new tools and insights to help meet the “new” children entering our classrooms.*
- *Teachers are feeling pressure from parents to do things with visible results or to include many activities in each morning. This can cause the teacher to feel stressed and rushed. The leisure of the morning and full opportunity for free play is sometimes sacrificed or compromised.*
- *Financial issues too often influence enrollment numbers in schools. Teachers across the continent observe that smaller groups seem healthier for today’s children. But economic concerns often insist that a teacher accept a group larger than what he or she feels is healthy.*
- *Licensing and legal regulations are extending their influence and requirements further and further into what we are able to do with the children.*
- *Individual teachers report conflicts and strain with colleagues. The social question appears to be our big challenge.*
- *Teacher fatigue remains a concern. Some teachers are leaving schools to create smaller programs where*

the institutional demands are less. Being teacher, record keeper, committee member, and counselor/social worker with families asks for a great deal.

Within the care and education of the child from birth to seven, we now see many approaches — Birth-to-three (RIE/Pikler included in Waldorf programs), LifeWays, home programs, parent-tot classes, nursery/preschool/kindergarten classes within one school, mixed-age kindergarten classes, daycare, and extended care, to name some. A question standing behind all of the above-listed observations is how can all of these be integrated to create a continuously woven fabric for the child’s experience, not a series of fragmented bits?

A great deal of discussion time was also devoted to looking to the WECAN membership categories and processes for attaining membership. Each early childhood program, even those in full-member AWSNA schools, needs to now complete a self-study and have a site visit to affirm full member status. This has seemed redundant for schools that have already undergone an AWSNA accreditation. It has also created a financial and practical hardship for small and home programs. Streamlining of forms and elimination of redundant questions was a practical result of the meeting. A checklist was also devised to make clear the steps for membership application and the order in which these should occur. These should make the application process much easier to step through.

Higher levels of dues for membership categories have proved a hardship for smaller and home programs. Recommendation for dues adjustment was formulated and approved by the WECAN Board. Ways to make site visits financially possible and practical for all programs will also be put into place. Specific details will come in WECAN mailings. For schools, AWSNA visiting teams are asked to include an early childhood representative to satisfy site visit requirements in an efficient and economical way.

In the midst of recognizing problems, it was also gratifying to see a most positive result of regional activity this past year, the regional meetings. These are a consciously designated time for meeting, study, discussion, and sharing among teachers in each regional area. These meetings seemed to satisfy a hunger for contact, and each region has affirmed

that such meetings will happen once, if not twice, each school year. Several are already on the calendar. Where there are large distances separating programs, there is discussion about having subregional gatherings rather than only one central one, to shorten travel distances and make attending more feasible.

Each morning of the retreat began with study of the College of Teachers' Imagination. This imagination helps us to picture our relationship with the spiritual hierarchies and how our interaction with them can help us form a social/spiritual vessel for our work. The participants experienced that this imagination is appropriate for any group, no matter how small, that wants to strengthen its relationship with the spiritual sources of guidance and renewal of Waldorf education. The importance of cultivating a meditative component in this work was deeply experienced by all present. The booklet *Spiritual Insights*, one of the WECAN "Little Series," offers additional verses and meditations from Rudolf Steiner that

can be a rich source for cultivating this part of our teaching practice. This compilation was created as a gift to early childhood educators by Dr. Helmut von Kugelgen, a great friend to Waldorf early childhood education.

The retreat ended with this imagination as well. The participants left feeling renewed and invigorated for the regional work, each affirming her commitment to continue for the next year. The group, hopefully with all regional representatives and board members able to attend, plans to meet again after the International Conference next August in Wilton, New Hampshire.

Nancy Blanning has taught within Waldorf education for twenty-five years as a lead kindergarten teacher and presently serves as a therapeutic and remedial teacher at the Denver Waldorf School. Her special focus is on developing movement enrichment for young children. She is a member of the WECAN Board.

Two Streams Entwined ***Striving to Understand the Work of Emmi Pikler and Magda Gerber in Relation to Waldorf Education***

Trice Atchison, with Susan Weber

We thus see that man accomplishes a momentous thing during the first three years of his life. He is working on himself in the spirit of the highest wisdom . . . This happens because the human soul and entire being are, during the first years of earthly life, in much closer connection with the spiritual worlds . . . Man works on himself by means of a wisdom . . . mightier and more comprehensive than any conscious wisdom of later years.

Rudolf Steiner

As a matter of principle, we refrain from teaching skills and activities which under suitable conditions will evolve through the child's own initiative and independent activity . . . While learning . . . to turn on the belly, to roll, to creep, sit, stand and walk, [the baby] is not only learning those movements but also how to learn. He learns something on his own, to be interested, to try out, to experiment . . . He comes to

know the joy and satisfaction which is derived from this success.

Emmi Pikler

The newborn baby . . . is between heaven and earth, not quite here yet . . . Trust that she will develop in her own time, rhythm and manner. After all, who knows better how to be a baby than a baby?

Magda Gerber

Rudolf Steiner, Emmi Pikler, and Magda Gerber all recognized in babies and toddlers the awe-inspiring process of growth and development that takes place during the first three years of life. During this brief time, the child's organs are still forming and she learns to roll, sit up, crawl, stand, walk, speak, and think. She is becoming herself.

Steiner, with his spiritual insights that formed the basis of Waldorf education, saw in this process

the formative Christ forces at work – forces that are more active and evident during this time of life than at any other. Pikler, the Hungarian pediatrician who founded the remarkable Budapest orphanage Loczy, and Gerber, who brought Pikler’s wisdom to the U.S. through Resources for Infant Educators (RIE), also saw this process as clear evidence of an innate wisdom at work. All three spoke out against prevailing childcare practices that failed to respect this profound process by interfering with, rushing, or thwarting development or by neglecting the child’s basic needs for connection and trust.

Early childhood educators who have been exploring these themes met this summer in Hancock, New Hampshire to identify topics for contributions to a publication on the first three years of life. The goal is to shed light on ways in which these streams overlap, intersect, and diverge. The proposed contributions are intended not as a definitive work, but rather as a continuing conversation on these important, and sometimes challenging, topics.

The intention is to contribute to the publishing of a book to be available in time for the International Waldorf Early Childhood Teachers’ Conference in Wilton, New Hampshire, August 4 – 8, 2008. The conference is an ideal forum for disseminating birth-to-three work and for elucidating ways in which educators can consider integration of Pikler/RIE work in Waldorf settings.

As Waldorf early childhood teachers explore the insights of RIE and of Emmi Pikler, many questions arise that have the possibility to send us more deeply into learning from our own observations and from our deeper study of the anthroposophical picture of the incarnating human being. At this July gathering, the full group worked hard to clarify questions and to look at contributions that could be made to further our work with the very young child. A lively discussion engendered the following proposed topics for publication:

What Is All the Talking About? Ute Strub of the Emmi Pikler Haus in Germany, a foster care home for neglected and abused children, described a Waldorf teacher who had come to observe care at the home. Like many others, she wished to know why the caregiver spoke to the baby about caregiving activities, since the Waldorf approach uses fewer words with young children. At the end of her

observations, the teacher said that she had come full circle in answering her own question as she grasped the value of the connection created through this purposeful, respectful, and soothing manner of speaking. A future article will elaborate on the reasons for, and manner of, verbally engaging with young children during caregiving activities such as bathing, feeding, and diapering.

Exquisite Play. Another topic is the importance of teachers and caregivers serving as facilitators of healthful play. Related to this idea is the phenomenon of more and more young children being diagnosed with ADD and other disorders and, thus, beginning formal remedial work earlier and earlier. Related, also, is the growing incidence of young children who don’t know how to play. How can facilitating play serve as an effective way to meet the child with various challenges, and promote general healthy development in all children, thus obviating and eliminating the need for premature therapeutic intervention?

Independent or Alone? Hearsay stories of questionable practices in the care of young children – attributed to the incorrect usage of Pikler/RIE principles within Waldorf settings – beg for further description of the true aims of the Pikler/RIE approach. There is a need for a greater understanding of the difference between inappropriately pushing the child toward independence and what Pikler and Gerber intended in their caregiving model: sharing in the child’s joy of movement and self-mastery, which means remaining aware and respectful. Celebrating the development of independence is not the same as leaving the child alone or unassisted. We recalled the admonition of Anna Tardos, Emmi Pikler’s daughter and director of the Pikler Institute: the young child needs to become independent out of joy, not out of duty, and it is the responsibility of the adult to warmly and intimately accompany the child on this journey to independence.

Similarities and Differences between Waldorf Education and RIE. Is Waldorf education open enough to allow other streams of wisdom in? How can the two worlds be bridged? An article outlining what practitioners of Waldorf education and RIE have observed in their work would be helpful – noting where Waldorf education and RIE meld, and how they differ. Ute Strub mentioned that Anna

Tardos specifically stated that we need to explore the differences between Waldorf education and RIE, and the reasons why they differ. Similarities, while important, can be recognized as sympathy forces that make us comfortable; dissimilarities, as antipathy forces, might ultimately bring more knowledge.

The Spiritual Underpinnings of Rudolf Steiner and Emmi Pikler. An exploration of what stands behind the views of Pikler/RIE and Steiner would further elucidate this work. Pikler came out of a humanistic and observational/scientific framework. She carefully observed children, and came to conclusions about what the infant/toddler does and does not need that support Steiner's spiritual-scientific observations. Anna Tardos has described Pikler as a seer who could, through observing children and their parents, tell what was happening with them now and project what would happen in the future. Pikler described, for example, one mother at the beach who allowed her young children to play while she was engaged in another activity nearby, remaining aware of the children and available to them when they needed her, versus another mother absorbed in her own business and unavailable to her children while they played. The first mother embodied the healthy Pikler/RIE approach; the second did not.

According to Ute Strub, the Pikler approach doesn't deny spirituality, but doesn't articulate it or outwardly work from it. Pikler seems to have recognized the special forces at work during the first three years, although she didn't name them as the Christ forces. She felt it supremely important not to interfere with this profound process, and so saw that the best approach was to allow the forces do their work by getting out of the way and remaining mindful not to interfere, while simultaneously remaining attentive and ready to respond.

Reverence Observed. Pikler herself gave no overt statements about a spiritual reality, but a strong sense of reverence was and is conveyed through deeds, through the caregiving ritual, and the relationship between adult and child. One research group member, when observing at the Pikler Institute, saw a nurse tenderly oiling all the creases of a baby's arms and legs. Anna Tardos said, "Look, she is anointing the child in the way Mary Magdalene anointed Jesus." Another member similarly experienced a sense of the sacred

while watching a Pikler Institute pediatrician work with a seriously developmentally delayed sixteen-month-old. Every day the child needed his spastic limbs moved. The pediatrician sang, spoke, and otherwise engaged with the child in such a loving and healing manner that the observer felt that she was witnessing spiritual substance, the I-thou relationship, in action.

Transformation of the Adult's Gesture toward the Child from Birth to Age Seven. A year's research conducted by staff working with the older children (four- to six-year-olds) at the Pikler Institute included observation, looking at the daily records of caregivers and studying Pikler's writings, with the intention of recognizing what the evolving gesture of the adult toward the children needed to be. This presentation at the April 2007 international symposium prompted the idea of an article on Waldorf early care that would look at this question from the other side: what inner transformation is needed by a Waldorf early childhood teacher in his or her gesture when the care of children in the first three years (rather than from age three to seven) is taken up? This question could be viewed through various lenses – for example, in terms of movement, sensory awareness, rhythm, touch, imitation, and so on.

Ute cautioned that many older children today haven't had a Pikler/RIE experience as a baby and may need to experience what they haven't had in order to regain confidence and mastery; therefore in certain cases the nursery or kindergarten teacher may need to bring in elements considered appropriate only for younger children. In these cases, the caregiver would be conscious of what she was doing and the reasons for doing it, rather than unwittingly neglecting to adjust her behavior to the changing needs of a child at a different stage as new soul, spiritual, and physical qualities emerge.

Mixed Ages or Developmental Stages? The Emmi Pikler Haus in Germany groups children by developmental stage. Other educators and childcare providers advocate mixed-age settings with a wider range of ages as being more familial and natural. A look at the different explanations of these groupings and real-life scenarios is another topic for future consideration.

Fragmented Care: Is There a Better Way? Great care is taken in Waldorf grades programs to

provide children with the continuity of the class teacher through grade eight; this is in contrast to the tendency within Waldorf early childhood settings for the young child (who arguably needs greater continuity of care and a stronger sense of security) to experience several different teachers from parent-toddler to nursery to kindergarten to lunch/nap to aftercare. Helle Heckmann, of the noted Waldorf early childhood center Nøkken in Denmark, for example, thinks that the kindergarten children should be with their teacher through lunchtime. Helle asks, “Why in North America do we experience that the teacher does not have the will forces to be with the child through lunch?”

The Real Work May Be in the Real Work. The question was asked, “Why are the kindergarten lead teachers not doing more of the physical/practical work of the classroom?” Many in the group observed that, for them, it is the daily maintenance and physical work – whether in their homes or caregiving settings – that is the most rejuvenating and, arguably, the most necessary for young children today to witness. Also, it may be a confusing message for the children for the division to be so wide that the lead teacher appears to be much like the “queen” who leads the creative activities and presides over the class, while the assistant may be viewed almost like a servant who quietly sweeps and scrubs in the background. Some members of the group felt that a more shared responsibility for these different types of activities may be healthier for the adults and children. This is another interesting area for further exploration.

Other potential topics include:

Small Acts of Grace: How Tender Caregiving and Supporting Gross Motor Movement can Promote Healing in Young Children.

Time Together, Time Apart: How Bringing Deep Attention to Caregiving and Allowing for Breathing Space between Caregiver and Child Supports Both Bonding and Freedom.

Out-of-home Care at Earlier Ages: What is Truly Worthy of the Child and Family in Terms of Providing Warmth, Nurturance and Security?

Are We Meeting Their Needs? Sensitivity to the

Younger Two-year-old’s Emerging Presence in Traditional Waldorf Nursery Settings.

A Closer Look at Toddler Conflict: How Waldorf and Pikler or RIE-based Approaches Can Help Teachers and Parents Effectively Respond to Toddler Conflicts in a Parent-Toddler Setting.

Seeing with New Eyes: A Look at How Careful Observation of Children Can Help Parents and Caregivers Meet their Needs With Greater Sensitivity and Respect.

In Support of Motherhood: How to Ease the Path of Parenting for Mothers Experiencing Postpartum Depression.

Joyful Beginnings: A Description of One Existing Approach to Infant/Parent Work, Incorporating Waldorf, Pikler, and RIE insights.

The research group looks forward to exploring these and other topics.

Trice Atchison teaches in the Early Childhood program at the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School in Massachusetts. Susan Weber biosSusan Weber, one of the founding circle of Sophia’s Hearth Family Center in Keene, was invited to present the work of Sophia’s Hearth Family Center at the Pikler Institute’s 60th anniversary symposium in Budapest in April 2007.

FLY ON THE WALL

Two five-year-old girls:

“She hit him.”

“No I didn’t. I was out of my mind.”

“Then where were you?”

Pointing to stomach:

“Cause I wasn’t thinking.”

Casa Emmi Pikler

A Children's Garden in the Andes Mountains of Ecuador

Joyce Gallardo

When I arrived at the big wrought-iron gates of Casa Emmi Pikler one sunny morning in July, parents were arriving with their children. The petals of rose-colored bougainvilleas climbing in a welcoming arch over the porch of the house fluttered like butterflies in the soft morning breeze. There was a flurry of greetings – *buenos dias!* – to teachers and hugs and *hasta luego!* to mama and papa, as the patio came alive with the shouts and laughter of the children going off to the various play spaces with their caregivers.

A flower-decked path cut into a carpet of green grass to the right of the house led to the gate of a delightful, magical garden, a peaceful haven for children, protected by a high brick wall along which grew tall eucalyptus trees. Trees laden with fruits shaded the play areas and the many fragrant flower beds provided palettes of color against the backdrop of a carpet of green – all offering a feast for the senses. Hundreds of white butterflies fluttered near the vegetable garden where the gardener was composting the soil from a large compost pile. In the distance the deep purple peaks of the Andes soared silently towards the blue vault of the heavens. And this was just a few blocks from the hustle and bustle of the center of town.

Katharina Becker is the co-founder of Casa Emmi Pikler. She told me that she first started a group for parents and children one and a half to two and a half years old in her home in April 2001 with three children. In February, 2002, Casa Emmi Pikler was inaugurated.

Katharina found a site that she transformed into a special garden for children, where they could spend most of their time outdoors in the year-round temperate (averaging 65 to 80 degrees) climate of the town of Tumbaco. It is large (3,000 square meters), with plenty of room to create play spaces, and it is close to the center of town. Today seventy children from four months to six years old are enrolled at Casa Emmi Pikler.

Katharina facilitates the parent-child groups and is the director of Casa Emmi Pikler, which receives its inspiration from the insights of the Hungarian

pediatrician Emmi Pikler, for whom it is named. The spaces that had been created for the different age groups of children are divided by low child-sized fences and gates made of *carrizo*, a reed-grass that grows in Ecuador. The fences and gates have the appearance of just “growing” out of the ground! In the two-and-a-half- to three-and-a-half-year-old group, several straw mats, called *esteras* are laid out on the grass with toys on them. There is a climbing ladder, several wooden boxes, a hammock seat and some large curved pieces of tree trunks for climbing. A beautiful playhouse structure constructed of wood and other natural materials, with wide spiral stairs topped by a red-tiled roof and a fenced platform, is in the middle of this area. The platform provides a large shady space underneath for the table and small stools, as well as a space for diapering.

The caregiver receives the children individually as they arrive by applying a natural bug repellent specially made by Katharina of lavender, cloves, lemon balm, lemongrass, aromatic eucalyptus and sunflower oil to their tender, exposed skin. Her touch is light and delicate and she gives each child her undivided attention as she explains what she is doing in a soft voice meant just for his ears.

Adjoining this space is the parent-child space. Mothers arrive with their one- and two-year-olds at 10 AM and Katharina is there to greet them. The mothers soon stretch out comfortably on the grass in the warm sunshine to observe their children playing with big colored beach balls, small wicker balls, large wicker baskets, and with the water in the small swimming pool. Some children climb on the wooden rungs of small climbing structures and in and out of low wooden boxes like the ones at Loczy in Budapest.

Katharina says that “the snack is an offering, not an obligation.” A food tray is brought to a small table in the shade of a tree with little stools scaled to the size of the children, and they are invited to come. They come quickly to eat the slices of fresh fruit and crackers, brought by the parents. It is a peaceful, quiet snack time. Soon it is time to go home. At the gate, warm goodbye hugs are

exchanged with Katharina. *Adios, hasta manana!*
Good-bye until tomorrow!

Respect for the autonomous motor development and independent movement of the child, as well as free play without direct interference from the adult, are among the key principles of the Pikler work. Emmi Pikler felt that the child's very individuality and experience of competence arise out of self-initiated independent movement and that the proper attitude of the adult is of paramount importance to the child's development. These are the cornerstones of the work with the children at Casa Emmi Pikler.

Casa Emmi Pikler is open from 8 AM to 1 PM five days a week. Various services are offered to children and families: workshops for pregnant mothers, home visits to families with newborns, and weekly reunions with parents on questions of child-rearing and development. They also offer national and international student internships. Outreach and dissemination of information about the Pikler work are important components of Casa Emmi Pikler.

St. Martin festivals and the Advent Garden celebrations are enthusiastically received by the children and their parents. Katharina is also striving to learn more in depth about the festivals native to Ecuador. She celebrates the summer solstice festival, called *Inti Raymi*, an important festival for the indigenous peoples in Ecuador, with the families at Casa Emmi Pikler, amidst music and dance. The children bring fruits to offer and seeds to plant in the vegetable garden.

Story time happens every day at noon for the older children. "The children come only if they want to," Esteban told me. Esteban is the only male caregiver here. His daughter attends Casa Emmi Pikler. His group is the largest one there, with seventeen kindergarten-age children. The kindergarten space is the largest by far and its only boundaries are natural ones – the pool, the brick wall, a thicket which provides a natural tunnel for play, a grove of eucalyptus trees where there are tall stumps for climbing, and a house made of *carrizo* with a curtained doorway.

Three children were sitting on a four-foot-high stump. One had a doll in her arms. Two boys were daring each other to jump off the stump onto the ground. It was the girl who jumped off first and ran to the natural tunnel to hide. Other children were

climbing and hanging by their legs from a jungle gym. They were all completely absorbed in their play and hardly noticed me observing. The grove of trees offered a welcoming shade from the sun overhead and the pungent smell of eucalyptus wafted through the air on currents of wind scurrying through the garden.

In the house at Casa Emmi Pikler, there are three small rooms with toys and Montessori materials which the children can use whenever they wish. The rooms were orderly, with cubbies and open shelves easily accessible to the children. A few children were playing in one of the rooms when I entered. There were two adults working in the kitchen preparing the snacks. The children played uninterrupted, except for snack time, until noon, when most of them went to hear the story Esteban would tell near the pool. Esteban had been sitting a little distance from the children, observing them while they played. He was there for them, but I did not see one child run over to "tattletale" on someone or to ask for assistance. The children were deeply involved in their play and I saw no conflicts arise. The only near-conflict I observed in the whole garden was in the one-and-a-half- to three-and-a-half-year-old group, where one child was pouring water from a small bowl on the heads of several other children. Their caregiver did not intervene right away and the children were complaining (one was crying). They did not like having water poured over their heads. The caregiver, who was new, did not intervene soon enough.

The parents of Casa Emmi Pikler said that they were working closely with Katharina to help promote respectful caregiving by disseminating information to local child care centers, known as *guarderías de niños* in Ecuador, where the caregivers were interested in knowing more about the insights of Emmi Pikler and how to apply them in their work with children. Katharina told us that Casa Emmi Pikler has plans to develop a training program in the near future for teachers, caregivers and parents from abroad who are interested in coming to learn more about what they do in Ecuador. There would also be an opportunity to work as an intern side-by-side with the caregivers at Casa Emmi Pikler, with Katharina as mentor.

I was pleased that Katharina accepted our invitation to the festive graduation ceremony at the

Waldorf School, Centro Educativo Micael, where new collegial relationships and friendships were forged. The kindergarten and preschool teachers, as well as a class teacher, were invited to visit Casa Emmi Pikler and Katharina would recommend Centro Educativo Micael as a possible choice of schools to her parents whose children were ready to enter first grade. This is community building, consciously creating a nurturing worldwide community to support the respect and dignity of the young child.

Casa Emmi Pikler embodies the ideals of respect and dignity for the young child within an artistic

context. Through her vision and her commitment to these ideals, Katharina has created an artistic model for center-based care in Ecuador where childhood is honored out of a conscious respect for the dignity of humanity worldwide.

Joyce Gallardo is a member of WECAN'S RIE (Resources for Infant Educators)/Pikler Research group and recently completed the RIE I training. If you have any questions regarding this article, you can reach Joyce at joyceagallardo@yahoo.com. For questions regarding the training program and internship at Casa Emmi Pikler, you can reach Katharina at pohlmann@uio.satnet.net.

Waldorf Education and Teacher Training in Chengdu, China

Elisabeth Swisher

Five years ago I took a sabbatical from teaching at the Chicago Waldorf School to teach English in a Chinese public high school in the north of China. I was amazed and in awe of what I experienced there. After I had finished teaching, I traveled through China on my own, stopping in Chengdu to see the panda research center. At that time there were no Waldorf schools anywhere in China, but I thought if I came back to China I would like to teach in Chengdu. I just liked the city, the parks, and the temples. Later on, people who knew about my connection to China introduced me to Zewu Li, Li Zhang, and Harry Huang, the founders of the new Chengdu Waldorf School. I was very happy to hear about their work and decided I wanted to help them in any way I could to support Waldorf education in China.

The Chengdu Waldorf School opened its doors three years ago with about ten children in kindergarten and first grade. Thanh and Benjamin Cherry are the godparents of this beautiful school. They provided the founders with much-needed practical advice as well as inspiration. Today the school has five kindergarten classes and seven grades. It sits on a huge, beautiful piece of land with a big pond, and is surrounded by farmland. There are plans in the works to build another classroom building. The growth rate of the Chengdu Waldorf

School is about the same as in the rest of China's economy. This is a little disconcerting because Li, Zewu, and Harry are burning out fast. And without them things would deteriorate quickly. Because they needed trained teachers, they decided to start the training courses on the school premises. These courses run during school vacation in the summer as well as in October and May.

There has been tremendous interest in the training courses. The first module of the grade school training had 100 students and the kindergarten training had 50 students. Twenty prospective students had to be turned away due to lack of space. Many of the students came from Montessori backgrounds, some came from other teaching jobs, and there were several who were "just parents," who came to learn about education, especially in the kindergarten course. One student, a Montessori school mentor and advisor, told me that she always felt that there was something missing in this education, which she has finally found in Waldorf education. Other Montessori teachers in the course told me similar stories. There were students from all parts of China: from Taiwan, Hong Kong and many areas of mainland China. One of the teachers at the school who also participated in the courses was from Tibet. It was very touching to see how Waldorf education and

anthroposophical striving brought all these people together to look in the same direction and to pursue the same goals.

The first module (three five-day weeks) of the three-year grade school training course held in July 2007 was led and planned by Benjamin Cherry from Australia and Harry Huang. Ben gave wonderful lectures in the morning about the nature of the human being (the three-fold, four-fold, seven-fold, and nine-fold human being) and the essential concepts of thinking, feeling, and willing in the development of the child. The second part of the morning was dedicated to the teaching of language arts, with Zewu taking the lead in Chinese and Ben giving assignments in English. In the afternoon I taught Werbeck singing exercises, choral singing, the “mood of the fifth,” and the pentatonic flutes. This course also included five days of biography work led by Ben, and folk dancing, led by me, in the morning to wake up, get moving, get to know each other, and have fun. The days concluded with reviews, questions, and answers.

In August the third module (two six-day weeks) of the three-year kindergarten training was led and planned by Thanh Cherry (from Australia, originally from Vietnam) and by Li Zhang. Thanh gave most of the morning lectures on such themes as the Nature of the Human Being; Rhythm, Ritual and Reverence; Child Study and Child Observation; Constitutional Types; and the Four Temperaments. I gave three morning lectures on Circle Movements, the Western Festivals, and Music for the Young Child and the Mood of the Fifth. The course also included classes on hand gesture games, presentations of morning circles by the students, creating regional festivals, singing, understanding the mood of the fifth, learning how to write songs, learning how to play the pentatonic Choroi flute, and folk dancing in the morning. Yang Ting, the handwork teacher of the Chengdu school, taught knitting (beautiful flute cases and cute babies), and plant dyeing with silk and cotton gauze.

Almost none of the students had any musical education from high school or university, but they loved to sing, knew many of their folk songs by heart, and they sang them beautifully on pitch. Very few people could not hold a tune (mostly the men). But when I tried to teach some rounds or two-part songs, many could not hear certain half-tone steps

and were not able to get them right. It dawned on me that the Chinese still live mainly in their pentatonic music (which does not contain half-tone steps), even though they know and love lots of Western songs, such as “Doe, a Deer. . .”, and that they have yet to complete this step into another consciousness through music and Anthroposophy.

Classical music, especially piano and violin, is much loved and some children of well-meaning, music-loving parents get exposed to lessons (and drills) at a very early age, usually around four years old. Achievement and money are keys to success, and materialism has taken hold of most Chinese people, sometimes even more strongly than in the U.S., which I was very surprised to discover.

The students were incredibly appreciative, loving, enthusiastic, and eager to do well, to shine, and to learn. They took in everything they learned without seeming to get tired, asked wonderful questions, and were very respectful to their teachers. They loved their pentatonic flutes and were very happy about the fact that they now understood more about music.

The challenge of teaching Waldorf education in China is not so much the language (we had fabulous translators), but the fact that the basic books by Rudolf Steiner have not been translated yet. Therefore, one has to present all the ideas of Anthroposophy that are relevant to Waldorf education in the class lectures. This also precludes the students doing independent reading of Steiner texts. We had to say many times: “You don’t have to *believe* what we are saying. You have to live with it, ponder it, and work with it to find out if the things we are telling you, which come from Rudolf Steiner’s insights, ring true to you. You should not just believe us, you have to give it a try, explore and feel if this is right out of your own experience.”

Another delicate fact is that some people are afraid of having anything to do with religion due to their Communist education. Christianity especially sounds suspicious to many of them, even though almost all of China celebrates Christmas for the gift giving and commercial fun, without really knowing what it is all about.

As you probably know, China has another big problem: the one-child family and the fact that many families still prefer boys over girls. The girls are sometimes given away for adoption so the parents

can try for a boy again. The boys then are raised by two parents, often both of them working all day, and four grandparents who all spoil them rotten into “little emperors.” The phenomenon has arisen that boys are especially disrespectful to their mothers: swearing at and hitting them, and not listening to them at all. The mothers are desperate. The teachers have a hard time with the boys, because their social skills are nonexistent. I was asked to attend two parent evenings where the parents were given the opportunity to ask questions, and many of these questions dealt with this topic.

The Chinese have been through many changes, and I hope that with the start of the Waldorf school and the teacher training a balance to the materialistic view can be brought to this part of the world. The Waldorf movement in China not only needs teacher training instructors, but also people who can mentor new kindergartens, schools, kindergarten teachers, and grade school teachers on a regular basis.

If you would like to help, please write to: Li Zhang at waldorfchina@126.com, or Harry Wong at waldorfd@126.com, or Thanh Cherry at thanh@hinet.net.au.

Elisabeth Swisher was born in Austria, was a Waldorf student in Stuttgart, Germany, studied music at the University of Vienna and did her Waldorf teacher training in Stuttgart. She taught music for all grades and teacher training at the Vienna and the Chicago Waldorf Schools as well as summer courses in different parts of the U.S. After a sabbatical in China she opened her own Waldorf early childhood program in Chicago in 2003. In July and August of 2007 she taught for five weeks at the Waldorf teacher training courses in Chengdu, China.



Li Zhang, Harry Wong and Zewu Li meeting in the Chengdu Waldorf School's hallway. Photo: E. Swisher

Betty Szold Krainis **Early Childhood Building Dedication**

by Christine Inglis and Michelle Kuzia

On May 17, the entire Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School community gathered to dedicate our newly renovated early childhood building to our beloved founding kindergarten teacher, Betty Szold Krainis, whose life spanned April 16, 1923 to September 19, 2002.

In 1959 Betty and her husband Bernie Krainis purchased a marvelous fifty-acre property in Great Barrington that included a Colonial-era house, cottage, and barn. Ten years later the Krainis family created the Good Food Coop with more than a hundred families, and housed it in their barn. Some of the same people interested in wholesome food were also interested in starting a Waldorf school, so in 1971 the barn in Betty's backyard was transformed into the Pumpkin Hollow School, a kindergarten, with Betty serving as teacher.

Betty was a teacher on many levels. Her colleagues learned much from her through example. She wasn't daunted by hard work, and rolled up her sleeves to do the physical work necessary to create a school, and taught us the hard task of fundraising. Second only to her family, who were dear to her, Betty loved being a kindergarten teacher. She believed deeply in Waldorf principles and saw the happy years of early childhood as optimal for developing confidence in the child. This, she knew, together with cultivating capacities of wonder, reverence, and gratitude, builds inner strength in the child.

The school soon began to outgrow itself, and so Betty, with her generous spirit, donated the land and barn, which was moved a quarter mile down the road to its present location (and now houses our school library). Not only was Betty Krainis a founding kindergarten teacher at our school from 1971 to 1988, her gift of the land and barn enabled the Pumpkin Hollow School – later renamed the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School – to really take root and flourish. For many years, the barn served as the kindergarten classroom, while the grades program grew up around it. Eventually the burgeoning early childhood program sought more space.

The current early childhood building, or North Building as it was once called, was originally built as a Waldorf high school. The building has served many purposes over the years, but for the last twelve years it has been home to our kindergarten, nursery and parent-toddler classes. Over the past two summers, a wonderful renovation took place, making the building truly functional for our young children. We now have five beautiful classrooms, each with its own kitchen and child-sized bathroom decorated with decorative tile work evocative of its name: Robin's Nest, Rose Room, Sun Room, Star Room, and Rainbow Room. Many parents, teachers, and community members were involved in this project and we wish to thank everyone who helped in creating this welcoming and nurturing new space.

Thirty-six years after that first kindergarten got started under Betty's loving guidance, we have a thriving, bustling early childhood program housed in a space that is a model for Waldorf early childhood programs everywhere. We wish to honor our founding kindergarten teacher and benefactor by dedicating this building to Betty Szold Krainis. Just as her warmth and love touched the lives of so many little children – some of whom now bring their own children to our school – we hope that this building will continue to serve as a haven for generations to come.

Mary Thienes Schunemann

October 7, 1960 - August 30, 2007

Many of you have been touched by the work of Mary Thienes Schunemann of Naturally You Can Sing Productions. She passed away quietly at home in East Troy, Wisconsin on August 30 after an intense, valiant journey with gastric cancer.

After years of being asked to record the songs she taught in several trainings, Mary took the time to create seven children's songbooks to help parents and teachers learn how to sing for and with children. Her music was not only liltingly beautiful but it was full of enthusiasm and joy. A former Waldorf kindergarten and music teacher, Mary finished her final CD one week before she died. This CD, a collection of healing songs, is called I Still Have Joy and is scheduled to be released on her birthday, October 7.

As many of you know, Mary was a dear friend and mother to my two youngest goddaughters. The girls and their daddy are beautifully surrounded by the Prairie Hill Waldorf School community and their local community. While fond memories and those habits of life (the time of day when Mary and I would often talk on the phone, or the urge to call and tell her a joke or sing a song with her) can bring tears, those who were close to Mary in life have a warm awareness of her newfound freedom and the largesse of her spirit. The greatest gift we can give to Mary is to continue singing and playing our instruments. She was, and is, a music ambassador.

Here are excerpts from Mary's eulogy by one of her longtime friends, Reverend Carol Kelly of the Christian Community. It was a privilege to serve with Carol at Mary's funeral on September 2, 2007.

– Submitted with love and respect by Cynthia Aldinger

When a tone sounds through a human voice, from where does it come? Something invisible and inaudible comes into the earthly sphere. It touches down for a moment and it leaves again. It lives.

When a song comes through a human voice we receive not only the gift of the song but we also receive something of what lives in the soul/spiritual nature of the person who sings it. There is a gesture, a signature of the human being behind the voice and it enters our deepest soul.

Mary was a wellspring of song, a fountain overflowing with such gifts. She gave her music with ceaseless generosity to all who wished for it and she even gave to some who were not yet aware that that was exactly what they "needed."

When we think of Mary we think of her outpouring radiant joy, sunlight, color, beauty, humor, outrageousness. She was always trying to make the world more beautiful. Her gesture was spontaneity, movement, flexibility. She was in love with "aliveness," seeking on earth what was a true reflection of the spirit. She took delight in all that sparkled, but also in deep velvet; she had depth of soul, and appreciated inner and outer beauty equally.

When she was a junior in high school she played the role of Maria in *The Sound of Music*. She was the "star," and perhaps the seeds were sown for her future musical career right then and there. But how DO you solve a problem like Maria?

Her quest began. She needed to go out into

the world and find herself, her mission in life. She was a bit of a gypsy, a seeker of truth, a wanderer. She traveled throughout her twenties between California, Europe, and the Middle East and back to Minnesota. She wasn't sure what to do with her life, but she was gathering experiences for the future. At twenty-six years old she returned to college and received a bachelor's degree in general studies. Then she began a massage training in California, and it was there that she met Anthroposophy – an encounter that would change the rest of her life.

In 1988 she attended Early Childhood Teacher Training at Rudolf Steiner College in Sacramento, where she discovered music and singing again! She had been lost until she found music again. She taught kindergarten at the Prairie Hill Waldorf School, the Urban Waldorf School in Milwaukee, and also in Louisville, Kentucky. Then she went for further voice training in Germany and Finland, developing a distinct, silvery tone that one would come to identify as Mary's unique and magical sound. Afterwards, she returned to Wisconsin to teach music, and reconnected with a man who was to become the love of her life, Sven Schunemann. Meanwhile, two "star children" were looking down from heaven and longing to come to these two lovely parents. There was a magnificent wedding celebrated in "queenly" style, in a manor house on Saint Bride's Bay in Wales. Baby Aurora was carried down the aisle by her godmother, Cynthia Aldinger. Another golden girl, Allegra, would appear on the scene nine months later.

Mary was a founding faculty member and longtime music teacher of the LifeWays trainings and also taught in other trainings. Dozens of people have credited Mary with the reason they now sing – some even joining choirs!

Mary gave presents and presence in abundance. She was often wrapping a wonderful scarf around one's neck or putting a bracelet on the wrist. She would find treasures and give them away. Then there was the gift of music, which will live on in all who had the privilege of working with her. For when a person teaches you a song, you have it for life. You can teach it to others, passing on the joy and the life of it in endless profusion without ever losing it. You can sing it outwardly or hear it inwardly. It is a living thing, which touches down to earth when we sing it and then returns. We can be sure that Mary will be

listening and rejoicing whenever we are singing from now on.

In one of her recent gift-giving moments, a friend received the following poem, which seems poignantly appropriate at this time:

*I fill this cup to one made up of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle nature the seeming paragon.
To whom the better elements and kindly stars have
given
A form so fair, that, like the air, 'tis less of earth than
heaven.*

*Her every tone is music's own, like those of morning
birds,
And something more than melody dwells ever in her
words.
The coinage of her heart are they, and from her lips
each flows,
As one may see the burthened bee; forth issue from the
rose.*

Our beloved rose, may our highest thoughts and love rise up to meet you. – Rev. Carol Kelly

ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER CONFERENCE, AUGUST 2 – 6, 2008

WECAN will host a world gathering of Waldorf early childhood educators on the campus of the Pine Hill and High Mowing Schools in Wilton, New Hampshire from August 2 – 6. The conference theme is Care and Education of the Child from Birth to Seven and keynote speakers will include Dr. Michaela Gloeckler from Dornach, Dr. Johanna Steegmans from Seattle/Alaska, and Dr. Renate Long-Breipohl from Australia. The conference is co-sponsored by the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education, and we expect Waldorf early childhood educators from as many as forty countries to attend.

Further details will be available in January; travel support is needed. Can your school community support someone coming from Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, South America or Africa? For further information contact the WECAN Office at info@waldorfearlychildhood.org or 845-352-1690.

Calendar of Events

Conferences, Workshops and Short Courses

Sources of Strength: Rudolf Steiner's Soul Exercises, January 25–27, February 14–17, March 14–16, 2008, in Spring Valley, NY. This course explores the power of eurythmy to bring balance and harmony into our lives. The so-called “soul exercises” are a special gift which Rudolf Steiner created for the needs of the modern age. This is a rare opportunity to learn and practice the exercises, which can give much-needed support for the life forces. Contact Michael Widmer, 845-426-3746, weekendeurythmy@gmail.com.

East Coast Waldorf Early Childhood Association Conference, February 8–10, 2008 in Spring Valley, NY. Theme: “Difficult Children: There is No Such Thing!” Keynote Speaker: Henning Koehler, author of *Working with Anxious, Nervous and Depressed Children*, and *Difficult Children: There is No Such Thing!* Henning Koehler is a curative educator and child therapist at the Janus Korczak Institute in Southern Germany. At a time when increasing numbers of children are seen as displaying behavior disorders, he encourages educators and parents to develop a spiritual-educational practice to support the incarnation of each unique child. This practice includes a deepened understanding of the development of the senses, conscious collaboration with each child's angel, and willingness to engage in one's own self-education on behalf of the child. Henning Koehler's lectures will be in German, with translation.

Conference information packets will be sent out in December to WECAN Members and last year's conference participants. Registration will take place through Sunbridge College. Enrollment is limited. For further information contact info@sunbridge.edu or call 845-425-0055 ext 10.

The Preservation of the Life Sense in the Young Child — an ECE Conference, February 15–16, 2008, at the San Francisco Center for Arts and Renewal. With Dr. Thomas Cowan, Nancy Blanning, and Suzanne Down. Contact Julie Fellom at waldorfplaygarden@yahoo.com, 415-971-4963.

West Coast Teachers Early Childhood Mini Conference, February 17–20, 2008, at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA, Keynote speaker: Michaela Gloeckler; other faculty includes anthroposophical doctors and nurses. The mini conference will focus on the anthroposophical medical aspects of the child from birth to seven with hands-on workshops. Contact Lauren Hickman at Rudolf Steiner College, 916-961-8727 ext.

117 or earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

Nurturing and Nourishing: Caring for Children, Caring for Ourselves, March 7–9, 2008 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at Milwaukee LifeWays Early Childhood Center. With Cynthia Aldinger, Mary Ruud and an anthroposophical medical practitioner. This is an open session of the Midwest LifeWays training. Learn how to apply poultices, wraps, inhalations, rubs, massages, how to care for infants and young children and how to care for ourselves. Limited enrollment. Contact Cynthia Aldinger at 405-579-0999 or ck.aldinger@sbcglobal.net.

Puppetry, Nursery Rhymes and the Development of Speech in Early Childhood, April 2–4, 2008 at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA. With Suzanne Down and Cynthia Aldinger. This is an open session of the Rudolf Steiner College LifeWays training. Limited enrollment. Contact Admissions Office, Rudolf Steiner College, 916-961-8727, admissiona@steinercollege.edu.

Ongoing Courses

Family Ways Parenting Series, September 2007–May 2008, with Lauren Hickman, Simone Demarzi and Guest Faculty. Rudolf Steiner College Parenting Series for parents, teachers and caregivers. Contact Lauren Hickman at Rudolf Steiner College, 916-961-8727 ext.117 or earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

Puppetry Arts: Juniper Tree Puppetry Events

For information on the following events, contact Suzanne Down, 1-888-688-7333 or suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com; www.junipertreepuppets.com

Healing Puppetry Workshop, February 21, 2008, Sacramento, CA. Developing the Protection Story and Story Vessels for Modern Times.

Northern California Puppetry Professional Development Tour, February 23–March 20, 2008. Teacher training, parent workshops, weekend regional courses. Contact Julie Fellom, waldorfplaygarden@yahoo.com, 415-971-4963.

Atlanta Regional ECE Puppetry Professional Development Weekend, April 19–20, 2008, Waldorf School of Atlanta. The Therapeutic Art of the Rod Puppet: Mother Earth and the Greening of Story.

Florida Regional ECE Puppetry Professional Development Weekend, Gainesville, FL. Developing Protection Stories and Story Vessels for Modern Times, a therapeutic puppetry exploration.

Banff/Calgary Regional Puppetry Weekend, May 2008, details TBA.

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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.
- *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.

Annual individual membership, which includes subscription, is \$40.
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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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