

Elan Leibner

*D*ear Readers,

From all of us at the *Research Bulletin* team:
Happy Reading!

The Board of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education held its annual meeting last spring in Amherst, MA, and together with invited guests, engaged in a one-day colloquium on the topic of “context.” Through presentations and discussions, the all-important significance of context was explored in such fields as physiology, literature, and physics. It was a rich experience of entering into dynamic rather than static perspectives on phenomena, taking into account the observer’s own part in the encounter. This issue of the *Research Bulletin* offers several contributions that investigate issues and qualities surrounding education, in a sense exploring the context more than the content of Waldorf pedagogy.

James Dyson, a physician based in the U.K., writes about anxiety. Acknowledging at the outset that most people simply want answers for dealing with anxiety, he posits that an understanding of the phenomenon must come first. He then engages in a description of anxiety, looking at the physiological, developmental, psychological, and cultural-historical aspects of its development. Only at the very end does he point toward the solution, in a direction at once surprising and energizing. This short article is highly recommended for anyone wishing to understand and engage with a common and debilitating condition that seems to affect so many children today.

Michael Howard, artist and art teacher with many decades of experience, takes up the development of empathy. He proposes that art education, specifically through the cultivation of

artistic perception, is a powerful tool for learning to feel not only what lives within us, but what lives in the other as well. He offers exercises for cultivating artistic perception and what he terms artistic feeling, and suggests that they are the same capacities that we need for developing empathy.

Resilience, like empathy, is a quality that most educators wish to develop in their students. Joan Almon describes how early childhood teachers help their charges develop resilience. She points to what researchers outside the Waldorf movement have discovered and offers additional thoughts on the significance of community in this effort. Her article is imbued with the very qualities of warmth and striving that must become foundational aspects for the relationships between young children and their caregivers.

Resilience of a different kind is on Stephen Sagarin’s mind. Sagarin has been on something of a mission to encourage Waldorf teachers to think independently about their choices of subjects and methodological approaches. Here he offers a framework for discussions in faculty meetings (or with oneself), which aim to replace mere following of traditions with active research and individual judgment. He examines things Rudolf Steiner said and things he did not say, and also things that must be understood in the specific context in which they were said. In sum, he shows how a conversation might develop to assess the relevance of the historical record to one’s present circumstances.

Two contributions tackle questions of assessment. Helen-Ann Ireland reports on a book that she and Sarah Ciborski recently published through a mainstream academic publisher. It

is the first time in the U.S. that peer-reviewed research about Waldorf education has been published as an academic text by a publisher not affiliated with Waldorf education. Ireland writes about the work that was done and some of the findings. Patrice Maynard, head of Waldorf Publications (an arm of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education), was actively involved in the process of birthing this book and finding a publisher for it.

Martyn Rawson writes about assessment as well. He discusses the nature of assessment itself, its various forms, and the value and purpose of each one. His comprehensive article (only a segment of a larger work) can serve as springboard for faculty discussions on this important topic. He offers warnings and encouragements for practicing teachers and points to the value of building assessment into the planning process of lessons rather than employing a “gotcha” quiz or test as the chief assessment tool.

From the Pedagogical Section Council come three contributions to our series about the study of the Core Principles of Waldorf Education.

Jennifer Snyder contributes an article on the 4th principle (freedom in teaching), and Holly Koteen-Soule and James Pewtherer write about the 5th (methodologies for early childhood, grades school, and high school, respectively).

From the archives of the Waldorf Journals Project, we offer a reprint of a Jørgen Smit article on remembering and imagining. Smit, a gifted teacher, speaker, and writer, offers profound meditations on educational topics that have remained relevant long after his passing. He was the head of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum and a frequent visitor to the U.S. Several collections of his lectures are available from Waldorf Publications.

Finally, reports from the aforementioned Waldorf Publications and the Online Waldorf Library tell of the important and successful work accomplished in these branches of RIWE. Of some note is the hacking and damage done to the OWL site earlier this year. It is a strange world in which someone—or possibly some autonomous machine—would set out to damage a website offering free educational resources.

Authors who wish to have articles considered for publication in the *Research Bulletin* should submit them directly to the Editor at: waldorfresearchbulletin@gmail.com.