

Gateways

A Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America

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From the Editor

Stephen Spitalny

Silence is golden! Yet silence is not something highly valued by the mainstream culture. It is a rare experience in most lives these days. Just listen to the sounds of modern life all around us. We resist the experience of quiet; perhaps we even are afraid of silence. It is a common practice for a family to have their radio or TV on as long as people are home and awake, as background noise. Few people drive without the radio or CD player sounding. And one needs only to look at all the people with their headphones and earpiece cellphones to see that many, many people want to be filled with electronic sounds wherever they go.

As childcare givers and guides for parents we have great opportunities to model being comfortable with silence, actually enjoying silence—we are the example for the children and parents alike. If we want children to grow up with the capacity for their own meditative practice, we have to show them that we both value and practice silence. They imitate us, and our actions are an imprint for their later activity, like a seed. We all know that in kindergarten, in our Steiner-inspired early childhood work, we do not fill the silence with our own speaking. We allow the children to be in the quietude of their inner life as they experience the outer world, or to initiate the talking to which we respond. We don't need to intrude into their world with our speaking except when necessary. We don't chat for the sake of chatter, to fill a void. How do we help the parents to discover the importance of giving the children the gift of silence?—not only for their own sake, and for what the silence gives them, but also for their children and for the future. Can we be agents of renewing the practice and valuing of silence?

I suggest reading the July/August 2008 issue of *Ode Magazine*, which was dedicated to various aspects of silence. Here is one quotation from that issue: "What on earth is wrong with modern people that makes us bent on doing whatever we can to chase away the silence? Are we afraid of it? . . . Silence may be scary, but a lack of silence is much scarier. Those who don't seek occasional silence to make contact with their deeper core,

higher self, pure soul, Buddha nature or whatever you want to call it, become detached from God. As a yogi friend said, 'To hear the voice of God, you must be silent.' I asked why. He looked at me as if the answer were obvious. 'Because God whispers.' " (Tijn Touber, "Because God Whispers")

It is becoming a trend at *Gateways* that we have more articles than we can print. What a difference from when I first began as editor and found that gathering articles was a bit like pulling teeth. This issue finds articles from familiar writers, and some new to our pages, all giving the sense of the breadth and depth of the work with young children arising out of the inspiration of Rudolf Steiner's ideas. We also have been receiving rather large articles, and in this issue we include part two of two separate articles by Nancy Blanning and Dr. Adam Blanning. Cindy Brooks sent us two therapeutic stories she created as a wonderful example of the healing possibilities in story. Nancy Blanning offers us another therapeutic circle time, and her thinking behind it. Ruth Ker has written about another aspect of first grade readiness that deserves consideration. We've included another thoughtful article by Renate Long-Breipohl and a first-time-in-our-pages article from Jo Valens. I have always wanted this publication to be a venue for conversation about ideas and approached, a place to pose questions and get responses. In a previous issue we included an article I wrote about the Sistine Madonna painting, and it elicited a wonderful article from Nancy Poer as a response. All in all, I am very happy with this issue, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts and questions that arise from reading it. Perhaps responding to articles can become a trend?

There is a plentiful harvest of new books by WECAN to support and further inspire our work. This issue is too full for a full book review section, but several wonderful titles need mentioning, the first two published by and available through WECAN. *Creating a Home for Body, Soul and Spirit: A New Approach to Childcare* by Bernadette Raichle characterizes twenty-five years of work at Awhina Day Nursery and Kindergarten in New Zealand. The Awhina practices were developed out of an attempt at understanding the archetype of home, the essential role of the adult and the developing of the fourfold human bodies, all out of the foundations of

anthroposophy.

A Warm and Gentle Welcome: Nurturing Children from Birth to Age Three is a compilation of the work of the RIE/Pikler WECAN task group. Full of articles on the changing needs of the family and the developing child, supporting parents, and the art of caregiving, this is the fifth in the Gateways series. The reader will find this an essential addition to his or her library on the work with young children, whether in a “program” or at home.

Another book deserves mention as well. Kindergarten teacher Dzvinka Hayda has published her version of a Waldorf kindergarten birthday story entitled *Little Angel's Journey*, by Trillium Forest Press. Her simple yet beautiful pictures accompany her unique version of an old staple.

And finally I want to mention *Bio-Typing: Beyond Body Language* by Johnny Seitz, published in 2004 by iUniverse. This innovative book is a look at the biographical moment of coming into uprightiness, and how the particular method utilized at that important moment imprints the physical body and the soul of the human being. Mr. Seitz gives us a key to the code of human movement and its relationship to personality and soul by examining the various ways of attaining the vertical. A few excerpts:

The body you inhabit today works the way it does as a direct result of how you first learned to use it in response to your environment. The way you first went about these early movements reflected the way you saw yourself and your relationship to the world. This is why the act of climbing to one's feet is so critically important. The muscles you first developed created a domino-like effect that caused some muscles to develop and others to go largely unused. This pattern of discovery and development led to the evolution of which muscles were to become most available to your body, causing certain muscles to be stronger

than others. As a result, the primary postural support muscles that we initially depended upon to stand have shaped how we move for the remainder of our lives (12-13).

It all started when we opened our eyes for the first time. We found ourselves in a new body, and it was entirely up to us to figure out how to use it. First we discovered fingers and feet. Next we began to realize that these were connected to us. Then we began the quest for control over our body. The world around us [was] filled with exciting sounds and sensations that called out to us. Fairly soon, we discovered that the higher we lifted our head, the more we could see, smell and hear. In time, our crib became too small to contain our curiosity. Raising our head as high off the floor as possible became more and more of a full time preoccupation. It slowly led us to the next step: How could we get our feet under our body and bring ourselves upright over them? (15)

The effects of three different ways of attaining uprightiness and the longstanding muscle use patterns that result are the theme of this wonderful book. Johnny Seitz is not a student of Rudolf Steiner, but he has taken an in-depth look at a point in an individual's biography that Steiner pointed to as archetypal for the individual, and observed patterns of personality connected to the threefold methods of attaining uprightiness. Please let me know what you think about this. As always, *Gateways* is open for your experiences, observations, and research, as well as your comments and questions.

Stephen Spitalny
Gateways editor
Santa Cruz, California

Reading the Book of Nature

Science Education in the Kindergarten

Jo Valens

There will come with the greater love of science greater love to one another. We cannot see how impartially Nature gives of her riches to all without loving all, and helping all.

—Maria Mitchell, nineteenth century astronomer

I have just been out in the woods, standing still and waiting for the birds to come back again after my approach initially disturbed them. The effort of patience relaxes into a satisfied waiting. My eyes are open, I feel the cool, wet air. Then, there it is! The fluttering wings of the chickadee—I cannot see the bird, but I have learned to distinguish that sound. When, how, where did I learn that? Nobody told me and I didn't read about it. I've learned this information over time; it's not just a thinking-knowing but a body-knowing and, as such, I feel I can claim it as my own. When one can experience such a thing, one needs very little else except, perhaps, a hot cup of tea to go home to. When Nature reveals herself to you, it fills you up. Who needs greater entertainment? As a teacher of young children, I wish to offer an education that will foster this ability to "read the Book of Nature." This, as I see it, is the essence of scientific inquiry. How can we teach this kind of "reading" in an appropriate way to the kindergarten children?

Men love to wonder, and that is the seed of our science.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Cultivating a sense of wonder is of great importance. Wonder is, of course, most natural to a child, but this inherent capacity can be dulled or even put to sleep by too many pre-digested facts and concepts. Every concept is a judgment, and although at times concepts may enhance our perceptions, they also very often can stand in the way of perception. When we perceive through the lens of concepts, the perception is not free, for it adjusts to fit the concept and we do not see what is really there before our eyes.

I've seen young children come to school with enormous amounts of facts and figures, passed on

by well-intentioned adults, about solar systems, digestive systems and all sorts of phenomena in between. I think of this as "un-earned knowledge," gained without effort on the child's part. No patience was practiced, no willingness to not-know, no turning over of stones. I have noticed that this kind of information can lead to contentious social interactions in which children hoard their facts, lording them over each other and arguing about who knows more first. And yet this contentious spirit never seems to rear its head when the children learn by discovery.

Out of a sense of wonder comes curiosity. "What's under there? Is that woolly bear dead?" Or, one of my favorites, after the candle is snuffed, "Where did the flame go?" The ideal way to answer these questions is with a sense of imagination and open-endedness. We try to enter the realm where children naturally live, offering responses that can be grasped by a young child. We speak with loving respect of Father Sun and Mother Earth, King Winter and Lady Spring, all of whom relate to one another in a manner that is true to the "facts" while being, at the same time, true to the child's innate understanding of the holistic interweaving of life. When a young child asks where the sun goes at night, how are we to answer? We can describe a heliocentric universe with the sun as a mass of hot gases, and so on. . . or we can tell a story of how Father Sun has worked hard to care for his children and now must rest so that he can greet us again in the morning.

The first description is cold and even frightening to a young child. It's as though when someone asks, "Who is Henry?" we would answer with a description of Henry's bodily fluids and parts. We all know that *that* is not Henry, even though the facts are accurate. Such information about the makeup of physical phenomena is appropriate at an older age and can be learned with greater interest and respect if children have had an earlier experience of imaginative and loving learning on which to base the factual information.

Sir Isaac Newton—mathematician, physicist and one of the foremost scientific intellects of all

time—said, “I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.” His insight points to how, along with a sense of wonder and curiosity, a child should be free to exercise his natural playfulness. So much is gained from rolling a marble across the floor or a snowball across the field! Or from looking at the world upside down!

The senses are our bridge between the incomprehensible and the comprehensible.

—August Macke, German painter

The development of the senses is of tremendous importance in the early childhood years. As with wonder, the senses unfold naturally in a young child and their development needs not be taught but, rather, allowed and gently encouraged to happen.

Learning to use the senses can be compared to learning to use tools. When you have learned to use pliers, you have acquired two new skills. The first is the capacity to use the pliers for the proper aims. Because you have become acquainted with pliers, you will notice the occasions in life when pliers may be useful, and now you are capable of using the tool properly. This capability arises because you meet a force within yourself that can accomplish in a non-material sense what pliers can do in the outer world. The soul discovers its ability to take hold of something. Edmund Schoorel, in *The First Seven Years: The Physiology of Childhood*, has said that when exercising their senses, children learn in a similar twofold way. They learn something new that enables them to perceive the outer world, and at the same time their soul acquires new capacities.

How do we educate the senses? We bake bread! The feel of the goeey dough and the dry flour, the smell of the yeast. . . and then the baking, and the tasting when we eat it! How about setting the table? Daily domestic life is full of sensory, motor and cognitive lessons. But we don't speak about it, we don't analyze it. Analyzing at this stage has the tendency to destroy the experience.

The young child learns with body and soul. This is why over-stimulation is counter-productive.

A child needs to digest what is taken in through the senses and this is done in a healthy manner when children play. Sensory overload can lead to frantic gestures, nonstop talking, and even illness. As protection, the child's natural sensitivity may harden, requiring ever-greater stimulus to elicit a response. This can become painfully evident during the adolescent years. Given a manageable environment, ideally one including the elements of simplicity and beauty, the senses may naturally develop in a healthy way. Getting to know and trust one's own ability to perceive leads to a trust in one's own perceptions, and eventually in the ability to think for oneself—a capacity much-needed in a world of confusing and manipulated information.

Science is not fact until it is discovered.

—Ann Sagarin, Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School class teacher

When we have wonder, we take interest. Combine interest and curiosity with healthy sensory activity, add a dose of patience, and you have discovery! Author and teacher Arthur Zajonc has said that the moment of seeing is the moment of discovery—one then perceives the hidden coherence in nature. That, he maintains, is the longed-for objective in science. I have recently been inspired by a course given at The Nature Institute in Harlemlville, NY, titled “In Dialogue with Nature,” through which I am learning to perceive in this Goethean sense. Craig Holdrege, one of the teachers of the course, writes in the Institute's journal, *In Context*, “The perceptual world has endless richness of detail and pattern to disclose. . . We must look, look once more, and look again. The basis of a dialogue with nature is that we immerse ourselves in perceptions. . . seeing what the plant has to reveal. . . We are not trying to explain the plant; we are not asking about causes. . . ”

Pay attention. Be present. Be awake. How can young children begin this adventure of learning about the natural world in a way that inspires them to keep on wanting to learn? Derrick Jensens provided a clue in the November 2007 issue of *Sun* magazine, “The solution is to let your child explore nature. . . Right now I'm looking at spiders on my wall, and they sit for hours, sometimes days. I often wonder what they're experiencing. I'll probably

never know unless they communicate with me. And even if they do that, I won't perceive it unless I'm paying attention, and unless I've learned at least a little of their language. And that, once again, is precisely the point."

This afternoon I waited for the birds and they came. As a teacher, I would be satisfied if I felt I had passed on to the children in my care an ability to wait and to listen. Their discoveries will lead us in the future.

In ancient Greece, it was said that all human striving after knowledge must proceed from wonder.

In every soul who seeks to reach to the truth, there must at one time be present this experience of standing

in awe before the universe. Otherwise, our thinking will attain merely to what is correct, but never to the truth in its reality. . .

Someone may be the most astute thinker, but if he has never passed through this stage of wonderment, nothing will come of it; it will remain merely a spinning of ideas.

All real knowledge must, in a certain respect, have as its seed-kernel—wonder.

—Rudolf Steiner

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Creating Partnerships with Parents in First Grade Readiness Decisions

Ruth Ker

In my first years of teaching in a mixed-age kindergarten class I felt anxious about the challenge of making decisions around first grade readiness. Witnessing the grandness of the change that the six-year-olds experience on all levels left me confused as to what criteria I should consider when making decisions about their future placement. The ability to understand what I was observing was not living in me yet, and I relied heavily on my instincts and untrained observations. Many times I simply fell back upon the school's cut-off date for grade school entrance and hoped that the parents would support this.

Then I began to meet more and more mystery children whose development and future placement posed even larger questions to me and also more and more parents who wanted to know what was behind my recommendations. Many times I felt inadequate to meet the important questions of the parents. How I longed for skilled and informed local companions to accompany me in making these decisions!

Some Waldorf schools are fortunate to have school doctors, readiness committees, or remedial or curative teachers to assist them when it comes time to consider whether it's appropriate for a child to enter first grade, but in many schools the kindergarten teachers are on their own when determining whether the child is ripe for school. Results from the last extensive WECAN survey on "The Older Child in the Kindergarten" show a variety of ways that schools in North America cope with the decision about first grade placement. Most established schools stated a definite procedure for shepherding the children into first grade—some more elaborate than others. Many kindergarten teachers reported using the cut-off date as the sole determinant. One school relayed that their assessment process and the subsequent report had become so stressful for the parents, children and faculty that they were questioning its benefits. This same teacher commented that she was going back to observing the children in their natural classroom setting rather than setting up separate out-of-class

screening appointments. However, the majority of schools reported being at varying stages of establishing clear, effective assessment procedures and are still revising these practices. Many schools also stated that there is uneasiness about who gets to make the decision when the parents and the kindergarten teachers disagree about first grade placement.

This survey also showed that even in schools that had extra professional support there seemed to be different understandings as to who should be responsible for this decision. Here are some aspects of the question:

- Is it the responsibility of the remedial teacher or the child's kindergarten teachers or a care committee (comprised of the child's kindergarten teachers, the remedial teacher, grade school representatives, a member of the College of Teachers and/or an admissions person)? The answer to this question seemed to vary according to the personnel resources that the particular schools had.
- There was also the underlying question of whether it is best for the kindergarten teachers who have observed the child regularly to develop the skills of carrying the first grade readiness assessment, or are these teachers already too subjective?
- Another part of this question is the issue of how it affects the children's response to the assessment if they are taken out of a familiar environment to interact with someone, perhaps a remedial teacher or other school representative, who is unknown to them. One school reported that their remedial teacher had regular weekly contact with the kindergarten classes and teachers and this made it easier for her to do the assessments in consultation with the children's kindergarten teachers.

So we can see that there are a variety of perspectives and opinions on how to achieve recommendations for first grade placement.

At our school in British Columbia, Canada we do not have a curative or remedial teacher, a care group, or a readiness committee, and our first grade teacher often does not arrive until the summer before the next school year starts. Out of necessity, I have had to labor diligently to hone my

observation skills and to develop my own process for determining the placement of the kindergarten children in the next first grade class. When I feel stumped I consult with my colleagues in the kindergarten and the grade school. Sometimes I consult with remedial teachers in other schools.

I owe much gratitude to a colleague who, through her own studies, began to share some of the ways in which she was beginning to gain fresh eyes in which to see the children. This opened doors to me and I began to realize that, through research and observation, I too could find ways to understand and look for developmental milestones. I began to determine what the common phenomena are that most children display at the transition between kindergarten and first grade. Some of these manifestations of the six-year change can be witnessed in the regular indoor and outdoor play of the children and are described in the book *You're Not the Boss of Me!—Understanding the Six/Seven-Year-Old Transformation* (WECAN, 2008).

As time progressed, I also began to realize that some of the children's changes could not be witnessed easily by me while the children were engaged in their normal daily interactions with their peers. I began to wish for opportunities to be alone with the children in order to look more closely at other developments that are necessary for success in the first grade year. Memory, fine motor dexterity, fine balancing, crossing the midline, dominance, awareness of body geography, language development, stamina, and the child's ability to follow directions are just a few of the things that could not be easily observed while the distractions and needs of the group were ongoing. This is when I decided to begin a procedure of spending time alone with each one of the children who are candidates for the future first grade class. This decision has served the children, the parents, and me very well.

Research and consultation with other teachers and doctors has resulted in the development of an objective process including a checklist with criteria for objective observations of the children. Because I do not feel comfortable with the word "assessment," I refer to the time I spend with the children as "the first grade readiness games." However, the children themselves do not know that this time has anything to do with first grade readiness. They only see that they have a chance to play games with their teacher.

So each year I “play games” with each child who is a potential candidate for first grade the following year, for one hour at a time, for one day only. I begin at the end of January, asking the oldest and most obvious candidates first. My colleague and I discuss when we should begin this process in the new year and whether there is a need to call in a substitute to assist her on the playground while I am inside with each individual child. In this way, all of the children have had their turn by the time that we have the Parent/Teacher interviews in March and I can feel more sure of the recommendation I have for the parents then. The younger children in the kindergarten aren’t as interested in the games. They would rather play outside. The sun children (as we call them) are content to wait until next year for their turn when they will be one of the big helpers in the kindergarten.

As time has progressed, my initial clumsy observations have been replaced with a deepening of interest and understanding. Witnessing similar responses from the children as they played the games helped me to pinpoint the important milestones demonstrated before me. By repeating these experiences with different children over and over again I have been able to hone my own powers of observation and find my way into recognizing various nuances in the signs of readiness. The value of developing some concrete criteria that can be used year after year cannot be overestimated. There is an old adage that goes, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one single step.” I would encourage kindergarten teachers to take their initial steps upon this rewarding journey. Childhood and the six-year-old transformation came alive for me in a different way when I included the first grade readiness games in my yearly plan.

There has also been an added dimension of joyful interaction as I witness the enthusiasm with which the children look forward to the opportunity to play games with their teacher. Another bonus is the respectful response of the parents for the first grade readiness recommendations when they discover that it has a definite procedure and a set of observations behind it.

More importantly, these games have given me a venue in which I can make a deeper connection, a soul-spiritual link with the child and parent. I can’t say enough about the value of this. There have been

times when I have felt stumped by the placement of a child and, after playing the first grade readiness games with the children and consulting with the parents, I have known what my recommendations would be. I regard this time that I spend with the individual children as a time that supports a depth of observation so poignant that, in the evening when I carry the question of the child’s placement into my sleep, I am able to present a truer picture of the child to his/her angel. Then I think that the child’s angel, the parents’ angels, and my own angel are able to find each other, draw closer, collaborate and inspire us all with the right decision.

Although my intent in this article is to share some ideas about being in this decision-making process with the parents, it seemed necessary for me to explain beforehand the benefit of having a first grade readiness assessment process that engenders the necessary respect from the parents, who have the potential to be some of our greatest allies and helpers. Below are some considerations that I implement in my work with the people who are most familiar with the children and tend to know them very well: their parents.

A very valuable piece of advice was given to our teacher training class by Joan Almon: “Before you begin to advise the parents, find a way to love them. When you strive to do this, then you will eventually be able to say what you need to say to them.” Each year I take this up as my mantra right from the very beginning of my encounters with the children’s parents. Here are some ways that I develop this loving relationship through time:

- When I first meet a family I take interest in the parents as well as the child. What are the parents’ hobbies, activities, and viewpoints? What are their concerns about their child? What was their childhood like? This initial openness paves the way for a strong future connection.
- If there is a child that I sense may be in the position of needing another year in the kindergarten then I work very hard at creating this connection with their parents. I want trust, respect, and warmth to exist between myself and the parents when, later on, I know I will be advocating another year in the kindergarten for their child. At the initial

interview when I meet the family I am very clear about stating our cut-off date for first grade readiness. If the child falls within this time then I explain the benefits of another year in the kindergarten.

- Engaging the parents in warm conversation by phone or taking them aside at drop-off or pick-up times is very helpful.
- Involving the parents in some kindergarten tasks can engage their interest and make the kindergarten year(s) more meaningful for them.
- Sometimes, I also incorporate the parents in my evening meditation by accurately seeing them in my mind's eye.
- When I sense that an issue is brewing in the parent group, newsletters can be an effective and neutral way to build group trust by addressing the issue and sharing living stories that are part of the kindergarten day. Sometimes it's easier to speak about an issue to the whole group, as if the topic just occurred to me, then it is to risk defensiveness or offending someone by approaching them directly. Reading a newsletter gives them the opportunity to read the idea and ruminate on it in freedom.
- Creating a vessel for the parents to get together and talk while I am present also paves the way for open discussion about parents' observations and questions. I host a monthly Parent Discussion and Craft Circle.

During the school year there are several meetings with the parents. At each one of these events, the six/seven-year-old transformation and first grade readiness are mentioned, sometimes briefly and other times in greater detail (depending on what developmental manifestations we are witnessing in the older kindergarten children). Explaining common behaviors that can be witnessed at this age helps the parents to see the reason for their child's upheaval as being related to the six/seven-year change and not the "fault" of the kindergarten.

As the year progresses and the children show more signs of the change, I speak directly to individual parents about it again. "Have you noticed Sarah's giggling and that she's racing around more lately? Have you noticed that Johnny has increased

his appetite and is going through a growth spurt? Is Allison questioning your authority at home? Do you notice Nathaniel's fascination with teenagers lately?" By comparing observations the parents tend to be put at ease and feel more fellowship and support when their children are going through these changes. This can be a confusing time for parents and teachers alike. If this atmosphere of warmth, mutual respect and trust has been built and the parents have been properly informed beforehand, then it can be welcome news when the teacher recommends that a child have another year in the kindergarten.

The cut-off date for our school is June 1, although we often give May birthday children (especially boys) the opportunity to attend kindergarten for another year. As I look back over the past five years I see that we have been blessed with some March and April boys and girls turning seven during the end of their kindergarten year. Through time I have discovered some important ways to bring this possibility to the parents. The following suggestions are helpful when parents question the teacher's recommendation and are determined that they want their child to go on into first grade.

First, rather than using the language that the child is "staying back" (the connotation being that he/she is missing something), it works better to place the emphasis on the benefits of another year. The language I use is, "Let's give Sally the *opportunity* to have another year in the kindergarten."

Here are some of the benefits that can be mentioned to the parents:

- Rather than having to struggle to keep up with his peers, the child who has more time can have the opportunity to develop the self-esteem that comes with being fully ready to take on tasks with ease.
- A child who is the youngest in his or her family can have the opportunity to practice being an older "brother or sister" in the kindergarten.
- An only child or a youngest child in the family constellation can have an opportunity to nurture younger children, because in her second year in the kindergarten she will be in the position to be a helpful older child.

- If the child has just begun to show signs of the six/seven-year change then it can be helpful for him to have some consolidation time through more movement opportunities rather than sitting at a first grade school desk for longer periods of the day. It's often helpful to ask the parents if they can imagine their child managing her impulses and sitting contentedly for long periods of time.
- Having an extra year in the kindergarten can help a child who would have been the youngest in first grade to be one of the oldest in the kindergarten. Cultivating leadership qualities prepares the child for a successful future.

As well as discussing the benefits with the parents, there are also a few helpful strategies that can assist the decision.

- By far the most helpful strategy that I have found is to make a list, in order of age—oldest to youngest—of the children who will be going on into first grade, and then, in the same manner, a list of the children who will be staying back in the kindergarten. Then, with the parents present, plot where their child would be situated on these lists age-wise. Often when parents see that their child would be the very youngest in the first grade class and, as it often turns out, not even the oldest in next year's kindergarten class, they understand what that could mean for their child.
- Sometimes a decision can be assisted by the teacher saying "If I can let go of Johnny being in kindergarten next year, can you let go of him being in first grade next year and we'll just give this decision some more contemplation time?" If the parents agree, I ask them if we can keep this conversation open to future sharing of our observations. Then I often tell the parents about the importance of the child going on with his or her own peer group. I tell them that I will document daily whom the child plays with. Sometimes the parents invite over an older child and a younger child to their home (on separate occasions) and they can then witness how their child's play changes depending on the age of the playmate. It's important to keep in mind here that often the younger child becomes the slave of the older

child, fetching things and so on. When we sensitively observe their play we can see that the younger child is not really playing as an equal with the older one.

- Handouts from parents expressing successful results from giving their child the opportunity for another year in the kindergarten are very helpful.
- Members of the parent body who struggled with this decision of first grade placement and whose children are in the grade school now can be a rich resource if they are willing to accept phone calls from a current questioning parent.
- Hosting a parent evening where the first grade readiness games are explained (after the games have been played with the children) eases the parents' concern that this decision be made by qualified professionals.

The warm bond that we make with the child's parents is essential for a healthy year in the kindergarten. The efforts we make to insure that the social fabric we weave together is abundant with the golden threads of love, trust, and respect are well-justified, forming a foundational garment that can be carried forward into the future.

Ruth Ker teaches kindergarten at Sunrise Waldorf School in Duncan, BC. A WECAN Board member, she recently edited You're Not the Boss of Me! This article will be part of the companion volume on first grade readiness.



Therapeutic Stories

Cindy Brooks

The following therapeutic stories, while adaptable for an early childhood group setting, were intended for parents who have children between the ages of three and nine. It is still possible to tell therapeutic stories to children age nine or over, but parents need to know their child and what she or he is likely to find inspiring. Once the child turns nine she will more likely see the correlation between a therapeutic story told by an adult and the adult's motivation in telling the story, although not always. True stories, especially from one's own experiences or biographies of historic figures, are usually more useful as therapeutic stories for children age nine and older.

"The Little Seed's Journey" is helpful for building a sense of security, safety and confidence in the young child. Meant especially for children ages three to seven, this story could be used with children up to ages eight or nine. "A Stormy Day in Mother Earth's Garden" is helpful for bringing healing after a day of explosiveness—a child's or yours or both! Parents may find that reading this story at bedtime after a "stormy" day leads to greater calm in the child the next day.

The Little Seed's Journey

Once there was a lovely green meadow high up in the distant mountains. In summer the meadow was filled with every kind of beautiful flower—yellow and white daisies, blue cornflowers, purple lupines, orange and red paintbrushes, and pink and white wild orchids.

This meadow was filled with abundant life! The fairies came to play and dance day and night. All kinds of birds, big and little, swooped over and through the trees, singing all manner of songs. Butterflies and bees visited the flowers every day and chased the golden sunbeams dancing through the meadow.

In the midst of this field of flowers there stood a lone sunflower. She had grown from a seed spilled by a young boy early in the springtime while he hiked through the meadow with his family. The sunflower was by far the tallest flower in the meadow! Baby seeds were just starting to grow inside her blossom, but they were still sleeping.

One day, towards the end of summer, the bees came visiting. On the back of every bee there rode

a fire fairy, sending warm light all around. On this day one especially fuzzy bee flew atop the sunflower and sat down quietly. The fire fairy on that bee was wearing a fiery red dress and she glowed with a sparkling halo. She stepped down onto the sunflower's yellow petal and bowed very gracefully, as fairies always do. She noticed that one of the little seeds was waking up, standing very straight and tall. She bowed to the little seed and her halo sparkled all over her. The little seed had never seen a fire fairy before, let alone a fairy bowing to him, but he was sure that he should bow to her too and so he did. He bowed so far down that his head touched the very tips of his feet and he thought he might fall over!

The fairy spoke to the seed. "On this day I have brought you a special gift. I have made this gift especially for you. You will need it very soon, for soon you are going on a very long journey." The seed stood up even straighter—even though he did not know what it meant to go on a long journey. The fairy had wrapped her present in the finest of silks, one for every color of the rainbow. Since the seed was still quite young, the fairy unwrapped the silks to show him what was inside. What a wondrous sight he did behold! Underneath the silk wrapping there glowed the most radiant golden blanket! It was woven of golden threads filled with light from the stars, moon and sun. The seed was filled with wonder and said, ever so respectfully, "Oh, thank you dear fairy for this beautiful gift," and bowed his head down to his toes.

Then the fire fairy bowed to the seed, climbed back on the fuzzy bee and they flew away. The sunflower told the little seed of the great long journey he would be taking one day when Brother Wind began to blow his cold winds across the land.

Mother Earth was very busy deep down underground. She was making tiny beds to welcome all the seeds for winter, for flower seeds are oh so tender and do not like the cold. Soon Brother Wind would blow his gusty winds through the meadow, and then the little seeds would pack their bags and travel the long path down to Mother Earth's

underground garden.

Brother Wind began to blow his cold breath through the land. All the little seeds packed their bags and started down the steps to find the land where Mother Earth was waiting for them. The little seed went with them. He carried his golden blanket wrapped in the fairy's rainbow silks. He walked and walked. Soon he found the door to a long, dark tunnel. A friendly gnome working there told him that this was the way to go. As the little seed made his way through the tunnel he saw many gnomes inside. They were hacking and cracking the rocks and the stones, finding sparkling crystals and beautiful shining ores. It seemed that the gnomes never slept, they just kept working all the time! They scooted the little seed along his way whenever he felt drowsy, and so he kept on going through the long tunnel.

Then he came to the end of the tunnel and there was Mother Earth waiting for him. She had lit some fires in fire rings to keep her land underground toasty warm. The little seed loved this warm and cozy world. Mother Earth showed him to the little bed she had made especially for him and helped

him settle into it. For he and all the other seeds were going to sleep a very long time while Old King Winter stormed about in the meadow high above.

So the little seed carefully unwrapped his golden blanket from the layers of rainbow silk that were wrapped around it. Then he snuggled into his bed. Mother Earth tucked his golden blanket carefully around him so that he would be toasty warm. Then she sang the sweetest lullaby he had ever heard. Soon he was fast asleep. High above, King Winter reigned supreme. He blew his icy winds hither and yon and sent his frost boys and snowflake girls dancing all around. The grasses were frozen stiff; long icicles hung from the branches of the trees; not one bird, flower, butterfly or bee was anywhere to be seen.

The little seed lay peacefully in his warm winter bed, wrapped in the sparkling warmth of his golden blanket and tended oh so lovingly by Mother Earth. He dreamed of flower meadows, sunny days, fairy dances and bird songs. Mother Earth hummed sweet lullabies as the little seed slept snuggled in his bed. And the little seed's golden blanket shone with the light of heaven all winter long.



A Stormy Day in Mother Earth's Garden

Mother Earth lives in a beautiful green garden. In the back of her house is a lovely blue pond, as round as the moon and as blue as the sky on a bright sunny day. When Father Sun shines his warm sun rays down to Mother Earth's garden, they dance around on the surface of the pond behind her house, and then the golden fishes living there jump up high to catch them.

At one edge of the pond is a great old willow tree, whose branches float over the edge of the water. Under the willow tree, at the edge of the pond, is a patch of soft green lily pads, where all the frogs that live in the pond like to sit. The great big frogs sit on the great big lily pads and the little frogs sit on the little lily pads, and they all sit there and sing together when Father Sun wakes up and again when he goes to sleep. Their song is very loud, so even Father Sun can hear it!

The little frogs like to swim in the pond all day long and they are friends with the golden fishes that live there. Sometimes they swim together with the golden fishes down to a world of rocks at the very bottom of the center of the pond. This is their very own castle and they love to play there, for there are many rooms to play in!

Brother Wind comes visiting Mother Earth's garden some days and blows his gentle breath across the land. Then the branches of the old willow tree dance on top of the pond and tickle the great big frogs that are sitting on the lily pads there. Brother Wind sends his gentle breath across the surface of the pond and the golden fishes are rocked ever so gently down below. Sister Rain sometimes comes visiting Mother Earth's garden and sprinkles her drops all around. The little frogs love to swim on the surface of the pond when she comes to visit and to feel the pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat of her fingers tapping on their backs.

One day, Brother Wind came visiting Mother Earth's garden and brought two new friends with him: Terrible Thunder and Crackling Lightning. Even Brother Wind didn't know how much trouble they could make! Into Mother Earth's garden they came to play. At first nothing seemed unusual. But then Terrible Thunder began to clap and shout so loudly that all the little frogs went dashing down to the bottom of the pond to their castle of rocks to

get away from the terrible sound. Then Crackling Lightning began to shriek and pounce, and all the golden fishes went dashing down to the bottom of the pond to get away from him. Brother Wind was so upset that he began to whirl and dash here and there, round and about, great waves began to crash on the edge of the pond and the great old willow tree's branches got tied into a terrible knot.

Mother Earth heard all the noise in her garden, and saw how frightened everyone was. She went outside and called to Father Sun for help. Together they shooed Terrible Thunder and Crackling Lightning on their way. Only then did Mother Earth see what a terrible mess they had made! Then she called to the flower fairies and garden elves, and together they worked to make the garden beautiful again. The flower fairies untied the great old willow's terrible knot and her branches hung gently over the edge of the pond again. But the little frogs and the golden fishes were nowhere to be found! They stayed hidden in their underwater castle until Mother Earth called her water fairies to swim down and tell them all was safe again.

That night the great big frogs and the little frogs sang to Father Sun as he got ready to go to bed, and they were as loud as ever could be. They wanted Father Sun to know how glad they were to see him again! That night Lady Moon brought all her star children to shine and sparkle in the dark night sky and they sang lullabies over Mother Earth's garden all night long.

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Reflections on the Sistine Madonna

Nancy Jewel Poer

The Sistine Madonna is one of the greatest and noblest works of art in human evolution.

–Rudolf Steiner, *The Mission of Raphael in the Light of Spiritual Science*

Man is the sun, his senses are the planets.

–Novalis

The Sistine Madonna has long been a loving presence in Waldorf kindergartens, acting as a gift to the children that brings them an image of an embracing archetypal heavenly mother and heavenly child. This work of art has profoundly lifted and transformed the souls of those beholding it for over five hundred years, for it reminds us of our true spiritual nature. In our classrooms around the world, it is has been there to give hope, transformation, and a sense of protection to generations of children.

As our world becomes more interwoven with the wonderful diversity of people of all races and backgrounds, so too do our Waldorf schools. Some of our earnest Waldorf kindergarten colleagues, striving to be inclusive and with acquiescence to the diversity of their parent body, have made decisions not to have the Sistine Madonna in their classrooms or have removed it. Though it is far from an exclusively Christian icon, they feel that thus it will not be there to offend those who may experience it that way.

Another consideration is that sometimes the image has not been so “quietly” displayed in our classrooms. When it is given a church-like altar, this can certainly create an issue for some parents, especially if along with it comes any dogmatic attitude from the teachers. We can have empathy for the strong emotional responses to such situations that may come out of past or current religious experiences. (A number of these were published anonymously last year in *Kindling*, the British counterpart to *Gateways*.)

As modern freedom-loving individuals, we are rightly repelled by the appalling acts perpetuated throughout history in the name of institutionalized Christianity (as well as other religions). But just as

we are asked to see beyond the tantrums and ugly behavior of young children to perceive the striving of their spirit, as Waldorf teachers we are also asked to look beyond our subjective experiences and those of some parents to serve the children whose time is now. As public representatives of Waldorf education, with our tremendous debt to Rudolf Steiner for making this education possible, surely we need to earnestly engage in learning about the universal spirituality that is the heart of Anthroposophy. We need to understand why he calls it an esoteric all-embracing Christianity.

With regard to the image of the Sistine Madonna in our kindergartens, my response, and that of many other experienced teachers, is not to *remove* it but rather *add to it*. People from all backgrounds need to feel met in our schools, so we can add other warm art images to the room—Madonnas of different ethnic backgrounds and even family groups. With the Sistine Madonna, I prefer to use the top half of the painting with just the mother and child.

Anthroposophical insights

As Waldorf educators we are called to carry Anthroposophy in inclusive and exemplary ways to our communities. With that in mind, how can we live into why this image and its creator were so important to Rudolf Steiner? We find that in the last four weeks of his life, as he lay gravely ill, Rudolf Steiner spoke to a close colleague imploring that Anthroposophists strive to understand the incarnations of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist (Boardman and Newbatt, 10).

John the Baptist is the great personality who will become Raphael, the painter of the Sistine Madonna, and then later will become Novalis, the poet. Prior to the incarnation as John the Baptist, he was Elijah the prophet who foretold the coming of the Messiah, the prophet whose words carry the “will and the future,” as Evelyn Capel puts it. In all these incarnations is the golden thread of esoteric Christianity and announcement of renewal for the human soul through the spirit, the possibility of renewal for all humanity through the deed of Christ.

The Bible refers to this series of incarnations when it speaks of Elijah becoming John: “I say to you, that Elijah is come already and they knew him not. . . Then understood the disciples that he spoke to them of John the Baptist” (Matthew 17:12-13; Revised Standard Version).

As Novalis, the young poet, this powerful individuality described (esoteric) Christianity:

Christianity is of a threefold form. One is the creative element of religion, the joy in all religion. One is intercession in and of itself, faith in the universal capacity of all earthly things to be the bread and wine of eternal life. One is faith in Christ, His Mother, and the Saints. Choose which one you will. Choose all three, it makes no difference. You will thereby become . . . members of a single, eternal ineffable community (Novalis, *Hymns to the Night and Other Selected Writings*, 62).

John the Baptist

John the Baptist actually knew the holy mother in person. His elderly mother, Elizabeth was visited by her cousin, Mary, when they were both pregnant. The infant John leapt in the womb when he first felt the spiritual presence of the babe, Jesus, who would be born six months after his own birth. As John, he experienced the earthly incarnation of the pure and holy soul who was the mother of the child who would later bear the spirit of Christ. It was he who would recognize and baptize Jesus to become Christ.

In regard to further great mysteries of the spiritual interpenetrations our mortal existence, Steiner speaks of John the Baptist as the over-arching inspirer of all the disciples following his death, and of his merging with the being of Lazarus as Lazarus went through initiation by the Christ. Lazarus was the first human being resurrected from death to new life. Thereafter, he had a new identity as John, the Evangelist, the writer of the most mystical and exalted gospel and the book of the Apocalypse. Christ-initiated, he was so filled with the power of new life that he appears as youthful and beardless in Leonardo’s Last Supper as “the one whom the Lord loved.” (This picture does not represent Mary Magdalene, the sister of Lazarus.)

Raphael, the Painter



Raphael (1483-1520) was born on Good Friday, lived in tumultuous times with a calm beauty of body and soul, and died on Good Friday when he was only thirty-seven years old. In this incarnation, he painted the heavenly Sophia that rayed through the earthly being of Mary he knew in his former incarnation. The mood of this painting (known as the Sistine Madonna) he will later describe in his next incarnation as Novalis:

*If I but have him,
Is the world mine too;
Blissful as a heavenly cherub
Who the Virgin’s veil may hold.
Raptly, deeply gazing,
I can feel no dread of earthly things.*
(Novalis, *Hymns to the Night*, 35)

And further:

The veil is for the Virgin what the spirit is for the body, its indispensable organ, the folds of which are the alphabet of its sweet annunciation; the endless play of these folds is like music, for speech is too bold for the Virgin—her lips open themselves only into song . . . to me it is nothing other than a solemn call to a new archetypal assemblage, the mighty beat of wings of a passing angelic herald. They are the first pains. Let each prepare himself for birth! . . . To a brother I will lead you; he shall talk with you that your hearts

shall open, and you shall robe your withered beloved expectation in a new garment. . . This brother is the heart beat of the new age; whosoever has felt it no longer doubts its coming and steps. . . to join a new band of disciples. For this brother has made a new veil for the Holy one. . . able to wrap her more chastely than any other (Novalis, *Hymns to the Night and Other Selected Writings*, 62).

This sublime painting of the Sistine Madonna has quite a different quality than the eternal calm of Raphael's many other beautiful and benevolent Madonnas. One of his last, it reflects Raphael's experience from the spiritual world, beyond the threshold. This is shown by the green curtains being "drawn aside" to reveal a truth about the uplifting power of the archetypal eternal feminine. Rudolf Steiner writes,

*The Sistine Madonna was born out of a deep instinctive knowledge of nature and the spirit. . . Mary folds in her robe following the forces of the earth while in the region of her chest the garment is inwardly rounded. . . a feeling of inward enclosure . . . Here the sun forces can find entry and the innocent Jesus child . . . is the sun activity resting on Mary's arm with the radiance of the stars above. . . The head and eyes of Mary are as though a light were shining out from within them towards humanity. . . the Jesus child. . . as though emerging from the rounded cloud shapes, tender and loveable and inwardly sheltered (Steiner, *The Four Seasons and the Archangels*, 40).*

While earth forces are revealed in the folds of in her lower garment, the upper half with her veils is almost like a heart-shaped womb. That it speaks of spiritual birth, and not physical one, is evidenced in the child's firm, un-childlike gesture, holding his leg across the lower body. The mother's veils, that we can imagine as golden, are wafted in heavenly winds from the astral and etheric realms. Both mother and child look at us with penetrating, even challenging gazes—as though impelling us to ask, "Can we realize the spiritual birth in our own souls that this image implies?"

Novalis, the Poet



This individual's next brief life is as Novalis (pen name of Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801); he dies at 29. He falls deeply in love on the first meeting with an angel-like 13-year-old girl, Sophie, who has a pure and unearthly majesty about her. As he devotedly and respectfully waits for her to grow older so they can marry, she suffers a long and painful illness that she bears with great courage and nobility, and soon dies. Novalis is utterly devastated. He visits her grave night after night wishing for death for himself. Then Sophie, now in her full spiritual dimensions and further irradiated with eternal Sophia wisdom, initiates Novalis from the spiritual world. His desperate anguish in face of her death has prepared his soul for a resurrection, an initiation from across the threshold that has been prepared by his previous lives. He describes it in tender words:

*I see you in a thousand pictures,
Maria, in loveliness portrayed.
But none is able to depict you
The way my soul beholds you. . .
(Steiner, "The Christmas Mystery")*

Never in the history of the world has a series of incarnations so profoundly revealed the importance, presence, and call to us today to honor and seek the wisdom of the Sophia being. Steiner writes that we have the Christ, the Sophia is what we must find.

I feel the following words can only resound in our souls in the deepest and most serious way when we realize these were the last words that Rudolf Steiner was able to give in a public address before he collapsed into illness at Michaelmas, 1924. He emphasizes that this great individuality who incarnated as Elijah, John the Baptist, Raphael, and Novalis will be “he who will lead you now and beyond the great crisis in which we are engaged.” He refers to the “well nigh heavenly splendor” in the magical idealism of Novalis and then he states:

And so we see in Novalis a radiant and splendid forerunner of the Michael stream which is now to lead you through the gate of death, you will find in the spiritual supersensible worlds all those others among them also the being I am speaking of today, all those with whom you are to prepare the work that shall be accomplished at the end of the century, and that shall lead mankind past the great crisis in which it is involved (Steiner, “The Last Address,” 171).

The words of Novalis come as a plea to us today to work on ourselves for the sake of world peace, a plea as powerful and relevant as when they were written about the destiny of Europe.

Blood will flow over Europe until the nations recognize their frightful insanity which drives them vainly in circles; until touched and softened by a heavenly music they step in motley coalition before olden altars. . . Only true religion can awaken Europe once more, reconcile the peoples and install [esoteric] Christianity with new splendor visibly upon earth in its ancient function of ministering peace. . . Will not [the nations] forget all enmity, when the same Divine Compassion itself speaks to them, and one and the same misfortune, one lamentation, one common feeling fills their eyes with tears? (Novalis, “Christianity or Europe,” 42)

Ursula Grahl takes it further: “While the Christian church falls apart and is split into many denominations and religious wars rage throughout Europe, while theologians dispute the doctrines of the church and set up dogmas to rob the people of freedom, Raphael’s art, transcending all denominations, conquers the world; without their even being aware of it, would are won over by

Raphael’s pictures and come to recognize the great truths that are embodied in them. The Christian impulse, which worked, and still works, through the paintings of Raphael is above all Confessions, all Nations, all Races; it is the universal cosmic Christianity” (Grahl, 13).

The Sistine Madonna Today

In light of the world that we live in today, with such deep violence, sorrow, and strife in world affairs, and insecurity about the well-being of the earth herself, I believe the painting of the Sistine Madonna is speaking to us from the threshold of the spiritual world. These mighty sublime gazes of the holy mother and child become especially powerful when we imagine they are speaking to us across the beasts of the abyss we are experiencing now. They are speaking to us with a plea to awaken our consciousness, giving us hope and an incredibly beautiful reassurance that the spiritual world is there, and very real if we can only raise our awareness. Surely this is what our children need, and what we all need?

As Waldorf teachers and parents, beholden to the inspiration and spiritual insight of Rudolf Steiner for our great work of caring for young children, may we deepen our appreciation of this timeless work of art. Let it shine before the souls of our children, so continually assaulted from every side with depraved and degraded images of the human being coming from our crassly materialistic culture.

We may surround the classroom with other heart-warming images from all backgrounds so that everyone who enters the classroom feels met and represented. Waldorf education belongs to the world. But let this sublime image be there to speak of a future when we shall, out of our own spiritual striving, give birth to our higher selves. When we can create the wise, pure, and sacred space in our own souls (the holy Sophia) to let the Sun light of our higher selves condense, take form, and come to birth to guide our lives, our thoughts, our mission on earth with one another, then we will realize we all share immortal spirituality. Thus we join the stream of light and transformation in world evolution.

Nancy Jewel Poer is a co-founder of Rudolf Steiner College, where she still teaches. Nationally known lecturer, author (*Living Into Dying and Mia's Apple Tree*), artist, grandmother of 14, she is the founding teacher for three Waldorf kindergartens, most recently Cedar Springs Waldorf School in Placerville, CA.

Nancy writes, "I, like my colleagues, have struggled for many years on presenting images of the Madonna for the parents. To that end I created *Mother of All*, showing all the world's ethnic Madonnas in a rainbow. While not necessarily for the classroom, it could be nearby for the parents." Available through nancyjewelpoer.com or Rudolf Steiner College.

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Madonna and the Abyss

In the course of writing this article I felt this timeless art is now very close to the threshold to inspire us to our higher selves. Yet at the same time, in this world of violence, fear, and uncertainty, we can experience the beasts of the abyss are right there as well. I created this juxtaposition of the madonna with the beasts of the abyss because Rudolf Steiner has indicated that in art for today, spiritual truths (always the purpose of true art) often need to be conveyed by the ugly and the beautiful in the same composition. It is **not** meant for the classroom, but for our thoughtful contemplation as teachers and citizens of our time. —Nancy Jewel Poer

Working and Living with So-Called Difficult Children, Part II

2008 East Coast Waldorf Early Childhood Conference

Nancy Blanning

Dr. Karnow's presentations began with the following verse, which Rudolf Steiner gave to Dr. Ita Wegman in December, 1920.

*The human being is a bridge
Between the past and future existence.
The present is a moment; moment as bridge.
Spirit grown to soul in matter's husk
Comes from the past.
Soul growing to spirit as seed encased
Journeys toward the future.
Grasp future things through past ones
Hope for evolving things through what has evolved.
So grasp existence in evolving growth;
So grasp what will be in what exists.*

This image can serve as a bridge as well to contemplating the second major topic Dr. Karnow offered in his keynote addresses. The first theme, described in the Spring 2008 issue of *Gateways*, considers what mood of soul the teacher must develop in order to understand and serve the child. We need to cultivate selfless emptiness so the being of the child can speak into us and guide us in what to do. We must shed our sympathies and antipathies, our expectations and judgments about the child. We let the development and experiences of the child resonate within us and then guide us into future action on the child's behalf. We do not label. We develop reality-based thoughts formed not on abstract ideas, but upon what we observe.

This leads to the second major theme, observation of the child as a threefold being. Dr. Karnow described that Rudolf Steiner worked for thirty years before he shared the content of his thoughts on the threefold organization of the human being. These are ideas we need to work with more and more seriously, as this threefold picture is the motif of our work. This gives an approach to understand the **time structure** of the human life so we can begin to know what to do. When we are working with the "difficult" child, we are struggling

to understand the threefold nature of the human being.

This time structure and the threefold human being are discussed in *Riddles of the Soul*. Rudolf Steiner perceived through his years of research that the human being has three aspects which find expression in both the physical body and in soul activities. There is the nerve-sense system (including the brain and nerves), the rhythmic system (including the heart and lungs), and the metabolic-limb system. These are the physical expressions of this threefold nature. Connected to these systems are soul activities of thinking, feeling, and willing, respectively. The physical base for thinking is the nerve-sense system. Feeling, emotional life, lives not in the nerve-sense system but rather in the rhythmic system. In conventional psychology, everything is assumed to function within the nervous system, but Steiner's observation-based research said that this is not so. Feeling life lives in the rhythmic system. Willing activity lives in the metabolic-limb system. Steiner states:

*Just as, when something is mentally pictured, a nerve process occurs upon which the soul becomes conscious of its mental picturing, and just as, when something is felt, a modification of the breathing rhythm takes place through which a feeling arises in the soul: so when something is willed, a metabolic process happens, which is the bodily foundation for what is experienced in the soul as willing (Steiner, *Riddles of the Soul*, 133-134).*

The *whole* physical/physiological human being is the basis of the life of soul, not just the nervous system. For those active in Waldorf education, to make the above observations may seem commonplace. We speak of thinking, feeling, and willing all the time. But Dr. Karnow emphasized it is important that we consider these deeply; these are vast ideas and profound insights. Truly understanding the development and expression of thinking, feeling,

and willing can be the “foundation stone” for the teacher’s work.

Rudolf Steiner further explains that thinking, feeling, and willing develop in the course of time. Aspects of these physical and soul processes, which operate in time, permeate the whole human being; yet each system is also identified with a physical region as well. The head, the physical center of the sensory and nervous systems, has its concentrated development during the first seven years of life. The trunk and rhythmic system have focused development, leading toward maturity, in years seven to fourteen. And development of the metabolism and limb system is the focal point between the ages of fourteen to twenty-one, when the body fills out and develops muscles and a solid physical form.

While this development, which we can physically see, is occurring, there is also development occurring for an “invisible” human during these seven-year periods. From birth to age seven, the etheric body—the body of formative forces—is growing and molding the physical body. From seven to fourteen, the astral body—the body of consciousness, of sympathy and antipathy—is educating the feeling life. Then from fourteen to twenty-one, the I or ego force is working to grow and strengthen independent thinking forces which can flow into deed through the human will. When each of these “invisible” bodies has completed its work in these ways, it is liberated for new tasks in the soul life. These soul elements of thinking, feeling, and willing are not only rooted in the physical body but undergo liberation and transformation when bodily processes complete their phases of development. The energies which have been dedicated to physical growth become available for new processes in the soul life. Specifically, the first seven-year period completes the forming of the child’s physical body through the activity of etheric growth forces. Then the forming activity is transformed into powers of thought.

This is described in the first chapter of *Fundamentals of Therapy* by Rudolf Steiner and Ita Wegman:

Forces functioning in the ether body are active at the beginning of the human being’s life on earth—most distinctly during the embryonal period—as the forces of formation and growth. During the course of earthly

life a portion of these forces emancipates itself from this occupation with formation and growth and becomes forces of thinking, just those forces which, for the ordinary consciousness bring forth the shadowlike world of thoughts.

It is of the utmost importance to know that the human being’s ordinary forces of thinking are refined form and growth forces. A spiritual element reveals itself in the forming and growing of the human organism. And this spiritual element then appears during the course of later life as the spiritual power of thought.

That which forms the body comes to a level of completion and is now available to be forces that allow us to have content in our mind. We have a visible human being forming—the physical body which we can experience with our physical senses. As this attains completion in its formation, the “invisible” human being is being born. The true bridge spanning the past into the future manifests only when the invisible I or individuality is born. Before the birth of the I, everything is from the past. Our capacity to think comes from the transformed forces that have formed and grown the physical body. How we think is grounded in what type of form we have accomplished in the physical body. If we can observe and understand the *form* of the body, then we can develop windows into understanding how thinking, feeling, and willing manifest themselves. The physical human being has a physical physiology; the invisible human-coming-into-being also has a soul-spiritual physiology. As we observe children’s behavior, we are actually talking about an anatomy of the soul. This anatomy of soul is rooted in the physical body, in the substance of the human body.

Now Steiner takes this picture of the threefold human being yet a further step. He points out that each of the seven-year periods has within itself a threefold aspect as well. He states in *Soul Economy*: “One can recognize such seven-year periods throughout the entire course of human life, and each of these periods again falls into three clearly differentiated shorter periods” (110). The big seven-year phases mentioned above follow the developmental motifs of nerve/sense system, rhythmic system, and metabolic/limb system respectively. Yet within each seven-year period, there is a mini-recapitulation of these developmental

motifs.

Since our work as early childhood educators is primarily concerned with the time from birth to age seven, we will use that as the focus for our consideration here. From birth to two years and four months, development concentrates upon the nerve/sense system and is most visible in the development of the head. From that point until four years and eight months of age, the rhythmic system is in the forefront, and changes in trunk are the visible physical expressions of development. In the final stage, which lasts through the seventh year, the maturation achieved in the metabolic/limb system shows itself through structural changes in the arms and legs.

From this physical picture, let us return to consideration of what is happening with the “invisible” soul development for the child. When this growth task is completed, the etheric forces become available for use by soul activities. Steiner states: “Now, at the end of the first seven-year period, most of these etheric forces are released to flow into the child’s soul and spiritual nature.” He points out that

*. . . a supersensible contemplation of man will reveal to us, apart from his physical body, another finer body which we have called the etheric body or the body of formative forces. From this etheric body spring not only all the forces sustaining nourishment and growth, but it is also the source of the faculties of remembering and of making mental images, of ideation. It becomes an independent entity only during the change of teeth, at which time it is born in a similar way in which, at physical birth, the body is born from its mother. This means that up to the change of teeth the forces of the etheric body are entirely working in the processes of the child’s organic growth, whereas after that time—though still remaining active in this realm to a great extent—they partly withdraw from these activities. These released forces of the ether body now begin to work in the soul realm of mental picturing and memory, as well as in the many other nuances of the child’s soul life. (Steiner, *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education*, 110).*

When the etheric forces have achieved a certain completion in growth of the physical body, those forces are liberated for the soul activities of thinking, feeling, and willing. With each visible, physical

completion come changes in the behavior and consciousness of the child. This is true for each full seven-year cycle as a whole and also for the threefold divisions of each larger cycle. As the etheric body completes its growth tasks, this body of formative energies becomes available for soul activity in thirds as well. So we will see changes in consciousness, emotional and will life in distinct thirds within each seven-year period, too. The more we study human development, the more we will be able to observe the changes in consciousness that correspond with physical developmental completions. The changes in physical form will guide us into knowing whether different soul capacities have been liberated for the tasks of school, for example. If the physical development is incomplete or atypical, as will often be true with the “difficult” child, we can begin to understand why and how there may also be unusual aspects of behavior and consciousness, which are the expressions of the “invisible” human soul. By looking at outward forms of the human body, we practice a special kind of perceiving. Dr. Karnow described this as a flexible “seeing thinking,” a kind of conscious clairvoyance where the thinking is willed into us by the child.

Dr. Karnow emphasized Steiner’s insight that points of physical development and changes in conscious soul life are not only related but are interdependent. If we truly school ourselves to know what these changes are, we will have a map guiding us in our child observation. We must know what is normal and typical for the child and appropriate to each age phase before we can begin to observe deviations or exceptions which the difficult child might present. Knowing the hallmarks of these nodal points is essential in helping us observe whether developmental completion has been achieved and a child is ready to go on to a next step, such as going on to first grade.

A primary source for understanding the threefold division of the seven-year phases is Dr. Bernard Lievegoed’s *Phases of Childhood*. Dr. Karnow has added this volume to the pedagogical “bibles” of *Study of Man and Education for Special Needs: The Curative Education Course*. Dr. Lievegoed took the indications so briefly sketched above and gave detailed descriptions of how these developments are manifested in both the physical body and in the soul life in thinking, feeling, and willing. It

is not possible in this article to do justice to the detailed and precise descriptions he offers to guide the teacher's observation of the child. The book is a masterwork that deserves dedicated study. Below are offered only some of the basic motifs to help us develop a framework for organizing our own picturing of these processes.

Dr. Lievegoed begins by pointing out how the proportion of head size to the rest of the body changes. In a baby the proportion of head to body is 1:4. Up to about two years, the head predominates as the focal point, due to its size. By two years, the ratio has changed to 1:5, and by age six to 1:6. Until a new growth spurt begins at about age two, with growth in the trunk area, the upper half of the baby's body predominates. "The upper half of the body runs ahead of the lower half; the head in relation to the trunk, the shoulders in relation to the pelvis, the skull in relation to the facial structure, the eye sockets in relation to the lower jaw, and so on" (Lievegoed, 31).

From about two-and-a-half to five years, the toddler figure is evident. With the head-to-body proportion now reduced to a 1:5 ratio, growth is seen in the trunk. At this time growth in height occurs mostly through stretching in the trunk region, not in the limbs. There is primarily growth in breadth of the body, with a characteristic large tummy, and the angle at the bottom of the rib cage still flat. On the head, the chin has come more forward and gives the face more expression.

From five to seven years, there is dramatic growth in the limbs, as they grow longer and more slender. A waist develops, the stomach grows flat, the spine develops an S-shaped curve, and the collarbones become more pronounced. Body movements appear more angular and more purposeful. The body develops greater freedom of movement and there is much motor activity of the whole body.

The school-ready child will show physical aspects, as the face begins to change around the age of seven, marking the beginning of a whole new phase. By this time the head to body ratio is 1:6. The eyes, which have been below the halfway line of the head until now, have moved upward, making the forehead less dominant. The eyes now appear smaller in the face and can look expectant and more conscious, observing the world with some judgment. Dr. Lievegoed describes that "the whole impression is

one of slim agility and easy, comfortable mobility, of an elegance which was lacking in the toddler." Children tend to be rather thin at this stage, as well.

There is parallel development of soul life of the little child as well. Up through the first two years at least, the child is an open sense organ who responds through the body to all things that come into her sensory life. Experiences and expressions of pleasure or pain, joy or sadness are body-based. Emotions depend on the state of the physical organism. Behavior is based on drives of the body.

The toddler, in roughly the second third of the first seven-year period, begins to become aware of the world as something separate from her. She is not only influenced by the world but begins to influence it as well. Play arises in an exchange with the environment. The imagination for play arises out of what is in the child's surroundings, not out of an inner imagination which marks the next step of development. The child can respond to the world only in the present moment. She plays with things in her horizon, with what is available *now*. Play can take on a rhythmic quality that seems to flow in an imaginative stream. Behavior is no longer based primarily upon drives. The child at this age loves to live in rhythms which can smoothly carry her along.

With the beginning of the final third, a big change comes in play and imaginative life. The child is able to take a step back from the world and consider it, rather than be so directed by it. Lievegoed calls this "creative imagination," which stands separate from the world and which can imaginatively change the environment as play dictates. The environment is used to create the inwardly-held play imagination rather than suggest or even dictate to the child what to play. Play has a goal directed by the child's will. In practical life, the child begins to be aware of what he can do and be frustrated by what he cannot achieve according to his own expectations. He begins to look to the adults in his environment and to respect them for what they *can do* rather than by what they intellectually *know* or attempt to explain to him.

Dr. Lievegoed summarizes: during the period from birth to seven, the first third is dedicated to developing the foundation of the nerve/sense system of head, senses, and nerves as the foundation for later thinking. At its conclusion, the etheric force births itself from the head region. The second

third shows development in the young child's feeling life and the emergence of creative imagination. The etheric forces liberate from the trunk region at this phase's end. The final third shows development of intentional will, as the child forms an inner imagination which he then executes in the world through his will. The final partial birthing of the etheric forces is achieved when the limbs show the mature and elongated form of the school-ready child.

A general summary relating to each of the seven-year phases from birth to twenty-one is further given by Dr. Lievegoed:

Every metamorphosis in thinking coincides with an important change in the appearance of the head, the expression of the face.

The periods of the changes in feeling correspond to the periods of growth in breadth of the trunk.

The critical periods in the development of the will coincide with moments of growth in height, when the limbs in particular grow much longer.

As shown above, this is certainly true for the first seven years. It also applies to the changes in physical growth and of consciousness seen during the cycles of the school-aged child and of the adolescent.

This consideration began with the image of a "bridge" which connects the past with the future. Dr. Karnow stated that the true bridging occurs with the birth of the I, the true individuality of the human being. What have been described above are all steps along the way to the resounding birth of the I at age twenty-one. How well that event will occur depends mightily upon how each of these earlier steps and developmental phases were completed. As teachers, we are "incarnational" guardians for the children. What we provide for them in early childhood is important for the whole of life, not just for this immediate time during which they are in our care. We serve the children well when we know what archetypal developmental stages are, both physically and in terms of consciousness, in emotional life, and in the expression of the child's will. Only then can we observe when development is proceeding in a healthy fashion and when there are impediments to the incarnation process. If we know the hallmarks of development, we can observe where things are on an archetypal course and where there may be delays or incongruities. If we can observe the match or mismatch of chronological

age and developmental manifestation, we can gain a sense of where the child may be frustrated or stuck in development and gain sympathy for his or her struggles. This opening up to the child's situation can inspire insight into the "difficult" child and guide us to help the child move beyond the obstacle in his or her path.

This series began considering the inner work of the teacher. This educational guardian must strive to develop a selfless emptiness, which becomes an open space into which the being of the child can speak. This second article has attempted to expand our understanding of what is a true picture of the human being in early childhood. This concluding thought from Rudolf Steiner ties these threads together:

*What really matters in education is the mood and attitude of soul, which the teacher carries in his heart with regard to the being of man. . . . What really matters is that each teacher carries within himself a true picture of man and if this picture stands there before his inner gaze, he or she will act rightly, though outwardly possibly in very different ways (Steiner, *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education*, 110).*

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Supporting the Development of Movement in Children Under Three

Renate Long-Breipohl

Two streams are especially important in early childhood, the one which leads to the development of imagination and thinking, and the other stream which is related to the development of movement and will; the stream of connecting with the past, the pre-birth experiences, and the stream into the future, moving forward into earthly life. In working with movement, especially with older children, there is a wonderful merging of both aspects, imagination and will.

The following considerations relate to the steps that children need to have completed in order to happily and confidently participate in guided movement programs such as the morning circle.

In the process of working with issues of movement, the question of what is needed for a healthy development of movement has condensed for me into one single main aspect: **Uprightness**. Rudolf Steiner has placed great emphasis on upright posture as the archetypal human gesture, and my own work with children has confirmed this for me.

In the last decade important publications have appeared related to the theme of movement and young children. A range of different support programs is offered around the world for prevention and treatment of delays in the development of movement. Some of them are used in Steiner early childhood programs in Australia. I especially would like to mention the work of Sally Goddard Blythe and the Institute for Neurophysiologic Psychology (INPP) and her discovery of the connection between “retained reflexes” and learning difficulties of children. This research has gained international recognition and has also influenced the “Extra Lesson” work in Australia. I would like to add to this some more recent research into the development of movement, which has become available in Germany in 2005 and has led to a different approach in movement therapy.

Uprightness: The spiritual picture

Two spiritual processes are at work behind the development of movement in the first three years of life:

- the process of spiritual growth forces working from the head downward in the formation and fine tuning of the skeletal-muscular system and the inner organs, and
- the process of learning to walk, speak and think in which the I works together with the will forces from below upwards.

The spiritual origin of movement is the I, who works in the forces behind movement, as described by Rudolf Steiner in his lectures to teachers (Steiner, *Study of Man*, Lecture 12). The intention to move which originates in the I may become conscious in the human being or remain totally unconscious as is the case when young children learn to stand upright and begin to take their first steps.

The working together of the two streams, the will stream from below and the formative forces from the head down, brings about three important milestones in child development.

First milestone: the acquisition of upright posture

As the child randomly moves arms and legs and at the same time perceives her movement with her senses, the child becomes more and more conscious of her body and able to direct movement. This process moves through the body from the head downward. As the child tirelessly attempts to first bring the head out of the horizontal plane into the vertical position, then the torso and then the whole body, she works with her will and ego forces, which rise up from the lower part of the body.

Second milestone: the change of teeth in the seventh year

Here Steiner describes the co-working of both streams in the form of a “battle” through which a new stage of development is achieved. The battle happens between what he calls the “musical” forces rising from the body and the formative growth forces descending from the head, and serves the process of pushing out the second teeth. The musical forces

then recede back into the body. The etheric head forces are freed, which enables the child to achieve new, more advanced abilities in imagination and thinking.

Third milestone: puberty

Musical forces from below rise up again and meet with formative forces coming from the head in a kind of big clash in the region of the larynx. In this process the changes of puberty occur, and again there is a significant step in the development of thinking (see Steiner, *Balance in Teaching*; Klocek, Chapter 3). Steiner was able to spiritually perceive that growth and development arise out of the working of two opposite streams or forces. In other developmental pictures we are directed only to one stream, that from the head down (the cranio-caudal stream), to the process in which the formative forces take hold of the entire body and work on refining the skeletal-muscular system and the inner organs. Steiner also was the first to see the unique significance of human uprightness in the physical and spiritual development of the human being and in the process of spiritual collective evolution.

Regarding the development of the individual human being, it takes two and a half years to develop uprightness fully, not only one year. It takes all that time for the I together with the spiritual hierarchies to fine tune the skeletal/muscular system, the speech organs and the human brain as physical foundation for the development of the human soul forces of willing, feeling and thinking.

Standing upright at around twelve to eighteen months is only the first step. The entire process is not completed until the hands have reached a certain independence from the lower body and are able to act in accordance with sense perception for exploring the world, and the head is able to be held in balance and becomes independent of the movement of the limbs so that the child can experience thoughts. Uprightness and balance belong together; it is the greatest achievement of the child, if he is able to stand still. Dr. Michaela Glöckler once summarized this milestone with the following words: What are we wishing for in terms of movement achievement by the age of three? The answer: that the child stands with full uprightness in the world, expressing through his posture and gesture: "This I am" (Glöckler, 2002). Up to this

time, according to Steiner, the child is a "hermit" and not yet open to other human beings' will and intentions.

At the age of two-and-a-half the spiritual beings and the higher I start to withdraw after having established the child's orientation in space, his ability to speak and to think. At the same time the child becomes able to separate his impressions of the outer world from his perception of self. In consequence the child reaches a more detached way of perceiving what is around him. This results in more acute observations as to what adults are doing and in a new interest in experiences that adults are offering.

Now the opportunity arises for adults to take on the role of "helpers" in guiding the child further into life activities. This is the time when a more formal movement program or circle time can be introduced.

Uprightness: The physiological picture and therapeutic approaches

According to the model of cranio-caudal development, the child grows "from the head down." The increasing differentiation of the structure of the brain enables the child to develop new movement patterns and skills. Involuntary or uncontrolled movement gradually becomes directional. Yet often this does not happen properly. Research into the sequence of developmental movement patterns has been conducted with the aim of identifying the causes for the increasing number of children with delayed or incomplete movement development. These developmental irregularities are linked back to problems with the hierarchical sequence of processes in the brain and to an inability to integrate sensory and motor activity.

Sally Goddard's research into the phenomenon of "retained reflexes" and her therapeutic approach are based on the hypothesis that all children go through the same sequential pattern of "primitive reflexes." While these reflexes have an important role at a certain point of development, they do become a hindrance for further development if they are retained beyond their time. Goddard designed a developmental movement program with the aim of overcoming these retained reflexes. In this movement program the sequence of reflexes is

repeated in the order in which they are normally occurring and in which they are meant to disappear under normal circumstances. These so-called “floor exercises” are used in Extra Lesson work and to some extent in the kindergarten work as well.*

Through her work with children Goddard has made some interesting discoveries about the vital role of the sense of balance and the vestibular system in the prevention and therapy of learning difficulties. As balance is situated in the lowest parts of the brain, it is fundamental for the development of free deliberate movement. Therefore in her therapeutic program Goddard emphasizes the stimulation of the vestibular system. She was able to produce evidence that musical therapeutic programs clearly benefit children with movement disturbances and resulting learning difficulties (Goddard Blythe, *The Well Balanced Child*).

In 2004 a former co-worker of Goddard, Wibke Bein-Wierzbinski, published a dissertation proving the therapeutic success of a movement program which does not repeat the sequence of primary reflexes, but is based on specific movements which she claims play a key role in movement development. She questions programs based on the theory of repeating all stages of primitive reflexes and suggests that a child may have overcome the primitive reflexes initially, but then at a later time and possibly under stress may have returned to primitive reflex patterns. She suggests that all primitive reflexes may be present in an inactive state within the human being and that they can “flare up” under certain circumstances.

Bein-Wierzbinski proposes that the repetition of the sequence of primitive reflexes should be avoided in therapeutic programs, and that only certain key developmental movements, leading towards uprightnes, should be practiced and reinforced in a developmental therapy. She found that there is a critical age at around four to six months for these

* Originally Audrey McAllen’s program did not include these floor exercises. Neither did she recommend beginning the Extra Lesson program in the first seven years of life. She states that this remedial/therapeutic work should only be done with children older than seven years to allow the etheric forces the full period of early childhood to complete the development of the physical body.

key movements. If they are mastered correctly, they will set the child on a track of subsequent normal development. Bein-Wierzbinski suggests that these particular movements should be practiced and strengthened through therapy.

They are described as follows:

- Firstly a full stretch as occurring naturally between four to six months of age, with the back straight, legs straight, arms straight, head up. The head tilt backwards and the pulled up legs as in the Symmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex should be avoided.
- Secondly a movement with the opposite quality to the full body stretch: bringing the foot to the mouth with the help of the hands. The entire body is curved.

Both movements together form something like an expansion–contraction movement sequence. Bein-Wierzbinski was able to show that if these two movements are performed correctly and frequently, then the process of becoming upright proceeds normally.

In her therapeutic program she focuses on the spine as the area of development of uprightnes. She found that if movement is no longer initiated from the upper body and head but from the area of the lower spine and hips, then the head is able to move or stay still independently of the rest of the body. The whole picture of limitations in movement activity through retained reflexes does not occur. Therefore in her therapeutic approach she uses exercises of leg movements guided by the rotation of the hip rather than the turning of head and shoulder. This will cause a shift of the gravitational point from the upper part into the lower part of the body.

There are now movement therapists in Germany, who are working from Steiner’s indications and have started to work with “Rota Therapie.” Ingrid Ruhrmann focuses in her movement program for children with retained reflexes on a simple set of movements based on variations of turning sideways and rolling over as they naturally occur in movement sequences such as crawling, rotation, sitting, rotation to change direction, crawling in new direction, rotation, sitting, and so on.

In addition she uses Anthroposophical therapies

to strengthen the etheric and astral forces of the child through water applications, nutrition and rhythm. She teaches mothers how to use Rota Therapy at home in a playful way. It is heart-warming that the child before three years can be held on mother's lap during the therapy and thus be in a protected space. Ruhrmann was able to confirm that basic hip rotational movements will stimulate normal development into uprightness.

Existing reflex patterns are ignored in Rota Therapy; the aim is to strengthen the deliberate movement at that crucial point from which movement development will proceed normally.

Supporting movement in young children

If one wishes to enable the child to feel comfortable and free in the upright position, one needs to be able to recognize when development is not following the normal order of steps or when steps are omitted.

Healthy movement at age two-and-a-half should include:

- Upright posture, the child is able to stand still (balance)
- Free head rotation without causing either arms or legs to move
- The head does not tip to the front nor is the neck extended towards the back.
- The arms swing freely while walking
- Movement is intentional
- The hands can be brought together in the sagittal plane at will
- The hands move freely in the horizontal plane, above and below the horizontal midline (butterfly)
- The speed and force of movement can be varied at will and adapted to different situations
- The centre of gravity and the rotation point of the spine is in the hip area
- The face is relaxed while moving, which means that the child does not spend extra effort in maintaining posture and balance (Ruhrmann, 2006).

Uprightness must be regarded as the foundation for all further differentiation and refinement of movements, such as those brought in morning circles. If uprightness and balance are not yet achieved, the child will not be able to fully live into the action/movement patterns of the circle, and will have difficulties imitating the gestures of the teacher and confidently moving within all spatial dimensions.

The steps to uprightness are the young child's work

The child needs time and the appropriate space to practice these. Adults should step back and watch the little ones' progress with love and minimal intervention.

Emmi Pikler's documentation of the development of movement of the children in her care at the Loczy orphanage in Hungary (see Pikler, *Give Me Time*) has shown how the child explores and practices a wide range of movements: rotations, pushing forward or backward, lifting and turning. Through this process the child experiences her own capacities in mastering her body and develops confidence and a sense of freedom.

Regarding the connection between the development of the dexterity of the hands and speech development, Wilma Ellersiek has shown through her hand gesture games how we can support movement development of the very young child, starting on a one-to-one basis (see Ellersiek, *Giving Love—Bringing Joy*).

The life forces are stimulated in hands and feet through gentle hand touching games accompanied by rhythmical speech or song. Gestures such as the opening and closing of the hand, holding and releasing are practiced.

From Sally Goddard's work the need of stimulation for the vestibular system has become apparent and this should flow into our work with young children. Mothers have always intuitively stimulated the baby's vestibular system through gentle rocking. Later the child is rocked on the lap to the rhythms of nursery rhymes. Once the child has achieved the upright position, the child delights in being rocked more vigorously backward and forward, sideways or up and down in a see-saw motion. Swinging up and down or being held by the hands and whirled around will have a stimulating

effect as well. From the third year of life the healthy child will find pleasure in rolling in the grass, jumping and sliding, sitting on a swing, or turning and spinning in the upright position. Many of the traditional outdoor movement games contain vestibular stimulation.

I would like to make the point that in the work with children under three there is no need for a formal movement program as we practice it in the work with children aged three to six in Steiner kindergartens or pre-schools. Whenever one experiences circles in play groups for toddlers, the circle seems to be more directed towards the mothers' experience and learning while the child is "taken along."

In a group situation with children under three, whether in child care or in toddler play groups, the play area is the space for free movement and the child's play time is the movement program. The space, however, needs to be prepared with the possibilities for climbing, for exploring different heights and ways to get up and down. It is a space for practicing differentiated, child-initiated movement. The involvement of the adults in their domestic or craft work will provide an opportunity for children to observe the movements and gestures of the grown ups. The child absorbs these gestures deeply. Some of these may be imitated and reappear in the child's free play.

The adult accompanies the child's "movement work" with warmth, love, and reverence and as much as possible without interference. Steiner's warning not to impose the adult's will on the young child, as this may damage the child's further development, needs to be taken seriously.

We turn now back to the beginning, to the spiritual mystery of movement. It is the I who moves the limbs and thus imprints each child's individuality onto the body movements.

It is one of the most difficult challenges to learn to perceive this imprint of the individuality. The following questions arise:

- How can we learn to understand the individual signature of movement?
- What is the spiritual intention or destiny that expresses itself in individual variations of developmental movement patterns?

- Why are reflexes retained or re-enlivened in a child?
- Why do some people have to live all their lives with retained reflexes?
- What is the lesson to be learned through physical challenges?
- If the physical hindrance evokes a greater effort of will in the child, will this effort later bear fruit?

Holding such questions within and pondering about them, will help to see the child with intensified human interest and compassion. They are the big moral questions of education and of therapeutic intervention. May we never forget to ask these moral questions. Through professional training one can learn to identify patterns in the development of movement. Through inner spiritual work one can become sensitive to the hidden forces behind movement and tune into what wants to evolve as the child's destiny. As Rudolf Steiner says, "To be a teacher and educator one must work with what is taking place in the depths of human nature" (Steiner, *Study of Man*, 67).

Conclusion

How does one educate the young child under three? Rudolf Steiner's answer to this question is very clear. The child educates himself under the guidance of spiritual beings. The adults around the child contribute through their own self-education. The fruits of self-education become visible for the child in the quality of our gestures and these gestures are imitated by the child and work in physical growth and development.

Beyond this the child also unconsciously absorbs movements and rhythms of the earth and the cosmos and these one can see beautifully in the levity and dance-like quality of the movements of the young child. To contemplate how we could work in accordance with planetary forces in movement programs would be a further step towards a spiritually based education of the young child. A quotation by Rudolf Steiner may just hint at the dimensions of this issue.

Our purpose is to imitate, to absorb the movement of the world into ourselves through our limbs. What do

*we do then? We dance. . . All true dancing has arisen from imitating in the limbs the movement carried out by the planets, by other heavenly bodies or by the earth itself. . . The head rests and the soul, being related to the head, must participate in the movements while at rest. It begins to reflect from within the dancing movement of the limbs. When the limbs execute irregular movements, the soul begins to mumble. When the limbs perform regular movements, it begins to whisper. When the limbs carry out the harmonious cosmic movements of the universe, it even begins to sing. Thus the outward dancing movement is changed into song and into music within (Steiner, *Study of Man*, 144).*

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Web resources

- Bein-Wierzbinski research: www.paepki.de
Rota Therapy: www.rota-therapie.de

The Stars Are Brighter in Your Peripheral Vision, Part II

Working Towards a Constitutional View of the Epileptic/Hysteric Polarity

Adam Blanning, MD

When development is closely observed it is always dynamic. What do we mean by dynamic? We mean that it is moving, in process. While modern science loves nouns and labels, facts and numbers, development really happens in verbs. This poses a real challenge, of course, because it is easier and safer to stay with the labels, the descriptors, but that rarely helps us know what we should do. When we can begin to live into the process then we can understand the *origin* and the *healing* of a developmental imbalance.

In Part One of this article, the constitutional polarity of the epileptic and hysteric process was explored (please refer to the Spring 2008 issue of *Gateways* for the full picture). In the epileptic

process the physical and etheric bodies are not yet able to serve as an adequate vehicle for the higher members because they are too dense. Because of this density, these children’s relationship to their environment is “numbed,” as the astral body and I are trapped inside. They then have to work hard to break through that dense barrier and truly connect with the world around them. Out of this dynamic process—one in which there is a continuous damming up and then breaking through of the higher members—we can understand why these children wake slowly in the morning. We can also understand why they may not be ready to meet and digest food, or sensory impressions, until late in the day. Waking, reintegrating the astral body and

I after sleep, is a laborious process and takes time. Strong sensations—big physical movements, rough play—may help to speed up this process, just as you might shake and bang your leg when it has fallen asleep from sitting too long. We can see the epileptic process expressed in how a child sleeps, eats, and interacts, in many different aspects of their daily life.

The child with a hysteric process does not get stuck; however, he or she overflows. Instead of the physical and etheric bodies being too dense and locking in the higher members, here they offer too little form and boundary. Everything is felt and noticed, and therefore has to be paid attention to. Where in the epileptic process it is long and laborious to make healthy contact with the environment, now there is way too much contact. The child has difficulty releasing the environment. This manifests in difficulty falling asleep; then in the morning, the child is immediately awake and aware of the environment again. And since everything flows in, it is actually easiest for the hysteric child to digest food in the morning. This is because by the end of the day, the “sensory diet” has overwhelmed his or her digestive capacity, and food nourishment is simply too much to handle. The social interactions of a child with a hysteric process may be excessive, even invasive, and the child truly finds it difficult to rein in all of these sensations and interactions.

After looking at the developmental polarity of the epileptic and hysteric process, after looking at its phenomenology (physical, physiological, and spiritual), we can hopefully start to appreciate why a child acts a certain way. But we can't stop there; we need to move to the will sphere and look at what we can practically do. Making observations about a child is a rich and wonderful process, but it is important that its fruits also flow into daily consciousness and activities.

This step from observation to implementation can be a daunting one, and always needs to be considered carefully. On the one hand, casually applying judgments about constitutions and polarities is a dangerous business, because we can again easily get caught in the world of nouns. “Epileptic” can quickly become just a label, like ADHD, or opposition-defiant, or, or, or. . . But if our observations can stay in the realm of careful, reverential focus and consideration, if we can

imaginatively live into the dynamic of a polarity, then our study will bring great gifts. If our study of the child is infused with love and interest then we will be guided in the right way.

One open and loving gesture we can make in order to begin thinking therapeutically about a child is simply to say, “What does this child crave?” The child is usually showing us exactly what he or she needs. It is safe to say that the kinds of experiences small children regularly seek out (when we remove the artificial influences of modern media and too many labor-saving devices) express exactly what they need.

To summarize again, briefly: if a child's borders are numb and hard to penetrate (as we may see in the epileptic process, in which the astral and ego organization have trouble coming into, and then through the physical and etheric bodies to meet the environment) he or she will often seek out *big movements*, with *strong experiences of touch and gravity*. In a way, with each strong movement, each gravitational encounter, such children are creating a little seizure-like process to help themselves break through. Steiner says that this process is confirmed if the child has problems with vertigo, or dizziness, in which the entire sense of one's body in space, in relation to gravity, is disturbed. This numbed relationship with the environment may manifest itself on another level as well, in that these children's moral sense is weakened or absent. They are stuck inside their bodies (literally ego and astral inside of physical and etheric) and cannot meet the other—their “social” sense of touch is numbed. So then the child who greets you like a bulldozer, or who never seems to be able to have a social interaction without physical contact, may well be repeatedly healing his or her own epileptic process. The timing and form of the interaction is often inopportune (and disruptive), but the underlying intention is healthy, and actually really a seeking-out of healing experience.

If a child's borders are loose, porous, overflowing (the hysteric process, in which the sensitivity of the astral body extends far beyond the physical borders of the body) then the child will try to find ways to rein in the astral body. This generally also involves an increase in stimulus, but instead of seeking a sensation of strong touch or gravity, the child with a hysteric process likes rhythm and surprise.

Rhythm, in that they are better able to collect and feel themselves when things are accelerated; surprise (the word Steiner actually uses is shock, “Schockwirkungen”) to contract and focus.

In *Education for Special Needs*, Rudolf Steiner describes these therapeutic, healing experiences as follows. For the epileptic process:

If you find this to be the case [symptoms of vertigo], let the child do gymnastics or eurythmy, but giving him always at the same time objects to hold, such as dumb-bells or the like. . . If you give the child two dumb-bells of exactly the same weight—you must have them weighed on a chemical balance—and let him do exercises with them, making eurythmy movements, or other gymnastic movements, this will be one thing achieved. Then you can go on to something else. Let the child hold in his left hand a dumb-bell that is lighter than the one in his right, and once more do exercises; then let him take in his right hand a dumb-bell that is lighter than the one in his left, and once more do exercises. Then tie some object—it need not be particularly heavy—to one of his legs, and let him walk about with it, so that he becomes conscious of the force that is pulling at his leg. When he walks in the ordinary way, he is not conscious of the force of gravity. It is, however, important for him to place himself, with his ego organization, right into the force of gravity (Steiner, Lecture 3).

And for the hysteric process:

Anything in the environment that may cause even a slight shock to the child—if it originates in the unconscious, in the temperament of the teacher—must be avoided. And do you know why? Because the teacher must also be capable of inducing shock consciously and deliberately; shocks are often the very best remedy for these conditions! They take effect, however, only if they do not proceed from unconscious habit but are given consciously and deliberately, the teacher watching intently all the time to observe the effect on the child. . .

Try to bring the work into a quicker tempo. . . The fact that the child is at this moment compelled to come into his state of anxiety, compelled to enter into an experience that has been artificially promoted and is different from the previous one, brings it about that he strengthens within him, consolidates with him, the ego and astral body that are trying to flow out. If you

repeat such things systematically with a child, over and over again, a consolidation of ego and astral body will take place (Steiner, Lecture 4).

One of the kindest gestures one can make to a small child in the classroom, is to observe the children with real interest and attention, try to find out what experiences they are seeking, and then provide the opportunity for those sensations in a formed, consciously-held, and socially affirming experience. In a way, it is trying to find the child’s itch and respond to it before he or she needs to scratch it. What could possibly be a more loving and enriching social gift?

The following article by Nancy Blanning includes a movement journey/circle time written with precisely these two constitutional polarities in mind. It offers some special gifts of its own:

- The esoteric needs of the child, from both the epileptic and hysteric sides of the polarity, are directly addressed and met.
- The activity is playful and imaginative. In contrast, one could imagine a weight machine of a very “modern” design with asymmetric weights, or a sing-along DVD that would shockingly speed up and then slow down its rhythms. That would perhaps meet the most mundane physical requirements of the two therapies, but it would hold no invitation for further incarnation, no artistic breathing, no archetypal pictures from the spiritual world. It would address only the coarsest aspects of the child but not help teach and encourage the higher members to do the balancing on their own.
- The circle time is fun, and has great humor. The children will be met, and engaged, and simply enjoy what they are doing.

Adam Blanning, MD lives in Colorado where he works as a school doctor and anthroposophic physician for the Denver and Boulder communities. His special passion is finding ways to meet, support and encourage the incarnation pathway of the young child.

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Incorporating Movement for the Epileptic/ Hysteric Indications

Nancy Blanning

In many ways we already incorporate movements into our circle times that express the indications Steiner gave for these polarities. Whenever we vary tempo, particularly when we accelerate movement and speech to create a little bit of tension, we are giving a therapeutic gesture for the hysteric-inclined child. One could picture that with a particular child for whom this little “shocking” is intended, the child could be next to the teacher. The teacher’s calm, firm urging to “hurry up” will support the child in being “shocked” to make the shift in tempo. In general, whenever we alter the tempo, quickening or slowing down, we are offering healing experience for the hysteric constitution. For all children, the shift of pace is fun and offers opportunity to develop restraint and impulsive control of full body movement. Variation in tempo also provides a kind of breathing in the circle activity, the importance of which Steiner describes to us in the first lecture of *Study of Man*.

For the epileptic inclination, Steiner describes in *Education for Special Needs* that we want to bring the child into conscious relation to gravity. In subtle ways we do this whenever the child jumps off of something to the floor. The impact into the feet

and legs makes us more aware of body weight and the fact that we are propelled downward by gravity’s pull. The following movement journey, “Lazy Jack,” is unusual in that it employs beanbags; we do not usually carry anything or use props in our movement imaginations. This was done very consciously to emphasize the experience-of-weight element which Steiner suggests, but is something we would employ selectively.

There can be other opportunities besides circle time for giving a chance to feel weight. One favorite “game” I play with my students, which could be a small part of a movement imagination or even offered at outside or free-play time, is what we call “Erie Canal.” Using the old American folk song I remember from my childhood, the imagination is one of carrying heavy bags of grain onto a boat, which will deliver the grain downriver. A beam is propped up onto a stool or small platform, creating an elevated ramp that the child climbs up. Held in his hands or slung over one shoulder is a beanbag of anywhere from two to ten pounds in weight. I sing the song, which has a measured, slow pace to set the tempo, while the child carries the bag up and drops it onto the boat (that is, onto the floor over the edge of the stool). The child can jump off the stool or descend down the beam to get the next bag. This is repeated until all the bags are loaded. An individual child could repeat this several times; with a group, each child could carry one bag until all are loaded. When the boat has reached its imagined destination, then the bags can be unloaded and carried down off the ramp as well.

Children have loved this game. It seems to give a very satisfying feeling of experiencing one’s body through the proprioceptive (sense of self-movement) pull of weight in the limbs and in feeling related to the earth.



Lazy Jack

A movement journey based on the English tale from Jane Yolen's
Favorite Folktales from around the World

Composed by Nancy Blanning, 2008

Note: Movements in this journey were specifically chosen to incorporate indications, given by Rudolf Steiner in *Education for Special Needs*, to assist children who lean toward the constitutional polarities of epileptic/hysteric. How these apply to young children is described in the Spring/Summer 2008 Gateways article, "The Stars Are Brighter in Your Peripheral Vision," by Dr. Adam Blanning.

Preparation and equipment: Two beams of 6-8 feet in length will be needed to create ascending and descending beams. These are propped up on opposite sides of a **jump box** or very stable stool (possibly a piano bench), so the children can climb up the beam on one side and then descend down the other. A **blue cloth** will be laid upon the floor as a "brook" to be jumped over. Sufficient **bean bags**, ideally of 1½ to 2 pounds each, are needed so each person participating will have one to carry.

There was a lad named Lazy Jack

*Jump and make eurythmy /k/ gesture on "Jack,"
kick right foot forward and hit floor with heel.
Arch arms over head as roof.*

Who lived with his mother in a dreary,
poor shack.

The poor woman made her living by
spinning.

*Balance on left foot, move right as though
treading, arms moving in circular motion to
suggest spinning wheel.*

But Jack just lay in the warm sun
grinning.

Standing still, look upward, grin.

At last she said, "I've made up my mind.
You must get work or a new home find!"

*Stomp foot for emphasis.
Cross arms on chest, nod head.*

So Jack went out to the world that day
Over the hills and far away.
Slowly up hill, quicker down

*Ascend one beam, come down the other side,

Slowly up, quicker pace down.
(Repeat as many times as necessary to
accommodate the whole group's passage across the
beams.)*

He found work with a farmer
Who paid him a penny round.
But jumping o'er the brook he lost it.
"Jack," said his mother, "always put it in
your pocket."

*Gesture digging, raking, pitchforking, etc.
Circle thumb and finger round.
Jump over blue cloth; gesture dropping the coin.

Gesture this action.*

REFRAIN:

A B A G A B A
Jack, oh Jack, you silly lad.
G G G G E G A G A G
What shall you do so things will not go bad?
A B A G A B A
Traveling through the world you go,
G G G E G A G
Shall you now go fast or slow?
A B A G A B A
Traveling in the world at last,
G G G E G A G
Will you go now slow or fast?

Another day he milked a cow,

His pay a jug of milk right now.
He grinned and poured it in his pocket
just so,
But when he got home there was nothing
left to show.
“Oh, Jack,” said his mother, “don’t do just
what I said.
Next time carry it on your head instead.”

REFRAIN *song as above*

Another farmer he did please
Who gave Jack a nice cream cheese.

On his head he carried it.

It melted in the sun.
Cheese and cream down his face
In rivulets did run.

“Oh, Jack,” said his mother, “This I
cannot stand.
Next time, for goodness sake, carry it
in your hands.”

Sung while group circles around

holding hands.

Vary speed between faster

and slower, with some

unpredictability.

*Gesture milking—fingers curling in one at a time,
index finger first, to squeeze out milk, alternating
hands.*

*Curl left arm to suggest pocket,
right hand gestures pouring into it.
Arms held open with empty palms.*

Place both hands on top of head.

*Hand each child a bean bag while
these two lines are spoken. Repeat as necessary
until all are handed out
Place bean bag on head and balance it there while
walking in circle. Repeat so everyone has at least
10 steps.*

*Index fingers trace lines down face, eyes down to
chin. Tip head forward to slide bean bag off head
into hands*

*Hands held out together, palms
upward, in carrying gesture.*

REFRAIN song

Next he helped the baker who
Gave him an old tom cat.
The cat did not sit still at all
But jumped and clawed and spat.

“Not in your hands,” his mother said,
“But tie it with a string.
Pull it along behind you
To home then bring.”

REFRAIN song

Then he helped a butcher
Who gave him a piece of meat.
He tied it to a string
And pulled it home through the street.

Said Mother, “You’re a ninnyhammer,
Jack.
Carry it upon your shoulder like a great
big sack.”

REFRAIN song

On Monday he was paid a donkey for
his work.
To lift the donkey to his shoulder Jack
did not shirk.
He staggered on along the lane
Until to the rich man’s house he came
Where there lived a pretty girl
Who always was so sad.
Said her father, “I will marry her to
Whoever makes her glad.”
She could not laugh or hear or speak.
She could not even make a peep.

*Walk around in circle form without
holding hands. Each carries her own bean bag.
Set pace according to how hard the bags are
to carry.*

Hold bean bag in upturned hands as the cat.

*Begin to shake the bean bag, tossing and catching
it as children can, letting it fall to floor on “spat.”*

*Hands, palms up, held open.
Tying gesture
Right hand extended back to gesture
pulling something along.*

Walk in circle holding bags.

Hold bean bag out as the meat.

*Place bean bag on floor and hold on to one corner
of the bag, leaning down to drag it a short
distance. Leave it on floor to free hands for
next gesture.*

Arms open in exasperation.

*Motion as though slinging a sack up on one’s
shoulder. Leave bags on the floor, circle around
holding hands.*

Do donkey kick 3X (see below)
Each pick up a bag from floor
Put bean bag up onto one shoulder to carry it
as the donkey.
Bend under the load, stagger along.
Continue to walk slowly through this stanza.*

But Jack and the donkey were so silly
to see,
She laughed and she giggled and spoke
with glee.

The donkey Jack put down.
They were married that day.
Now all the village can dance and play

*Place bean bag on the floor.
Everyone joins hands to dance
around in a circle.*

REFRAIN *with revised words:*

Jack, oh Jack, you silly lad,
All has turned out well,
Things did not go bad.
Traveling through the world you go.
Shall you now go fast or slow?
Traveling in the world at last.
Will you go now slow or fast?

*Dance around with varying speed
as before.*

Now we all can use a rest.
Lying on the soft ground is best.

*Everyone lies down for a resting
interlude. Sing lullaby if desired.*

* **DONKEY KICK:** *Bend over and place both hands on the floor. Kick your feet up behind you, holding weight on your hands. The donkey would kick up both feet together at the same time. This is ideal, but kicking up the legs one after the other in a kind of frolic is fine, too. The important aspect in this exercise is that the body weight is borne by the hands and arms and then that some pressure is brought into the feet, ankles, and legs as the body tips back down onto the feet. Rock back and forth between arms and legs bearing the body weight as the donkey would.*



News from WECAN Publications

Several of our newest publications fill a need for more resources concerning work with very young children. Helle Heckmann's ***Childhood's Garden*** shows a thoroughly thought-through way of caring for children from ages one through seven in a group setting in Copenhagen, Denmark. The one-hour DVD and accompanying booklet strive to demonstrate the reasons behind each practice chosen, all with the goal of creating a healthy environment for the children. Photographs in this issue of *Gateways* are black-and-white versions of images from the book, which is in full color.

Creating a Home for Body, Soul, and Spirit: A New Approach to Childcare by Bernadette Raichle is "terrific," according to Rahima Baldwin Dancy, who says: "In describing the Awhina Day Nursery and Kindergarten she founded in New Zealand, Bernadette gives many descriptions and practical tips about attending to and strengthening the four 'sheaths' of any home or childcare facility: she calls them the physical, etheric, soul or astral, and ego sheaths."

A Warm and Gentle Welcome: Nurturing Children from Birth through Age Three is a collection of articles from a diverse group of authors, all of whom share a deep concern for understanding and honoring the needs of the first three years of life. Nancy Parsons (of Bob and Nancy's) writes: "What I love about *A Warm and Gentle Welcome* is that rather than simply saying that we must recreate our world from scratch, the authors one by one address modern necessities (for instance, the fact that many mothers quite simply must work outside the home in order to help provide for their family and children), and offer suggestions and approaches for working with them out of their own successful experience. For me,

this is an invigorating, health-giving breath of fresh air, one which I believe will serve our children and world very well indeed. In this book is hope, and the direction and help to make it a reality."

Professional Review and Evaluation in Waldorf Early Childhood Education addresses another need: that for clear and useful procedures in the realm of professional development. This companion volume to *Mentoring in Waldorf Early Childhood Education* offers warm encouragement and many practical suggestions from two experienced teachers and mentors, Holly Koteen-Soule and Patricia Rubano. A useful set of photocopy-ready forms is included at the end of the book.

In the coming months we expect to publish several exciting new books on a wide variety of topics. ***Meeting the Needs of the Child Today*** will collect the lectures from the summer 2008 international conference in New Hampshire. ***Dancing Hand, Trotting Pony***, the fourth volume in the series of gesture game books by Wilma Ellersiek, is in two parts: first a set of delightful games focusing on finger play, and then a section of animal games, sure to become favorites with children. A preview of ***First Grade Readiness*** appears in this issue with Ruth Ker's article on page 7. This much-needed resource will be edited by Nancy Blanning. Finally, ***A Day Full of Song*** by Karen Lonsky offers 40 original songs in the mood of the fifth created for many activities of the kindergarten day, from grinding grain and raking leaves, to washing hands and cleaning, to story time and birthday celebrations.

For a current book catalog, contact WECAN at 845-352-1690 or mlyons@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

Helle Heckmann Announces 2009 Teaching Tour

Helle would like to offer her experience in child observation, in developing a rhythm, in working with parents and colleagues, and out of this have a dialogue with teachers. In addition, she can also offer parent or public talks on Friday evenings, and Saturday workshops on a variety of themes. She can also meet parents with burning questions individually for ninety-minute consultations. She will be touring the United States from mid-October through December 2009, beginning in Seattle and working her way down the coast and across the country, staying up to one week in each location. Contact Vanessa Kohlhaas at butterflygarden@gmail.com for more information on available dates and daily rates.

Calendar of Events

Conferences

February 6–8, 2009 in Chestnut Ridge, NY: **WECAN Early Childhood Conference: Developing the Eyes to See—Deepening our abilities to serve the children in our care** with Dr. Gerald Karnow. Dr. Karnow will return to the conference this year and continue the theme of observing young children through threefolding as described by Rudolf Steiner in *Study of Man (The Foundations of Human Experience)*. He will explore how this threefolding informs our way of seeing and gives us direction in serving the children in our care. Registration opens November 24. Contact Andrea Gambardella, Conference Coordinator, 516-801-4344, agambardella@waldorfearlychildhood.org, or see www.waldorfearlychildhood.org.

February 14–15, 2009 in Eugene, OR: **Pacific Northwest WECAN Conference: Insights Into Child Development—Pre-birth to Seven** with Dr. Johanna Steegmans. This conference, the first of a three-year cycle with Dr Steegmans, will focus on the child from pre-birth to three and will offer an opportunity to all who wish to deepen their understanding of the developing human being in the light of anthroposophy. As well as our colleagues in school settings, especially invited to attend are childcare providers and home preschool teachers. Contact: Annie Gross, 250-537-4644, anniegross@gmail.com; Holly Koteen-Soule, 206-528-1702, hollysgarden@qwest.net.

February 15–18, 2009 in Fair Oaks, CA: **Western Waldorf Educators' Conference: The Art of Education in the Light of Contemporary Scientific Evidence** with Christof Wiechert. Early Childhood Mini conference: Keynote speaker Dr. Adam Blanning. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 ext. 117, earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

April 18–19, 2009 in Vancouver, BC: **Healthy Family Conference: Honouring the Young Child**. Contact: lifeways@gmail.com.

April 25–26, 2009 in Fair Oaks, CA: **Celebrating Family Life** with Shea Darian, DeAnna L'am and other keynote speakers, plus three dozen workshops on family life and Waldorf education. Contact Rahima Baldwin Dancy through www.waldorfinthehome.com or call 303-546-0070.

June 29–July 3, 2009 in Denver, CO: **Building the Moral Sense**, Early Childhood Therapeutic Conference. Presenters include Dr. Adam Blanning, Nancy Blanning, Laurie Clark, and Marielle Levin. Contact Dr. Blanning at adamblanning@hotmail.com.

Workshops and Short Courses

December 6, 2008 in Keene, NH: **Creative Discipline: Strategies for Guiding Two and Three Year Olds in Developing Successful Social Behaviors** with Susan Weber and Nancy Macalaster. Growing up from infancy to the pre-school years is a journey that begins in being part of the whole world and gradually leads to becoming a powerful individual. It is a time in which we as adults must determine appropriate boundaries, rhythms, and expectations for our children. At the same time, we must help them navigate the significant changes that come as they grow, and support the development of their new social skills. Conflict is a normal element in this process, and this workshop will explore the distinction between conflict and aggression. Contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603 357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

December 13, 2008 in Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Felting Gnomes and Crystal Caves** with Mikae Toma and Renate Hiller. Contact the Fiber Craft Studio, fibercraft@threefold.org or 845-425-2891.

January 2–4, 2009 in Saratoga, CA: **Storytelling Forum and Workshops** with Nancy Mellon. On Friday, January 2 Nancy will present “Meeting Henney-Penney : How to Turn A Negative Around” at the Kindergarten Forum. Panic, confusion, depression, angst and emotional conflicts of all sorts are encoded secretly in the picture-language of many of the most popular children’s tales. Discover how to tap into these pictures to make up new rhymes and stories with the children in your care, and for your personal benefit. On Saturday, Nancy will give a workshop on her recent book, *Body Eloquence*, and on Sunday a workshop for grandmothers. Contact Anna Rainville, 408-872-1456 or annarainville@aol.com. See www.Kindergarten-Forum.com for more information.

January 3, 2009 in Fair Oaks, CA: **Family Ways—Rhythms and Routines** with Simone Demarzi. How to set up rhythms to support healthy daily life. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 ext. 117, earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

January 15–19, 2009 in Chestnut Ridge, NY: **The Agriculture Course—An Intensive Study of the Origins and Future of Biodynamics** with Mac Mead, Steffen Schneider, and Malcolm Gardner. For students or practitioners of Biodynamic gardening, a chance to revisit Steiner’s original lectures in a stimulating group setting. Not an introductory course. Contact Mimi Satriano, 845-352-5020 x15, mimi@threefold.org.

February 7, 2009 in Fair Oaks, CA: **Family Ways—Creating Festivals with Young Children** with Cynthia Lambert. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 ext. 117, earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

February 28, 2009 in Fair Oaks, CA: **Flowers and Animals: The Soul of the Backyard Garden**. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 ext. 117, earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

March 7, 2009 in Fair Oaks, CA: **Family Ways—Strong Willed and Wonderful: Working with Today's Children** with Nancy Poer. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 ext. 117, earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

April 4, 2009 in Fair Oaks, CA: **Family Ways—Working with Discipline** with Veronica Gunesekara. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 ext. 117, earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu.

April 6–10 in Arizona: **Walkabout Tales** with Suzanne Down. An Easter mood immersion in the art of meditative walking and writing story. We will invite the muse to inspire us through our walking in nature. Then we will create puppets to tell our healing earth stories. Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts, 1-888-688-7333 www.junipertreepuppets.com, suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com.

July 5–10, 2009 in Duncan, BC: **The Joys & Challenges of Working with the Older Child in the Kindergarten** with Ruth Ker and Barbara Klocek. Included: Observation of the 6-7-year-old • Discipline, Imitation & Authority • Building the Social Fabric of the Mixed Age Kindergarten • Meeting the Challenges of the Older Child in the Day, Week and Year • Handwork for the Older Child • Games • Circle • Story Development • Building Inside & Outside Environments. Contact Ruth Ker, 604 748-7791, info@westcoastinstitute.org.

May 2, 2009 in Fair Oaks, CA: **Family Ways—They Don't Come with a Manual! Parenting Today** with Lauren Hickman. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 ext. 117, earlychildhood@steinercollege.edu

July 12–17, 2009 in Duncan, BC: **The Journey from Kindergarten to Grade One** with Ruth Ker and Nancy Blanning. Included: How Do We Have Accurate Observations of the Six-to-seven-year-old? • The Nature of the Change of Teeth • What is Readiness? • Readiness Assessments • Working with Parents • Activities That Help Teachers Recognize Readiness • Traditional Games

and Movement Journeys • Puppetry • Obstacle Courses • Scooter Boards • Nature Experiences. Contact Ruth Ker, 604 748-7791, info@westcoastinstitute.org.

Training Programs

April 20–29, 2009 in Vancouver Island, BC: **Six-week Full-time Professional Training in Puppet Theater**. Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts, 1-888-688-7333 www.junipertreepuppets.com, suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com.

June 29–July 17, 2009 in Keene, NH: **Sophia's Hearth Family Center Early Childhood Summer Institute and Training Program**. New courses for summer 2009 on working with parents with Carol Nasr Griset; Creating an Outdoor Environment for Young Children with Jane Swain, Marjorie Rehbach and others; Nurturing the Young Child with Susan Weber, Jane Swain and Marjorie Rehbach; new session of our Training Course—The Child and Family in the First Three Years. See website for full information or contact Bonnie Chamberlin, 603-357-3755, bonnie@sophiashearth.org.

July 6–24, 2009 in BC, Canada: **Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Training**. First summer session of a two-year, part-time course of study in Waldorf early childhood education intended for practicing early childhood educators who wish to deepen their knowledge of Waldorf education. Each year, three weeks in July, and one week each in the fall and spring. Contact Dorothy Olsen, 604-740-0539 or Marjorie Thatcher, 604-985-3569, info@westcoastinstitute.org.

Summer, 2009 in Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Applied Arts Program, Sixth Cycle begins**. The Applied Arts Program, a professional development opportunity for Waldorf handwork teachers and aspiring teachers, explores the art, philosophy, practice and pedagogy of teaching handwork. The course meets in the Fiber Craft Studio on the Threefold campus for two weeks each summer and one week each winter for four years. In their time together, students and teachers form a learning community that supports their artistic development as well as their spiritual and practical striving. Contact fibercraft@threefold.org, 845-425-2891.

Please submit calendar items for May through December, 2009 by April 15 to Lory Widmer, publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

Gateways

A Newsletter of the
Waldorf Early Childhood Association
of North America

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Issue 55

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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.

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