

Report from the Co-Directors

*David Mitchell and
Douglas Gerwin*

To be sure, this has been a demanding year for the Research Institute. On the one hand we have enjoyed unprecedented growth in our connections to research around the world—from Australia and New Zealand in the west to Europe and Russia in the east—with new overtures and offers of research; on the other hand, we find ourselves restrained in launching new projects because of a decline in philanthropic funding.

The Research Institute has been able to sustain its ongoing activities—such as the Online Waldorf Library (OWL) and the publication of this *Research Bulletin*—thanks to the steady backing of the Waldorf Curriculum Fund as well as schools that have remained loyal “Supporting Members” of the Institute. At the same time, we will have to limit our activities in the forthcoming year to completing projects already underway while we seek funding for new projects. In short, we feel much of the uncertainty of the current economic climate. We welcome both advice and support!

Current Projects

Our current projects include:

Parent Research: We are evaluating and analyzing a parent survey by Martin Novom of 318 North American Waldorf school parents. Our intention is to publish the results of this survey later in the academic year 2009–2010.

Electronic Books Project #2: A collection of out-of-print essays, now available either on disc or as a download from the Online Waldorf Library (OWL), includes the following titles:

Reading and Writing by Karl König

Mathematics by Karl König

Embryology and World Evolution by Karl König

Creating Social Sacraments by Dieter Brüll

Sexuality Curriculum for grades 5–12: With the help of a modest grant from the *Pädagogische Forschungsstelle (Educational Research Institute)* in Germany, we have begun collecting articles for

translation, identifying new chapters to be written, and developing a curriculum for Waldorf schools. We plan to have a book available within the next year and a half, provided that the requisite funds can be secured.

Teaching Sensible Science: For the past five years, the Research Institute has offered this course to experienced Waldorf school class teachers who were ready to deepen their understanding and practice of a phenomenological approach to teaching science in grades 6–8. In response to requests from participants, plans are underway to offer a further program for veterans of the course who wish to broaden this approach to other aspects of the curriculum. Meanwhile, the most recent cycle of this program—which typically meets for three separate weeks during the school year and vacation times—had to be postponed because financial constraints prevented Waldorf schools from sending teachers they had pledged to sponsor. We are grateful to the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and the Waldorf Educational Foundation for their continued support of this important project.

International Collaboration with Researchers: One of the guiding missions of the Research Institute is to build bridges with scientists and researchers working outside Waldorf education on topics of mutual interest. In this context, Douglas Gerwin was invited to take part during a week around Easter 2009 in two conferences of medical and pedagogical researchers—one in San Diego, CA, connected with the annual gathering of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the other at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, where the leadership of the Anthroposophical Society hosted a conference for physicians, therapists, and educators. Despite the evident cultural differences—to say nothing of the nine time zones—that separated these two gatherings, some remarkably similar themes were sounded in both events. A separate article on these shared themes appears in this issue of the *Research Bulletin*.

4 · Report from the Co-Directors

International Conference on the Tenth Grade Curriculum in Kassel, Germany: This spring, Michael Holdrege, a Waldorf high school biology teacher at the Chicago Waldorf School, represented the Research Institute at the International Refresher Course in Kassel, Germany, focusing on tenth grade curriculum. The conference, held in both English and German, attracted a worldwide participation. In Holdrege's seminar alone the thirty-four participants represented sixteen nationalities. In his keynote address on "Challenges and Opportunities of Waldorf Education in North America," Holdrege spoke about the issue of high tuition and the resultant high expectations of parents. He also spoke about religious diversity and the SAT and high-stakes testing. He questioned whether the U.S. government had abandoned its role as social arbiter by deregulating economic commerce and over-regulating school life. Schools, he noted, are desperately seeking rigid organizational models and failsafe forms of assessment, and yet, like any living social organism, they actually require flexible and malleable forms capable of responding differently in each situation. He lamented the energy used in this Sisyphean pursuit. He also spoke about the emergence of a subculture of some sixty million people called the "Cultural Creatives," a number of whom are drawn to Waldorf education.

Connections with Russia: David Mitchell was invited to Moscow to speak about high-stakes testing and the *Bulletin* article on this subject that was reprinted last June in the academic journal *Pedagogical Journal of Bashkortostan University, Ufa, Russia* (see *Research Bulletin*, Vol. XIII, no. 2, pp. 21–30). A separate article on the experiences gathered on this journey appears in this issue of the *Research Bulletin*.

Research in Norway: David Mitchell was also invited to Norway where he met with researchers on childhood and Waldorf education to establish future collaboration and share papers. The Anthropos Verlag and Bookhandlung in Oslo now carry most titles from AWSNA Publications, as well as several issues of the *Research Bulletin*. These publications were featured at a Scandinavian Waldorf school teachers conference in August.

"Assessment without High-Stakes Testing: Protecting Children and the Purpose of School?": This article (see *Research Bulletin*, Volume XIII, #2), written by five Waldorf educators under the aegis of

the Research Institute, has been growing steadily in popularity and attracting interest around the world. In the U.S. the article was presented to the Obama administration, which posted the document on its website in a section entitled "Educational Change." The article was also sent to members of the Education Subcommittee of Congress and to the Department of Education. It has been reprinted in the following journals and posted to the following locations:

- *Independent Teacher On-line Journal*, www.independentteacher.org
- *The Institute for Social Renewal*, www.socialrenewal.com
- *The Pedagogical Journal of Bashkortostan University, Ufa, Russia*, Number 5 (18) 2008
- *Journal for Waldorf Education in New Zealand/Australia*, Volume 11.1, May 2009
- *Lilipoh*, Autumn 2009
- *Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners*, www.freunde-waldorf.de
- *European Council for Steiner/Waldorf Education*, www.steinerwaldorfeurope.org
- *Renewal Magazine*, Fall-Winter 2009
- *Houston Examiner*, August 9, 2009

New Board Member at the Research Institute

Finally, we are pleased to welcome Natalie Reed Adams to the Board of Trustees of the Research Institute. During her undergraduate years at Harvard she learned about the work of Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf education. After graduation she traveled first to England to complete foundation studies at Emerson College, then to the Waldorf Pedagogical Seminar in Stuttgart, Germany, for a two-year teacher training. On her return to New York City she became the first grade teacher at the Rudolf Steiner School.

Her husband, a descendent of Presidents John and John Quincy Adams, was employed in the U.S. Foreign Service, so the family moved abroad to live in Thailand, Romania, and Azerbaijan.

After the family returned to Washington, DC, Natalie became a tutor and part-time teacher in the high school math and science programs at the Washington Waldorf School. Eventually she picked up a class in the sixth grade and, after finishing the eighth grade, agreed to serve as Faculty Chair, the position she currently holds.