

Gateways

Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America ♦ Issue 67, Fall 2014

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From the Editor

— Nancy Blanning

This issue of *Gateways* continues with the theme from last spring, **Continuity of Development**. When we reflect on our own biographies, we experience that we cannot explain or describe who we are without appreciating our experiences and development from the past. And we don't like to be defined by how we stand in the present moment because we have plans and ideas we want to move toward and manifest for our future. Our adult pace has slowed down from childhood, but we are given generous opportunities to develop and grow both through our own initiative and always by life itself. So it is perplexing when we see descriptions of child development that seem to imply discrete stages instead of a flow of growth through change and destabilization, insecurity with mild chaos, revelation of emerging transformation, consolidation and ripening, and hopefully a resting pause—then on to the next impulse in this rhythm. The outside world tends to give fixed definitions of what is “normal and typical,” categorizing the child into different developmental “bits” that do not acknowledge this continually unfolding, ebbing, flowing, sometimes eddying movement toward becoming an individual human being.

We began our picturing of the emerging, evolving child last issue with an overview by Claus-Peter Röh, which he shared as preparation for the *Transitions in Childhood* international conference which will be held at the Goetheanum the week before Easter 2015 (see page 34 for details). Re-reading this article as an introduction to what you will find in this issue is highly recommended. Other articles from the spring issue described the very young child living between two worlds—the realm of spiritual archetypes and the new physical world and its realities—and the tender, precarious, transitional moment of the three-year-old. The strengthening and consolidating of the four- and five-year-olds characterized the next pulse for the child. A final article considered what to do with the complicated six-year-olds who are staging a new birth of their etheric forces. The continuing pathway from birth to school entry was well prepared by these contributions.

It is gratifying that *Gateways* has been provided with such an abundance of insightful, thoughtful articles that one issue could not do justice to them. Jane Swain, of Sophia's Hearth, shares her expertise as birth-to-three educator and Spacial Dynamics spokesperson in the first article, “Development of the Three Planes of Space.” We saved this article for this issue so it could be printed in its entirety. Jane gives a broader context to the developmental continuum by describing how the human being from birth to age twenty-one finds his or her relationship to the three different planes of space. How we relate to each plane influences our willing, feeling, and thinking capacities for the first twenty-one years of life. We trust that you will find Jane's observations fascinating and enlightening. It is an article that can be shared with full faculties, including the high school teachers, which is what I plan to do in my own school.

Stephen Spitalny, longtime kindergarten teacher and former *Gateways* editor, returns to these pages with “Three Archetypal Styles of Walking.” Steve offers this information as a new window to child observation that he has found valuable. Interestingly, without naming any planes of space, you will see some familiar terms described in Steve's article.

With the *Transitions in Childhood* conference coming towards us, there is much attention on school readiness. There are questions of how we recognize readiness. How do we truly understand what Rudolf Steiner describes as “birth of the etheric?” This can seem elusive to grasp and identify, but it is fundamentally and even critically important that this “birth” be accomplished with each child before starting grade school. How, in the face of mounting societal and governmental pressures that children begin academic schooling at younger ages, can we confidently advocate for the right grade school starting time for each individual child?

Articles by Dr. Claudia McKeen and Ruth Ker address these issues. Both authors are members of the international IASWECE Older Child working group. This is one of the groups helping to plan the *Transitions in Childhood* conference, along with those focusing on

the nodal transitional points from birth to age three, the pivotal nine-year change, and the transition towards adolescence at twelve.

As an anthroposophic physician and school doctor, Dr. McKeen's research correlates growth completion of the skeleton to changes of consciousness and new thinking capacities for the child, giving us a physical picture of the etheric birth. Dr. McKeen's article is reprinted from the new WECAN publication *School Readiness Today* (which includes additional illustrations, such as x-ray images of the example mentioned above). This article can help us understand the etheric birth in a new, concrete way.

Ruth Ker has done much research within the educational field on behalf of all of us. Her article, "Standing for the Children in Our Care," cites significant mainstream research that supports letting children be fully ready to begin grade school learning and not rushing them ahead. Studies confirm that younger is not better. Both short-term and longitudinal studies over decades reveal that older children are more successful in school, have better health, and live longer. Ruth points to the specific studies which we can share with officials and questioning parents. We also thank Ruth for compiling and editing the new WECAN publication *From Kindergarten into the Grades*. This is another sourcebook looking toward the conference, and contains many of Rudolf Steiner's indications about the birth of the etheric.

The other weighty article in this issue comes from my own desk. This article has been growing in me with an increasing sense of urgency over the last year and more. It is useful and important that we learn from mainstream sources about the burgeoning descriptions of challenges and difficulties young children are experiencing in our modern world. Three-letter syndrome classifications and "spectrum" vocabulary are tossed around almost casually in conversation. We need to know what these mean, and to explore what the mainstream picturing can offer to our anthroposophical understanding of the human being. But just as we adults resent being defined or categorized by how we are in a single biographical moment, it is offensive to the child who "is just getting started" and cannot protect or defend himself. "The Child is not a Check List. . ." speaks to this concern.

A book review of *Benjamin Breaking Barriers* is included to give us a vivid and personal picture of one family's journey through their son living with autism. The author/mother is a musician and acquainted with Waldorf education. At a conference on the topic of Autism held at Camphill Beaver Run last March, this

book sold out. Here we may find ideas we can adapt to help many of our children develop in a healthy way as we live in an increasingly isolating, autistically-inclined world.

International news features Waldorf early childhood work in Vietnam. Louise deForest's description of three programs there makes poignant reading for those of us who have memories of the Vietnam conflict. The dedication of the Vietnamese teachers and those who come to help train them gives hope of some healing to the war-torn past. One of WECAN's aims is to carry a consciousness of our international colleagues and programs. Financial donations to any international program can be sent to WECAN and ear-marked to support international work through IASWECE.

And now for the fun. "Farmer Grieder" joins us from the pages of *Tell Me A Story*, as a wild duck gives his peaceful farm some challenges but the end brings a satisfying resolution. We are also able to share with you a lovely cobbler circle composed and compiled by Christina Assirati of the Chicago Waldorf School, with simple but interesting movements that give this familiar theme some new twists of delight. Our cover illustration and selected poems come from Betty Jones, to give us some new artistry. Betty's recently republished *A Child's Seasonal Treasury* is also reviewed in this issue. We hope you will find delight, inspiration, and some fun with her collection. Betty's art work is beautiful, her watercolors a treasury by themselves. This book may also be a good reference for new families wanting to bring Waldorf elements into their home.

What is up next for *Gateways*? We will embrace the theme of last February's Early Childhood Educators conference, **Nurturing the Sense of Life**. This theme will be carried through the 2015 and 2016 conferences as well, so we are able to gather much material from the individual presenters for our thinking consideration. What we especially invite from you are descriptions of how you experience the life sense supported by the activities in your early childhood classes? Through rhythm? Practical work? Artistic activities? Creative play? Longer contributions or small vignettes are all welcomed. Please share your magic moments when something lights up and enlivens your classroom—inside or out. *Gateways* also invites your questions and challenges to supporting the life sense in busy major cities with little opportunity for outdoor play and renewal in nature.

We have so many different experiences and different successes. There are many different right answers. Please share them. ♦

FOCUS: Continuity of Development II

Development in the Three Planes of Space

~ Jane Swain

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I wish to give credit to Jaimen McMillan, founder and director of Spacial Dynamics, for the inspiration for this article. The following ideas and examples have developed out of many years of my study of and use of Spacial Dynamics in my work with children. (Spacial Dynamics is a registered trademark of the Spacial Dynamics Institute.)*

I was in an airport recently and was struck by how intensely the adults walked in straight lines. They were here, and they had to get to there, and heaven help anyone who was in their way! In contrast was a little two year old, *wandering around*. Something in the environment would attract him, and he would *be drawn* towards it. In this process of noticing, being interested, and following, he would veer off in a curve towards the new object. The adults moved like water spraying out of a fire hose. The toddler moved like water flowing in a stream. It was as if he caught a current, rode it as it whooshed over a rock, hovered in an eddy and then repeated the sequence again. It wasn't so much that he moved, but more that he *was moved* by something of interest to him.

My colleague Susan Weber, after hearing this story commented that the toddler's movements are mirrored in his thinking, as depicted by the stories for this age. These stories are nonlinear, wandering around stories, with no real *story line*. A wonderful example is Wilma Ellersiek's finger game "Flip and Flop," where "they dance and sing in a joyous round-a-ring." I will not comment on the quality of the thinking of the adults in relation to their movement but leave that to the reader to contemplate.

The child's mother was allowing his meanderings in the airport. If she would have needed to hurry up and get to their gate, she might have tried to *straighten him out* by taking his hand and directing him in a linear fashion. It is often easier for all concerned in a situation like this to simply carry the child, as young children are developmentally not linear. A memory from my childhood illustrates this point. I grew up in Iowa, where every so often a child would get lost in a cornfield, and rescuers would be called to find him. I remember my mother telling me that if I ever got lost

in Grandpa's cornfield to follow the row out. I actually remember thinking that that would be a good idea, but it wasn't obvious to me initially.

There was another mother in the airport with two boys, approximately eight and nine years old, who were playing tag. I overheard the mother say to them, "What is the matter with you? Can't you see that no one else is playing tag here?"

The teenagers in the airport were able to walk in lines fairly well.

Here are representatives from each of the first three seven-year periods of life, each with a different approach to the adult behavior of walking in a straight line. Libby Haddock, an experienced early childhood teacher, once remarked that child development is the best-kept secret in the western world. I agree, and perhaps an even better kept secret is the growing child's spatial development.

Last year I heard 85-year-old Alheidis von Bothmer recount a story about her father-in-law, Fritz von Bothmer (who developed Bothmer Gymnastics). Bothmer was the first movement teacher in the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Germany. One day, Bothmer was teaching and a boy was disruptive in the class. This was a middle-school-aged boy, and it was not the first time this had happened. Bothmer got a long beam and attached each end to the balcony, across the expanse of the gymnasium. Please note that the beam was quite high in the air. Bothmer had the boy walk across the beam. Just at that moment, Rudolf Steiner walked in, as he was prone to do in the early days of the school. At this point, Bothmer had second thoughts and wondered if this was too severe; but the boy made it safely across. Steiner told Bothmer afterwards that this experience saved the boy from becoming a criminal!

Why did Bothmer choose this particular activity? Why didn't he have the boy walk on stilts, for example? Bothmer acted out of a spiritual understanding of the human being's developmental journey in the three planes of space. Negotiating a balance beam is a sagittal (right/left) plane activity, which met the boy at his stage of development. The forces that the boy had to generate in order to successfully walk the beam were very important for him at that point in his biography. He had gotten *sidetracked* and had to get *back on track*. He had to *pull himself together* and *walk the straight and narrow*. This experience on the beam influenced the course of his life.

Each of the three planes possesses particular forces that influence and sculpt the growing individual, and there is an archetype to the child's progression through the three planes. During the first seven years of life, the child is primarily concerned with the horizontal (up/down) plane of space, during the second seven year period with the frontal (front/back) plane, and during the third seven-year period with the sagittal (right/left) plane.

The Horizontal Plane

Of course the child is always living in all three planes. But from birth to seven, the child's emphasis is to explore and gain mastery in the horizontal plane, in which abide the mighty forces of gravity and levity.

As Jaimen McMillan teaches, when the infant pushes down against the floor, his body is displaced upwards. This activity of pushing down into the supporting surface and then rising up against gravity happens over and over throughout each stage of the developmental motor sequence. It is largely unrecognized how pervasive and how important this gesture is during the first three years especially, and also during the first seven years. The infant pushes down in back lying, side lying, tummy lying, belly crawling, rolling, sitting, hands-and-knees crawling, squatting, standing, climbing, and walking. The child also pushes down while transitioning into and out of each position, for example from squat to stand or from prone (tummy lying) to prone on elbows.

Over countless repetitions of pushing down, the child learns, at an unconscious level, the answer to a fundamental question of this period: *where is down?* Knowing *where down is* is crucial in order to manage one's body weight in the gravitational field with a feeling of ease. It is also the foundation for proper orientation in space. If one knows where down is, then up, right, left, front and back are also revealed, and this is

very important for later academics. In *Reflexes, Learning and Behavior: A Window Into the Child's Mind*, Sally Goddard reports that "When astronauts are put into a gravity free environment, they start to write from right to left, to reverse numbers and letters and to produce 'mirror-writing'" (p. 19). This makes sense, because without gravity, the astronauts have lost their inner knowing of where *down* is, and so the other directions also are confused.

In a typically developing child, if the child is allowed to *self-initiate* his motor exploration, he will push down into the supporting surface. It makes a difference whether the child *is taught* or *teaches himself* to move. For example, if he is put into a position that he cannot yet achieve on his own, such as when we prop a child up into a sitting position, he will tense *up*, and strain to hold himself *up*. This is an entirely different movement gesture than pushing down in order to come to sitting through one's own efforts. Though propping to sit is a common practice, it actually is working against the child's spatial development.

The infant and young child are fascinated with up and down. They never tire of dropping their toys while playing on their bellies, dropping food off their high chair trays, building up towers of blocks and knocking them down, walking on inclines, dropping objects off decks, climbing up onto rocks and sofas and jumping down off of them. They love to climb up and slide down slides, drop gravel on slides and watch it fall down, swing on swings, and play on teeter-totters. I was consulting at a childcare center once where several three-year-olds were repeatedly jumping off a small table in the room, and the teacher was repeatedly telling them to stop this. Later I explained that this is what children are supposed to be doing at this age and that it would benefit all concerned if she could make a safe place where it was allowed for them to jump down.

It is the work of the adults to help guide the young child *gently down* to earth. For example, a pogo stick is an experience of up and down. It is too difficult for the young child and more appropriate around fourth grade. Trampolines are also experiences of up and down. These aren't recommended for young children, as they involve quick, jolting changes of direction, often resulting in the child becoming *unglued* and *out of himself*. At this age the space surrounding the child's physical body is not yet securely attached enough to withstand such an abrupt, intense movement.

Nursery rhymes are largely concerned with up and down. It seems that the characters all fall down. This is incarnation—coming *down* to earth. Consider Jack

and Jill, Rock-a-bye Baby, Hickory Dickory Dock, London Bridge, the Noble Duke of York, Humpty Dumpty, and the man in the moon who comes tumbling down. A favorite of mine is “Goosey goosey gander, whither dost thou wander, upstairs and downstairs and in my lady’s chamber. Once I met an old man who wouldn’t say his prayers (i.e. who wouldn’t get down on his knees to pray). I took him by the left leg and threw him down the stairs.”

Young children naturally come with a preponderance of levity. They are light on their feet. They don’t really walk around the room; they lilt, jump, and gallop instead. However, slowly and steadily children come ever downward in their space, until at fifth grade they are quite balanced between up and down. Running involves a balance between up and down, and fifth grade is the year when the students run around the block every morning during main lesson in preparation for the Olympic pentathlon. With puberty the spatial plummet begins; their gaits become heavy, their pants droop, and their postures slump. Here is when they need a lift, and the trampoline is an appropriate activity for the teenager.

Little children with their abundance of levity often make adults smile. Imagine if we didn’t have babies and toddlers on the earth to bring levity and lightness to us grownups! However, young children are not yet able to modulate their level of levity. They are prone to becoming too *geared up*, *charged up*, *wound up*, and *keyed up*. Then they *blow up*, until they have a full-blown *melt down*. The adult is left to *pick up* the pieces.

If the adult is attentive to the spatial state of the child, she can see the eruption coming, and nip it in the bud by helping the child *calm down* and *settle down*. It is possible for adults to hone these skills, to learn to read the spatial configuration of the child and to offer spatial support to the child in order to help her learn to spatially modulate herself. Whether we are aware of it or not, children follow our spatial gestures in each of the planes of space (and in other spatial ways too). If we have consciousness and facility with our own space, we have more ability to serve as models worthy of imitation. Here is where I find the Spatial Dynamics exercises invaluable for the adult.

Our language gives us strong indications that the horizontal plane is the plane of emotions. We can be *uptight* or we can *get down*, be *on top of the world* or *down in the dumps*, and experience the *heights of jubilation* or the *depths of despair*. There is an old saying, “Don’t let ‘em get your goat.” Goats are grounded, sure-footed. They rarely fall; however, a horse is prone

to fall and break a leg. Horses are high-spirited; they can prance. It’s hard to imagine a goat prancing. In the old days at horse racetracks, it was the practice to keep a goat in the stall of the horse before the race in order to keep the horse calm. Sometimes an opponent would steal the goat, with the result that the horse would get too nervous and lose the race. Hence the saying, “Don’t let ‘em get your goat.” We are the goats for the children.

The Frontal Plane

If we consider the second seven-year period, when the child is primarily exploring the frontal plane, it’s noteworthy that this plane is called the frontal plane, and not the “backal” plane. As a society we have an imbalance in the frontal plane. We are a *no child left behind* society, a *get ahead* society. If one is ahead of oneself in the frontal plane, one is hurrying, already at the goal and not able to participate in the process. Perhaps this is the underlying societal gesture whereby children are treated as little adults, and perhaps the most effective way to rectify this situation is by addressing our underlying spatial imbalance.

The frontal plane has to do with time. One can be imbalanced forward and constantly be rushing head-first to meet deadlines. One can be imbalanced backward and be *behind the times*. One can be balanced between front and back and be fully *present*. Military troops *present* themselves to the general in frontal planes.

The frontal plane also has to do with will. In a group setting, if a speaker asks for volunteers, he asks if anyone is *willing to come forward*. If someone doesn’t want to volunteer, he tends to *recede into the background* where he hopes he won’t be noticed.

Classic games from this second period of life include Mother May I?, Red Light/Green Light, and Red Rover. These games deal with will and with timing—in other words, with impulse control. At an unconscious level, these games demand answers to major questions of this period: when do I go forward, and when do I hold back? The infant and the toddler are especially challenged by having to wait. The early childhood teacher knows that the younger the children, the less are they truly able to wait at the table for their food. It is the teacher who must *plan ahead*, have everything ready to go before calling the children to the table, and then implement a very short and simple grace. It is not reasonable to expect more from them in the frontal plane because developmentally they are not there yet. Here rhythm is crucial to carry the children.

Perhaps the quintessential frontal-plane grade-school game is tag. The variations of tag are enormous. The child must have awareness of those in front of him so that he doesn't run into anyone, with simultaneous awareness of what's happening behind him so he doesn't get tagged. This is a very complicated spatial activity. Tag is being banned in public schools across the country because children get hurt. This is a shame because grade-school-aged children naturally love this game; it meets them. It is true that children today are often ahead of themselves, for after all they are part of the society, yet it is possible to teach tag in safe ways if the teacher understands how the children in her care are living in their space and how to work with this.

Learning to jump rope with the rope turned for the child is an appropriate activity in the kindergarten for those approaching first grade. Having the child run through the turning rope and to run in and jump is better left for first grade, as this is a significant frontal plane activity. The first grade teacher knows that she needs to have a relationship with the children before she asks them to run through the turning rope. This is a threshold experience for them, and for some it can be frightening. Here the rope is turned at a steady pace. In order to successfully negotiate the rope, some children have to speed up, and some have to slow down. The children must change themselves in order to meet the world (the rope); they have to develop fluidity and mastery in the frontal plane. There are great mysteries in classic children's games—children are learning spatial gestures, which can have cross-over effects and can serve them later in life. Perhaps if the children can learn to run through the jump rope, later on they won't have "the bus left me" experiences. For in truth the bus does not leave us behind; it is we who don't get ourselves to the bus on time.

The Sagittal Plane

In the third seven-year period, from fourteen to twenty-one, the child is primarily exploring the sagittal (right/left) plane, which is the plane of focus, the plane of thinking. If we are trying to find out what we think about something, we come to the midline of the body: we cross our arms, cross our legs, put our finger above our upper lip in the middle, and purse our brow. We may cock our head to the right or to the left of the midline. Then, once we know our mind, we release this pose and can express our thoughts.

In many places in his writings, Rudolf Steiner refers to the importance of the six fundamental exercises. These are practices designed to further one's inner

development and to assist in one's ability to work in the outer world as well. The goal of the first exercise is to direct one's thinking in a focused manner, to narrow down the possibilities and to only think about what one chooses to think about. This involves willed ability in the sagittal plane.

Developmentally the sagittal plane comes to the forefront at age fourteen, and it is interesting to look at the rudimentary beginnings of orientation in this plane. The newborn is not able to keep his head in the middle of the frontal or of the sagittal plane; under the influence of the primitive reflexes, his head is extended back and rotated far to the side. Only gradually is he able to bring his head to midline and control it there. The same situation occurs with the hands. Only gradually is he able to bring them to the sagittal plane midline, look at them there, and then use them there to play with toys or to pull on his clothes. In *Cradle of a Healthy Life*, Dr. Johanna Steegmans says, "If you've ever seen a young child meeting her own hands, looking from one to the other, this is what will bring thinking about: to be able to put two concepts into a relationship. That's the beginning of thinking" (p. 44).

Gradually, while lying on her back, she starts to bring her knees to midline and bring her hands to her knees, and then bring her feet to midline and bring her hands to her feet. As she starts to roll, she reaches across midline with her arm or leg. This is the beginning of crossing the midline.

When toddlers start to walk, they have a wide base of support, which gradually narrows as their balance improves. The two-year-old at the airport mentioned earlier was not linear because he was developmentally not yet at home in the sagittal plane. Over time he could learn to push a wheelbarrow, walk a balance beam, ride a bike without pedals, wind wool, and finger-knit at the midline. Gradually and steadily, he may gain more facility in the sagittal plane as he learns to ride a regular bicycle, walk the tight rope, and canoe. Gradually too, his thinking will evolve.

It's not appropriate to ask young children to unnecessarily narrow things down, as they are naturally wide in their space and in their thinking at this age. In their play, the possibilities are endless. A stick can be a person, a spoon, or a tree; and this can change in an instant. It reduces stress for young children if we refrain from offering them too many choices, because developmentally they have not yet achieved mastery in the sagittal plane.

Sports emphasize the sagittal plane, and this has potential to meet the teenager. Ability in the sagittal

plane is necessary to hit the bull's eye with an arrow, to shoot a basket, or to sink a putt. The sagittal plane is the plane of exactness, of merciless objectivity. It has the least flexibility. The ball is either in or out. The rules are rigidly adhered to, and this is appropriate for the teenager; things must be fair. However, for the young child and also for the grade-school-aged child, things are not so black-and-white. In the grade school the rules of games are flexible, and games support and encourage a wide variety of movements. With sports, the possibilities lessen; the variety of movement narrows down. There are repetitive drills and training requiring precision. However, for the young child, too many "narrowing requirements" are developmentally out of sync.

~ *An understanding of spatial development leads to realistic expectations and assists the adult in creating environments where the children can feel met and satisfied.*

An understanding of spatial development leads to realistic expectations and assists the adult in creating environments where the children can feel met and satisfied. We can look at activities with new eyes and evaluate their developmental spatial fit. One example is the walking ropes that are used to take young children for walks. These are ropes with regularly spaced knots or loops that children are to hang onto as they are led to walk in a prescribed path. It's interesting to note that these types of ropes were used to walk prisoners to Siberia during Stalin's reign. These ropes impose artificial sagittal-plane and frontal-plane structures upon the young child. It is a sagittal-plane activity in that they must walk in a line. It is a frontal-plane activity in that they must hang on to their loop and keep the correct spacing between the child in front of them and the child behind them, and they are expected to walk at the same tempo.

Similarly, expecting young children to hold onto hands, keep in line, and not fall outside a set speed parameter is also imposing potentially stressful spatial forms upon them that don't yet fit. Developmentally, young children are at home when they have time to meander, discover, and dream, with no imposed goal, just process. Considering our societal imbalance in the frontal plane, it is worthwhile to consider the benefits

of allowing young children periods every day where they *don't* have to hurry to keep up. When they come to the grade school, there is a developmental shift. Then it is right to expect them to start to walk through the halls in more or less straight lines and to modulate their tempos, but this doesn't happen overnight. It evolves over time as they come more and more into relationship with the sagittal and frontal planes.

As an early childhood teacher, one certainly may choose to employ a device such as a walking rope for young children if one has sufficient reason, such as safety when crossing a busy city street. However, it is helpful to recognize the developmental spatial misfit, to limit its use, and perhaps to think of the walking rope as a type of car seat—necessary in certain situations, but not ideal.

Rudolf Steiner has said that there is no education but self-education. Essentially he is telling us that we can trust development, that if we strive to remove hindrances and provide environments that meet the children, that self-education will occur; we don't have to teach them. A key point seems to be how to meet the child, and an understanding of spatial development is very helpful for this. Jaimen McMillan has an interesting observation regarding how one can recognize if the child has been met: if a child has truly been met, he will respond with joy. Jaimen notes that there's a difference between fun and joy. With fun, the children want more: bigger, better, faster, louder, more. They can get greedy; it's never enough. But with joy, they feel satisfied; they pause, savor the experience, and linger with the after-taste. They flow out and are filled up. *They feel met.* This is the plane truth: Go for the joy! ♦

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Jane Swain is a graduate of the level III training in *Spacial Dynamics*. *Spacial Dynamics* is embedded deeply into Jane's work as a pediatric physical therapist, associate director of professional development at Sophia's Hearth Family Center in Keene, NH and as consultant to early childhood and grade school classrooms.

Three Archetypal Styles of Walking

— Stephen Spitalny

With infants, a diligent observer can get a glimpse of the individual's unique style of engaging his or her own will. If one observes the steps taken in movement development toward walking, one sees how the will takes hold of the physical body to fulfill needs and desires. From the first lifting of the head, to the discovery of one's own two hands, to sitting and then the first locomotion—the moving of the whole body from one place to another—this is all will activity.

The first forward movement is a great joy for the child. Babies repeat their first successful movements over and over. They imprint the gesture of that success onto their etheric body. One can observe in that specific pattern in the individual child the character, the qualities of their will taking hold of movement. How is this picture of movement, this picture of will taking hold, related to later events and situations in the child's life?

Rudolf Steiner said at various times that if one observes how a child comes to uprightness, one gets a sense of the child's future biography. In one lecture he articulated it thus: "The most intimate matters in life are closely connected with how the child finds its way into the static and dynamic realm. If one can develop a faculty for observing such things, one will find that an individual's destiny already begins to be revealed in a strangely sense-perceptible form by how a child begins to place the feet on the ground, in how a child begins to bend the knees, or in the way a child begins to use the fingers. All of this is not merely outwardly or materially significant, but it reflects what is most spiritual in the human being" (*The Child's Changing Consciousness*, Lecture 3, p. 48).

Observing how a child moves and extrapolating from that how he achieved uprightness can be very informative and can give insight into various challenges the child may have. In his book *Bio Typing: Beyond Body Language*, Johnny Seitz offers the results of his research into observing various styles of achieving that uprightness. He describes the three archetypal ways of achieving uprightness and the archetypal accom-

panying personality traits. Seitz names these three the "forward faller," the "backward faller" and the "sway walker."

For me, any time there are categories with which to classify people there is a danger of over-generalizing and not being awake to what is present in the moment with another person. So with the following characterizations it is advisable to consider the content as themes, and gestures, and see how it all might apply to real people.

The Forward Faller

The forward faller walks on the midline. His head remains centered, not swaying side to side, while walking. The heels stay close together, and the feet are slightly turned out. He walks on the balls of his feet, slightly leaning forward. His head may face toward the ground, and is the leading part of the body while walking.

The forward faller breathes primarily into the abdomen with the diaphragm being the organ driving the breathing. If you ask a forward faller to stand on one foot, he will lock his knee and maintain balance at the ankle. As child he felt safe exploring the world. He often fell face forward, and often had scabs and stitches on his face and head.

The focus of the forward faller is forward, on where he is going. He is goal oriented, and perhaps even visionary. He has an open-mindedness to others' ideas, but is most focused on his own moving forward into what is next. He tends to focus on the parts of a situation, rather than the whole picture.

The forward faller is naturally impulsive, making a decision easily and then following forward the course dictated by the decision without looking back. He may find it easy to do several things at once. He engages his will into action easily, and later his thinking and feeling come along and join in.

The Backward Faller

When walking, the backward faller has his feet just off midline and his head moves slightly side to side. The feet are parallel, landing just the either side of the midline when walking. He breathes primarily by lifting chest up using spinal muscles. He tends to walk on his heels, leaning back a bit, his chest pushed forward. Remember R. Crumb's cartoon character "Mr. Natural"? He was a backward faller.

If he is standing on one foot, the knee is slightly bent and balance is maintained with the knee. The backward faller tends to have lower back pain and a chronically tense back of the neck. As a child learning to walk, he was careful and cautious and did not fall often.

The backward faller meets everything in life one step at a time. He needs lots of details and engages in detailed planning. He tends to be careful and cautious and think a lot about the past, where he has been. Often his focus is on the whole, not the parts. With his narrow focus it is hard to multitask. His energy is focused on what he is doing in the moment.

When the backward faller wakes up in morning, it is best if no one tries to hurry him out the door. He does not like to feel pushed or pressured. The backward faller is independent and strong-willed and likes to test other people's ideas for himself before accepting them. When he engages his will into action, he has already fully thought through the possibilities.

The Sway Walker

His gait is back and forth across the midline like an ice-skater. The head very noticeably moves from side to side. His heels are shoulder width apart, and the toes are even further out. He breathes primarily by spreading the ribcage laterally. While standing on one foot, knee bent, he maintains balance with the knee.

As a baby, he crawled a long time and may have feared falling or being knocked down. He felt challenged and vulnerable as a child. The sway walker likes routine. He lives very much in the present. His actions have to align with his feelings. When he takes a stand he does not back down easily. His strong opinions make it hard to accept change.

The sway walker has his focus on what is around him and how he is in relation to the world. He is always trying to minimize risk. He can multitask, but always gives his full attention (even when multitasking). For him to engage his will, his feelings must first align with the action to be taken.

A Threefold Lens

Imagine a rainy winter day when the back yard has a small puddle. The five-year olds are looking at it and imagining themselves as giants on the edge of a huge ocean. Jack (who walks with a slight forward lean) with no announcement, discussion or delay, takes a step back and successfully leaps over the "ocean."

Sam, who walks with a slight backward lean, watches Jack leap over the ocean. He looks carefully at the puddle—how wide is it? For a couple of minutes he seems to be considering various factors about the ocean and how big a giant he is. Then he announces, "I'm gonna jump too." He jumps and barely makes it across, making a small splash as he lands.

Alex (when he walks it looks a bit like he is ice-skating) says, "I don't want to get wet. I'm not jumping." Sam and Jack and the other children try to convince him to jump, but he just won't do it. "I don't feel like it," he says.

Since reading Seitz's book I have tried to observe people with this threefold lens. It is getting easier to see the three different walking styles for me. And so often the style of walking corresponds with a palette of personality qualities. Seeing these archetypes in young children aids me in providing the support they need. Observing the child through the window of Seitz's research into styles of achieving uprightness can be a helpful complement to the resources we already have in a Waldorf approach to child development. Looking carefully and deeply makes our interest in the child more dedicated.

Labels are a way for the intellect to classify and therefore not have to be present with the person at hand. Yet the qualities and characteristics the labels stand for can be revealing and can offer insights not easily gleaned otherwise. It is up to each of us to do the research, and to *observe, observe, observe* and see what reveals itself to us. ♦

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The Child Is Not a Check List, a Deficit, or a Three-Letter Disorder

— Nancy Blanning

Each child is a wonder. Each boy or girl comes to us intent on fulfilling a unique destiny, with pre-earthly intentions that were resolved upon in the spiritual world. It is a gift that Waldorf education gives us an appreciation of the spiritual biography of the child who stands before us.

Then children are born into earthly life. They are loved and nurtured by parents who want only the best for them and are trying to ensure that they will have a happy, healthy, and satisfying life. And in time these children come to us in our classrooms. But many times we find someone “in disguise,” compared to the beautiful picture our understanding of the child’s spiritual heritage assures us to be true. We see children who are not at home in their bodies, who squiggle and wiggle and cannot find stillness when it is appropriately called for, who seem inattentive and unresponsive to speech or who are oversensitive to sounds, who are unusually sensitive to touch and fuss and fidget over a twisted sock, who have narrowed diets and refuse certain snacks, and so on. The list is long and the behaviors we see perplexing. In the social domain, these individual eccentricities can sabotage the flow of the day and strain development of the social fabric. As educators, we may be puzzled and dismayed. We sincerely want to understand the cause of such behaviors and find ways to help children move beyond them into a more harmonious relationship with the world.

Rudolf Steiner has provided us with an important window for observing children and sensing how their incarnation is proceeding. Steiner’s descriptions of the twelve senses in numerous lectures (see reference list below) give us indications of the importance of healthy development of the sensory life—especially the foundational senses of touch, life, self-movement, and balance—for what will develop later. Comfort in the body as an earthly home for this incarnation, ease of movement and coordination, directional security in space, memory, and development of social and spiritual life: all depend upon the strength and harmonious integration of these four senses in the first seven years. While Stein-

er pointed to the unquestionable importance of healthy sensory development, he did not delineate specifically what we might see if development was thwarted or uneven. Non-integrated senses may actually give conflicting information that makes the world seem scattered, unreliable, and even threatening to the child. Healthy senses confirm an integrated experience of what is seen; damaged or under-developed senses often warp and contradict one another. Our modern world in general is pushing children toward precocious intellectual development, but leaves foundational sensory and motor development neglected as unimportant. Consequently we see what the authors of *Developmental Signatures* describe as “dissociation, such as when intellectual development is not in step with physical maturity, and so forth. . . Such dissociation can be seen as a sign of a lack of stability in the foundations of development” (*Developmental Signatures*, p. 42).

Mainstream studies of sensory integration and sensory processing have been helpful in describing particular behaviors and challenges in children that show distress and possible disturbance in development of the sensory systems. It can be so helpful to consider that a child’s constant movement in his chair during story time may indicate an under-developed balance and/or self-movement systems rather than deliberate disruption or willful inattention. Learning to carefully observe sensory development can give us clues that help us understand how a child’s incarnation is proceeding. Everything the child does is “communicating” to us, if only we have the interest, patience, and background knowledge to put the pieces together. Lists of behaviors associated with disturbed sensory life can be very helpful in this search for understanding.

But these lists are usually referred to as “red flags.” This already alerts us to the “Oh, oh, something’s wrong” picture. Collected “red flags” can create a deficit picture of the child. The DSM -IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) uses this approach. If a sufficient number of symptoms is accumulated, then the child receives a disorder classification—

ADD/ADHD, Oppositional-Defiant Disorder (ODD), Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and so on. This is thought to be an objective, unbiased approach. But we know the great risk is that we lose the human being in the classification achieved by adding up the numbers. We can be lured into looking at the “what’s wrong” part rather than seeing the intention of wholeness that the child brings from the spiritual world.

Whenever we interface with the scientifically- and mathematically-oriented mainstream approach to investigating the world, we enter a danger zone if we are not alert. We are ourselves products of our own education and cultural attitudes. Most of us current teachers have had a traditional academic education which encourages this approach, though we strive toward something more complete as Waldorf educators. We also have what may be seen as “check lists” within our own materials for child observation. The allure of using this as a tidy and efficient tool toward classification hangs over us as temptation. Even the space allotted on the page to place a check mark draws us toward a mechanical, detached view rather than warmed consideration of the child that would come more easily if we wrote our observations in narrative form.

Waldorf education, however, dedicates itself to honoring each child’s humanity as a whole. Whatever lists we have created are meant as guides to help us focus and organize our observations, not as tally sheets from which to draw conclusions. All the details we observe of physical and sensory development, rhythmic habits, movement, speech, gaze, social orientation, and play, colored by mood, tempo, and gesture, are facets that coalesce to reveal the wonder of the child and the pattern that he or she is striving to manifest.

We do not want to ignore or reject the helpful information the sensory integration domain provides. Learning that puzzling, disrupting, or annoying behaviors may correspond to incomplete sensory development can be a revelation. Our hearts can open to a child with understanding and compassion for his or her plight.

The mainstream world works toward a straight-line conclusion leading to a label. But Waldorf education is committed to doing something different. A more appropriate image for us is to work with the rounded curve. Imagine standing in a cathedral and gazing up at the majestic, round rose window. Light streams in through the perfect patterns of colored glass that have been carefully chosen and balanced. If we think of a child as a human rose window, sometimes the

glass blowing may have been imperfect and the pane has a slight distortion. Perhaps a portion is missing and the sunlight starkly glares through. Imperfection in the glass does not destroy the beauty but adds to its uniqueness. A missing pane can be fashioned to complete the pattern in time. The final pattern may be different from the original design, perhaps less perfect but surely more individualized and whole in its unique way. The fashioning of the window is a process striving to fulfill the ideal of the child’s earthly intention.

Developmental Signatures sums this up as follows: “Waldorf education sees an inviolable individuality in every child. This individuality exists before conception and birth and, from its past, brings a very personal destiny with it into a present earthly existence, joined with still hidden impulses for the future that gradually emerge as a guiding theme or ideal in life, in the sense of Schiller’s declaration, ‘Every individual person carries within himself, according to his disposition and purpose, a pure, ideal being, and the great task of his existence is to come into harmony with the unchangeable whole unity, in all its diversity, of that ideal’ ” (p. 19).

No matter how many “red flags” the deficit model waves at us, these are distress signals from the child. The ideal is still within, longing and striving for expression, but blocked by sensory challenges that the child cannot control or overcome without help and understanding. DSM-IV-type thinking can lead to dehumanizing or categorizing by numerical totals derived from check lists. This kind of materialistic thinking affects us subtly as well. Let us be alert to any hint of check-list mentality and use a rounded embrace instead. Around the periphery of the rose window of the child, each of the twelve senses stands with its attributes and questions. Our observations in each of these domains do not define or limit, but weave together into a new layer of color and light that encourages the ideal pattern toward its most complete expression. When we get a clearer picture of what the pattern wishes to become, we can help to polish the panes of glass so the light can shine through more warmly and clearly. ♦

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Material by Rudolf Steiner on the twelve senses includes *Study of Man/The Foundations of Human Experience*, lecture 8; *Man as Body, Soul, and Spirit* (1909 lectures on the body); *Anthroposophy—A Fragment*; and the 1920 lecture “Man’s Twelve Senses in Their Relation to Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition.”

Standing for the Children in Our Care

— Ruth Ker

How do we, as early childhood educators, rise to meet the discouraging compromises of our current educational systems? How do we stand for the healthy development of the children in our care, as they undergo the transformations of the six/seven-year change? Do we ascribe to the current push for acceleration, or do we advocate for the possibilities inherent in the young child's ability to develop through child-directed play? Is there a middle ground? It is my hope that this article will offer a glimpse into research that can fortify those of us who wish to stand for the rights of the young children who are on this endangered threshold.

When I was involved in my Waldorf early childhood training I was greatly inspired by an article published in 1977 in *Der Spiegel*,¹ a prominent German news magazine. This article, brought to us by Joan Almon, who now is involved with the Alliance for Childhood,² discussed a longitudinal research project conducted by two universities in the North Rhine-Westphalia district when the German Educational Council was advocating the introduction of “early learning programs.” This study followed the progress of children “in their total development” from the age of five to ten in fifty play-based kindergartens and fifty early learning programs. Information about it was later published under the title “The Kindergarten Year,” showing that “the children initiated early into the ‘ABC’s,’ later ranked not only in ‘mathematics, writing, and spelling’ but also in ‘industry’ and ‘oral expression’ behind those who, as five-year-olds, had only played” in their kindergarten settings. The report on the study, which was characterized as extraordinarily careful, had immediate consequences for German educational policy—to cancel plans to lower the age of mandatory schooling by a year and to discontinue early learning programs the following year. Needless to say, this study was very supportive of Waldorf pedagogy as well.

Over the years since I became aware of this research, there have been many more published studies that have come to the same conclusions: that children

in a play-based program progress with more stamina long-term and also tend to have the capacity to have continued interest in learning in their later years. As well, there is a body of evidence to support the argument that an early introduction of didactic curricula may increase anxiety and impact negatively on the child's self-esteem, contributing to a lack of motivation to learn, and may even contribute to higher risk of attempted suicide (Uphoff and Gilmore, 1986; Elkind 1987; Brenitz & Teltsch, 1989; Crossner, 1991; Thompson, Barnsley, & Dyck, 1999; Gagne & Gagnier, 2004; and many more).

I have felt supported by these mainstream studies while I continue to benefit from the spiritual insights that Rudolf Steiner has shared with us (a collection of these was published this year by WECAN under the title of *From Kindergarten into the Grades: Insights from Rudolf Steiner*). And yet, there is still much pressure from policy-makers, licensing authorities and government agencies to “make the children ready for school.”

It's interesting that Finland, which consistently ranks at the top of all OECD³ countries for educational attainment and has one of the highest per capita numbers of PhDs in Europe, is currently among only six European countries (also including Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden) that starts formal schooling at age seven.

We all have probably heard of the example of the spring bulb that is forced into flowering in mid-winter. How often have we seen the evidence of this phenomenon of the plant shooting up and then toppling over after a brief period of flowering? Many longitudinal studies, such as the 2005 HighScope Perry Preschool Project and the 2007 Suggate research into early reading, have shown that this phenomenon exists for young children as well. In general, children who have been exposed to early math and reading curriculums and to early school entrance tend to “droop” by the time they reach grade four and over. Did you know that the word “curriculum” stems from the Latin word for race course? Is our culture advocating racing our

children to the finish line?

Another longitudinal study, “The Longevity Project,” was based on a group of over 1000 California children born early in the last century. Lead researcher, Dr Howard S. Friedman, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, and his colleague Margaret L. Kern “gathered follow-up data from the Terman Life Cycle Study to examine how age at first reading and age at school entry relate to grade school academic performance, lifelong educational attainment, midlife health and mental adjustment, and longevity across eight decades. Early reading was associated with early academic success, but less lifelong educational attainment and worse midlife adjustment. Early school entry was associated with less educational attainment, worse midlife adjustment, and most importantly, increased mortality risk.” Dr. Friedman was quoted as saying in a May 16, 2012 press release in England,

In our work on The Longevity Project, an eight-decade study of healthy aging, we were amazed to discover that starting formal schooling too early often led to problems throughout life, and shockingly was a predictor of dying at a younger age. This was true even though the children in the study were intelligent and good learners. I'm very glad that I did not push to have my own children start formal schooling at too young an age, even though they were early readers. Most children under age six need lots of time to play and to develop social skills and to learn to control their impulses. An over-emphasis on formal classroom instruction—that is, 'studies instead of buddies,' or 'staying in' instead of 'playing out'—can leave serious effects that might not be apparent until years later.

Another document submitted to TACTYC, the Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators, was written by Dr. David Whitebread and Dr. Sue Bingham, researchers from the department of education of the University of Cambridge in England. In their conclusion, they say “The model of ‘readiness for school’ is attractive to governments as it seemingly delivers children into primary school ready to conform to classroom procedures and even able to perform basic reading and writing skills. However, from a pedagogical perspective this approach fuels an increasingly dominant notion of education as ‘transmission and reproduction’ and of early childhood as preparation for school rather than for ‘life.’” They go on to say that, in their extensive research, “the curric-

ulum centered approach” and “the idea that rushing young children into formal learning of literacy, mathematics etc. as young as possible” is misguided. This leads to a situation where children’s basic emotional and cognitive needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, and the opportunity to develop their metacognitive and self-regulation skills, are not being met. Of course, mention is made in this article of the value of play, indoors as well as outdoors. Some studies show that children, especially boys, are able to learn better after exposure to outdoor play.

There have been many such studies, which have confirmed that the “earlier is better” approach in relation to young children *is misguided and will not make a difference in the long term*. As caregivers and educators of children from birth to seven, we must not be swayed by the tide of opinion that children must enter school at an earlier age. We must take a stand for the sake of the children in our care. In order to protect childhood in our time, we are being asked for much more than we were in the earlier years of our practices. Now, in order to protect the children from the acceleration of our times, it’s imperative that we know about at least some of the important research that is available to us. The Waldorf movement has many resources and understandings that can inform our practice, and there is also much mainstream research that can corroborate this.

In many ways, the pedagogical understandings of Rudolf Steiner are just coming of age. It seems that the pendulum has had to swing the other way in order for humanity to concretely experience how children *do not* learn, and now it’s time to re-inform ourselves about how young children *do* learn.

So, as professionals active in this pivotal time for young children, it’s important that we prepare ourselves to influence the future of childhood in the best possible way. In order to offer our sound understandings it behooves us to also learn some of the modern way of speaking about early childhood. Knowing words like the ones below helps us to be understood by the people outside of Waldorf circles with whom we need to be in conversation:

- *Self-efficacy* (needs for feelings of competence)
- *Self-agency* (autonomy)
- *Relatedness* (warm and loving relationships)
- *Metacognitive* (knowing about knowing—knowledge about when and how to use particular strategies for problem solving, as in learning through play)
- *Multi-sensory learning* (“Neuroscience research

shows that all learning depends on neural networks distributed across many regions of the brain. Consequently, the wider the range of types of experience, repeated practice, activity with progressively increasing challenge, the deeper and more secure the learning”—again, qualities demonstrated in self-directed play. See Goswami and Bryant, *Children’s Cognitive Development and Learning*.)

In 2011 in British Columbia, Canada, where I live, the government decided that all kindergarten children would be going to school for full-day programs. At first many of the independent schools and Waldorf schools thought they had no choice but to comply. Then we began a conversation that was augmented by providing research, advocating the rights of parents to choose, and most importantly, having individual conversations with government officials and advocacy groups and amongst ourselves. A common language was necessary. As a result, the right of parents to place their children in half-day programs was granted. By taking the time to learn this common language and speak up for the needs of the children and their parents, we were able to protect the early childhood environments of many children.

Below are listed the studies referenced above as well as a few more studies on the topic of school readiness. These could be particularly helpful with your kindergarten/first grade placement considerations. Rather than placing the references below alphabetically, I have placed them by year because I’m hoping that you will see that there has been a steady stream of advocates that support Waldorf/Steiner perspectives on the healthy development of young children. (I encountered research dating back to the 1930s, but for the sake of brevity I have selected just some of the works available from the 1980s onward.) These resources can help us to champion the thought that we can work together to protect childhood. Together, we can advocate for the recognition that the healthy consideration of the educator is not “earlier is better,” but rather, “better late than early”!

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Mayer, S.E., & Knutson, D. (1999). Does the timing of school affect how much children learn? In S. Mayer and P. Peterson (Eds.), *Earning and Learning: How School Matters*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

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Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W.S., Belfield, C.R. & Nores, M. (2005). Lifetime effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool study through age 40. *Monographs of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation*, 14. Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press.

The HighScope Perry Pre-school Project compares the outcomes of children who participated in different types of early years provision. Researchers found that although direct instruction methods of teaching seemed to give some children initial advantages in

terms of their early reading and numeracy, the High-Scope children who had been in “social constructivist” learning environments showed significantly more positive results over the long term. By age fifteen, the direct instruction group participants were showing signs of having become “disaffected” with learning, presenting more psychological and social problems than other groups and reading only half as many books.

Pellegrini, A.D. (2005). *Recess: Its role in development in education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.

Goswami, U. and Bryant, P. (2007). *Children’s Cognitive Development and Learning* (Primary Review Research Survey 2/1a). Cambridge: University of Cambridge Faculty of Education.

Suggate, S. (2007). Research into Early Reading Instruction and linked effects in the development of reading. *Journal for Waldorf/Rudolf Steiner Education*, 11 (2), p.17.

A recent study that compared the abilities of children from schools in which children do not start learning to read until they are seven, with children who start at the age of five found that by the age of eleven there was no difference in reading ability level.

Hirsh-Pasek, K. & Golinkoff, R.M. (2008). “Why Play=Learning.” In R.E. Tremblay, R. G. Barr, R. DeV. Peters & M. Boivin (Eds). *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*. Montreal: Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development Press.

This promotes play as a central vehicle for learning, allowing children to imitate adult behaviors, practice motor skills, process emotional events and develop understandings about their world.

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This list is by no means complete. Please forgive any and all omissions. I would be most grateful to hear of any research in your knowledge that advocates giving children the time they need for play and for an unpressured childhood.

In the face of all of this research, what puzzles me is that there is still such a strong push to accelerate children into capacities that are not resonant with basic developmental milestones. Some people make arguments that this is economy-driven and others that this is based on decisions made by policy makers who haven’t done their research. The United States’ “No Child Left Behind” document has many counter-reactive impulses in many countries worldwide. In spite of the PISA⁴ research showing that children who enter school at age seven have a better success rate than those who enter earlier, even the Scandinavian countries, who in the past have honored this age seven entrance, are having to face government legislation that encourages earlier entry into formal schooling. Many European Waldorf schools have introduced the practice of having a “zero class” where children can have play and limited focused creative learning activities from as early as five, in some countries, and six in others. So it’s obvious that we have our work cut out for us *and* that we have a huge body of research that supports us in the doing. We are fortunate to stand beside each other in the task of supporting the children who come toward us in these times.

In closing, this verse attributed to Herbert Hahn, comes to mind:

*Remember daily,
you are continuing
the work of the spiritual worlds
with the children.
You are the preparers of the path
for these young souls,
who wish to form their lives
in these difficult times.
The spiritual worlds will always
stand by you in this task.
This is the wellspring of strength
which you so need. ♦*

School Readiness and the Transition from Kindergarten to School

— Claudia McKeen, translated by Margot M. Saar

Why is so much emphasis placed on school readiness in Waldorf education? Why is it so essential that children start school at the right time, that is to say, at the moment when they are ready to move on from “implicit” learning—learning unconsciously through imitation, experience and repetition—to “explicit” learning, that is, the targeted absorbing of information which can later be deliberately re-called or remembered?

There is no scientific study which proves that an earlier school entry would support or enhance successful learning in children—on the contrary. For approximately seven years now, children in Germany have been starting school earlier. Quite recently the German newspaper *Tagesspiegel* reported that in Berlin, where since 2006 the school entry cut-off date has been brought forward by six months to December 31—which means that children in Berlin start school at the age of 5.6 years—ten times more children than before have stayed a year longer in the school entry phase (first two years of school). It is also known that early school starters often have to repeat a year in the course of their schooling, or leave school at an earlier stage than children who were older when they first entered school. These children are given the feeling that they are not good enough and they tend to feel over-challenged as a result. Their motivation for learning is compromised in a way that jeopardizes their future relationship to learning and their whole educational biography.

These facts alone would suggest that a later school

Notes

1. See *Der Spiegel*, Number 20, 1977, pp. 89-90.
2. For information on the Alliance for Childhood, visit www.allianceforchildhood.org.
3. OECD is an international organization of 34 countries that helps governments tackle the economic, social and governance challenges of a globalized economy.
4. PISA is an international study that was launched by OECD in 1997. It aims to evaluate education systems worldwide every three years.

start is the better option. They don't even consider the effect that earlier school entry has on a child's health in later life as a result of premature intellectual demands and the cutting short of the time spent in kindergarten. Early school starters have less time to play freely, to take hold of and work through their growing bodies, and to mature. The forces needed for implicit learning, which are naturally active in children during the first seven years of life, are inhibited prematurely as implicit learning is replaced by explicit, intellectual learning. Younger children do not yet have the forces available that are needed for this approach, nor are they sufficiently mature physically. The age of school entry is not just a question of greater or lesser learning success; it affects whether or children can develop into healthy, creative and autonomous adults. Pedagogical knowledge and experience and economic-political interests are fighting a hard battle over this question.

In an address Rudolf Steiner gave on the evening before he started his lectures on *The Foundations of Human Experience*, he spoke of this cultural battle: “The Waldorf School will be living proof of the effectiveness of the anthroposophical orientation toward life. It will be a unified school in the sense that it only considers how to teach in the way demanded by the human being, by the totality of the human essence. We must put everything at the service of achieving this goal.” He then spoke of the flexibility that would be necessary to make the compromises needed to “conform to what will be far removed from our ideals.” He added, “We have a difficult struggle ahead of us,

but nevertheless, we must do this cultural deed” (*The Foundations of Human Experience*, pp. 29-30).

The question we need to ask today is: *How far can we go in making compromises and when have we reached the point where what we offer is no longer Waldorf education? The question of school readiness is one we must not compromise on! How do we find the arguments that help us to raise our voices in this cultural battle for the child, for the future of the emerging adult? Are we spiritual revolutionaries?*

The metamorphosis of forces of growth into forces of thinking

What are the forces like that, at the time of implicit learning, shape the child’s body and organs, and later form the foundation for conscious memory? What is the ether body? What does it mean that the ether forces metamorphose? How can we understand the process in which forces that were used to form the body and the organs are transformed into the forces needed for conscious learning and remembering?

The child’s individuality arrives from the spiritual world and incarnates out of lightness and spacelessness into the earth’s gravity and materiality, connecting with the earthly substances that make up the body. This process does not happen all by itself. The spirit-soul needs a mediator, and it finds this mediator in the etheric forces. The etheric forces are the link between the spirit-soul and earthly materiality. They can take hold of matter so that it ceases to follow its own physical laws and begins to obey a higher order: the laws of life. The etheric forces are able to build up a material earthly body for the spirit-soul to reside in. Once the etheric forces have formed the organs and built up the physical body, the part of them that is not needed for the lifelong preservation of life and organ activity will become available to

the life of spirit and soul.

In the 1924 book *Extending Practical Medicine* Rudolf Steiner described to physicians how the ether and growth forces relate to the ordinary forces needed for thinking and mental representation:

At the beginning of a human life on earth—most clearly so during the embryonic period—the forces of the etheric body act as powers of configuration and growth. As life progresses, a part of these forces becomes emancipated from activity in configuration and growth and is transformed into powers of thought, the very powers that create the shadowy thought world we have in ordinary consciousness. It is of the greatest importance to know that ordinary human powers of thought are refined forces of configuration and growth (p. 6).

These formative, sculptural forces, which build up the organs, become available for the activities of soul and spirit in as much as they are released from the physical body (see Figure 1). They return to the body if they are needed as healing forces in case of illness in order to support regeneration and the building-up of organs. When we are sick we lie down in bed and notice how our awareness, our perception and soul life are weakened until the ether forces become fully available again, often in a new form, once we have recovered. Equally, these forces are active in us when we are engaged in artistic or creative work and they help us to attain higher knowledge.

There are always two sides we can look at in child development: there is the body that grows, ripens and evolves, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, a relationship evolves with the surroundings through perception and conscious awareness that comes to expression in the life of spirit and soul. At every step of physical development we can look at the spirit-soul

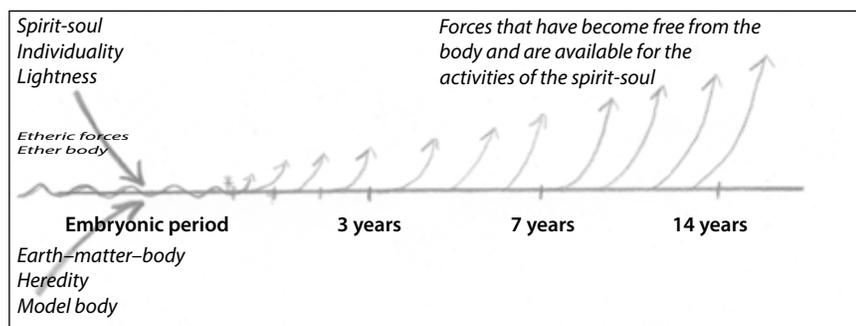


Figure 1

The etheric forces’ gradual emancipation from the body and increasing support of the activities of soul and spirit during child development

and ask, “What is new now?”—and vice-versa.

There is tremendous scope for research in the field of developmental physiology, a field that needs the cooperation of teachers and physicians. What soul faculties emerge when the lungs have finished growing, or the liver? What about when the child’s physical form changes in the seventh year? Once we understand this, we will be able to recognize abnormal developments at an early stage and prevent them. Children’s drawings, and the way children play, reflect this inner development.

With the change of teeth around the age of seven, the formation and building up of the dental enamel, the body’s hardest substance, comes to an end. Behind the twenty milk teeth, thirty-two permanent teeth lie hidden in the jawbones, ready to be forced out gradually. We notice how the forces that were previously active in building up the teeth are released and appear in the child’s spirit-soul—as powers that preserve and maintain form, and as the ability to accurately mirror thoughts, experiences and learning contents and to consciously remember them.

From the age of seven, children are able to follow a longer story because they are now able to relate the end of the story to its beginning. If we look at the development and bone structure of the limbs at this age, around the time of school readiness, we see how the individual bones become more and more connected due to the progressing calcification. If we compare this stage with that of a one-year-old, whose ossification centers still appear like isolated islands floating in the fatty tissue, we get a sense of how the etheric forces, which are at work in the calcification and ossification processes, provide the possibility for coherent thinking in the spirit-soul once they have become free. The image of the one-year-old reflects the evanescent impressions of the young child whose perceptions are separate and unrelated.

There is another aspect to how the ether forces affect the child’s body in the first seven-year period. Rudolf Steiner spoke of it on March 1, 1924, in his Karma Lectures. “. . . For in effect, when he is at the change of teeth, man not only exchanges the teeth he first received, for others, but this is also the moment in life when the entire human being—as organisation—is for the first time renewed. . . . Man, we must say, when he is born, receives something like a model of his human form. He gets this model from his forefathers; they give him the model to take with him into life. Then, working on the model, he himself develops what he afterwards becomes. What he develops, however, is the

outcome of what he himself brings with him from the spiritual world.” Rudolf Steiner then asked, “Why do human beings need such a model at all? . . . Originally . . . man was pre-destined to come to the earth in such a way that he could form his own physical body from the substances of the earth, just as he gathers to himself his ether-body from the cosmic ether-substance” (*Karmic Relationships, Volume 2*, pp. 78-80).

If that were still the case, we would form a physical body that would “fit” our spirit-soul perfectly. Our body would always be in perfect harmony with what we are in spirit and soul. We lost this faculty due to the luciferic and ahrimanic influences and we therefore need to take on a hereditary body. As a consequence of the Fall of Man we need a hereditary body that serves us as a model for seven years. We then build up our own body that is more or less individualized depending on how strong or weak our “I” is. The success of this transformation and adaptation of our body determines the extent to which we are able to know and put into practice our spiritual impulses in a given incarnation. In the same lecture Rudolf Steiner said, “If it is a true school, [a school] should bring to unfoldment in the human being what he has brought with him from spiritual worlds into this physical life on earth” (*Karmic Relationships, Volume 2*, pp. 80-81).

The consequences of premature school entry

In observing the metamorphosis of the forces of growth, we discover the laws of the ether forces, which build up the body and the organs, and which also work freely in thinking and mental activity. Observation of the transformation of the model body shows us furthermore how the inherited body needs to be individualized. This is what children do during the first seven years of life. In rebuilding the model body they inherited, children need to wholly take hold of it so that their spirit can imprint itself into the new form. For this to happen, the body needs to be supple and malleable. Only then can it be a suitable vehicle for the child’s individuality and destiny.

A number of factors can hinder this process of individualization. Vitamin D and fluoride, for instance, harden the body too early. Vaccinations, antipyretics, and antibiotics prevent the inflammatory, warm diseases that help children to re-melt their model body. The same happens when children are addressed intellectually too early, when they start school before they are ready, and when the transition from implicit to

explicit learning is induced prematurely. Instead of being given time to work on the body, the organ-forming forces are drawn to the child's consciousness to be used for learning, abstract thinking and conscious memorizing. The child's reshaping of his or her model body is interrupted or cut short.

It makes a difference whether or not we give children time and support for working on their inherited model body at all levels in order to individualize this body. This work, which proceeds in stages, needs time. In the first two or three years, mainly the head and neurosensory system mature. The process of gaining awareness, of learning to stand up and master the body, starts with the head and the senses. It involves forces that are activated in the body through imitation and that, as sensorimotor intelligence, enhance the child's mobility. Between the ages of three to five, the child's respiration and heart rhythm are established. The rhythmic system is taken hold of and individualized. The forces which gradually rise up from this sphere to the child's consciousness are the ones that enable children to unfold their magical imagination. In the last third of the first seven-year period, children take hold of their system of metabolism and limbs. They develop secure motor skills, their movements become more differentiated and with the change of their outer form the transformation of the model body comes to a conclusion. The forces that are now set free appear, as forces of memory and imagination, in the conscious awareness of the child who has attained school readiness.

If we draw these forces away from the neurosensory system prematurely and direct them to the child's consciousness, if we use them too early for thinking and mental image forming, they will be missing from the process of growth and maturation that is still going on in other parts of the body. What we increasingly see as a result of this is the dissociation, the drifting apart, of the cognitive faculties, which appear isolated and excessively pronounced, and the child's social and motor skills, which cannot come to maturation due to the insufficient development of the rhythmic system and the system of metabolism and limbs.

It was not until 1924 that Rudolf Steiner spoke of the model body and its transformation during the first seven years of childhood. He did this in the Karma lecture of March 1, 1924 (see *Karmic Relationships, Volume 2*), in the lecture of June 25, 1924 of *Education for Special Needs*, and in lecture 4 of the "Pastoral-Medical Course" (most recently translated as *Broken Vessels*), given on September 11, 1924.

In the latter lecture, Steiner looked beyond the healthy transformation of the physical model body in the first seven-year period to the developments in the second and third seven-year periods. He explained that the quality of this transformation process would affect whether or not a person could "be given full responsibility" in later life because the connection between their "I" and physical body had come to be too loose or too tight.

There is a second question connected with the remodeling of the model body that concerns early childhood educators and lower and upper school teachers alike: *What indications are there in kindergarten as to whether children transform and individualize their inherited model bodies in a healthy and appropriate way? What indications are there for class teachers and upper school teachers as to whether the transformation of the model body proceeded harmoniously or whether the development was in parts too fast, too slow, or incomplete? What can be done during the school years to help the body catch up with what has been neglected in maturation so that the children can find the impulses they brought with them in their biographies?*

The healthy metamorphosis of the growth forces is hindered today not only by premature school entry but by many other factors such as vaccinations, by giving children fluoride and vitamin D, and through premature intellectualization, all of which tend to harden the body too early and bring about the withdrawal of forces that are then missing at other levels of the human organization. ♦

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For the Classroom

Mister Grieder and the Wild Duck

— Carol Grieder-Brandenberger

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *The Mister Grieder stories, often shared at the nursery snack table, are based on my husband's memories of working and growing up on his parents' farm in Switzerland.*

In Mister Grieder's barnyard all was peaceful. The animals were all friends and they enjoyed their days out in the meadow or in the barnyard. But one day all that changed. A wild duck had flown into the barnyard, and he was eating up all the food and even chasing the other ducks and pulling out their feathers! Oh, what a commotion there was in the barnyard! For several days, Mister Grieder watched this and he was not happy. "This fighting will not do in my barnyard," he said. "I must find a way to stop it."

So, the next morning he placed a cage on the ground in the barnyard. He walked very carefully up behind the wild duck, so the wild duck would not see him. Then slowly, slowly, he put out his hands, picked up the duck and placed him in the cage. The duck looked out of the cage in surprise. What was happening to him? Mister Grieder took the cage and tied it firmly onto his bicycle. He stepped onto his bicycle and rode all the way down to the lake. He rode past many farms and through several villages, as the lake was very far away from the barnyard. When he reached the lake, he was happy; the waves glistened in the sunlight and all around was peaceful. "Surely the duck will be happy here," he thought to himself.

Mister Grieder opened the cage door and out flew the duck. He landed on the waters of the lake and paddled out to the center of the lake, looking back at Mister Grieder. Mister Grieder waved good-bye to the duck and stepped back on his bicycle. Up the hill he went, through the villages and past the farms. It was a long way to his barnyard but Mister Grieder was happy, for he thought that now the fighting in his barnyard would be over. But when he returned to the barnyard, can you imagine who had already returned? It was the wild duck! He had spread his wings and flown back to the barnyard. And there he was again, eating all the

food and plucking out the feathers of the other ducks. Mister Grieder was surprised, and he said to the duck, "You must really like it here in my barnyard. Perhaps this is where you belong."

As time passed, the wild duck learned his barnyard manners. He started to share the food and rarely plucked out any feathers. And it wasn't long before you could not even tell which one of the ducks was the wild duck, for they had all become the dearest of friends. ♦

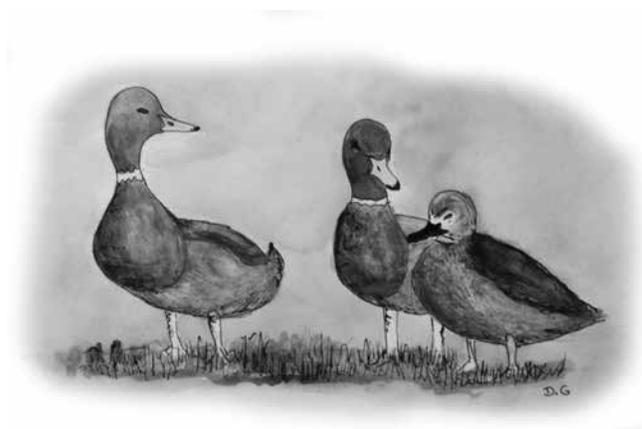


Illustration by Deborah Grieder

Carol Grieder-Brandenberger, a native of Switzerland, is a nursery teacher at Green Meadow Waldorf School in Chestnut Ridge, New York. This story is an excerpt from *Tell Me a Story: Stories from the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America* (WECAN, 2013).

Cobbler Circle

~ Christina Assirati

Swinging, swinging, swinging,
Morning bells are ringing,
Sounding bells are sounding,
Monday, Monday morning.

VERSE

My shoes are too small,
Worn and old—
I need new shoes.
Let's go to the cobbler's shop,
And see what he can do.

Hold hands, form a circle and slowly walk around.

*Look at your feet.
Right foot in front tapping the floor.
Left foot in front tapping on the floor.
Open arms sideways, palms facing up.*

SONG

We are walking to the cobbler's shop. (Repeat 3 times)
We are marching . . .
We are crawling . . .
We are skipping . . .
We are tip toeing . . .

*Walk around the circle.
March around the circle.
Crawl around the circle.
Skip around the circle.
Tiptoe around the circle, singing softly.*

The musical notation is written on two staves in 6/8 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the song: "We're walk - ing to the cob - bler shop, We're walk - ing to the". The second staff contains the melody for the second line: "cob - bler shop, We're walk - ing to the cob - bler shop." The lyrics are written below the notes.

VERSE

Here we are at the cobbler's shop.
Knock, knock, knock. . .

*Right hand in close fist. Left hand forms a "door."
Right hand "knocking" at left hand.
Then pause while placing right hand behind your right ear (pretending to listen). Repeat three times.*

VERSE

My name is Christopher Cobbler,
And I make fine shoes.

*You are an important and serious cobbler.
Stand very upright.*

I make long shoes.

*Arms straight out together in front of your body.
Then, open arms (heart height).*

I make short shoes.

*Bring arms almost together, palms facing each other.
Leave a "shoe" distance between them.*

I make tall shoes.

Spread arms apart. Left arm down and right arm up.

I make flat shoes.

*Bring arms almost together, palms facing each other
horizontally a half inch apart.*

My name is Christopher Cobbler,
And I make fine shoes.

VERSE

I make red shoes,
Yellow shoes,
Party shoes,
Outdoor shoes.

*Right foot pointing forward towards the floor.
Left foot pointing forward toward the floor.
Stand on tip toes.
Stamp feet.*

SONG

My dear cobbler look at me,

Right foot forward, hands pointing to shoes.

I need new shoes as you can see.

Left foot forward.

My shoes are far too small,

*Place right foot on left knee and hold right foot with
both hands. The sole of foot facing the ceiling.*

They do not fit at all.

*Place left foot on right knee and hold left foot with
both hands. The sole of foot facing the ceiling.*

My dear child come here to me,

Right foot forward, hands pointing to shoes.

What is your size? Just let me see.

Left foot forward.

I will cut the leather fine and new

*Place right foot on left knee and hold right foot with
both hands. The sole of foot facing the ceiling.*

To make new shoes for you.

*Place left foot on right knee and hold left foot with
both hands. The sole of foot facing the ceiling.*

My dear cob - bler look at me, I need new shoes as you can
see. My shoes are far too small, They do not fit at all.

VERSE

Cobbler, cobbler, mend my shoes,

Sit down with legs stretched together on the floor in front, toes pointing towards the ceiling, moving back and forth.

Have it done by half past two.

Legs stretched together on the floor, heels touching each other, toes facing up, move feet apart keeping heels together (open and close).

Stitch it up and stitch it down,

Touch your feet (with toes pointing up) with the tip of your fingers touch the side of your feet and move down toward the heels.

Make them the strongest shoes in town.

Still sitting down, bend knees and stamp feet with all your might.

GAME

Cobbler, cobbler make me a shoe.

Have it done by half past two.

Cobbler, cobbler tell me please,

Who has shoes that are just like these?

One player is chosen to be blindfolded and stands in the center of the circle formed by the other players, who are all seated (legs stretched together on the floor, and toes pointing to the ceiling). The seated players recite the verse while the teacher spins the blindfolded player. When verse is finished, blindfolded player chooses a seated player, taps his/her shoes and guesses who it is. Whether the guess is right or wrong, the chosen player now goes to the center and is blindfolded. Repeat game.

VERSE

There once lived a cobbler,

Hold left index finger up

And he was wee,

He lived in a hole

Hands together, fingertips and wrists touching, making a hole between hands.

Of a very big tree.

He had a good neighbor,

Hold right index finger up.

And she was a mouse,

She did his wee washing,

Right hand gently rubs palms of left hand in circular motion.

And tidied his house.

Each morning at seven,

Right hand behind right ear, pretending to listen.

He heard a wee tap,

Right hand in a fist, "knocks" on left palm.

And in came the mouse,

Hold right index finger up. Run left index finger down right index finger (represents the apron). Then, left finger touches tip of right finger (represents the cap).

In her apron and cap.

She lit a small fire,
And she fetched a wee broom,
She swept and she polished
His wee little room.
To take any wages
She always refused,
So the cobbler said “thank you,”
And mended her shoes.

CLOSING VERSE

I dance with the flowers,
I sing with the sun,
My warmth I send
To everyone.

Notes

The verse “My name is Christopher Cobbler” and the game “Cobbler, cobbler, make me a shoe” are based on material found in *You’re Not the Boss of Me!* (WECAN, 2007), pages 230-231. The anonymous verse “Cobbler, cobbler, mend my shoe” comes from *Spindrift* (third edition, Wynstones Press, 1999), page 51. The verse “There once lived a cobbler” is based on the poem “The King Mouse” by Natalie Joan. The sources of the songs used in this circle are unknown.

Christina Assirati Originally from Sao Paolo, Brazil, where she studied education, health and nutrition, and a graduate of the Arcturus Rudolf Steiner Education Program, Christina is currently an Early Childhood Lead Teacher at the Chicago Waldorf School.

*Hold both index fingers up and cross them alternating three times.
Join fingertips on right hand and “sweep” the left palm gently. Keep left palm flat.*

Hold both index fingers up.

Wiggle right index finger sideways.

Bend left index finger forward.

Left index finger taps bottom of right index finger.

Sitting down in a circle. Hold hands and say the verse in reverence.



Detail from “Stepping Stones” by Betty Jones

Seasonal Verses and Movement Games

— Betty Jones

Five Little Apple Leaves

Five little leaves on an apple tree
Danced and pranced so merrily,
One leaf floated away from the rest
Making its home in a wee bird's nest.
Four little leaves in the apple tree,
Thought, "Oh where could one leaf be?"
Light Brother Breeze blew a kiss.
Two little leaves flew off in bliss.
Two little leaves danced together
On the apple tree in stormy weather
Big Brother Wind, he blew so hard
Two little leaves flew down in my yard!

*Hold one hand, five fingers spread
Wiggle five fingers while swaying
Thumb floats downward
Cup other hand as nest for leaf
Hold up hand, four fingers up
Tap forehead with four fingers
Other hand to lips, blow a kiss
Two fingers leave forehead, float away
Hold up hand, two fingers wiggle
Two fingers wiggle and sway
Other hand surround lips and blow
Last two fingers fall into lap*

Autumn Leaves

The trees are saying "Goodbye" to their leaves
As they flutter and fly and float in the breeze,
All golden, orange, and red, they sink softly off to bed,
On Mother Earth's breast rests each leafy head.

*Stretch out arms and wave goodbye
Flutter fingers
Slowly bring fluttering fingers down to floor
Make sleeping gesture with palms together; give a big,
restful sigh*

The Living Garden

Little ants run to and fro, in and out the earth they go,
Busy, busy, never still, are the ants in their anthill.
Overhead the spider weaves its shining web among the
trees,
And makes its thread so fine to snare unwary creatures, so
beware!
Slowly, silently goes the snail, and leaves behind its gooey
trail,
As it makes its slimy way whether it be night or day.
The buzzing bees sip here and there as fine flowers their
nectar share,
Making honey, oh so sweet, those busy bees a working
fleet.
Fuzzy caterpillar on this track, up and down goes his back
As he curls into a cocoon, who would guess that he'd be
soon
The beautiful, winging butterfly, fluttering joyfully in the
sky
And like a flower, her colors bright, fade into the darkest
night.

*In a circle, children act out the garden creatures as de-
scribed. Ants scuttle around; spiders climb by inching
hands upward with fingertips touching; snails slide
slowly around the circle, bent over with their fists on
their backs; bees quickly flutter their hands; caterpil-
lars put their hands and feet on the floor, stretch out
their bodies, and slowly inch their feet towards their
hands; butterflies dance lightly in the circle.*

Excerpted by permission of the author from A Child's Seasonal Treasury by Betty Jones (2014): from p. 48, "Five Little Apple Leaves" and "Autumn Leaves"; from p. 90, "The Living Garden". Opposite page: detail from "Stepping Stones," p. 44, reproduced in color on the cover of this issue. For more information about Betty Jones, see the Table of Contents.

Around the World

News from Vietnam

— Louise deForest

In 2013 WECAN conferences collected \$2,194 to support teacher training in Vietnam. Louise deForest has provided this very informative description of Waldorf early childhood work in a faraway land of which anyone who lived through the 1960s is still painfully aware. We apologize for any inadvertent misspellings of names of people or places.

For many of you, Vietnam is a name on a map of a country somewhere in Asia, as well as a name that crops up in our history books. For my generation, however, Vietnam forms part of the personal history of my peers and the Vietnam War, in part, had a defining effect on my whole generation. Just as we were coming of age in our middle to late teens and early twenties, the escalation of the war had an impact on every single person I knew. Very early in our lives we found ourselves having to make decisions of conscience and developing the strength to stand behind those decisions. For some, this meant enlisting voluntarily in the military, risking life and limb in the hot jungles of Vietnam and sometimes meeting disdain upon returning to the United States. For others it often meant leaving family and loved ones and becoming an expatriate, thereby avoiding the draft. For all of us, we spent our twenties either living with or in the war (and many of us mourning our lost friends), avoiding it, or protesting against it. So for me, so much later in life, it fills my heart with joy that we can support something in Vietnam that promotes well-being, life, and the possibility of a brighter future.

There are three Steiner early childhood programs in Vietnam, serving 130 children; as yet there is no primary school. One of these early childhood programs is connected to the Dieu Giac orphanage in Ho Chi Minh City (with a population of seven million people), and is where all the youngest orphans spend their first years in school, along with many street children (about thirty in all). Presently, this kindergarten is on the grounds of the orphanage as a home school program while teachers and volunteers renovate the school's building to meet new building codes and some teachers update their teaching qualifications. It is expected that the kindergarten will be able

to resume its function as a registered kindergarten and move back into its building in 2014. Tuitions are funded, for the most part, by sponsors. Currently there are about fifty sponsors, some having pledged to support a child or two throughout their school years (and some, now that the sponsored child has left the orphanage, are sponsoring a new child for the rest of their education); others have made a more short-term commitment. Four children from the orphanage were accepted into universities this year and one of them, Tran Thi Mo, 18, was invited to join a prestigious medical school. Another, Van Thien Loc, who has been sponsored since first grade by the Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School (Australia), has been accepted to a university in Texas on a full scholarship, to study architecture. Dieu Giac struggles to continue the support of these bright young students and there is one young student who could not go onto higher education because the orphanage ran out of funds to support him or her.

Thanh Lan K, in Cu Chi, has an early childhood program for approximately 85 children, from two to six years of age. This program also relies on sponsorships to support maintenance of the buildings, meals, clothing and medical supplies, as well as regular mentors. It is hot and dusty in Cu Chi and the days are very long. Yet the teachers are dedicated to continuing their education, spending the children's rest time studying together and, after the children have left for the day, getting together for more practical work, such as making toys. There is a local law that says all the materials the children use must be periodically washed in strong disinfectants; that, coupled with the warm weather, means that toys, mostly made of natural fibers, need to be replaced each year.

The third early childhood program is named Tho Treng Childcare Centre and it serves twenty-two chil-

dren in two classes ranging in age from nine months to five years. Their days are also very long: 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday and also include three Saturdays a month, as do most of the early childhood programs.

The life of a Waldorf teacher in Vietnam is not easy and requires enormous commitment. In one school, the founder and director of the school has at least three children who live with her while their parents work in distant towns. As in many countries, teachers first need to be certified by the state, which supports a purely academic approach to learning—formal academic learning starts at three years of age! Becoming a Waldorf teacher involves taking one week-end seminar a month—not easy when most teachers work on Saturdays—and have only two weeks of vacation a year, including national holidays. With a well-organized mentoring system in place for the duration of their training, after three years they receive a certificate of completion. The enrollment in the teacher training is between fourteen and twenty people; this past training program had fourteen students, all of whom were working in a Steiner early childhood class.

One of the biggest challenges for the teacher training, some of which we are supporting thanks to your generous donations, is finding and affording experienced teachers and mentors. While almost all of the mentors and teacher training teachers offer their services for free, the airfare (sometimes shared with China), room and board, and materials for the course work all add up and it is a yearly challenge to find the funds to support this activity. In 2012, teacher trainers came from Australia, New Zealand and the UK.

However, there are positive developments in support of Waldorf education in Vietnam from many parts of the world. In Australia, supporters of Waldorf education in Vietnam have recently started the Vietnam Children's Project, which raises funds, looks for potential sponsors and publishes a newsletter, all on a volunteer basis. As the founders say, "Our aim is to provide practical, life-changing support to orphans and other young children, in a country still experiencing the after-effects of the Vietnam War." And not long ago the Vietnam Steiner/Waldorf Education Foundation was founded, with help from the Providez Founda-

tion (a Swiss bank) which allowed them to rent an office and a meeting space and another room which can serve as accommodations for two people, when needed, as well as a small store/library. The aims of this foundation are to introduce Anthroposophy and Waldorf education to the people of Vietnam, to organize workshops, talks, courses, performances, exhibitions, social activities, and study groups, and to translate Rudolf Steiner's books into Vietnamese. And soon the Camphill Village, founded by Lisi and Tho Ha Vinh in 2011, hopes to open a kindergarten and, together with the existing teacher training, to broaden, deepen, and expand the teacher training.

As Thanh Cherry (the organizer for the teacher training in Vietnam and an ongoing mentor for all the early childhood work there and in China) said, "Similar to what happened in China, our old culture with its rich spiritual traditions has been virtually lost in the push for modernization. The general culture is now geared towards a materialistic life style. Parents are confused, children are confused, teachers are confused. The Steiner trained teachers will be the only hope for our culture, however small." ♦

Louise deForest is a WECAN board member and regional representative for Mexico, and is one of two North American representatives to the IASWECE council.

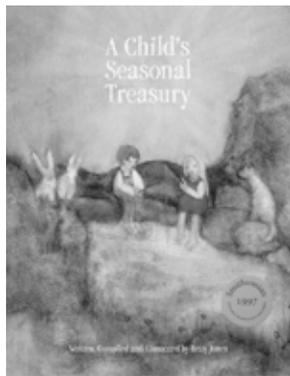


The Dieu Giac Kindergarten

Book Reviews

A Child's Seasonal Treasury

Written, compiled, and edited by Betty Jones (second edition, self-published by the author, 2014; available from WECAN)



The word “treasury” usually means a place where precious and beautiful things are gathered together. Those who enter the treasury can delight in the wonder and glow of the surprises to be seen there. The recently revised edition of Betty Jones’s book, *A Child’s Seasonal Treasury*, lives up to that definition.

Originally published in 1997, this volume was designated as a “Notable Book for Children” by the Smithsonian Institution at that time. The original collection of verses, poems, songs, finger games, recipes, and crafts to carry us through the seasonal year has now been expanded with original material by Betty. The shifting colors, moods, weather, foods, and activities that mark the difference and flow from one season to another are well represented here.

The book opens with general “Year Round” imaginations, songs, artistic and craft activities, and recipes that fit into any time of the year. In this first section a personal favorite is Betty’s description of “All Year Round Movement and Creative Drama.” She has concisely summarized how and why playful and creative movement is so important for children. This helpful statement is clear and accessible, a great resource for teachers to share with parents.

Then each season is featured in its own right. Each section is filled with poems, verses, and songs. Some will be familiar to Waldorf early childhood educators from other collections. This new edition distinguishes itself by also having the rich addition of many original verses by Betty herself. Some are lyrical and pictorial word pictures of the seasonal moods. Some give imaginative journeys through the natural world in its changing colors, textures, sounds, and tones. Others are playful and make the reader and listeners want to giggle and dance.

“Reader and listeners” is stated deliberately because all of the pieces are ideal for reading or speaking aloud, so that the listener can savor the sounds and create the imaginative pictures the words suggest. As I read through the longer poems, I could see these as bedtime readings, reviewing the day’s experience experiences at the close of the day. With this *Treasury* we can draw our children to attentive listening. Children are turning off to what they hear because so much is not worth listening to. This book provides a healthy antidote to this cultural problem.

Within each section are suggestions for seasonal activities and recipes to enrich festival celebrations. These are activities that families can do at home with simplicity and success. In so many ways this book will serve as a bridge between the Waldorf classroom and home life. It can serve as a resource and cultural introduction to families new to Waldorf education who want to bring festival rhythms and richness into their homes.

Yet the most impressive and precious aspect of this book has been saved to last to mention. This edition is completely illustrated with Betty Jones’s original art work, prominently water color paintings. These are visually stunning! For adult eyes to rest on these beautiful pictures is refreshing and calming to the senses. For little children to see such beauty is balm for their souls. Here is a visual reminder of the care and beauty children remember from the spiritual world. Their eyes have something worthy to look upon with this book. These pictures alone would justify adding this book to one’s personal library.

In *A Seasonal Treasury*, teachers will find verses that are old friends and also new compositions by Betty to extend the richness of the kindergarten. Parents will find it a new best friend as it can guide and accompany them into new possibilities for their families. Thanks to Betty for providing this seasonal feast for our senses.

—Nancy Blanning

See the cover of this issue for one of Betty Jones’s paintings, and page 27 for verses excerpted from the book.

Benjamin Breaking Barriers

by Malva Tarasewicz (Integrated Musician's Press, 2014)



Malva Tarasewicz, like so many parents of autistic children, had the heart-breaking experience of seeing her fifteen-month-old child quickly retreat into a world of his own. Up to this time, Benjamin openly sought her cuddles and affection and was even beginning to name things in his environment. In *Benjamin Breaking Barriers* Malva tells us about her own

path of realization and Benjamin's reawakening to the world around him as she transitions from shock and remorse to hopeful conviction. We read how Malva gradually seeks out the therapies that help her son and, more importantly, how these interventions contribute to Benjamin's "baby steps" back to connection with the world into which he has incarnated. The descriptions of the significance of these therapies for Benjamin are full of helpful insights for the educator.

The subtitle, *Autism—A Journey of Hope* is an apt

way to describe Malva's incredible journey from the despair of the first realizations of her child's diagnosis of autism to the step-by-step path of unconditional loving connection to which she decided to commit. She quickly realized that she needed to stay engaged with her child during his waking hours. Failure to do so meant that Benjamin would retreat into his own world of twirling, flapping and inward isolation.

For teachers and parents, this book reinforces the importance of being in the present with children, investing in "right relationship" with them. Then, out of the soul-spiritual substance that is built up in this activity, we may trust in that which comes to us as indications from the periphery. *Benjamin Breaking Barriers* is a must-read for teachers and parents working with children with extra needs. It is an inspiring, engaging and uplifting story of how love, perseverance, and devotion to other human beings can make a difference to their lives.

At publication time, Benjamin was eighteen. In Malva's own words, "This is the story of how, with ongoing help, Benjamin has grown from being a lost and silent toddler to being a bright, social young adult who loves his friends and gives inspiring educational presentations, in spite of the fact that he still has to deal with autism challenges on a daily basis."

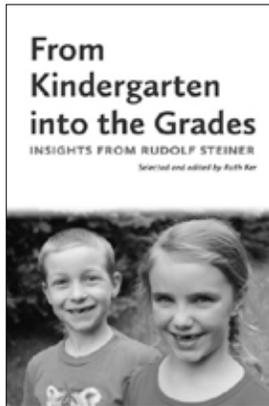
I would definitely recommend that teachers and caregivers read this book. In it, there are so many indications that can positively affect our practices.

—Ruth Ker



Benjamin, age eighteen, with his mother Malva.

News from WECAN Books



From Kindergarten into the Grades: Insights from Rudolf Steiner

Edited by Ruth Ker (WECAN, 2014)
120 pages / \$14

School Readiness Today: A Report from the Pedagogical Section of the Goetheanum

Translated by Margot M. Saar (WECAN, 2014)
78 pages / Full-color illustrations / \$14

Our two newest publications were produced in preparation for the 2015 international conference on Transitions in Childhood (see page 34). Both deal with the important and sensitive time surrounding the birth of the etheric body and the change of teeth.

From Kindergarten into the Grades: Insights from Rudolf Steiner, edited by Ruth Ker, offers a selection of excerpts from Rudolf Steiner's writings and lectures that give insight into the great transformation that takes place in the child around the age of six or seven. Both early childhood educators and their colleagues in the grade school can benefit from these insights, for they must work together to understand and support children as they go through their second "birth."

School Readiness Today, originally published in German by the Pedagogical Section of the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, gathers important new research on the transition from kindergarten to school. This research was presented at a colloquium at the Goetheanum in February, 2013, hosted by the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE). It offers valuable insights into healthy child development in relation to school entrance, including color reproductions of children's drawings that illustrate this developmental stage in a fascinating and very concrete way.

To order, please contact WECAN or visit our on-line store: store.waldorfearlychildhood.org.

What's new from WECAN Books?

Resources for working with children from birth to age nine and beyond
store.waldorfearlychildhood.org

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Calendar of Events

Selected events coming up in the fall and winter months are listed here. For more events, view our web calendar at www.waldorfearlychildhood.org. To submit or update an event, contact publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

Events listed are sponsored by WECAN, our member schools and training centers, and our affiliated organizations, AWSNA and IASWECE. A limited number of other events of wide interest may be included at WECAN's discretion (mainly major conferences). Non-member organizations and individuals are welcome to submit advertisements of interest to Waldorf early childhood educators. Advertisers are not necessarily endorsed by or affiliated with WECAN.

Personal and Professional Development Courses and Workshops

Starting October 11, Sound Circle Center for Arts and Anthroposophy, Seattle, WA: **Family Foundations**. Eight monthly classes for parents. Contact: 206-925-9199, information@soundcircle.org, www.soundcircle.org.

November 15, Charlottesville Waldorf School, VA: **Brain Development and Waldorf Education: A Marriage Made in Heaven**, WECAN Southeast Regional Gathering with Sharifa Oppenheimer. Contact: cws_se_wecan@cwaldorf.org

November 20, Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Early Childhood Teacher Education Open Day** with Susan Howard. Contact: Ayla Dunn, info@sunbridge.edu, 845-425-0055 x20 or visit www.sunbridge.edu

December 6, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Creative Discipline: Reframing Discipline Using Sensory Strategies** with Jane Swain. Contact: 603 357-3755, info@sophiashearth.org, or visit www.sophiashearth.org

January 10, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Supporting Integration of the Primitive Reflexes** with Jane Swain. Contact: 603 357-3755, info@sophiashearth.org, or visit www.sophiashearth.org

March 7, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Application of Spatial Dynamics Therapeutic Practices in the Early Childhood Classroom** with Jane Swain. Contact: 603 357-3755, info@sophiashearth.org, or visit www.sophiashearth.org

March 15–20, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **Early Childhood Associates Program**. First session of a new two-year part-time program. Visit www.steinercollege.edu, call 916-864-4858, or email rsc@steinercollege.edu

April 18, Monadnock Waldorf School, Keene, NH: **WECAN Northeast Regional Gathering**. Save the date now; more information to come in the coming months.

Conferences

November 7–9, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **2014 Early Childhood Symposium: Love Made Visible — Creating Sacred Spaces** with Linda Thomas and Barbara Klocek. Register online at www.steinercollege.edu, call 916-864-4858, or email rsc@steinercollege.edu

November 7–8, Rudolf Steiner Centre Toronto: **Waldorf Development Conference: The Turning Point of Time and Waldorf Education** with Patrice Maynard. Contact: 905-764-7570 / info@rsct.ca / www.rsct.ca

February 7-9, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **WECAN East Coast Conference: Nurturing the Sense of Life and Well-being in the Young Child—and in the Adults who Care for Them** with keynote speaker Dr. Adam Blanning. This is our second year in a three-year series working with this theme, which is central to our work with young children today. Our speaker this year will be Dr. Adam Blanning, an anthroposophical medical doctor from Denver who works closely with Waldorf early childhood educators. Some issues that he plans to address are questions of sleep disturbances, and effects of over-stimulation on young children's behavior and how we can help with this. Workshops and other conference activities will provide opportunities for participants to explore how to support young children in today's stimulating world through health-giving sheath-forming activity. Registration will open in early December.

March 31–April 3, Dornach, Switzerland: **Transitions in Childhood**, international conference of the Pedagogical Section of the Goetheanum and IASWECE. See page 34 for details or contact info@iaswece.org.

Trainings

New WECAN-recognized trainings and trainings that do not enroll a new group every year are included here. For other WECAN member trainings, visit the "Options for Training" page on our website, www.waldorfearlychildhood.org

June 2015, Sunbridge Institute, Chestnut Ridge, NY: **Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Education Program** New cycle starting in a three-year part-time program, with full and completion tracks. Contact: Ayla Dunn, info@sunbridge.edu, 845-425-0055 x20 or visit www.sunbridge.edu

July 2015, West Coast Institute, Duncan, BC, Canada: **Waldorf Early Childhood Educator Program** New cycle starting in a two-year part-time program. For information contact Ruth Ker, 250-748-7791 / info@westcoastinstitute.org, or visit www.westcoastinstitute.org

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.

Information and registration are available at the Pedagogical Section web page:

paedagogik-goetheanum.ch

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

For more information, contact:
info@iaswece.org

For the full WECAN calendar of events, visit www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/calendar.php