

Gateways

Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America ♦ Issue 66, Spring 2014

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285 Hungry Hollow Road
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(845) 352-1690 / Fax (845) 352-1695
info@waldorfearlychildhood.org
www.waldorfearlychildhood.org

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Editor Nancy Blanning

Editorial Advisor Susan Howard

Administrator Melissa Lyons

Copy Editing & Layout Lory Widmer

Calligraphy Dale Hushbeck

Cover Art "Cherry Blossom Crowns"
by Sheila Harrington

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About the Cover Artist:

Sheila Harrington is a painter, illustrator, and graphic designer whose work ranges from print design to painting to museum exhibition graphics. WECAN publications for which she has created graphic design and/or illustration include *You're Not the Boss of Me*; *Creating a Home for Body, Soul, and Spirit*; *Eurythmy for the Young Child*; *Nurturing Children and Families*; *A Lifetime of Joy*; and several volumes of the *Gateways* series. Her recent paintings, cards, and illustrations can be seen at sheilaharrington.org; graphic design and other work at studiosdc.com. Sheila's blog *Each Day Is a Celebration*, sheilaharrington.org/EachDay, features work from her years of sketchbooks.



From the Editor

— Nancy Blanning

A human life is a great panorama, one that extends even beyond the thresholds of birth and death. As we are privileged to know through Anthroposophy, the intention of development begins long before the physical birth—even before conception—and extends after physical death. The in-between time that we call “life” is marked by rhythmic, seven-year phases leading to the transformation of consciousness and consolidation of new capacities and strengths.

We early childhood educators are naturally most interested in the time from birth to seven, and our focus on even more specific stages within this phase has greatly intensified in recent years. The first kindergartens cared for children from about three-and-a-half to six, with the oldest turning seven. Now, to these “traditional” mixed-age kindergartens are sometimes added two- and three-year-olds; other groups provide special care for very young children from birth to three; and we have separate nursery groups of three- and four-year-olds. At the other end of the spectrum, in Europe and some parts of Canada we see “Grade Zero” and Senior Kindergartens with only six-year-olds. We see “specialties” emerging, as we concentrate our study to learn as much as we can about the age group in our care. This is our mandate as early childhood educators.

But as we specialize, our concentration can cause us to lose touch with the complete picture of the growing child. Concentrating upon a more age-focused view can divide the child into chronological slivers. The child turning four is still the same child on her birthday as she was as a three-year-old the day before. The six- or seven-year-old entering first grade is likewise the same child he was on the last day of kindergarten the previous spring—though continually growing and changing toward becoming a full-fledged school child. The chronological age does not make the child instantly ready to sit at a desk. Like the mainstream world, we need to constantly hold in mind that *the child is flowing in a developmental stream* rather than resting in confined segments.

Knowledge of previous development will help us to understand the child in this moment. Knowledge of the gesture the incarnational path leads toward will help us anticipate for the future. We can better help to prepare the way, whether the child will remain with us or pass into the care and guidance of another teacher.

Toward this end, this issue of *Gateways* is dedicated to the theme of **Continuity of Development**. It is important that we understand what phases and points of awakening the children have moved through up to the moment when they come into our “specialty.” It is important that we know what they are moving toward and preparing for after they leave our group. This way we can help each one stream toward the future and pass with greater ease through developmental transitions that can pose challenges for the child—and for the others around them.

Understanding of the child’s path to incarnation can also smooth the major transition from kindergarten to first grade. It is a gift to the children if we can develop a caring transfer with the first grade teacher. Study of this transition with our grade school colleagues can help develop a collaborative picture of the child we see leaving the kindergarten and walking through the door of the first grade classroom in the fall. What is an objective picture of the child? Deepened knowledge speaks objectively. Teachers in both kindergarten and the grades can benefit from a sharing of our different perspectives.

There is an additional challenge facing the educational world now. Increasing pressure is coming from the mainstream world to enroll children in grade school at younger ages. This pressure is especially heavy in Europe and is also impacting Scandinavia. To protect the children, their childhood, and their future health, we must become as articulate and knowledgeable as possible to explain the nodal points when transition consolidates into true maturation. The children’s future will be put at risk if their developmental needs are ignored.

A momentous event is being prepared for the week before Easter, 2015 in Dornach to address these questions. **Transitions in Childhood—from Birth to Fourteen**, a world teachers' conference, will be hosted at the Goetheanum, bringing together educators working in Birth-to-Three, Kindergarten, and Grade School and Middle School. We will have the concentrated opportunity to learn more deeply about the whole continuum of development through the nine-year-change and beyond, up to the beginning of adolescence.

A more detailed announcement of the conference is on page 29 of this issue. Please work to send at least one Early Childhood educator and one Grade School teacher to attend from your schools. This conference, sponsored jointly by the International Association of Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE) and the Pedagogical Section, is groundbreaking in bringing so many aspects of the child's education together.

In the year leading up to the conference we will be dedicating this issue and the next *Gateways* to this important theme, in order to help refresh and expand our picture of incarnational development. In this issue, the lead article is provided by Claus-Peter Röh, co-leader of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum. He offers an overview of the whole range of the child's development and how we teachers can develop more astute and sensitive observation skills through Anthroposophy. Susan Weber then describes the often-unrecognized vulnerable state of the three-year-old in a limbo-land between toddlerhood and preschool, while Daniel Udo de Haes offers insight into how the world "speaks" in archetypal images to the very young child. Stephanie Hoelscher gives us some lovely peeks into the world of her nursery class, with actual examples of children displaying their intense commitment to grow up and out into the wider world. The four- and five-year-olds, the heart of our mixed-age classes, are Lisa Gromicko's focus. How do we sufficiently enjoy and honor who they are? Finally, Louise deForest reminds us of the nature and

needs of the six-year-old growing toward first grade.

"For the Classroom" includes two contributions by Laurie Clark, who gives examples of how she supports the sense of taste and nutrition with snack in her classroom, followed by a delightful movement circle inspired by the honeybee. A song by Ilian Willwerth that adds new fun to the activity of jumping rope is also included, from the recent WECAN publication *Merrily We Sing: Original Songs in the Mood of the Fifth*.

Continuing the musical theme, another recent publication, *The Mood of the Fifth*, edited by Nancy Foster, is featured in a book review. This book has articles from colleagues who have deeply studied this musical domain so important to our work with young children. There is something for everyone—from the basic introduction to what *mood of the fifth* is through more detailed considerations. Thanks to Jill Taplin and our UK sister journal, *Kindling*, for making this available to our readers.

On a more somber note, there is a tribute to Monica Grudin, an early childhood educator from New Paltz, New York, who crossed the threshold this last Michaelmas. She was a wonderful colleague deeply loved by her sister teachers and community, and *Gateways* is privileged to honor and celebrate her life in this way. And so, this issue of *Gateways* truly spans the panorama of life. We go from the three-year-old "stepping away from the Madonna's cloak" to passing through the gateway of death with Monica, assisted and honored by her loving community.

If we were each asked, "What is the most important time in a child's education?" and answered honestly, we would likely each say, "The time that I am teaching!" And we would all be right. Each moment *is* the most important—at that specific time and place in the child's development. If this issue of *Gateways*—and the next issue this autumn, which will feature more informative and inspiring articles—helps us appreciate that life is a stream of "most important times," continually building upon one another, then these pages will dance with happiness. ♦

Transitions as Developmental Dynamics Between Dissolution and Rebirth

— Claus-Peter Röh, translated by Karin Smith

This article originally appeared in the Pedagogical Section Newsletter of the Goetheanum, in anticipation of the international conference “Transitions in Childhood—From Birth to Fourteen,” which will take place at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland from March 31 to April 3, 2015. For more information about the conference, please see page 29.

Starting from birth, there are three different streams mutually permeating each other in the child’s development:

- If we observe small children, we are amazed to see how they express their inner being through movements, gestures, sounds, gaze, and facial expressions.
- These lively expressions emerge from the innermost core of the child and are closely connected to the growth of the organism; there is harmony between soul qualities and physical development.
- The small child can be seen as one complete sense organ; this is the reason why he absorbs all external sensory impressions entirely, and, by the power of imitation, is deeply connected with his surroundings.

These three aspects permeate each other, and it is at this interaction point that the child develops day by day. The spiritual element radiates outwards towards the soul and is thus closely connected to the physical body and its surroundings. However, despite all the movement, we also notice phases of consolidation within the child’s temporal development. In these phases, the child incorporates new experiences and recently acquired skills into an existing framework, and by doing so, the experience in turn strengthens the child.

So, on the one side we see phases of consolidation, but on the other side we observe dynamic phases of metamorphosis which strongly influence the child’s development. New, unsettling impulses lead the child into transitional phases with their own dynamics of transformation, but also sensitivity and insecurity. The intention of the conference that will take place just before Easter in 2015 is to explore the qualities, dangers and possibilities of these phases of transition and re-birth.

Anthroposophical perspectives on transitions

There is a dynamic relationship between Anthroposophy and the changes and turning points in child development. To start with, I want to consider the three stages of metamorphosis described by Rudolf Steiner at the end of lecture three in *Balance in Teaching* (September 21, 1920): conscious studying; meditative and repeated processing in order to “digest” and deeply understand the content; and, as a third step, remembering the anthroposophical view of the human being during teaching, which leads to new, creative impulses and activities.

To sum up, the three stages may be connected to the following qualities:

Studying Anthroposophy—

Conscious thinking perception

Meditating Anthroposophy—

Repeated intimate contemplation

Remembering Anthroposophy—

Actively creating new impulses

At the moments of transition from one developmental step to the next, when the child changes on the inside and on the outside, we are faced with the challenge of moving from stage one to stage two of the process described above. How do we achieve the transition from ordinary thinking and observation to a streaming way of thinking? The child’s inner being brings forth metamorphosis, and we can only discern this inner being if our cognition becomes “fluid,” as it were. If this does not happen, then there is a danger that we remain on

the surface of observation. Rudolf Steiner encourages teachers to develop a precise insight into transitional moments.

Because of the scientific mindset that has ruled for the past three centuries, nowhere in contemporary civilization do we find the kind of intimate observation that sees the fine and delicate changes in the human soul or body organization. Consequently, people have little to say about the important changes that have occurred in the child's whole physical organization, such as those that happen at the change of teeth, at puberty, and again after the twentieth year. These changes are mentioned, it is true, but only as they affect the actual physical body of the child or are expressed in the soul's more superficial dependence on the physical body. This would require much more delicate observations (The Roots of Education, p. 19).

Steiner describes a series of exercises which practice these kinds of delicate observations. They follow a certain pattern: through inner, flowing activity, we must strive to lessen the distance between ordinary thinking and profound observation and thus achieve true intimacy and deep cognition.

These exercises are based neither on superstition nor merely on fantasy, but on clear thinking and deliberation as exact as that used for mathematics. They lead human beings to develop a capacity for thought in a much more vital and active way than that found in the abstract thinking of people today . . . Once we have condensed and concentrated our thoughts by means of the exercises mentioned, we experience spirit in such a way that we no longer have the abstract feeling, which is so prevalent today, that objects are far from us. We get a true sense of them that arises from practiced, concentrated thinking (The Roots of Education, p. 25).

Exercises for observation and imagination as a bridge to active, vital thinking

Let us consider the so called "cloud exercise" as described by Rudolf Steiner in *Practical Training in Thought*. He suggests to carefully observe some phenomenon at a certain time of day, for example cloud formations at the time of sunset. The observation should be retained in memory in all its details. Next day, the cloud formations are observed at roughly the same time. Thus, a series of concise cloud formation images is built up. Do not interrupt the connection to the phenomenon with quick, intellectual interpre-

tation or speculation but rather try to increase your awareness and retain as much detail as possible. If you achieve an intimacy with the reality of the clouds, then you can try, as a next step, to merge the pictures into each other, from one day to the next. There is a twofold movement within this process: First, avoid any speculation, focus your attention completely on the phenomena and retain it. Then, consciously, seek to move from one cloud picture to the next, as inherent in the nature of clouds. This movement emerges from the clouds themselves and is not invented by you. After some repetition, this exercise leads to:

- Higher awareness
- Awareness of quick, speculative thinking
- Trust in the union of phenomena
- Fluid, vital thinking which is closer to reality

These effects are possible because worldly events, through intense inner activity, bear upon the astral body and thus also upon the ether body.

To the extent we insert ourselves into the course of the world through observation of the events in the world and receive these images into our thoughts with the greatest possible clarity, allowing them to work within us, to that extent do those members of our organism that are withdrawn from our consciousness become ever more intelligent. If, in the case of inwardly connected events, we have once acquired the faculty of letting the new picture melt into the preceding one in the same way that the transition occurred in nature, it shall be found after a time that our thinking has gained considerable flexibility ("Practical Training in Thought," p. 10).

Here, Steiner describes a training in thought and observation which goes back to Goethe. It does not take place outside objects and phenomena, but rather at the core of life's processes.

The child at the age of three

Bearing in mind the above, let us now consider the transitional phase at the age of three. The child's senses are still very much open, just as they were in early childhood; this can be seen when the child is completely lost in perception as in the following situation:

In late autumn, the child watches in awe as an adult is pushing a wheelbarrow full of dry leaves. The next day, the child pushes her own little wheelbarrow full of dry leaves alongside the adult. The child is comfortably absorbed in imitation. The adult,

needlessly, comments on the child's action by saying: "It's really nice that we are both pushing our wheelbarrows today." These direct words interrupt the child's active will. She stands still and says decidedly, "Both of us—and me!" Then, she carries on with the work.

A few days later, there is a second incident:

Walking through town, the child recognizes the streets; she realizes that she is close to the market square and suddenly wants to go there. The mother, however, wants to go somewhere else and the child protests angrily, "No! No! I don't want to go there!" The child is seized by a strong will which shows itself to the point of stamping and shaking. (Unfortunately, most adults have lost the ability to say "No" with such vehemence.)

A short while after the third birthday, there is a new phase in the described transitional period:

After a moment of contemplation, the girl asks with a serious expression: "Mama, how does God make hair grow? Does he sprinkle some grain on the head?"

In summing-up, the three incidents can be described as follows:

- The will to imitate is interrupted for a moment and sparks an instant of self-consciousness
- Anger flares up in a moment of defiance
- The child imaginatively weaves two pictures into a question

We understand the dynamics and relevance of the transitional phase better if we now try, from the child's perspective, to merge one image into the next. The child is still utterly devoted to her surroundings; however, this devotion is interrupted from time to time, in varying degrees, by an emerging self-consciousness. During peaceful, quiet moments, the emerging self-awareness turns inward and new questions arise. These are relevant for the child within her new relationship to the world and often appear as imaginative pictures. The parents have the impression that the quality of the earlier, natural devotion and imitation has changed: out of the inner will, little by little, self-consciousness and self-awareness emerge. This first feeling of self-awareness expresses itself in various ways during the transition period. There are moments of quiet contemplation, moments of energetic action, and sudden outbursts of anger.

The above depiction leads to a deeper understanding of the three-year-old and, as an inner consequence, shows the way forward: The child's own strong powers of development can unfold best when parents and teachers don't interfere directly, but rather when they create imaginative surroundings worthy of imitation including:

- Purposeful activities
- Lucid language
- True and sincere human encounters
- Artistic and musical activity, whenever possible
- A kind understanding for the true being of the child as it emerges step by step

Rudolf Steiner sums up the meaning and responsibility of the educator's attitude with the words,

We have to be aware that we cannot influence the child with words of advice or by setting rules but only by what we do in the child's company (from an untranslated lecture, February 28, 1921).

The child as the basis for education and curriculum

The child's maturation can be experienced in the transition periods when the child is changing, as new forces grapple with existing ones and the young person is seeking safety on diverse levels. The better the caregivers understand the child's true being, by way of observation as described above, the more agile their observation and thinking becomes, and the better they are able to find educational guidance within the child herself.

Each teacher should be permeated by a living comprehension of the human being . . . Those who develop this possibility within themselves, who configure their spirit in this way, make themselves alive in a different way in regard to developing children, even in large numbers. They gain the capacity of reading the curriculum from the nature of the developing child (*The Renewal of Education*, p. 86-87).

In this sense, the term *curriculum* does not describe a complete program, but rather the realization of what the child needs for her development. If the educator implements what she or he perceives as the child's need, then a kinship grows between development and activity; this kinship has strengthening and encouraging significance. I want to describe the "reading" of the child a bit closer now, focusing on various phases during the change of teeth at the age of six or seven. Let us start

with the kindergarten teacher's perspective:

It is early summer and all the children are putting their wellington boots and coats on to go outside. While the teacher is helping some of the younger children, two boys are standing by the door, uncharacteristically hesitant. The older one, who's already lost some teeth, says, "Let's go to the shed and talk about lightning and such!" He starts to run and the younger one follows. Towards midday, they both sit quietly and watch the puppet show. The younger one is quickly absorbed in the images of the enacted fairy tale while the older one shifts between serious, wakeful, questioning expressions and complete immersion.

When the teacher hears the words of the older one she remembers other, recent incidents: how he withdrew from games, the lengthening of his body, the look of suspense and the emerging of the second set of teeth. All this creates an overall image of deep transformation. She becomes aware how new, strong impulses arise from deep within and change his experience of the world. Rudolf Steiner describes this kind of transformation:

... the remarkable physiological conclusion of childhood occurs, when hardening makes its final push and the permanent teeth crystallize out of the human organism. It is extremely interesting to use spiritual scientific methods to look at what lies at the basis of the developing organism, what forms the conclusion, the change of teeth. However, it is more important to follow what I have just described, the parallel spirit-soul development that arises completely from imitation.

*Around the age of seven, a clear change in the spirit-soul constitution of the child begins. We could say that at this age the capacity to react to something quite differently than before emerges. Previously, the child's eye was intent upon imitating, the child's ear was intent upon imitating. Now the child begins to concentrate upon what adults radiate as opinion, as points of view (*The Spirit of the Waldorf School*, p. 139).*

When the teacher and her colleagues discussed this particular boy and the way he had changed, they visualized his position in a kind of "tidal zone," between imitation (which still gave him a sense of security) and the impact of his new self-awareness. The encounters with the boy and the contemplation of his position helped the teacher to develop a new attitude towards

him: She addressed him with clearer words and gave him new tasks and responsibilities within the daily kindergarten routine. It was clear for everyone involved that he was ready for school. For the younger boy, the decision to let him start school was only taken in May, when his teeth start to change and new skills emerged. After a further three months marked by more changes, both boys were admitted to first grade.

The transition of the seven-year-old: a battleground for diverging forces

Let us now look at the transition period, described above, from the perspective of teaching.

A few days after the start of the school year, the new first grade children happily enter the classroom. All eyes are on the teacher. The children are engrossed by her words which lead them to the choral recitation of the morning verse and further on to singing. This is followed by a few chosen words from a longer verse. It seems that the teacher's language opens a gate through which the children enter into their own world of imagination. The teacher now adds some gestures to the verse, these are readily imitated by the children. They become one with the language, rhythms, imagination, and movements. The younger boy described above is still very much absorbed by the pictures and copies the teacher's gestures out of a childlike, subconscious will to imitate. The older boy seems more awake and picks up some of the subtle nuances of the gestures. His speech is also more purposeful, he pronounces individual sounds with more certainty. Later, the teacher asks the children for their memories of yesterday's fairy tale; the older boy remembers the pictures and actions with ease.

As a notable tendency, the teacher experiences the children's increasing need to transform their outer abilities and skills into new, inner ones during the first few weeks of school:

- A profound listening to the words of the adults
- The harmony between beautifully spoken words and carefully led movement
- Imaginative inner pictures
- Being absorbed in stories
- Remembering what was told or happened the previous day
- Independent execution of tasks

The sum of these emerging inner soul qualities describes the re-birth of the etheric forces which free

themselves from the connection with the child's physical growth. With the help of careful observation and daily reviews, the teacher now becomes aware of what the children are looking for and need day by day. She thus understands and realizes the *inner curriculum* for this age group. Furthermore, she develops a more and more finely tuned perception of the children's *individual differences*. To the individual eye, the time of transition presents itself as a battleground for existing and newly emerging forces: the older boy is drawn to the new inner soul quality of imagination and memory; he needs to be encouraged to join in schoolyard games and to physically move enough. The younger one, on the other hand, who still runs, jumps and plays a lot, needs powerful stories and strong pictures to find his way to inner resonance which will eventually lead to the ability to remember. Rudolf Steiner describes this inner battle between existing and emerging forces:

Here you have an interplay between soul and body that is quite real; the soul emancipates itself in the seventh year and begins to function—no longer in the body, but independently. At this point, those forces that come newly into being in the body as soul forces begin to be active. . . Then whatever radiates upward from the body is thrust back, whereas the forces that shoot downward from the head are restrained. Thus, during the time the teeth are changing, the most severe battle is fought between the forces striving downward from above and those shooting upward from below. The change of teeth is the physical expression of this conflict between the two kinds of forces: those that later appear in the child as powers of reasoning and intellect, and those that need to be used particularly in drawing, painting, and writing (Balance in Teaching, p. 15-16).

The qualities of the transitional period around the age of six and seven can be summed up as follows: Comparing this phase with the changes in the three-year-old child, we see a more complex picture now. The early abilities for growth and imitation are transformed, but at the same time they remain side by side with new forces. Continuation, liberation, transformation, and re-birth completely permeate the young person—the inner spiritual aspects as well as physical growth.

The child's individuality is the conductor of these complex processes. On the one side it moves deeply into the physical body but at the same time it opens up completely new possibilities for the soul. The child's individuality now faces the teacher's individuality on an increasingly conscious level. We will discern the

child's true being if we improve our ability to think in fluid, perceptive ways and thus incorporate various perspectives and observations in one bigger picture. The complexity of the child's transformation at the age of six and seven forms the basis for Steiner's description of spiritual cognition in *Balance in Teaching*.

In spiritual science nothing can be characterized without approaching something from different sides and then combining the different aspects into one comprehensive view. Just as little as a single tone comprises a melody can a single characterization be enough for what spiritual science describes. You must characterize from different angles (Balance in Teaching, p. 44).

If we indeed achieve the ability to describe, and deeply understand, a child's or a group's *melody of development* based on a series of observations then we may learn to read therein the true curriculum and implement it in distinct educational steps. ♦

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Claus-Peter Röh is co-leader of the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, based at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. He was a class teacher for many years in Germany.

The Middle Place: Moving into Three-year-old-ness

— Susan Weber

The following thoughts are drawn from keynote addresses by Susan Weber at the WECAN East Coast Conference in February, 2012, and at the WECAN Rocky Mountain Regional Conference in March of the same year.

Why are we focusing on the three-year old child?

Through a puppetry vignette at this conference we have received the picture of a child building a home, building an earthly mansion, a distinct physical body for this earthly incarnation. It is our fortune to be on the earth in our times at an extraordinary place in the evolution of consciousness. We have been coming through the consciousness soul, to awaken our individualities. There have always been gifts and challenges at any time of incarnation. Yet looking at the painting of the Sistine Madonna with faces of the children in the clouds can bring to mind what extraordinary courage these children have in coming to the earth in our times. If they have that much courage despite the challenges that lie ahead, the least we can do is be there to receive and support these children on their journey.

How do we help each human being find his individual path to this personal mansion of the human physical body? The gift we give is offering the context and opportunities for him to find his way to who he is and what he has come to earth to do. We have ourselves biographical moments when we feel we have aligned in recognizing our chosen task in coming to earth. Sometimes we take the right fork in the road, sometimes a detour. From Anthroposophy we know that each person does have a destiny and has pre-earthly intentions. Each human has a reason to come to the earth. What a gift it is to hold this picture and to be in relationship with the child to see his gift. Obstacles are part of the journey, making us resilient. But obstacles always want to be manageable and want to be carried in relationship with other humans. The reason we come to the earth is to meet one another. We have come to encounter one another. It is not always easy but it is the relationships that make us human. This is the grounding anchor in the world: re-

lationship.

At Sophia's Hearth, as they were caring for groups of young children, the teachers began to see the children moving into three-year-old-ness. They saw that something very important was happening in this three-year place. How can we understand this developmental moment?

If we look at the child from birth to seven (illustrated with a horseshoe curve drawn on the board), we can see that this time span can be divided into three parts. From birth to two and 2/3 years, the past and heritage from the spiritual world are still raying in. Pre-birth experiences stream in through this first period, and this never happens again. From four and 1/3 years to seven years, the future is raying in; children begin to anticipate. Seven to fourteen as a future phase begins to make itself visible. This segment looks to the future. Five-year-olds begin looking toward going into first grade.

Then proceeds coming into language. When language comes to birth, the child needs the possibility to connect herself to the world of archetypes that was experienced before birth. The sheaths, the nest, are echoes of archetypes of pure realities of life before birth. Wetness, lightness, flames are all archetypes from the spiritual world. These give the child reassurance in being on the earth. We need to become like a little child and enter into the archetypes. We want to have wholeness, caveness, waterness, so children can play in the archetype and have the language to go with it. This is the realm of the toddler.

The young child is also living with uprightness in language. The young child needs language filled with morality, with the ethics of truth. Adults create a mood and listen to the child so the child can speak into the respectful space of self-initiative. When the

child falls and hurts himself, he needs someone to acknowledge and comfort. We should not push away when his authentic voice is striving to come forward.

As life's task is to come to "Know Thyself," leading up to this vulnerable moment of three-ness, we support the child's self-knowing in many ways. We can provide clarity of form in the child's environment. Everything in the physical environment is ready, with things in order the same way every time. This builds the forming of thought. The caregiving processes are still all one-to-one with the child of this age. We are not sculpting a group of children. We are not holding these little ones as a group yet.

We have the possibility to support the child in another way. At age two the question of social life opens. The child pushes out against the world to create more space for his emerging individuality. The self has to define itself and take many different initiatives. His question is how to find himself and he needs to have space to not be distracted from this task. Adults have to find an artistic way to respond as the child expands outward. If he wants something someone else has, we say, "You want this and the other child wants this, too." This statement acknowledges and does not try to tell the child he is feeling something different from what he really is.

With the infant everything happens one-to-one. The adult is in the center doing all the care giving activity with the child. If we go to the other end, as the children grow, the teacher moves more to the periphery. The children become more interested in their friends. Their focus of interest is in the other children.



Photo from SeaHeart School, Costa Rica, courtesy of Louise deForest

With the older children, the adult moves to the periphery and the child carries the center within himself.

Right in this middle point, the three-to-four-year-old is neither fish nor fowl. He still needs lots of one-on-one time. Children should be independent out of joy, not out of duty. But when a three-year-old is vulnerable, he can easily unravel. This age needs all the nurturing and building of sheaths that we can offer. The three-year-old still needs bodily care and one-on-one time to feel whole.

This place in the middle—years two and $2/3$ to four and $1/3$ —stands alone. As the child moves toward three, there is a moment when Rudolf Steiner says the first thrust of the I comes in. This is not the first time that the I has been active. The eternal individuality of self has been active all along from the midnight hour. But we are talking about the moment when the child says "I" to herself, and then a certain door closes. Total accessibility to the spiritual world closes and the child now stands on her own. The future is not yet revealing itself. The child of this age is not held by the past nor called toward the future. In this place the child is extremely vulnerable. If the first years have gone well, consolidation of development will slip into daily life.

How can we observe if what has come before has gone well? Signs that the first years have gone well are:

- *The child will have fluid, healthy movement. She can walk and jump with sturdiness.*
- *Self-care is in place. The child can dress, toilet, and feed herself.*
- *The attachment process has come to a natural conclusion. Attachment begins at birth, peaks at one year, and keeps active through the second year. The Madonna's cloak begins to fall away and the child can step out on her own. The child begins to relate to other adults directly without the mother mediating. A signal of this accomplishment is when the child begins to call by name the caregiver who is not the primary attachment figure. The child is also moving away from one-on-one care to becoming part of the group.*
- *The child speaks and uses speech as interaction, which a two-year-old may not do.*
- *One has a sense that the child knows that the world is good. The child has experienced that "the world is good to me."*
- *The child has moved beyond instinctive willing and resistance into self-initiated will activity. The period of defiance has completed its intention so the child can*

move smoothly into the next phase of development leading toward the future.

We know, as described in *The Spiritual Guidance of the Individual and Humanity*, that the spiritual world guides the child's development for the first three years and then steps back. Then Lucifer and Ahriman can begin to influence the child and discord enters. We see that these influences are active in children at younger and younger ages. Today's children can have elements of both dreamy large-headedness and premature awakens at the same time, since these Luciferic and Ahrimanic influences have been given earlier and earlier access to the children through our current lifestyle. The consolidation we hope to see may not occur if some interrupting experience or consequence of destiny intrudes. Then aggression, chaotic disorganization, and anxiety can result. If we look to observe where development was interrupted, we can help the child reconsolidate, refigure what was not completed in the past.

This is a crisis between three and four. The child needs to be very close to us, still in a one-to-one relationship. In that time there is not yet the "held-ness" of the group. There is a turning-inside-out phenomenon occurring for the child. As things are turning inside out, the child begins to look to the adult ever more for social guidance. This self-initiative time of birth-to-three can turn itself inside out to move toward social interaction in the future. Self-protection and rhythm made or broken in the first three years begin to show itself during this crisis. Those children who did not have sensitivity of care and the possibility for freely-initiated activity become anxious. There is anxiety because the I is not rooted well enough into the body. Simple daily rhythms can help accomplish this. The I may not have penetrated as deeply as it has needed to.

How can we help the children at this time? We help them most by recognizing the special nature of this time period of transitioning from spiritual guidance to earthly guidance. A caring adult is needed as guide in this earthly world during this void. A story of two three-year-olds having a fractious time settling into play gives example. The two children wanted to build a train. They had language skills but could not negotiate socially how to proceed. They needed the adult to step in and offer guidance. The adult entered their play as a "signal person" who actively gave directions in their train yard. The play for these two three-year-olds settled and the adult could then step back.

The child needs the chance to develop freely-initiated

compliance. This needs lots of time so the little ones can stream along into what comes next. When we have pulled them along faster than their maturity can support, we have awakened something prematurely. We see this in toileting. Not having completed the toilet learning process shows that something remains incomplete from the first three years. This can also show as anxiety about feeding and eating. We want feeding and eating to come out of self-initiated activity. If we are directing whether the child is full or not, then the child cannot learn this for herself.

Free, self-initiated compliance grows out of imitation. It is very hard for adults to work primarily in this way. But if the children act through imitation, their will is being guided. It takes great confidence and courage on our part to strive to truly work out of imitation. Of course there are moments when we guide and instruct. There will occur a moment with the six-year old when she needs to be able to do what needs to be done, even if it is not her favorite moment, when the adult must be more directive. But it is through imitation that the child can come to act out of her own joy in the work.

The true immunization of our times is the act of supporting healthy integration of the self, to enable the soul-spirit to come into the physical and etheric bodies. We need to develop the capacity to meet fear and unpredictability. We must be flexible models of adaptability filled with joy for the children to see.

Our hope is to give to the child the possibility of carrying forward all that lives in him from the spiritual world—the archetypes—so he can know himself and can meet the world from that possibility. The child, through this activity, will have so much joy out of these processes that he will not retreat from consciousness but will step out into consciousness.

We allow the child the possibility to develop the capacities mentioned at the beginning of the lecture by honoring the children in these ways—with rhythmic care, not rushing, and recognizing and honoring the child's individuality. ♦

References

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Susan Weber is the Director of Sophia's Hearth Family Center in Keene, New Hampshire. She regularly presents the work of Sophia's Hearth—as well as themes relating to the very young child—at local, national and international conferences.

The Two Worlds of the Child

— Daniel Udo de Haes

*The following is an excerpt from the book *The Creative Word: The Young Child's Experience of Language and Stories*. Formerly available as *The Young Child from Floris Books*, it has recently been revised and republished by WE CAN. In this chapter, Daniel Udo de Haes touches on the child's experience of the spiritual archetypes that Susan Weber refers to in her article.*

Clearly, it will be meaningful to immerse ourselves in young children's experiences of their surroundings only if we try to awaken a vivid inner awareness that we, too, once bore within us the foundations of our soul-life from the spirit-land from whence we came.

In the child's environment, we discover two distinct realms. The first is the natural world, which in the home is present through pets, houseplants, or the elements of earth, water, and so on; the second is the human realm, full of man-made things, which forms quite a considerable part of the world that surrounds us.

It is gratifying that many parents feel how important it is for children to be allowed to find an intimate relationship with the things around them. As far as nature is concerned, consider, for instance, the substance with which children have such a special connection—water.

The ability of the child to live in two worlds, which we described in the last chapter, has a close affinity to the life and nature of an amphibian, which both lives in water, its world of origin, and on dry land. This amphibious aspect of soul-life appears—more clearly in the toddler than in the child of kindergarten age—in all that the little one observes and experiences; but water is particularly important. What the little child can experience both in and with water is nearly limitless, and it is wholesome for children to play freely with water. With this attitude, we see the harm of scolding such as “Look now, what a mess you have made!”—which nullifies the joy and also the deeper effect of the play and makes children feel that they have done something “bad.” Many parents now even consider such games as pottering about in the garden with water or with the mud of a rain-puddle to be a blessing for these little ones. Others will now and then give children a bowl of water so that even indoors they can play with this wet element to their heart's content.

It can be a joy to see children absorbed in his play, and as its therapeutic value for their development comes to be more appreciated, it will be seen as an essential and matter-of-course part of the care and education of children.

As a second example, we may take the wonderful substance that combines the fluid properties of water and the hardness of earth—pure, white sand. We can rejoice in the adult who makes a small sandpit in the garden or even in the living room, where children can enjoy the forming and pouring of this wonderful substance.

In contrast to the sense for the substances of nature, a relationship with man-made objects helps children feel that their own journey from heaven to earth has already been accomplished by the whole of humanity and is still taking place. Where nature offers beacons which show the way, man-made things are signposts left by those that have gone before—and these also speak deeply to the child's soul. They can be the simplest things, large or small—for instance, little pieces of cloth of various colors (where not only the colors but also an enveloping quality may be experienced), or a bowl and spoon, or a bucket and spade, or a small jug or cup, and so on. With the bucket or cup, the importance lies in the image of taking-up and letting-go, receiving and giving away again of the precious substance contained in these man-made objects. This experience addresses moral qualities and aids in their unfolding.

In this larger human context we may return to two earlier examples, which have a twofold message to impart. The sphere or ball made by a human being, whether it be as ornament, plaything, or for some other purpose, not only speaks to toddlers' unbroken connection with the heavens, but can facilitate a

dreamy absorption in the spiritual origin of all mankind. In contrast, we may see how the adult whose soul has become a “shrine,” and has made cupboards, or shrines, on earth, can show the way to children in their recapitulation of evolution. The child in search of individual selfhood can also feel a part of humanity as a whole. Older children, who to a certain extent have already gained their independence, like to have their own cupboards to keep their treasures and secrets.

In examining ordinary, man-made things like a table, a chair, a knife, a fork, a book, it will be seen that every object has, beyond the practical reasons for its existence, roots in a deeper reality—and these are experienced profoundly by the little child who observes the object and what it does. Of course, we are here considering only simple, elementary things, and not

technologically complex objects, where the deeper reality is obscured and often less favorable.

We can understand why it is the most “everyday” manifestations, those we pass by without noticing, that so boundlessly enthrall our young children, who quietly behold what they disclose. For children to be able to call to life all the good that they bring from their heavenly home, and for these gifts to thrive, depends not only upon our loving and understanding care, but also on the quality of the surroundings in which they grow up. ♦

Daniel Udo de Haes worked for many years as a teacher in an anthroposophic institute for children with special needs in Zeist, Holland. He died in 1986.

Scenes from the Child's Garden

— Stephanie Hoelscher

The Child's Garden of Orchard Valley Waldorf School in Vermont is home to two early childhood programs on its own farmhouse campus, providing a small, intimate community for young children. The Apple Blossom Nursery group consists of children ages two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half, while a mixed-age preschool group serves three-and-a-half to five-year-olds.

Sounding Notes

Morning in the play yard at the Child's Garden is hardly quiet. There is the squeaking of swings as the four-year-olds practice pumping their legs and propelling their bodies high into the damp, grey autumnal sky. From the sandbox there is the scraping sound of metal on metal as real tools dig into the earth—perhaps colliding with an inanimate mineral object—and carry a load into waiting buckets. There is the cry of a distressed child in the arms of his teacher. It is Monday. Mama is on the wrong side of the gate. One wonders, what is the passage of five days in the experience of a young child? And then there is, of course, the sound of children at play laughing and quarreling as they learn to be by themselves and with each other at school.

A teacher's voice floats and somehow penetrates through these layers of sound. She sings, “Come little children; come along and follow. . .” A few children come running; others slowly pick up their heads and

look about. Others continue in their work of play. The teacher's voice is not loud, but she sings in the mood of the fifth with an open tone that steadily embraces all the children. In a matter of minutes all fifteen children are standing at the gate holding hands and ready to leave for their morning walk.

Children have a sense of being in their element wherever singing and playing, speaking and moving are in unison. To take note of the quality of sound on any given morning in the classrooms and play yard of the Child's Garden is to appreciate how the “speech-body” of the children is nourished not only by the spoken word as such but by the formative power of the verbal music that works in the flow of time in which they participate.

Later in the morning the Apple Blossom children sit around their table eating bowls of rice. They hear singing from the adjoining kitchen. The larger preschool class is sitting down for snack as well and has just begun to sing a blessing. In terms of actual words, it is not the

same blessing that the Apple Blossom children sing. As they listen to the free-flowing rhythm, however, they find something familiar in its openness that is both enlivening and soothing to them. One child says to his teacher, “Those other kids are saying blessing, just like us. I can’t really hear them, but that’s what they’re doing. They are having snack too.” The rest of the children look up from their bowls of rice in silent agreement, listen, and then return to the task of eating.

Wills at Work: Rocks, Stumps, and a Fire Pit

Alongside the old barn at the Child’s Garden there is a collection of stumps. Last week there were sixteen stumps. Day by day the pile has grown smaller as the stumps have been moved to a grassy area extending off the meadow path that the children call “the circle.” The circle is a favorite place for resting, rolling, chatting, and cloud watching. It is here also where the children of the Child’s Garden have been busy throughout the fall resurrecting an old fire pit. In this creative and practical work of moving rocks to make the fire pit and hauling stumps to make a larger ring of seating, one sees the full range of qualities present in what we call the “will forces” of the young child. To observe how a child moves a rock from forest to meadow or lifts a stump together with classmates tells a story of an individual child and hints at the gifts that they bring—and will bring—to this world.

A child not yet three walks in slow deliberation cradling a heavy and muddy rock against her chest. Her

full cheeks puff with exertion; her eyes gaze unblinkingly ahead as she walks—one foot after another. Her teacher asks if she would like to take a rest. The child answers with a side-to-side shake of the head. Some minutes later, the child’s destination yet unreachd, her teacher asks if perhaps they might work together to carry this heavy rock. Again, the child responds with a shake of the head, never missing a step in her slow rhythmic march. She does not stop; she does not speak until she reaches a ring of rocks in the circle of the meadow. Quietly she lowers the rock from her chest and rolls it into place alongside the other rocks. Only then does she speak: “My mittens are muddy.”

Another child sits on the meadow path with a rock between her feet. “I can’t do it,” she says to her teacher. She points with a frown to a small rock. Her teacher smiles and continues walking with her own rock. The child stands, picks up the rock again, and walks on until she too gets to the fire pit: “Look what I did,” she announces to her teacher and classmates.

One day before the snow flies the children and families of the Child’s Garden will gather to sit around a fire in the fire pit in the meadow circle. Perhaps it will be cold—I hope it will be cold—and we will cook a pot of soup and eat together. We might take a moment to think about the contribution that the children have made in creating a new hearth for our Child’s Garden community. Rock by rock and stump by stump. ♦

Stephanie Hoelscher started the *Apple Blossom Nursery program* at the Child’s Garden in 2010.



Three-and-four-year-olds sanding cutting boards for use on soup day. Photo by Jay Ericson, courtesy of Orchard Valley Waldorf School.

The Heart of Early Childhood: Working with Four- and Five-year-olds

— Lisa Gromicko

The ages of four and five are the heart of early childhood. The force of creative imagination as a new capacity is becoming free in the child, as the child separates further from the outside world. These are the peak years of creative play. Everything is possible in play, as children can now create, change, or add to the world, through their imaginative capacities.

Four-year-olds live very much in the rhythmic-feeling realm. They love repetition so much! Simple nursery rhymes and repeated stories and songs are special treats for children of this age. They are comforted by hearing things over and over, and by predictable daily rhythm. Lots of movement is very important, and they especially love the rhythmic movement in circle and eurythmy. In play, they will happily imitate what they have seen adults doing. These elements nourish their feeling life and creative fantasy.

There is an endless flow of creative play forces, as play happens for its own sake, not for achieving a goal set by the child. This stream of fantasy play can sometimes seem unruly, but it is highly creative, as play is constantly in motion and very flexible. Children are more interested in each other now and communication is possible at a greater level than it was at age three. They are learning to speak to each other and may sometimes need guidance or modeling by adults about how to enter into play, share, or take turns. Parallel play will still occur at times, and children can be dreamy, but they become more cooperative and social as they grow.

At four, play is often sparked by an object, connected to the memory of seeing something in life—for example, seeing or helping to bake cookies. Pieces of wood can easily become the “cookies” to be baked for friends. Most four-year-old children are masterful at seeing an object and transforming it through play. One moment a piece of wood is a cookie, then a telephone, then it is a loaf of bread, a baby bottle, boat, and so on. All of this is possible because of what children have actually experienced. The combination of meaningful activity and remembered experiences, coupled with

open-ended play materials, is what fuels the play at this age.

In a mixed-age kindergarten, four-year-olds are like the leavening of the bread, I find. Whatever direction the general play is going in, the four-year-olds are able to tag along or support it in playful ways. Often, the older children will have created something and will need passengers or customers, for example. Four-year-olds (and even some three-year-olds) are usually very happy to join in! Unable yet to hold the bigger picture of the imagination, however, these children will sometimes be triggered by another idea altogether and “float” away. Recently I saw a group of four-year-olds that had been sitting dutifully as passengers on a train, built by some older children. All at once, they began meowing and crawled off of the train to find their mittens. As the older children discovered, it did little good to insist that these children do what they wanted them to do. Four-year-olds can become quite contrary.

This brings us to another aspect of this age: tender feelings. Four-year-olds are experiencing development in the rhythmic-feeling life, which is new and sometimes overwhelming. Emotions can be unpredictable and filled with frustration, disappointment, and a low tolerance for the irregularities that are part of an arrhythmic lifestyle. Tantrums can reappear and parents are often caught off-guard by this developmental stage. Generally, distraction is still very helpful if a tantrum is coming. With lots of warmth, consistency, and gentle inclusion, the child can feel secure and join in again. Spending time with me in the rocking chair or at a particular task creates a special time that allows for the affection these children often have so abundantly and love to share.

At five years old, children are beginning to access their will forces. This enables them to begin to create their own inner pictures—a critical human capacity which is fundamental to all future abstract learning. Now play becomes more purposeful and the child is able to play with a goal in mind, which has been set by

the child. Instead of being sparked by a familiar outer object, as was the case at four years old, now the child can have an inner imagination of what will be played and plan for this. More than at four, five-year-olds will often want the play objects to be like the idea and will spend much more time developing the materials and structures of the play. They will be capable of staying focused on a particular play theme and are much more awake than at four. The creativity of this stage is truly monumental, as the “wheel is re-invented” and other foundational concepts are literally re-discovered over and over. Adults who can remember their play at this age often recall that it was much “larger than life.”

Five-year-old children can transform their environment through this powerful play, as their own development becomes more focused in the limb and metabolic systems. Building structures are now a beloved activity in play, as children have overflowing creative forces. These play structures provide a beautiful “self-portrait” of the child’s physical growth and will

~ *The creativity of this stage is truly monumental, as the “wheel is re-invented” and other foundational concepts are literally re-discovered over and over.*

forces. In kindergarten, the five-year-olds become very capable of cooperative play and work. They are highly social and will communicate with each other to discuss an idea at length. They are also learning to work with their differences, although this in itself can easily occupy much of the play time!

For many children at around five-and-a-half or so, there can be a profound change in the ability to play. They may stop being able to really engage as before and become listless, troublesome or even claim to be “bored.” This stage is an important one, as the child is experiencing developmental changes that herald the six-year change. Along with this we can see a willingness to help the adults with their work, and this is so good for them! Becoming part of the “workings” of the kindergarten, through regular work tasks, allow children to bridge this stage of development. Then, play can be re-entered with new energy and ideas again.

Many changes are beginning to be felt, which can create some instability for the child. Behaviors can

arise that challenge established ways of doing things—our kindergarten ways. Some “bathroom talk” or “rascally” activities may arise. Maintaining good habits and firm, loving boundaries are a supportive help at this stage. I have also found that keeping my own inner flexibility and humor with this age is tremendously important. I love to pull out my little rhymes that begin very slowly and then become very, very fast! The children who have been speeding up the morning verse or table blessing are pleasantly surprised at this opportunity to speed things up and then have a hearty giggle. In their drawings, fingers will often be drawn now, as the will forces are waking up in the hands. I try to notice how the child grips the stick crayon at this age, to gently help nudge it toward a proper pencil grip, if needed. New capacities for dexterity and manipulation of the hands and fingers make it possible for children to learn to tie their shoes and to do hand-work, and also to help younger children to fasten or tie their shoes or play cloths. Finger-knitting will become a very useful skill, creating many desired objects for play. We will often see a whole play “structure” be tied together with finger-knitted “cross wires” as children reflect in their play the neurological changes and capacities that are unfolding, leading to the ability to connect (tie) ideas together through the will. Learning to jump rope begins to be of interest, as well.

There is an exceptional need for physical activity, to strengthen the movement capacities and to help anchor the child into his or her her body. This serves to support the developing will, which needs so much help today to develop in a healthy way. A good daily dose of running, jumping, and practical work is a real gift for children. It is still helpful for adults to work primarily out of example, and to encourage children to learn to use their own will through imitation. This is an important theme of our time: the work of helping the human being to develop a healthy will. Through the rhythm, movement, and imitation of purposeful activity in the kindergarten years, we can support the unfolding of the will in five-year-old children. ♦

Lisa Gromicko teaches kindergarten at Shining Mountain Waldorf School in Boulder, Colorado. She has been an early childhood teacher for nineteen years, and is still learning so much. She is married with two grown sons.

What To Do with the Six-year-old

— Louise deForest

One of the great challenges of the age we live in is the acceleration of time. We move at an ever-quickening pace and the glut of information available to us paralyzes our will and clouds our thought life. With the advent of ever more sophisticated technology, we are being asked to do more and more in less time. The result of this is that we are increasingly absent from the lives we are living. This is a very powerful attack on the human being today—a dehumanizing force that takes us away from being present in our relationships, our actions, and even our thinking. No one suffers from this more than the children of the world, and the increasing demands on children to be what they are not yet ready to be is of deep concern to early childhood educators all over the world.

In many parts of the world the timing of going into first grade is no longer based upon a developmental threshold but is rather a purely numerical reality. Going to first grade is determined by state or government regulation, with no pedagogical basis to the determined age, and the question of whether a child is ready for first grade is often a moot point. Increasingly, early childhood education and the entrance into first grade is seen as a “quick fix” rather than a rights-based engagement with young children, their families, and their communities.

In many countries, children are mandated to go into first grade at the age of four or five, long before they are developmentally ready for a more academic approach to learning. This is often justified by the belief that children today are brighter, quicker, and, in the highly competitive world of today, need to know more to be able to survive in the world of tomorrow. However, the Gesell Institute did a study several years ago to ascertain whether the children of today are, indeed, developmentally ready at an earlier age than in the past. What they found is no surprise to those of us who work with children: children are capable of learning almost anything but they do not *know* what they have learned until they have reached the appropriate maturity in their development, and these develop-

mental stages—these awakening moments—occur at the same time for all children as they have been in the past. So a four-year-old can learn that $3+2=5$, but will never figure out that $2+3=5$.

The three-year incarnational rhythms remain true for all children, but suddenly we no longer trust that life will unfold for them—that life itself will prepare them for their future. Increasingly, in our wish to secure our children’s future, we rob them of their present. We are forgetting that transformation and metamorphosis are intrinsic elements in the growth process. Children play their way into knowledge, and what the child uses in play reappears around twenty-one years of age as independent reasoning; the formative forces that shaped the body are transformed into the capacity for memory and thinking; imitation gives rise to morality; reverence and devotion in the first seven years give rise, in old age, to the power to bless; just to mention a few examples. With creation comes potential, each moment influencing the next, each act helping to build the future. Each step prepares the way for the next and can serve as a strong foundation only when the child is given time.

Even within our Waldorf movement the pressure to do more, sooner, is making itself felt. Parents, not entirely convinced that play and movement is all their child needs, want to have tangible proof that they have done something “important” during their day. So teachers often feel pressure to have the children produce beautiful handwork or craft projects, gifts, daily drawings and other evidence that they are “doing something.” These pressures often add a great deal of stress to teachers’ lives, and increasingly teachers feel dread at an upcoming festival or birthday rather than enthusiasm and joy.

Our colleagues in the grades, not so used to the young child after eight years of carrying their classes into adolescence, express concern and confusion about the behavior of the children in their first grade. Early childhood educators may get the message, spoken or unspoken, that they have not done their job

correctly and feel pressure to “prepare” the children for first grade in spite of knowing that our task is to meet the children where they are.

Martyn Rawson, coordinator of the International Curriculum Research Group, wrote an article several years ago titled “The Challenge of the Transition from Kindergarten to First Grade.” In this article he presents research showing that twenty years ago, out of a group of 100 first-grade-aged children, only seven of them were deemed *not* ready for first grade; today, taking children from the same socio-economic level, only twenty out of 100 first-grade aged children *are* deemed ready for first grade. His group found what we all know: there are more language and speech difficulties, shorter attention spans, more signs of nervousness, more allergies, more difficult social integration and less capable gross motor activities—leading the group to conclude that what we are seeing with children today is an expression of disassociated development. In other words, there are less harmonious interactions in the bodies of the child.

So what are we to do when confronted by parents who make choices for their children out of their fears and concerns rather than out of their convictions, colleagues who question our abilities and feel that something is not quite “right” with the children who come to them from our kindergartens, state and government mandated age cut-offs for first grade regardless of the maturity of the children? These all create a confusing and sometimes distressing environment in which to work. In some classrooms I have seen a quiet desperation on the part of the teachers to make everyone happy. And in the midst of all this there stands the older child, eager to push forward yet not having had adequate time to consolidate the present stage of development.

Many schools and programs are experimenting with alternative classes and group activities designed to provide more complex challenges and movement opportunities while at the same time striving to maintain a play-based curriculum for these older children. In Europe, many places have created what’s called “Class Zero”, in an attempt to hold children back from first grade for another year while giving them plenty of stimulation and movement. These classes can give the children another year’s opportunity to develop their social skills, yet many teachers who have experienced this type of alternative class remain concerned. Having only six-year-olds in one class is not an easy situation; there are no younger children to temper the six-year-olds’ adventurousness and daring and few opportuni-

ties for the six-year-olds to be of service to others. Being six can become a situation of privilege with no attendant responsibilities. And it is very difficult to find teachers able to offer these children the subtle mixture of imagination and authority so needed at this age. All too often class teachers lead the Zero Class, unfamiliar with how to guide and carry children through self-directed play. The Zero Class slowly becomes incorporated into the life and the mood of the grade school, with more preparation and less play.

In many countries in Europe and in North America a compromise is being tried. Instead of having separate classes for the six-year-olds, special activities or clubs are formed, sometimes once a week, sometimes every afternoon after school. There the six-year-olds have special rituals or activities, stronger fairy tales are told, and more complicated games are introduced. In some places language classes are also offered as something special for the older children. Children look forward to this weekly or daily class and some teachers feel that this is a viable and positive addition to the children’s day, while others still wonder whether this is really necessary and in the best interest of the older child. In many of our schools, the older children must spend the whole day in school, staying for lunch and rest and play, as a way of giving them something extra or building stamina but also reducing the unstructured family time so many of them are missing.

In some countries it is first grade itself that is slowly transforming into a program that takes into account the children’s lack of academic readiness. There are moveable classrooms—classrooms that have almost no fixed furniture but, rather, large cushions designed to be used to write on but easily rolled away to provide ample space for movement activities and play. Some first grades in Europe have no academic subjects until the second half of the school year, focusing instead on games and movement. One first grade teacher I met in Germany was building a yurt in the woods with his new first graders and planning on having a year in the forest with his class, chopping wood, carrying water, and “living” in the yurt.

When we look for signs of first grade readiness in our six-year-olds, we are looking to see if the etheric has finished its formative work on the physical body and will now be freed for memory and inner picture making. When we do see signs of readiness we say that the etheric body is born. What we often forget is that, as with any process, time is the key element; the etheric body is not born, it is in the process of being born, a process that can last several more years. The

longer we can let this enormous transition unfold and stabilize, the more settled the children will be in their own lives. I am not suggesting that we should hold children back from first grade beyond their time but rather reminding us that children need movement and play far longer than we may realize. I visited a Waldorf school in Mexico where once a week the first and second graders had indoor play time for a full hour in a kindergarten classroom, and how they played together! Puppet shows, meals, restaurants, and building all happened at the same time and with great joy and concentration.

It is a given that children need more movement; no longer do they have home chores that give them the opportunity to overcome retained reflexes and help establish dominance; no longer do they roam freely outside and engage in the movements they are hungry for, so of course we must meet those needs in them. But I am often reminded of the advice given to me by a kindergarten teacher many years ago. My son had a June birthday and we had decided to keep him in kindergarten for another year. I asked the teacher whether I should enroll my son in the full-day program as a way to strengthen him for first grade the following year. Her advice rings as true today as it proved to be twenty-five years ago. She said, "Pick him up from school at noon and take him home to a good, quiet lunch. Give him a long rest time, go out for a walk in the park

afterwards, and he will be ready when the time comes for him to go to first grade."

Laurens van der Post once wrote, "If one served the small needs of all the living, urgent moments utterly, the great necessities could be left to take care both of themselves and those who trusted accordingly." I think it's important that we remember that it is not our job to prepare the older kindergarten children for first grade; our job is to meet them in the present moment, offering guidance and support where they need it and giving them the message that they are just perfect the way they are. Six-year-old kindergarteners are not "rising first-graders"; they are kindergartners. Can we trust that if we meet the children where they are, give them a healthy, joyful environment where they have the freedom to explore and learn, and offer extra support where it may be needed, they will be ready for whatever next step they need to take? Can we trust the wisdom of human development? Meaningful work, lots of movement, guidance in healthy social interactions, and above all, true rejoicing in the growth of capacities and abilities are all any of us need to be ready to meet the future. ♦

Louise deForest is a WECAN board member and regional representative for Mexico, and an international teacher, consultant, and lecturer. This article originally appeared in the UK journal *Kindling*.



Photo courtesy of Ruth Ker, Sunrise Waldorf School, Duncan, BC, Canada.

Nourishing the Sense of Taste

— Laurie Clark

‘To have good taste’ is a metaphor that describes a human capacity that can be applied to all areas of life—artistic, philosophical, and practical. It is important that children learn to taste well. Children who have learned to taste nutrients well may also in other situations have a sense for the quality of a situation, because they learned to perceive the ‘inner side’ of things.

—Edmond Schoorel, *The First Seven Years*

When the children come into my classroom in the morning, beautiful teapots filled with fruit tea mixed with a little honey are set upon the table. To welcome the children with warmth and sweetness, I open the “tea shop” and am ready for business upon their arrival. “What kind of tea is this, Mrs. Clark?” I am often asked. In response I ask the child what kind of fruit it tastes like. The child often recognizes the taste after several sips and exclaims the name of the fruit with great enthusiasm for all to hear.

Snack time can be of great pedagogical importance. For the young child, to really experience the sense of taste is a kind of preparation for important abilities to develop later. To “have good taste” as an adult means to have fine-tuned judgments in determining the qualities of life. We even use certain “taste terms” as descriptors of people or situations, such as “What a sweet child!” or “She had a sour expression on her face, or “That was a bitter experience.” Through the language that we use, we begin to understand that the sense of taste has a deep relationship to the feeling life of the human being.

Taking substances from the earth into our body is an intimate and formative experience. As teachers of young children, we have many opportunities to open up possibilities in the realm of taste for the children in our care. By offering them varied tastes in the foods we serve in the classroom, we are giving them a way to practice expanding their boundaries around food and refining their relationship to the world around them. There are many children in our times that have difficulty with various food textures, having to do with the

sense of touch in their mouth, and have limited their diet to very few foods. Also, there are numerous food allergies and sensitivities to contend with that require our attention in planning our menus. Giving tiny “ant” portions on tiny doll-sized plates to the “texture sensitive” and “food limited” children as encouragement sometimes works.

To entice the children into tasting vegetables on soup day can be a real adventure! The children cut the vegetables to help prepare the soup in teeny, tiny pieces. I add delicious soup cubes and butter to the soup as well as many noodles, putting some of the soup in a separate pan for the dairy-sensitive children. This way, the “noodle children” feel somewhat “at home” eating the soup and are often willing to try it. I use various noodle shapes, often related to various festivals, such as stars for Michaelmas, hearts for Valentines Day and bunnies for Easter. I use the image of “diving” into the soup with our lovely oriental spoons to see what noodle shape awaits us. It can be very exciting! Finding ways to entice the children to bring the earthly gifts of food into the body is a way of enhancing the sense of life, helping them to feel that what the world has to offer is good. It is worth the effort that the teacher gives to this essential part of life.

Offering a full protein each day for snack allows the child to stabilize the blood sugar, which gives mood stability as well. When we only give a carbohydrate, only grain, it is like filling a bathtub up with water but forgetting to put the plug in the drain. Energy flows out quickly, especially if the child has had little or nothing for breakfast. Cheese cut into small sticks that fit into the child’s hand easily is one idea if dairy allergies are not present. Seeds and nuts also add protein, as does whole-milk yogurt with oatmeal. Providing the allergic and food-sensitive children with alternate protein foods is essential. Even the birthday cake can be improved with the addition of almond flour for protein.

To make the food flavorful and give it a beautiful presentation is an art that can develop the children’s experience of taste. Serving the food with reverence,

saying a verse that offers gratitude, and using beautiful plates with proper child-sized utensils opens the way to a successful snack. Practicing using forks and butter knives to cut pancakes is a wonderful opportunity to develop fine motor skills with the hands.

The sense of smell is interwoven with the sense of taste. When I make pancakes for the children, there are many teachers who come in as the smell permeates the hallway. I always make extra pancakes for the hungry visitors who are pulled into the classroom through the enticing aroma. The children also smell the pancakes cooking and come into the room excited for the delicious pancake day.

Taste and smell are also connected to memory. In the fall we pick the raspberries and make many jars of jam. When we eat it on our pancakes there is often a remark from a child about the day we spent picking (and eating) the raspberries that now are on top of our pancakes making them extra delicious. The food that is served at festivals often holds the heart of the memory of the celebration, and when that particular food is eaten a remembering of the event is stirred.

The following circle about the activity of the honeybees was my first attempt to bring the sense of taste into our movement activities. The honey-bear hides in

a basket covered with a silk cloth, and at the very end of the circle the work of the bees with the flowers culminates in a taste experience when a drop of honey is given to each child. A little honey in the tea and a taste of it after creating the life of the honeybee is a lovely experience for the children.

If any children come in sad, I sometimes offer a drop of honey on their finger so that they can have a “sweet” day. This almost always is a cure for the situation and brings a smile.

Rudolf Steiner advises not to give honey to babies, but says this about consuming honey in the prelude to his lectures on bees, given on February 3, 1923:

At the moment when you eat honey, it creates the proper connection and relationship between the airy and fluid elements in the human being. There is nothing better for a human being than to add a little honey in the right quantity to food (Bees, Anthroposophic Press, 1998, p. 3).

The process of rethinking nutrition and the food we serve the children requires innovation and creativity of the teacher. To bring joy and surprise to the taste buds is a wonderful way to invite the life of the child to integrate in a healthy way within the world. ♦

A Spring Circle: The Honeybees’ Waggle Dance

The honeybees are buzzing their song on this fine day. They are looking for a new home. How will they find their way?

The woodpecker bird is pecking a hole in the tree. This will make a fine home for the bees.

He hears the buzz, buzz, buzzing of the bees’ song. He says, “I will peck, peck, peck and help you along.” Into the cozy hollow of the tree goes the swarming family of bees.

They buzz, “Thank you, dear woodpecker, for our new home in the tree.”

SONG

G D' G G D
Buzz, buzz, zoom zoom zee

G G A A B G B A
We will make a home in the tree

G D' G G D
Buzz, buzz, zoom zoom zee

D D D' G-G G G
We will make honey so sweet.

Make buzzing sound

Stand on chair. Left hand up, right hand shaped like beak—make pecking motion

Crawling under table

About the musical notation: C, D, E and so on represent middle C and the notes in the octave just above. C', D', E' etc. are notes in the next octave above that. Songs may be sung in a free rhythm, one note per syllable, unless indicated otherwise.

Clap lightly in rhythm: Center, center, left-right-left.

Encircling gesture with arms

Repeat movements of first line

Gesture of tasting honey

A golden palace of rooms the bees will make for each other.
In the hollow tree they hang on to one another.
Each bee holds on to a sister or a brother,
As they build their house together.

All reach out and rub each others' backs while sitting down in a circle

Under their tummies the bees have little pockets of wax so fine.
They chew the wax, then build with it a room in a wonderful design.
They build with their feet, knees, backs, heads, and their wings,
Scraping and smoothing the golden walls of the palace as they buzz and sing:

Reach under tummy

Hand to mouth, pretend to chew

Touch ground with designated body parts

REPEAT SONG

Now, the golden palace is the honeycomb where the honey shall be stored,
All the way from the roof so high, way down to the floor.
In the golden rooms the baby bees will abide.
The royal queen bee is the mother to the baby bees;
In the golden rooms, they lay side by side.

Reach up on toes then down to floor

Gesture of beds side by side

Sing "Rock-a-bye Baby Bees" to the tune of "Rock-a-bye Baby." Rock to rhythm of song by holding knees and rocking onto back, then sitting back up.

Then out of the palace the scout bees fly,
In bigger and bigger circles they go around outside.
They look for flowers in meadows, orchards, and gardens all around,
Then bring back to the palace a taste of all that they've found.

Lead a spiral, all holding hands

Children look around room

Children bring back "nectar" to the circle

With their antennae, the family of bees tastes the nectar from the flowers.
The scout bees have looked for them for hours and hours.
The scout bee does the Waggle Dance to show the bees the way to go;
She sometimes turns fast and sometimes very slow.

Pretend tasting

To waggle: feet together, moving sideways, alternate moving toes, then heels in the direction indicated and repeat.

The scout bee turns first to the left
Waggle and waggle showing the way
Waggle and waggle to the right
The scout bee points to where the flower treasure is glowing in sunlight.

Waggle and move to the left, then right.

Point with "antennae," indicating direction

The bees each eat a bit of honey so they can travel fast
To the place where the flowers are—at last!
They suck up the nectar, the juice of the flower.
They fill up with nectar for hours and hours.

REPEAT SONG

Then they roll around and around in the flower bed.
They pick up golden pollen dust—it sticks on them
from foot to head,
Then they put it their pollen baskets that they carry on
their legs
And share it with other flowers as they fly from place
to place.

The bees bring back to the golden palace all they have
found;
A bee line they do make back home to keep it safe and
sound.
Nectar is made into honey after it arrives.
It is stored in the golden rooms in the palace of the
beehive.

REPEAT SONG

The bee's antennae reach out and touch each other—
This is how they talk to their sisters and brothers.
Then they eat pollen bee bread and sweet nectar tea.
Here is some for you and some for me.

We say “Thank you, dear bees, for all the work that
you do,
For the beeswax we play with, and beeswax candles
that shine, too,
For the gift of your honey that we put into our tea,
So sweet and good, for you and for me.”

Now we shall lie down to rest
After our adventure with the honeybees.
It has been one of the very, very best.

Hand to mouth

*Hands open like blossom, “sucking” as one would
through a straw*

*Lie on floor and roll around on back
Hands touch from feet up to head*

Indicate filling baskets on legs

*Elbows on sides of body, arms out like short wings,
fluttering*

*Children in a line following one another, flying back to
the hive*

Flying around room back to hive

Gesture of putting honey into rooms

*Arms above head, children gently touch one another
Gesture of eating and drinking*

Point to others, then self

Give each child a taste of honey on their pointer finger

Lie down to rest with glockenspiel or lyre

Note

*This circle was inspired by a story in Arthur Auer's
book, Learning About the World Through Modeling
(AWSNA, 2001).*

Laurie Clark *has been a Waldorf kindergarten
teacher for over 30 years and currently works at the
Denver Waldorf School.*

Jump Rope Song

~ Ilian Willwerth

This song comes from the new WECAN book, Merrily We Sing: Original Songs in the Mood of the Fifth.



Oh, the rope, it is swing-ing, and I'm gai-ly sing-ing, I leap from the ground as it



swings back a-round, When it's down, I am up, when it's up, I am down, It's the



pleas-ant-est game to be played in this town. I can e - ven do tricks: with my
e - ven do tricks: with our



hand, touch the bricks, turn a full time a-round, make a gal -lop- ing sound. I go
hands, touch the bricks, turn a full time a-round, make a gal -lop- ing sound. We go



out through one door, run a - round, in once more, Look, I'm
out through one door, run a - round, in once more, Now our



just run-ning through! Now a friend joins me too. We can
song, it is done, from this rope we will run.

Transitions

Tribute to Monica Grudin

— Wendy Weinrich

Monica worked at Mountain Laurel Waldorf School in New Paltz, New York for over twenty years. Besides working primarily in the kindergarten she also worked for a time with the handwork teachers in the grades and was the games teacher for a year or two after she finished her Spacial Dynamics training. She crossed the threshold on Michaelmas, Sept 29, 2013 at 6 pm. She was 58 years old. She left two daughters, one grandson, and her life partner, and hundreds of children and families that were touched by her light and love.

Monica was a bit like her overflowing closet, so full of projects and small delights. I often wondered how she knew just where to find the right thing to add to her nature table or to use to decorate her room. She was at heart, a true sanguine and her quiet sunny smile lit up the room. As a colleague she never was one to judge others but supported us actively as we struggled together with challenging children or school policies. In addition to being my colleague and friend for these many years, she was also my own children's kindergarten teacher and thereby my teacher as well. I learned so much from her, simple things like taking midday walks along the rail trail, having a quiet cup of tea, and making the perfect birthday gift for a child in her class.

This summer as Monica lay in a rehab bed, there was one particular story that captured her imagination. *The Little Troll*, written by Thomas Berger, is a story about becoming a human being through acts of kindness. It is also a story that acknowledges the wild, untamed self that is within each of us, and about how that "less than human" side can get in the way of creating harmonious work and community. In her bed Monica wrote and

spoke about her elaborate plans to produce this story as more than just a puppet play. She wanted to use the whole room as a set and have community members embody specific characters at various times during the telling of the story. Perhaps Monica's work with this story was her way of creating a healing stream around her beloved school community.

Monica's luminous inner light and devoted life forces continued to shine throughout her last days. Although she did not outwardly acknowledge that she was dying, just a week before she died, Monica warmed up to the idea of going home from the rehab, of resting instead of trying to get stronger. It turned out that she didn't get home until after she crossed over the threshold. Now I call on her from the spiritual world to remind me how to travel the path of becoming a human being, just like the Little Troll. She taught me so much in the nearly twenty years that I knew her and in her grace-filled dying, she taught me about the duality which we call life and death.

This Michaelmas Day, my dear friend Monica crossed over the threshold. She had been unconscious for five days after more than six years of dancing with cancer. The expansion that we all felt in the moment of crossing was only comparable to what I have experienced witnessing a child being born. Like a midwife, a friend stood with her hand on Monica's head softly singing. Then, as her husband, four friends, and I stood in a circle surrounding and surrounded by love, Monica joined the singing. Beautiful notes sounded on every exhale of her final labored breaths, letting go slowly, bit by bit. The room became very, very still and we were all called to witness this most astonishing and intimate experience called death.

She lived her life fully and engaged in the difficult questions that life poses, questions of love, family and



place in the world. She dedicated her life to the school with which she felt a deep karmic connection. Monica touched the lives of hundreds of children as well as their parents. She will help me be a better teacher now, a better human being. When I call on my angel and the children's angels I will also call on her to guide me from her place in the spiritual world.

My friend is dead, her body is still on this earth, and it lies just over there in the corner. But she is already on a journey that I can't even imagine. My body is full of life, my senses are keen and I am easier with others. I sit in the sun and feed almonds to the children. I sing a blessing and weep a prayer. I embrace each friend I have still standing here on earth—standing, breathing, dancing; through this thing we call life. She once said that there really is no difference between life and death.

I miss you, Monica. Thank you for being a part of my life. ♦

FROM A FORMER STUDENT, AGED 12—

*Dear Mrs. Grudin,
Have an amazing journey.
You will be a star.
Love Always.*

~

*There was a leaf
The leaf fell to the ground
Silvery snow covered the leaf
The sun shined, the snow melted
Where the leaf had been
There was a beautiful flower*

Book Review

The Mood of the Fifth: A Musical Approach to Early Childhood edited by Nancy Foster (WECAN, 2013)



This collection of articles is well up to the standard of previous WECAN publications and fills a gap that needed filling. It is helpful to hear about the mood of the fifth from many different people. It is a deep topic and approaching it from many different angles gradually builds an understanding. A compilation like this is ideal.

The subtitle says it all. It is about “a musical approach to childhood” because “the mood of the fifth is not limited to musical experience as such but characterises the entire atmosphere that should prevail around young children so that they are immersed in the qualities of this musical mood” (p. 20). It has a therapeutic role that is increasingly necessary as the modern world grows less and less friendly towards young children. Mood-of-the-fifth music, as Jennifer Floyd Aulie writes in the first article, “seems to reach

out and enfold the children in a protective sheath which has a quality of stillness and peace, although the children themselves may be active within it” (p.2).

The mood of the fifth enfolds the children, but for adults, as Nancy Foster writes of her own first meeting with it in the introduction, it can be an experience outside our comfort zone. The first of the book's three sections is intended to help us with that. Seven authors, (including me) explain, each in her own way, what the mood of the fifth is. Without some musical expertise or knowledge, a reader might get lost in any one of these articles, but read them all, and even if you don't understand some of the technicalities, the mood, the all-important mood of the fifth, will start to grow in you. It is subtle, and that is why it is so helpful to have this spectrum of approaches. As Eleanor Winship writes, “It takes a quiet, meditative approach to begin to enter the mystery of the child's world. Mood-of-the-fifth songs, in their quiet and subtle ways, open a door into this world” (p.8).

The second section gives us “deeper insights.” Dyanne Harshman refers to Rudolf Steiner's lecture series, *The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone*, with its insights into the evolution of human consciousness through music. In a way, Steiner says,

we are music. This culminates in the quote, occurring frequently in this book, that the young child “dwells in moods of fifths.”

Lisa Gromicko returns to dream consciousness again—how the child has to “coexist between heaven and earth” and goes on to explain how mood of the fifth supports this, a theme which others return to. She discusses briefly the A432 tuning and makes an interesting citation of Rudolf Steiner’s connection between the child’s musical education and the development of courage in later life. “Proper introduction to the musical element is fundamental for a human being to overcome any hindrance that impedes, later in life, a sound development of a will permeated with courage.”

In her article, “The Mystery of the Mood of the Fifth,” Andrea Lyman explains why we use the mood of the fifth, centring on the “sun tone” A, as a refinement of the pentatonic scale. She makes the important point that it is a mood of soul, not a scale. This is emphasised by Sheila Phelps Johns’s wonderful statement that, “If love is a verb, then surely music is an adverb! Music is actually a way of living. We can speak musically, think musically and move musically” (p.69). We are given an overview of the mood of the fifth within the whole Waldorf music curriculum by Christoph-Andreas Lindenberg before the last author in this section, Jana Hawley, gives a corresponding overview of human musical evolution and emphasises the balanced nature of the interval of the fifth.

The final section of the book goes behind the technical picture. Now that we have had a chance to grasp this “mood of soul,” we look more generally at the

musical experience and musical needs of the young child through the themes of “singing, sounding, and listening.” Carol Kelly writes about the need for the child to experience pure cosmic music. “For the young child, still at one with his environment and lacking self-consciousness, music should be played or sung with an awareness of its spiritual origins” (p.105). Sheila Phelps Johns writes about the need to protect and heal hearing in early childhood and beyond, distinguishing the physical activity of hearing and the soul activity of listening. The lyre holds its significant place because it is “one of the most valuable tools that can be used with children or adults.” (p.110). I found a striking statement by Karen Lonsky in her article about the importance of singing: “Today, most people seldom or never sing” (p.114). This reminds us of the importance of working with parents and reinforces the theme that “little children still have one foot in heaven and one on earth” (p.115). Following contributions by other authors including Nancy Foster, Estelle Bryer and Sally Schweizer, Micheal Deason-Barrow rounds off the whole book with his deep musical knowledge. I was most struck by his appeal for voices of “awe and wonder” and for his remark that we hear better when we smile!

I shall be re-reading this book myself to re-enliven the mood of the fifth in me, and recommending it to students and the practitioners that I meet. I hope that this marvelous collection of articles will find a place on every kindergarten bookshelf for the grown-ups.

—Jill Taplin

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Transitions in Childhood—From Birth to Fourteen Relevance, Challenges, Consequences Tasks for Teachers and Educators

Conference of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum and IASWECE
(International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education)
March 31 to April 3, 2015

Human beings remain incomplete until long after birth. Initially completely helpless and dependent, they gradually adapt to their environment and gain their own autonomy. However, this is not a linear process—a number of crises and transitions occur, introducing new developmental steps, in which the child is especially vulnerable. At the physical birth, and with the three-, six-, nine- and twelve-year-old child, adults have a special role.

Education is the art of midwifery, raising the question for educators of how they can accompany the various subsequent “births” in a way that allows for waiting, acceleration, protection, and encouragement, so that one developmental step prepares the next, in order for the developing human being to become able to take development into their own hands. Health, joy of life, learning abilities—through watchful and loving accompaniment of these “nodal points” and transitions, the adult can provide the child with an invaluable basis for later life.

From birth to age fourteen the child is, in addition to its parents, accompanied by a number of close people and specialists, who often do not know each other: midwives, child minders, nursery teachers, kinder-

garten teachers, after-school caregivers, class teachers, therapists, doctors. . . This conference is an attempt to look at a wider phase of childhood, with all these professionals together. Do we as educators know the consequences of our daily practice? Do we as school teachers know the origin of the forces with which the child learns? Can we gradually learn to better assist the child by perceiving the amazing metamorphoses which the child undergoes?

Aspects of pedagogy, medicine, nutrition, and social sciences will be addressed. The morning lectures will present interdisciplinary themes across the ages. The workshops, podium discussions, discussion forums, and research contributions will on the one hand provide an opportunity to deepen age- and profession-specific topics. On the other hand they will address specific themes which concern everyone: sleep, nutrition, health and illness, collaboration between institutions, child observation, kindergarten and school as living space, adult social skills, health of the children, and more.

Please reserve the conference dates now.

In the coming year we will send suggestions for how you can help to prepare the content of the conference in your own work context.

—*Claudia Freytag, Helle Heckmann, Susan Howard,
Bettina Lohn, Philipp Reubke, Claus-Peter Röh*

***For more information, contact:
info@iaswece.org***

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