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Research Bulletin

Fall/Winter 2021

Volume XXVI · Number 2

RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR

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Waldorf
EDUCATION



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Ilan Safit

Anyone familiar with Rudolf Steiner's instructions for anthroposophically guided education knows that its primary key is meeting children *where* they are, which begins by a deep observation of *who* these children are. This will also be our starting point in the current issue of the *Research Bulletin*.

The art and practice of observing children closely in order to detect and support their so-called "special needs" is the topic of this issue. Of course, all kids are special and so are their various needs—or, as one of the authors featured in this thick volume, Jeff Tunkey of the Aurora Waldorf School, states as a guiding principle: "All children need support!" Precisely. And a recurring conclusion of the articles offered here indicates that by getting better at supporting students with "special needs," teachers get better at supporting all students' needs.

We open the issue with Steiner's original instructions to teachers. More accurately, we open with a selection from Christof Wiechert's recent introduction and commentary to a newly reconstructed record of Steiner's conversations with the teachers of the first Waldorf School. The full transcripts of these meetings, demonstrating Steiner's educational vision in practice, as he was guiding the newly minted faculty in the *Freie Waldorfschule* in Stuttgart, will be published at a future date on our Online Waldorf Library website, along with Wiechert's detailed and extremely valuable commentary. We are very pleased to be able to provide here a taste of what is still to come.

Steiner also sketched out the course for working with children whose needs differ from age-appropriate expectations in the remedial work he conducted with Otto Specht, a child considered "uneducable" by his parents. Closely observing and addressing the deeper sources of Otto's physical and mental impediments, Steiner devised a set of remedial practices that allowed the child not only to catch up with his age group at school but also to continue later in his adulthood to study medicine and to eventually follow a successful career as a physician.

Steiner's close remedial work with Otto Specht, his instructions to the first Waldorf faculty, and many of his numerous lectures on the child's development continue to serve as the source for more recent remedial practices. These practices continue to develop as

Waldorf education further deepens and expands, as do the needs of the 21st century child.

In order to offer a ready-to-hand and rich toolbox for tackling a variety of needs and cases, we have assembled both original articles, published here for the first time, as well as previously published work, describing the outcome of recent research and protocols for tested practices. Of the latter category, you will find here several articles reprinted from a uniquely valuable collection, *Helping Children on Their Way: Educational Support for the Classroom*, compiled by Elisabeth Auer and published by Waldorf Publications in 2017. These include essays, several of which composed by multiple authors, that offer a thorough introduction to forming and maintaining a "Care Group" within the school (Elisabeth Auer, pp. 20-27); supportive practices for reading and writing in the lower grades in an article that also provides rich information about the Orton-Gillingham approach (Linda Atamian, pp. 53-60); therapeutic practices using music, art, eurythmy, and Spatial Dynamics (Juliane Weeks et al, pp. 80-85); and a host of physical and behavioral conditions described and accompanied by manual-style prescriptions for action offered by bestselling authors Kim Payne and Bonnie River ("Incarnational Disrhythmia: Hyper Motoric and Inattentive Challenges, Cumulative Stress Reaction, Sensory Overwhelm Issues, Non-Verbal Disorder, Oppositional Defiance" pp. 86-102). We highly recommend consulting further with the many other articles contained in *Helping Children on Their Way*, which is available from Waldorf Publications.

The first article devoted to this issue's topic, Jeff Tunkey's "Lenses on Teacher Development" (pp. 10-19), emphasizes in its very name that the ability to recognize the unique needs of exceptional students, whatever makes them such, is part of a Waldorf teacher's responsibility, hence of Teacher Development. This article, excerpted from Tunkey's recent and highly recommended book, *Educating for Balance and Resilience* (SteinerBooks/Bell Pond, 2020), is based on many years of guiding budding teachers at the Aurora Waldorf School in Western New York and in other institutions. It is, of course, also based on the author's decades-long experience of working with young students in the classroom. The result is a set of protocols to address the needs of a wide variety of students, presented with the insights of Tunkey's own personal-professional journey.

Another set of articles serve as an introduction to and an advanced description of Audrey McAllen's invaluable contribution to Waldorf education: *The Extra Lesson*.

Drawing on Rudolf Steiner 1909-1911 Berlin lectures, later translated into English as *Wisdom of Man, of the Soul, and of the Spirit*,¹ McAllen, a lifelong Waldorf teacher working in England, sought to address specific learning challenges in children by aligning a child's bodily movements with patterns of the earth's movements. Explained in her own words: "The Extra Lesson Concept doesn't focus on the soul of the child, but it works with the spiritual laws behind the architecture of the physical human body, and with the spirit of the earth. The exercises integrate the movements of the child into the universal movement patterns of the earth." Audrey McAllen's intensive work is presented in the book, *The Extra Lesson: Movement, Drawing, and Painting Exercises to Help Children with Difficulties in Writing, Reading, and Arithmetic*, originally published in 1974 and quickly becoming legendary among many Waldorf teachers. The book was since translated into multiple languages and was followed by several other volumes in which McAllen approaches elements of children's sleep, speech, handwriting, and drawings as realms through which to observe and address challenges and impediments.

An introduction to Audrey McAllen's method of the Extra Lesson is included here (pp. 28-31), in a reprinted essay by the Dutch educator and Extra Lesson specialist, Joep Eikenboom, who was a student and later a collaborator of Audrey McAllen and is the author of *Foundations of the Extra Lesson: Beyond What Is Seen in the Exercises* (Rudolf Steiner College Press, 2007). This introduction is further expanded in the following article, which is accompanied by a gallery of case studies from its author's, Connie Helms, years of working with the method with children, adolescents, and adults ("Supporting Adolescents with the Extra Lesson" pp. 32-39). Next comes a focus on the use of Extra Lesson in the screening of young students' admittance to the first grade and their later assessment in the second grade, written by Maggie Scott and Elizabeth Auer ("Extra Lesson: First Grade Readiness Screening and Second Grade Assessment" pp. 40-44).

An extensive case study, as much insightful about the inner process of the teacher as it is about the special needs of her student, is offered in Alla Markh's "The Case of Nathan" (pp. 45-52). The author, reporting on her experience as a class teacher at the Halton Waldorf School, in Ontario, writes a detailed account

of her work with a student on the autism spectrum. Wary at first of the ability of an independent Waldorf school to offer the kind of intensive, remedial support that the public school system can provide, Alla turned to the inner resources unlocked by Waldorf teacher training. These include the kind of close observations that produce a deeper, multidimensional vision of the child, and the meditative "night work" a teacher does in search for insight and understanding. The step-by-step descriptions of this progressive work, and the personal tone in which the author describes her own process, make this essay into an especially rewarding reading for any attentive teacher. Alla, too, recognizes that the work with exceptional students provides better tools to working with *all* students. She writes: "[T]he capacities, skills, and abilities I developed throughout this work are transferable to working with other children—observing and understanding them better, and developing towards them an unconditional love fostered by understanding."

Two programmatic articles on remedial work in reading and writing are offered in Jennifer Miltzer-Kopperl's "The Remedial Staircase" (pp. 61-71) and Virginia Berg and Renee Schwartz's "Sparking Curiosity Through Spelling" (pp. 72-79).

Miltzer-Kopperl is the founder of *Renewal of Literacy*, a program aiming to further support language arts instruction in Waldorf schools and which follows the work published in her books *The Roadmap to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 1 through 3* (co-authored with Janet Langley) and *Continuing the Journey to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 4 through 8*. In the article written for this issue, Miltzer-Kopperl presents her remedial approach to reading challenges as a progressive "staircase" that proceeds from removing individual impediments, to strengthening the student's capacities, to adjusting academic instruction, to addressing constraints stemming from the student's environmental settings.

Virginia Berg and Renee Schwartz combine their experience in the lower grades (Schwartz) and the upper ones (Berg) to lay out a set of activities aiming to spark students' curiosity into the origins of words, coaxing them into investigations that would strengthen their capacities of spelling and comprehension. The authors introduce multiple resources that come from wider pedagogical circles while adhering to the Waldorf principle of curiosity-driven education.

Several of the contributors to this issue are members of the Association for Healing Education, whose mission is defined in the following terms: "To serve the

1 A different English translation of the same lectures was later published under the title, *A Psychology of Body, Soul and Spirit: Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, and Pneumatosophy* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1999).

community of schools and educators who address the individual needs of children in Steiner schools and other environments. To support and further develop methods in Waldorf pedagogy, Extra Lesson, and therapeutic education which are based on insights of Rudolf Steiner into the nature of human development in order to recognize and remediate hindrances which inhibit children from reaching their full potential." We encourage readers to explore further the resources offered by the Association for Healing Education (AHE) at www.healingeducation.org.

Capping the contributions to the topic of student support is a heartfelt tribute to a leading figure in the international Waldorf movement, a thinker and teacher who has made significant contributions to this field: Henning Köhler. Köhler, who passed last April, devoted his lifework to therapeutic and curative pedagogy guided by anthroposophy's insights. Of the numerous books he had written, two were translated into English and were published by Waldorf Publications: *Working with Anxious, Nervous, and Depressed Children: A Spiritual Perspective to Guide Parents* (2000) and *Difficult Children – There Is No Such Thing: An Appeal for the Transformation of Educational Thinking* (2013). The tribute, written by Nancy Blanning, Laurie Clark, Stephanie Hoelscher, Holly Koteen-Soulé, offers a glimpse into the insight, influence, and personality of Henning Köhler, to whom the authors refer as "a companion to the companions."

Toward the end of this issue, you will find Patrice Maynard's response to a statement made in the previous issue of the *Bulletin*—a response we very much welcome as a way for our community of readers to engage in public dialogue on these pages. Addressing the relationship between AWSNA member schools, or official and accredited independent Waldorf schools, and the Waldorf-inspired initiatives seeking their place in the charter or public education spheres, Patrice offers here a detailed history of this relationship while renewing her call to a full separation of School and State.

Despite the dragging of pandemic-related impediments, activities continue in the Online Waldorf Library and the Research Institute for Waldorf Education—reports on which are to be found nearly at the end of this issue. At the very end, you will find an index of all the articles published in the *Research Bulletin* since its first volume, dated January 1996. These articles could be downloaded from the Research Bulletin tab at waldorflibrary.org/journals/.

We wish you all pleasant and inspired reading. Our hope is that this volume of the *Bulletin* would help expand and deepen the kinds of support offered at our schools.

Submissions

Submissions to the Research Bulletin should be made as Word document attachments sent to theresearchbulletin@gmail.com. You are welcome to suggest topics and themes for specific articles by writing to the editor at the same email address.



Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner

Christof Wiechert

Translated by Jan Kees Saltet

Editor's note:

As part of the Waldorf100 celebrations, a new and greatly enhanced record was published of Rudolf Steiner's meetings with the teachers at the first Waldorf school, including a new introduction and extended commentaries by Christof Wiechert, former Head of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum. The following article is drawn from Wiechert's introductions to the meeting notes to each of the six years during which Steiner met with the teachers, sometimes late into the night, at the school in Stuttgart. Eventually these commentaries, along with his more detailed notes and the actual transcripts of the faculty meetings, will appear as a special section in the Online Waldorf Library of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE). We are grateful to the Pädagogische Forschungsstelle and the Rudolf Steiner Verlag for granting RIWE permission to translate and publish these introductions and commentaries.

Introduction

Reading the transcripts of the faculty meetings brings us closer to the way the first Waldorf School came into being than any cycle of pedagogical lectures can do. We witness this education in the making, and with it the birth of the movement as a whole. They are a must-read for anybody who has Waldorf education at heart.

These meetings show us Rudolf Steiner in action, not only as Director of the school, but also as a colleague who was first among equals, giving shape to the pedagogy during the years of his leadership from 1919 until 1925. There was great fluidity in the way the pedagogy was developed; there was no fixed, preconceived concept. We should also take into consideration that the social and economic circumstances of the time could not have been more adverse to creating a new school. A modern-style feasibility study would have flatly declared the venture impossible.

Three things can be learned from these meetings, if one is inclined to take them to heart.

First of all, we can find original indications and content. There are large-scale outlines for the curriculum of the individual years, with delightful gold nuggets sprinkled in, such as this recommendation for eighth grade reading material: "Ideas for the Philosophy of

the History of Humanity" (*Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*), by J. G. Herder. Anyone who actually takes up this recommendation will be delighted to find that children of this age relish the stories contained in this [late 18th century] book; the ideas meet eighth graders exactly where they are.

Steiner repeatedly challenged teachers to develop grammar in dialogue with the students, gave incredible insights into the way Shakespeare's dramas affect us, indicated at what age drama is appropriate, made suggestions about reading out loud versus telling stories (reading would require more preparation). He also gave indications for individual subjects and how to develop curricula for them. We can follow how all these suggestions came into being. In addition, controversial remarks regarding contemporary figures and events provide rich food for thought.

Secondly, we find teaching habits and practices that Steiner corrected or criticized. Steiner carried on a never-ending crusade against the traditional, teacher-centered style: Don't simply lecture from the front, doling out intellectual information. Converse with the students, bring them in and engage them, don't hold forth from "Olympian heights." Other things he fought against included sloppiness, tardiness, lukewarm and disengaged teaching. He criticized misplaced esotericism (case in point: children were fooling around early in the morning while teachers were together reciting the weekly verse from his *Calendar of the Soul*). He hoped that, instead of casual nonchalance, "pluck" and team spirit would develop. He repeatedly expressed the hope that teachers would not teach from books and instead would stand in front of the children without notes. He also didn't want teachers to write in their attendance book during lesson time, and he urged them to be involved in the pedagogical work with heart and soul. He even asked them at one point not to perform the Christmas plays because they were expressing more enthusiasm for their performance than for their teaching. All these we can recognize as practices that continue in our schools to this day.

Thirdly, we meet Steiner in a new role, not as a recognized lecturer, but as a practical man in action. We see how he listened to the teachers and took in what they had to say; we experience his fine sense of humor and quick repartee, his astounding universality

of knowledge in every field. Reading these meeting reports, we can even get a sense for his intense presence of mind.

When teachers complained about the behavior of some students, we witness Steiner's soothing mildness, his empathy and understanding for how children are—"they are just playing pranks, nothing more"—so much so that one feels, "Yes, this is how one ought to treat them."

The economic and social situation after World War I and the ensuing revolution in Germany were by no means easy in Stuttgart. Children were neglected at home, many of them had hardly ever been to school. Large numbers came to school without having had breakfast, more than half of them suffered from severe malnutrition. There was insufficient housing for teachers, lack of space for the school, and there were never-ending financial worries. Such circumstances contributed to the severe crises that rattled the school as it was developing. Due to these dire circumstances, we experience Steiner also as a crisis manager who could analyze problems with clarity and steer the teachers toward solutions with a firm hand, a leader who wouldn't shy away from confronting shortcomings, holding up a clear mirror to the teachers when necessary.

When one takes into consideration that this was also the time when an attempt was being made to put Steiner's Threefold Social Organism for social reform into practice, an attempt that led to vehement attacks on Steiner, it is astonishing that the school survived at all. In fact, it was nothing short of a miracle, made possible by the indefatigable energy of the first teachers, who made great sacrifices and gave their all so the school would succeed, and who, on top of that, were often told by Steiner that even that wasn't enough.

Reading these meeting transcripts can bring one to the realization that seeds were sown in those years, the fruits of which we can still harvest today. However, the trees that bear these fruits need tending in order for them to remain fruitful.

These conferences have the power to awaken the enthusiasm necessary to do this tending, if we have the heart.

The First Year (1919 – 1920) (17 faculty meetings, from 8 September 1919 to 31 July 1920)

At the beginning of the school year, there were 253 students, 143 of them "Waldorf children" (children whose parents worked for the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory), and 110 "others". By the end of the school year the number of "Waldorf children" had dwindled to 137, but the number of "others" had risen to 151. These numbers were published by E. A. Karl Stockmeyer in the

Waldorfschulnachrichten, the news bulletin of the first Waldorf School ("Das erste Jahr der Freien Waldorfschule in Stuttgart" [The First Year of the Independent Waldorf School in Stuttgart], number 17 of 1 September 1920, p. 397).

It was September 1919, and the upheavals of the war and the German revolution had only just passed. Many children were traumatized, seriously malnourished, wild, and lacking classroom experience. They came in either directly, without kindergarten experience or with only fragmentary education due to the upheavals of war. Many parents couldn't afford to pay tuition and were not employed by the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory, but their children were covered nevertheless by the firm. Two boys died during the first school year.

Steiner carried on a never-ending crusade against the traditional, teacher-centered style: Don't simply lecture from the front, doling out intellectual information.

The school itself was poor, too. Parents were asked to carry the cost of the extra lighting needed during the winter months. Money was scarce everywhere. Living conditions for teachers were frightfully primitive, school supplies were limited to the bare minimum.

The opening ceremony, however, was extremely festive. There were meaningful speeches, there was music, and the event was attended by hundreds of people. The mood was highly celebratory. For Emil Molt, the director of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory and founder of the school, it was the crowning moment of his biography. It is reported that Rudolf Steiner had never appeared as happy and relaxed as when he was on his way to the founding of the Waldorf School.

After a two-week preparatory course, the teachers were full of ideals, hopes, and expectations.

Would they manage? On the last day of the course, Steiner added a personal remark, "For me, the Waldorf School will be *ein wahrhaftes Sorgenkind* [a child I need to be concerned about]." In a lecture to the Anthroposophical Society in Stuttgart, he used similar

words. It was as if he perceived that even though the educational course he had given had engaged the teachers intensely, it would take a lot of time for teachers to build up the necessary skills. And so it was: the first year, which Steiner called a trial year (for the teachers, that is), would test the enormous aspirations of this new art of education, especially considering the adverse conditions of postwar Germany.

So these were the tasks of the first year: gain pedagogical experience, figure out what to do with unexpected student behavior, try not to panic in the face of a host of pedagogical and methodological questions about which they were clueless. Steiner gave advice, soothed ruffled feelings, observed the most difficult children at Christmas time and concluded there was much that could be done with them, and repeatedly urged teachers to nurture the relationship with the children.

By the end of the school year, the projected growth for the following year amounted to 160 new students, even though no money had been set aside to appoint new teachers or acquire the necessary new buildings. At first, Steiner threatened to institute a cap on the number of children they could accept. However, money was somehow found, teachers appeared, and schoolrooms materialized, somewhere or other. They were able to go on, even though conditions continued to be tough both for the students and the teachers.

The Second Year (1920 – 1921)

(7 meetings, from 2 September 1920 to 26 May 1921)

Two teachers were needed for the new first grade, and the sixth grade had to be split in half because it had over 50 children. A ninth grade was added, for which Steiner gave elementary curriculum indications. This ninth grade was small because many parents who worked at the Waldorf Astoria factory preferred enrolling their children in apprenticeship programs rather than send them to a high school which was an unknown quantity for them.

During the course of the year, it became clear that this would be the only Waldorf school for now, and that no new schools could be founded in Germany for the time being. All available resources were tied to Stuttgart, which meant that the basic conditions for founding other schools were increasingly tenuous. Rudolf Steiner visited the school only a few times compared to

the previous year, and while he was there, pedagogical difficulties were brought up and solutions considered.

Right at the beginning, Rudolf Steiner clarified his relationship to the other teachers and the school. He said his effectiveness would depend on the attitude of the teachers. He could be truly effective only if teachers would take up his suggestions in freedom. Since he worked as an esoteric teacher, he would never act on the basis of his own authority or impose his will. Everything would depend on the free will of the teachers to translate his suggestions into action.

At the end of the school year Steiner analyzed the ill will which had been mounting against Emil Molt as a person. Herr Molt was identified with the Waldorf Astoria factory, and still filled the role of employer. The teachers felt he applied this role also to them, and they thought it inappropriate. Steiner had to explain to the teachers that the firm itself had contributed next to nothing to the founding and running of the school, and that financing the venture was almost exclusively the work of Emil Molt himself. They should be glad to be allied with him, not with the factory. The outcome was that the Waldorf School Association was founded in the spring of 1920, a necessary step for the school to gain independence from the Waldorf Astoria firm.

The Third Year (1921 – 1922)

(8 meetings, from 17 June 1921 to 10 May 1922)

The school kept growing. Next to two first grades, grades three and five also had to be split in half, and a tenth grade was added. There were now 15 classes, including Dr. Karl Schubert's "extra help" class, and 30 teachers for over 500 children. After two school years the number of students had almost doubled, and they were still housed in the same small quarters as before.

A special event this year was the school evaluation by the local school inspector. The teachers were worried; they thought the inspector was not well disposed towards the school and wouldn't take the relationship between teachers and students into account. Steiner suggested they write articles to counter the main points of criticism. A year later, however, Steiner read the actual report by Superintendent Eisele, and concluded that the inspector had been sympathetic to the undertaking and had approached both school and students with insight and understanding. Steiner was perturbed by the way teachers had received this report, especially because he thought some of Eisele's criticisms were to

Other things [Steiner] fought against included sloppiness, tardiness, lukewarm and disengaged teaching.

the point, and he told the teachers so in no uncertain terms.

The general economic situation was a great cause for concern. Inflation was climbing to terrifying heights, and “Der Kommende Tag” (“The Coming Day”, a corporation which tried to put Threefold Social Organism ideals into practice), led by Emil Leinhas, had trouble staying solvent. On February 25, 1922, therefore, it was decided to pull the Waldorf Astoria holdings out of the share capital of Der Kommende Tag and sell them. Because of the general inflation, this was a risky undertaking. Leinhas preferred fast action and went against the deal which Emil Molt had carefully been brokering. Molt had found a banking consortium willing to take over the stock holdings. Leinhas, however, sold the stock to a discount company in Mannheim, Germany, which spelled the beginning of the end of the Waldorf Astoria factory.

Steiner criticized the lack of response by the teachers to the lukewarm involvement of many of the students, urging teachers again and again to nurture their relationship with the students more actively. Elaborate indications for the curricula of grades 9 and 10 were presented.

At the end of the school year, tenth graders asked for a private audience with Rudolf Steiner, without teachers present. They communicated their concerns to him, complaining that they felt “not seen” by the teachers. The consequences showed in the fourth year.

The Fourth Year (1922 – 1923)

(18 meetings from 20 June 1922 to 8 March 1923)

It is not always easy to gain an impression of what actually happened during this school year, which is generally regarded as a crisis year. It is hard to realize the vehemence of the attacks against Steiner and anthroposophy at that time. The attacks were massive, aggressive, highly skewed, and in cases where Steiner was attacked, personally defamatory. At the start of the year, however, Steiner began an extensive lecture tour of Germany, covering 12 cities. At the same time, the Threefold Social Movement was being attacked on all fronts. In order to prevent the bankruptcy of Der Kommende Tag, the holdings of the Waldorf Astoria needed to be sold. Helplessly, Emil Molt had to watch his beloved factory and employees being taken away from him.

An academic lecture course held in Berlin did more harm than good, according to Steiner, but another academic course, involving seven Waldorf teachers as lecturers and held in The Hague, Holland, was more successful. Before the fourth school year began, a large part of the faculty was engaged with the second international congress of the anthroposophical movement in Vienna, the so-called East-West Congress. It was a great success, but the teachers, having had given it their all, were therefore exhausted even before the beginning of the fourth school year.

At the end of the school year, tenth graders asked for a private audience with Rudolf Steiner, without teachers present.

In addition, teachers had to deal with an exponential growth in the number of students, so one can assume they felt completely

overloaded, inwardly as well as outwardly. The toll of this congress soon became apparent. Teachers could not manage the upper grades, and a number of students were clearly out of control. Some of them were expelled, a decision Steiner regretted but was unable to undo because he saw that the cause of the problems lay more with the teachers than with the students. He lamented the lack of enthusiasm and energy on the part of the teachers, as well as the tense mood and the fact that teachers didn’t work well together.

Another stressful task this year was to institute an executive committee. Numerous conferences were held over a long period of time to figure out how to deal with this. Neglected difficulties concerning collaboration among the teachers were brought to light. It was a sheer miracle that, despite these tensions, teachers were able to hold meetings to further expand the curriculum and take up Steiner’s further advice and insights about human development.

The school was teetering on the brink, the Threefold Social Organism venture was teetering on the brink, and the Anthroposophical Society was shaken. Only in England and Holland were there promising developments in efforts to open further Waldorf schools.

The Fifth Year (1923 – 1924)

(13 meetings from 30 March 1923 to 27 March 1924)

Minutes from this year’s meetings show that the teachers were standing on firmer ground, and that difficulties could be named and worked with. Despite the crises of the previous year, the school was favorably regarded from the outside, so much so that enrollment continued to rise. The new school year started with 21 classes and almost 700 students.

As previously mentioned, Rudolf Steiner developed the school together with the teachers and did not push a preconceived plan in any way. This comes out clearly in the way they dealt with the question of final exams, among other issues. It was decided to hold the final exam at the end of twelfth grade, even though Steiner doubted the outcome of this plan would be successful because he was not sure teachers would practice the necessary economy in their lessons. Steiner didn't develop a specific Waldorf curriculum for the twelfth grade but suggested instead that the state curriculum requirements be used to prepare students for the final exam.

Many pedagogical problems were studied in depth and dealt with, primarily those concerning the ninth grade. Unexpectedly, one of the members of the executive committee, Paul Baumann, announced in a letter that he was stepping back from this leadership group after only a few months in this function. Steiner discussed this letter with the faculty on the same day the third parallel grade, 5c, was inaugurated, taught by Martha Haebler. All of this happened on the same day that Steiner gave the last of three lectures on the inner work of teachers, *Deeper Insights into Education* (CW 302a). The next day, he recast the content of this lecture in meditative form and gave it to the teachers. In this verse, he ties the mystery of human will to the will of Michael, and it has come to be known as the "Second Teachers Meditation".

After the Christmas holidays and the founding of the General Anthroposophical Society at the Christmas conference in Dornach, the teachers had to find their way with this new organization, meaning that the school was not part of the First Class of the School for Spiritual Science. Steiner made it clear that it was up to individual teachers to decide whether to become a member of the School for Spiritual Science.

The Sixth Year (1924 – 1925)

(Seven meetings from 9 April 1924 to 3 September 1924)

The sixth school year ran from 30 April 1924 to 30 March 1925. It was a stroke of destiny that the closing date of the school year coincided with the day Steiner died. The last time he was able to meet with teachers, however, was on 3 September 1924. Two weeks before his death, he wrote a parting letter to teachers and the students.

In June of 1924, Steiner held an in-depth discussion with the teachers and the first class of twelfth graders about the way they would go about the final exam in the future. It was decided to institute an extra preparatory

course, not as a thirteenth grade but as preparation for the final exam. Once they had made this decision, the curriculum of the twelfth grade was developed as the crown of twelve years of education.

The school and the curriculum were now established; no new grade needed to be prepared. The sixth year began with 784 students in 23 grades. Daily worries returned, including complaints about the burden of writing reports. At times, people noticed a slight resignation on Steiner's part. Pedagogical shortcomings had to be discussed again in the meetings of 19 June and 15 July. Steiner realized that pedagogical skills were lagging behind the needs of the students. A proper relationship between teachers and students was not sufficiently established, and as a result, the morale of teachers and students was not in tune. Steiner complained that teachers were not working on forming 'psychological pictures' of their students during his absence. Steiner used words like, "If the school is to continue to exist", and spoke of "a new beginning, if the Waldorf school wants to go on." He understood the "new beginning" to mean that the morale of the school needed to be talked about. His words were full of portent. "We need to think seriously how we can grow beyond this, if the Waldorf school is to continue to exist. There has to be a combined effort of good will, perhaps by having, prior to the beginning of the new school year, a series of teachers' meetings where we can discuss this very thing: the morale of the school." The last two meetings represent both assignment and legacy.

Further detailed commentaries by Christof Wiechert on individual faculty meetings with Rudolf Steiner between September 1919 and September 1925 are available for free downloading at the Online Waldorf Library (OWL) of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education: www.waldorflibrary.org

Jeff Tunkey

Introduction

I consider myself very fortunate to have begun my explorations of anthroposophy and Waldorf education in the late 1980s, shortly after I turned 40. At that time, there were still teachers and lecturers in North America whom I would classify as being in the “second circle from the sun.” That is, not part of the generation who were colleagues and associates of Rudolf Steiner, but among those who came along during the immediate period thereafter, i.e., beginning in the 1930s or 40s, and who had met some of the founding circle, or who had even been younger colleagues of those involved during Steiner’s career. Leading lights I was blessed to hear talks by, or even meet a little, included Henry and Christy Barnes, Werner Glas, William Ward, Ann Pratt, and a few others now lost to (my) memory. Then, my early years of teaching at Aurora Waldorf School (AWS) near Buffalo, NY, would not have been possible without contact with and help from many in the “third circle from the sun” — master teachers still leading the schools movement in the 90s. One of these, with a pithy ten-word question, set me running on the path to what I hope has been a serious attempt at Waldorf teaching.

The Question

This highlight moment occurred during my Spatial Dynamics® training with Jaimen McMillan. One evening in a discussion circle, Jaimen posed to the group the following rhetorical question: “By what right do you call yourself a Waldorf Teacher?” The meaning, for me at least, was bracingly clear: Consider very carefully the responsibility of thinking oneself and representing oneself to be a Waldorf teacher.

Let’s follow that along. What would Rudolf Steiner say—or do—if he were to walk into my classroom today? Cringe, grimace and have me hauled off to the Goetheanum, there to be dealt with by a squad of punitive eurythmists? How can I possibly know if I’m actually “doing Waldorf” a century after its founder passed from the scene, and in such a changed world? During his relatively brief life, Dr. Steiner gave some six thousand lectures, not all of which have been translated

into English. His philosophy of the human being, his indications for education, were presented from many perspectives in hundreds of different lectures now collected in scores of different books that comprise the teachers’ canon. And then, important pedagogical gems are also found here and there in the nooks and crannies of hundreds of other lectures on seemingly non-pedagogical topics. I do feel like I’m walking the winding yellow brick road seeking courage and a brain. By what right, I ask, may I call myself a Waldorf Teacher?

Teacher Trainings

As I began my teaching career, striving to create a cohesive program blending insights from gym program movement and remedial/student support, I decided to make myself a checklist of topics to keep studying and working to apply. I filled one book cabinet, and then a few more. Completing each book led me to add to, not shorten, my to-read list. After about 10 years of studying, attending workshops, and receiving a lot of mentoring, I noticed that sometimes the newer class teachers joining AWS from Waldorf teacher training institutes seemed less well versed in these foundational themes than those who had taken certificate courses in the past. This might be because—as the Waldorf movement evolves and passes from one generation to the next and the “circles from the sun” get wider—the orbit that teachers need to travel in order to gain understanding increases by a factor of pi or more. Perhaps some of Rudolf Steiner’s core concepts are a little less likely to be passed through oral traditions, and more likely to be fractured by pressures on curriculum and tested results. Does this ring true to you?

In any event, I began getting requests to provide faculty meeting study guides at AWS, and workshops at other Waldorf schools. For AWS, I formed a monthly book study course, dubbed “A Scaffold for Waldorf Teaching.” Each month for a year, participants completed a reading assignment; then we’d gather for five or six hours on a Saturday to discuss the topic and explore it through movement, speech, and artistic activities. I led three cycles of this course, and almost all of the teachers then at AWS attended it at least once. The balance of the chapters in this section will take up many of these foundations, and also provide some ways to find connections between these gifts from spiritual science and the findings of modern science.

1. This is an excerpt from the first chapter of Jeff Tunkey’s book, *Educating for Balance and Resilience: Developmental Movement, Drawing, and Painting in Waldorf Education*, published by SteinerBooks/Bell Pond Books in 2020. The *Research Bulletin* is grateful to the author and to SteinerBooks for their kind permission to reprint this selection.

Conclusion

In a lecture titled “Facing Karma,”² Rudolf Steiner suggested we should never lapse into a sort of basking in personal pleasure when success comes our way (as for instance when a teaching day goes blissfully well) but rather should remember to be thankful for the gifts of wisdom that passed through us. And, when things go less well and we feel discouraged, that we can find help outside of ourselves, through the One who walks along with us on our earthly journey.

All of the study items listed are not only interesting in the abstract; they are invaluable lenses for daily lesson planning, student observation, and self-evaluation. When a lesson or school day goes well, one can find ingredients of success in these staples of anthroposophy; when things go otherwise, invariably help for redeeming the next day can also be found by reflection on the list. Did I include laughter and tears? What was the quality of breathing in the room? Was there a student or students in shutdown mode? How was my posture?

A century after Rudolf Steiner began the Waldorf school movement, none of us can know for sure if our pedagogy and approaches would be what he might have intended. However, the world clearly needs Waldorf schools, so I believe we can all continue to provisionally claim to be Waldorf teachers so long as we keep striving to read and listen, and to discipline ourselves to place our self-evaluations in the light of the framework provided from the past.

Thus, in order to stand in front of students, parents and colleagues as a Waldorf educator, one must be willing to travel on a never-finished journey of research and self-understanding. Hold to the motto that every step forward with pedagogy requires two steps forward with personal development.

Practical and Ethical Considerations

The purpose of this chapter is to describe—and advocate for—a comprehensive spectrum of whole-class developmental strengthening; to outline approaches that can be added to movement program and individual support services your school may already offer.

Consider very carefully the responsibility of thinking oneself and representing oneself to be a Waldorf teacher.

In seating a student behind a desk, we as teachers and parents are anticipating that the child is physiologically and emotionally ready, or soon will become ready, for the academic progressions about to be presented. But realistically, every child will likely be at least somewhat challenged with some aspect of the academic environment: for myriads of individual reasons, each child every day will need a little help to thrive. Perhaps it might be a challenge to sit in balance, or to listen

quietly, or to muster the fine motor skills for writing, etc. Thus, we must remember that through the gifts of developmental movement, drawing, and painting inspired by anthroposophy, every child can be more fully observed, and helped to reach his or her full potential.

The Basis for a School-Wide, All-Students Approach to Learning Foundations

To begin, let us look at two practical aspects of Waldorf education that by their nature will lead us to focus on related ethical considerations. By keeping these inter-related issues in focus, we can gain additional resolve for our Michaelic educational journey.

First, Waldorf academic paths are in some ways “slower” or in any event less test-driven than is common today. For writing and reading, we take the stance that parents can be patient, and not fret, if their child hasn’t begun book reading in grade one, or two, or even three. For arithmetic, we are trying to be working, initially, to have the student “at home in the house of numbers” before emphasizing skill-and-drill computational learning.

Therefore, I believe, Waldorf schools have a heightened responsibility to observe carefully each child’s developmental foundations and capacities. Yes, it is right to provide daily learning challenges, while still leaving early-grades students free to awaken to the intellect at a pace harmonious to each individual. However, it would obviously not be ethically upright for a school or teacher to wait until third grade (or later) ‘for the light to go on’, only then to find out that a student actually lacks the foundations; nor for a school to wait until there is a crisis brought by a parent or parents to begin filling in the developmental and assessment blanks. This book is about having a robust toolbox of student observation and support methods that can help teachers with this vital responsibility.

Threading the Needle of Class Constellations

A second set of practical considerations often facing Waldorf educators is one that can tend to lead parents

² Vienna, February 8, 1912. Lecture 16 in *Esoteric Christianity and the Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz* (CW 130) (East Sussex, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2001). Also in *Anthroposophy in Everyday Life*. Four Lectures by Rudolf Steiner (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press/SteinerBooks, 1995).

and schools to meet each other at an intersection of weaknesses. This issue underscores the need for the types of approaches provided by this book.

Parents who begin investigating a switch to Waldorf when their child is in grade two or above are often seeking an answer to a question that in some regard they wish to avoid bringing all the way to the surface. Their child is struggling or even suffering in a current school, and they are seeking relief—but not (for instance) the bright light of a learning-disability label. And, very often, Waldorf schools struggle with enrollment and financial needs that leave them open to accepting an over-broad range of student and family profiles. The ethical consideration is multifaceted. Questions that can arise include: “If we accept this child, can we serve and educate him as well as or better than any of the alternatives? Have we objectively and realistically weighed the child’s needs and our pedagogical abilities, or do we feel pressure to ‘give it a try’ and hope for the best? And, will accepting this student make it less possible for other students to learn?”

After many years of wrestling with this second practical/ethical issue, my school arrived at an approach that helps us keep it real. When there is an application for a new student in any grade, the process includes consideration of four qualitative questions:

1. Does the student have the will to work?
2. Does the student have the academic ability to progress with the curriculum?
3. Do the parents support the pedagogical values of Waldorf education?
4. Is the student likely to be a positive social addition to the class constellation?

Our rule of thumb is that positive answers to at least three of these questions will be needed in order for the student to thrive and for us to carry out our professional responsibility. These same four points of relationship evaluation may come up again at any time during a student’s career at our school. Before addressing how these can be observed over time, here is an outline of our Educational Support Program.

School-Wide, All-Students

Observing children through Main Lesson, movement classes, in-services, recess, and subject classes can provide tremendous insight into the needs of students. It is through these classes and other modalities that

the faculty can bring forth questions and recommend assessments for individual services based on the development of the child.

Aurora Waldorf School (founded in 1991) was very fortunate that in its formative years several of its teachers were able to immerse themselves in studying *Extra Lesson* with Mary Jo Oresti, Rachel Ross, and other leaders of the Waldorf remedial movement; and *Spacial Dynamics* with Jaimen McMillan and Maureen Curran. Thanks to the wealth of pedagogical insights these trainings provided and to the enthusiastic support of the AWS faculty up to the present, a unique program was created and has continued to be strengthened. My hope is that, in presenting the model we have followed, readers will find elements they can add or enhance at their schools.

A guiding principle that we gleaned from these trainings is: “All students need support!” That is, the movement, drawing and painting exercises found in *The Extra Lesson*³ and other anthroposophic sources are not meant only for one-on-one use by struggling students who are provided individual help outside the classroom; rather, all students can benefit from doing them. For instance, many of

the activities serve to align us with the currents of the Earth, and contain a harmonizing, focusing element... and who doesn’t need that from time to time!

At AWS, resource allocations and personnel have shifted somewhat over the years, but the broad outlines have remained the same. The ingredients of our integrated ‘full spectrum’ program in the grades are:

1. Recess outdoors every day
2. At least two games/gym classes a week, plus one tumbling/gymnastics class (Middle school students have gym every day, for a total of 6 periods per week.)
3. An additional class called “Enrichment” in grades 1, 2 and 3; this provides whole-class time for *Extra Lesson* and developmental movement activities.
4. Two eurythmy classes per week
5. Classroom in-services: *Extra Lesson* teachers work with class teachers to model and mentor a core of whole-class remedial exercises, helping them add these to their repertoire of Main Lesson activities.

3 Audrey McAllen, *The Extra Lesson* (Hudson, NY: SteinerBooks, 2013).

6. Protocol for a progression of student assessments, including:

- First grade readiness
- Periodic in-class numeracy and reading screenings by the EST during grades 1 to 4
- Second grade assessment (blend of “First Lesson” and “Dutch model”⁴)
- Standardized reading and math screenings in third and fourth grade

7. Individual student services provided:

- Therapeutic eurythmy
- Extra Lesson
- Remedial reading
- Remedial math
- Assisted study hall
- Referral for third-party services

Pullouts: Minuses or Pluses?

Individual or small-group services may take place on a weekly, biweekly, or daily basis depending on the needs of the child. Students are pulled out for sessions during all parts of the day: from the book-work portion of Main Lesson, an Extra Main, or a subject class (pullouts from movement and eurythmy classes are avoided). Schedule planning seeks to find the least-interruptive schedule based on each student’s need. Naturally, no class or subject teacher would wish for any student to miss even one period, to have less of their subject — let alone to be away over an extended schedule. Nonetheless, teachers at AWS have come to accept over the years that students who need individual support are, in a manner of speaking, not actually “getting” their class, i.e., are not able to fully benefit until more concentrated help is given. And by focusing the majority of our remedial resources on the earlier grades, the need for pullouts has proven to be reduced by the time a student reaches the older, more academically-concentrated upper grades.

Learning is Movement, Movement is Learning

As noted before, a movement program that’s solidly based on the developmental needs of children can have many school-wide benefits, including reduced need for remedial services, and reduced teacher burnout because classes are more ready for daily academics.

At AWS, we have proven to ourselves that an extended program of play and movement strengthens the developmental foundations needed for success in the grades and beyond, and is complementary to the remedial program.

Two keys to the thinking behind this approach might be as follows. First, Rudolf Steiner indicated that our task as educators is to “teach the children to breathe.” Perhaps for our modern times this might be better translated as “help the children learn to self-regulate.” Secondly, Waldorf schools are supposed to provide—month after month and year after year—a progression of academic content for which the students are emotionally and physiologically ready, and which at the same time helps them take the next step.

Movement lessons can certainly make a contribution in both respects. Through age-appropriate movement, the developing human can gain basics like postural control, spatial orientation, movement coordination, the ability to change sight perception instantaneously between three-dimensional and two-dimensional space, good body geography, and confirmed dominance. Thus, each child can be helped in some way to reach his or her potential.

Waldorf schools have a heightened responsibility to observe carefully each child’s developmental foundations and capacities.

Again, our experience at AWS has shown that students are able to move ahead more solidly when they are all provided with appropriate daily movement and artistic activities; this is made possible by an embrace by class teachers of whole-class Extra Lesson and related exercises. Classes as a whole, and even individual students in the top academic tier, have through this dedicated effort shown strengthened foundations for literacy, numeracy, and

deskwork capacities.

The Hierarchy of Learning Readiness

What Kind of Help is Needed?

Every new school year draws the student into what might be thought of as a “new civilization,” and it bears repeating that every child will meet some individual barriers during the move to this new level of awareness of the world. Therefore, students will be best served by a curriculum that breathes in and out, flows between difficult new tasks on the one hand, and familiar, relaxing and supportive activities on the other. With this flow between analysis and synthesis, most pupils will be able to adjust to the new order of things, and they will progress.

4 McAllen, *The Extra Lesson*; Waldorf Schools of Holland Advisory Service, *Second Grade Development Observation and Assessment* (The Netherlands: Mercurius, 1986).

However, some will require additional individual support before our hopes for them can become achievable. Very often, in one way or another, the child is the one who lets the adults know that more help is needed. (As teachers we may struggle to keep in mind that a “discipline problem” might well be just such a signal.) Whatever the signs that more help is needed, our role as adults is to thoughtfully and carefully decide what kind of individual attention is needed. Both common sense and careful contemplation tell us that there is a hierarchy of needs and support within which we must work.

The Realm of the Physician

Is there a medical/physical problem or a constitutional imbalance? No amount of individual attention from a teacher can fully help a child who has, for example, an undiagnosed vision or hearing problem, or an unknown food allergy that is driving her off the deep end. Research has shown a connection between iron deficiency and math challenges. Problems of this nature are the domain of the physician. Additionally, a child may have an excess of one temperament or another (i.e., the overly sanguine child who loses focus, or the highly phlegmatic child who can write only one page while the others are writing five, etc.). Teachers can work pedagogically with temperaments to a degree, but a pronounced constitutional problem is also in the domain of the physician, perhaps working in concert with a therapeutic eurythmist and/or a homeopathist.

The Realm of the Soul

Is the problem in the realm of the psyche? Is there a family crisis, or a struggle with parenting, or an educational psychological problem? The teacher can provide a calm and loving classroom, but needs in this realm will also demand outside professional help, and in some cases a specialized classroom or an Individual Educational Plan.

The Realm of Childhood Development

Is the problem developmental? Many aspects of learning readiness—for instance spatial orientation, movement coordination, and the ability to change sight perception between three-dimensional and two-dimensional space—are the results of the child’s body/environment movement exploration during the first seven years. A developmental assessment or a Sensory Integration assessment can identify such things as retention of early reflexes or ambidexterity, lack of good body image, hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity, lack of

spatial orientation, inability to make mental pictures of sense impressions, and dyslexic symptoms. Without solid developmental faculties, a child will struggle with any curriculum, Waldorf or otherwise. Needs in areas like these can be addressed through a team effort by the child’s teachers plus individual attention for Extra Lesson or Occupational Therapy/Sensory Integration.

The Realm of Teaching and Tutoring

Is there a need for extra skill-building and skill repetition? Needs in this realm can also be addressed as a team effort, with additional individual attention in reading or math classes, plus tutoring.

Models for Observation and Reflection

In considering the needs or challenges of a child, it is important to try to form the clearest idea of which hierarchy or hierarchies might need to be addressed. These are:

Medical/Constitutional — the realm of the physician, as well as the therapeutic eurythmist and/or homeopathist guided by the physician.

Examples:

- Allergies or chemical imbalance
- Birth difficulties
- Injuries or illness
- Constitutional types
- Excess of temperament
- Heredity

Soul/Psyche — the realm of the parent, priest, or psychologist.

Examples:

- Home life
- Biography
- Diagnosis of learning disabilities. IQ testing, mainstream labels with deeper connections
- Birth order

Developmental/Pedagogical — the realm of the teacher.

Examples:

- Movement stages
- Twelve senses
- Six constitutional types
- Four temperaments
- Stretching and lifting

Have we objectively and realistically weighed the child’s needs and our pedagogical abilities, or do we feel pressure to ‘give it a try’ and hope for the best?

- Developmental keys: timing and rhythm; direction and goal; spatial orientation; sequencing; fine motor control and speech; midline barriers; imitation and anticipation; reflexes; radius and ulna; eye movement
- Family background of learning difficulties
- Learning style
- Home background for vocabulary, numeracy, will forces, etc.
- Breathing; laughter and tears
- Learning disability adaptations
- Laterality and dyslexia (*Laterality—i.e., the combination of eye, hand, foot, ear and brain dominant sides—and dyslexia have both a soul aspect and a developmental-pedagogical aspect.*

Working with the Twelve Senses

That humans have twelve senses, as presented in a variety of ways by Steiner a century ago, is often one of the first anthroposophic viewpoints that parents or others new to Waldorf will hear about. And if you're like many people for whom this was an informational starting point, you may have had a quizzical reaction when you heard someone state that humans have twelve senses, not just the six or seven commonly delineated by scientific textbooks (i.e., touch, sight, hearing, self-movement, taste, smell and balance). So, announcing that there are, as a fact, definitely a dozen senses might sound kind of "Waldorfy" at first blush.

But perhaps on this topic, as with many others, Steiner was ahead of his time, and modern science is just starting to catch up. For example, included in Steiner's model is what he termed a 'Life Sense,' the presence of an actual physical organ for sensing one's internal state of health and vitality. Off the beaten path? Or... pathfinding?

Well, a century later, the August 2018 issue of *Scientific American* magazine featured a lengthy and well-documented cover story titled "The Seventh Sense."⁵ In that article, neuroscientist Jonathan Kipnis presented research that shines new light on the relationship between the nervous and immune systems: new findings that these two systems are not, as anatomy textbooks depict, isolated from each other. Rather, Kipnis stated: "Mounting evidence indicates that the brain and the immune system interact routinely, both in sickness and in health." The immune system may "qualify as a kind of surveillance organ that detects microorganisms in the body... and informs the brain about them, much as our eyes relay visual information and our ears

transmit auditory signals." It will be fascinating to see how this new research is followed up in the future.

In any event, taking up Steiner's construct as a practical lens on the human organization can inspire fresh insights into the task of nurturing healthy childhood development and academic readiness. Those who want to explore the topic can find a wealth of reading, including books by Karl König,⁶ Albert Soesman,⁷ Gilbert Childs⁸ and others. The following outline, given only for the purpose of keeping the main points in front of us, is a brief review of the twelve senses model that has been compiled from this rich background of sources.

The Basics

Rudolf Steiner defined the human physical body as an archetypal form that is the sum of all the senses working together.⁹ Through our structural physical body, we can perceive three-dimensional space, gain uprightness, stand and walk, and carry our ego through life on the earth.

The twelve senses can be grouped into three tiers. The first group of four is commonly called the lower, foundational, physical or inner senses. It is through these four that the infant begins to find the way into the physical body and life on earth.

Touch Sense is the inner sense of "where I end and the outer world begins." Its development starts with the birth event itself. Touching any outer object changes one's inner state.

Life Sense is the sense of one's own health and inner condition. Examples: the heightened perception of one's inner state during running and then cooling down; feeling the nutritional difference between lightly steamed fresh vegetables and microwaved frozen vegetables. The mainstream term "homeostasis" refers to somewhat similar aspects of sensing.

Self-Movement Sense refers to the inner sense of one's own movements, both fine and gross motor; 'proprioception' is the equivalent mainstream term. This sense begins even before birth.

Balance Sense also begins before birth, as the mother moves around, reclines, etc., and then develops further as the infant rolls around, crawls, and learns to walk.

6 Karl König, *The Human Soul* (Edinburgh, UK: Floris Books, 2006), and Karl König, *A Living Physiology* (Whitby, UK: Camphill Books, 1999).

7 Albert Soesman, *Our Twelve Senses* (Stroud, UK: Hawthorn Press, 2000).

8 Gilbert Childs, *5 + 7 = 12 Senses: Rudolf Steiner's Contribution to the Psychology of Perception* (Stroud, UK: Fire Tree Press, 1996).

9 Rudolf Steiner, public lecture, Dec. 30, 1917. Typescript copy may be available from Rudolf Steiner Library.

5 Jonathan Kipnis, "The Seventh Sense," *Scientific American*, Volume 319, Issue 2, August 2018.

Next, four middle senses are delineated. Also known as soul senses, they are at the boundary between the inner and outer world.

Smell and Taste senses are just as delineated in common parlance.

Sight Sense, in this paradigm, refers to the aspects of vision in which color, visual warmth, changes of scenery are perceived; sensing via the eyes also has a self-movement aspect, as our finest muscles move the eyes to focus and to process shapes.

Warmth Sense, distinct from touch, takes place at a wide margin between inner and outer (example: placing a very cold hand under lukewarm water). Dr. König points to the primacy of this sense in maintaining our balance between our inner and outer worlds.¹⁰

The four higher senses, also known as spiritual senses, connect us to the world of ideas and human interactions.

Hearing Sense — one of the twelve senses in common parlance.

Sense of Language or Word encompasses all that it is to sense and “be in” a language: hearing/perceiving the language, speaking and reading, etc. Language represents an amazing human achievement and is all the more astounding in that it develops in the first few years of life.

Concept or Thought Sense is the ability to perceive thoughts.

Ego Sense is the ability to sense another person’s ego or presence (not the development of one’s own ego). Example: sensing when another person has entered a room (perhaps a teacher with good classroom presence). It affects the ability to wait for a parent or teacher to explain an activity and to work in a group.

Connecting to Students

How can this theoretical model help us as teachers (and parents)? How can it be put into practice? I believe, in two ways: it offers an alternative—and effective—vantage point on modern labels for learning disabilities and is an important approach to self-evaluation of lessons and classroom management.

For each of four lower senses, which appear in the first days and grow throughout childhood, there

is a companion higher sense that appears later in development, representing a transformation or flowering of the lower sense. Another way of saying “the lower senses develop the higher senses.”

Quite a few learning difficulties—challenges including inabilities to pay attention or stay with the class, struggling to form or remember thoughts, hindrances with language or listening skills—appear to relate to one or more of the four higher sense categories and to call for tutoring or other direct intervention. But one can instead look at these challenges at the level of language, thought, or human attention as possible needs for help in the development of corresponding lower senses, and then approach things from a different starting point rather than only working on the labeled problem/manifestation in the higher faculty.

Expressed in a positive way, this suggests that any activity that helps one of the four lower senses will also be vital to the development of its companion higher sense. Conversely, it could be counterproductive or even harmful

to attack a learning obstacle head-on, without first assessing, and if needed addressing, the companion lower sense. Because almost every child has at least a little difficulty here and there, developmental games and activities can be given to any child, or to an entire class, with the knowledge that a few children deeply need them as hygienic experiences and almost all will benefit. Thus, in thinking about a lesson or a school day, it can be of great benefit to review how one worked with the lower senses as avenues to connecting with higher-level learning.

Nurturing and development of Smell, Taste, Sight, and Warmth senses is also fundamental to academic progress. Steiner once noted that human learning has a certain canine-like sniffing/tracking quality; we hunt for new ideas; try to dig out the truth.

Connections from Lower to Higher

The first lower-higher pole runs from the Touch sense to the Ego sense. This relationship is the reason it’s so helpful to shake each student’s hand, to remember to make direct eye contact, and when possible to touch a distracted student on the shoulder or arm rather than using (or raising) one’s voice. It’s worth wondering whether the epidemic of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is to some degree driven by a deficit of bodily-kinesthetic pedagogical approaches in the modern school environment.

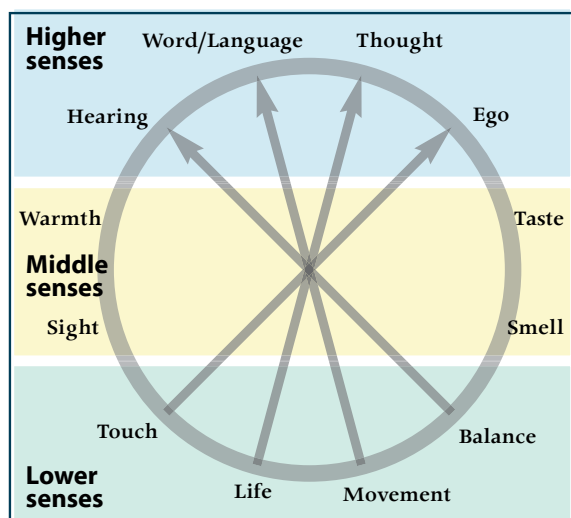
The Life sense is connected to the Thought or Concept sense: by and large people are more able to learn new

¹⁰ Karl König, *A Living Physiology* (Whitby, UK: Camphill Books, 1999).

things when well rested and feeling positive. Of the four lower senses, Life is perhaps the one where we as teachers are most in need of teamwork with parents: our teaching task of imparting new information can be made so much easier by a rhythmic and healthy home life. Quite frankly, we can build bridges to student learning only from our side of the river, i.e., when the student can arrive at school physiologically ready to meet the new school day. Every young child needs to be surrounded by adults who in word and deed convey the message “You look strong/healthy/well rested (etc.) today,” or, when ill, “You are strong, you’ll be well soon.”

Self-movement and Language have a connection that can readily be observed through similarities between a child’s speech and gross-motor movement patterns, as well as what can be seen of the fine-motor control for the jaw, tongue, etc., recruited for speech.

The organs for Balance and Hearing are co-located in the inner ear. Children who spin themselves around the classroom or who fall off their chairs are helping teachers remember to include movement breaks with an element of vestibular stimulation.



The Lower Senses and Postural Control

One aspect of a child’s development calling for careful observation and helping attention can be summed up as the postural control system—how the network of bones, muscles, and nerves can make it possible to sit at a desk, stand poised with the head upright, etc. The four lower senses can be a symphony that enables the student to breathe in and out, to shift between analysis and synthesis, between joyful movement and harmonious focus. Thus, strengthening the four lower senses is one of many reasons we as teachers must attend to our

own posture: “be the change you wish to see!” There’s a lot more to explore on this topic.

The Common Sense

These ideas about the twelve senses and the interesting connections between them, although superficially beyond the boundaries of mainline beliefs, are in fact supported by scores of common idioms — everyday expressions that point to a wider acceptance of these deeper truths. For the lower/higher poles, examples include: “I don’t follow you,” “a (verbal) pat on the back,” “it (the words of the speaker) made me dizzy/gave me a headache,” etc. There are also common phrases pointing to how the middle senses relate to learning, including: “that [idea] doesn’t pass the smell test/was in bad taste,” “I see what you mean,” “Let me chew on (or digest) that for a while,” etc. So, “keep your eyes open” for other expressions that can “shed some light” on the twelve points of the spectrum of human senses.

...Or is it Sixteen Senses?

For several years, I puzzled with a little question about the concept of strengthening the four lower senses as an avenue to strengthening higher-sense academic capacities. That is, the four higher senses seem to relate mostly, or most strongly, to the Language Arts curriculum: listening, speaking, comprehension of language, and interpersonal communication. Placed in comparison with Harvard professor Howard Gardner’s modern theory of nine multiple intelligences, the higher senses as given in Steiner’s model seemed to be mostly or only about just two of the intelligences in the Gardner model—the Language and Interpersonal intelligences—and to have very little to say about, for instance, the Math/Logical and Spatial intelligences. They only related to two of the three Rs: Reading and ‘Riting, but not ‘Rithmetic! This interested me at a practical level because the incidence of student challenges in arithmetic/math can be as frequent as those in reading acquisition, and, if anything, more difficult to identify in the early stages.

Howard Gardner redefined intelligence to include the following nine facets of human capacity. The list below (with an example of genius for each) suggests some fields in which particular intelligences will be useful.

Language (poet, playwright, lawyer): *Maya Angelou*

Math/Logical (mathematician, engineer, philosopher): *Euclid*

Musical (musician, composer): *Aretha Franklin*

Spatial: *Albert Einstein*

Kinesthetic: *Michael Jordan*

Connections Between the Lower and Higher Senses – and How to Help			
Touch & Ego	Life & Thought	Movement & Language	Balance & Hearing
Developing touch strengthens the ability to connect to other human beings	Developing health, and joyful appreciation for nature strengthens thinking ability	Developing proprioception strengthens language – speaking writing and reading	Developing balance helps to develop listening skills, postural control, arithmetic readiness
Qualities: Trust & Acceptance: In the physical and spiritual worlds In adults’ and one’s own judgments Acceptance of boundaries	Qualities: Joy & Wonder A sense of the whole Patience; acceptance of what is not fair, of differences Self-reflectiveness	Qualities: Dignity & Grace Industry and uprightness Connectedness to body and earth Synthesis - parts in relationship to the whole	Qualities: Resilience & Freedom Ability to move between tension and release, concentration and relaxation; to quiet oneself for listening
Hindrances: Early wakefulness Overprotected Shock or trauma Sedentary lifestyle Harsh discipline	Hindrances: Lack of boundaries, being treated like an adult Media; limited real play Nature deprivation Poor diet	Hindrances: Sedentary lifestyle Poor diet - obesity Lack of healthy models for imitation Youth competitive sports	Hindrances: Adults who are stuck in one way of being, or who are glib, sarcastic, exhausted or short-tempered
Help needed if: Hysteria, insecurity, mistrust, cynicism Over-connection with the earthly Defensiveness, withdrawal, little consideration for the needs of others; defiant and oppositional	Help needed if: Quick to correct and label others; low self esteem Fear, guilt; impatient, greedy; feeling victimized Disappointment in everything Obsessive or compulsive behavior	Help needed if: Inferiority, hopelessness Fixed concepts; rigidity of thoughts, feelings or actions Failure to pick up nonverbal or social cues Math or speech difficulty Disorganized movement Lost in space or time	Help needed if: Gravitational insecurity Motion sickness or dislike of spinning movements Fear of heights Hyper-vigilant Impulsive; blurting out Cannot take turns Poor short-term memory
Games that can help: Drawing on backs; Hand clapping games; London Bridge with rocking; Simon Says; Wrestling/roughhouse games; and all throwing and catching, especially with a partner	Games that can help: Quiet activity - free play, nature walks, water color painting. Most of the work of helping to develop a healthy life sense must take place at home. Rhythm in daily, weekly, monthly and annual life is the key.	Games that can help: Tumbling Crawling games Jumping rope String games (cats cradle) Blindfold games Ball bouncing games - jacks, 7-up, etc.	Games that can help: Recreational gymnastics, and ANY activity that rotates the inner ear in space (e.g., rolling down a hill) or depends on balance (e.g., blindfold games) will provide a terrific benefit.

Naturalist: *Marie Curie*
Interpersonal: *Martin Luther King*
Intrapersonal: *Henry Thoreau*
Existential: *Johann von Goethe*

The Lower Senses as Foundations for Arithmetic and Higher Mathematics

I was quite excited when I happened upon a typescript of talks on arithmetic that Karl König had given to Camphill teachers.¹¹ König drew on information that Rudolf

11 Karl König, *Conferences and Seminars on Arithmetic, with Zoological Considerations*, <http://www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org/pdf/Arithmetic.pdf>, 2009.

Steiner had given in *The Boundaries of Natural Science*.¹² König noted:

And then Rudolf Steiner goes one step further. He asks the question: Where do these powers of mathematics come from? And he has a clear-cut answer. He says that they arise out of the three lower senses. They arise from the sense of life, from the sense of movement, and from the sense of equilibrium; so that, so to speak, these living forces of mathematics—these living abilities of counting and reckoning—they work in the sensory

12 Rudolf Steiner, *The Boundaries of Natural Science* (Hudson, NY: SteinerBooks, 1987).

organs of life, of movement, of equilibrium. And after these three senses are partially built up, these forces become available within the human mind. But these are not—and may I make this clear to you—these are not etheric powers. They are powers of the soul. We might also say these are the powers of the astral body. You see Rudolf Steiner describes very extensively, in the lectures to teachers, how etheric powers form our organs, form our tissues, form parts of our body, and as soon as they arise, after the second dentition, they become powers of thought.

The astral body enters the sense of life, and in the sense of life it learns to experience a difference—the difference between the feeling of well-being and unwell-being. The child... has the experience of feeling all right, and then experiences the difference when it is hungry, thirsty, suffers pain, discomfort, and so on.... And then in the sense of movement the astral body learns to find out the ratio and relation of the limbs and parts of the body towards the stretching—all that is continuous, million-fold experience is an experience of learning the proportion here on earth. And in meeting the sense of balance the astral body learns a manifoldness which is hard to describe—a manifoldness which is not a simple experience of the negotiation between gravity and levity, between the darkness of earth and the light above.

König summarizes the above as:

SENSE OF LIFE = Difference
 SENSE OF MOVEMENT = Ratio
 SENSE OF BALANCE = Logarithm

Thirteen Senses? Fifteen?

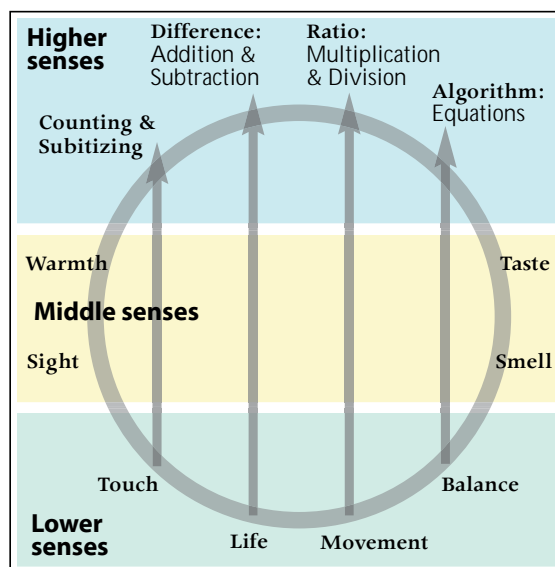
Reading the above was, for me, an “Aha!” experience—my (perhaps slightly obsessive) desire for diagrammatic completeness with respect to the links between the twelve senses and the nine intelligences had been answered. Please read the booklet and draw your own conclusions, but clearly to me, Steiner and König are both indicating the existence of a numeracy sense, or perhaps even that Difference, Ratio, and Logarithm are three (separate) higher senses, transformations of three lower senses, and matching in the realm of numeracy the lower-higher schema of Language, Thought, and Ego sense.

One More Thing...

Regarding numeracy, current research underscores the importance of two primary skills in arithmetic: subitizing and counting. (Subitizing is the ability to perceive and accurately report small quantities of objects,

without counting each item. The learning goal would be to reach automaticity with the dot patterns on dice or dominoes.) Until children are secure with these two steps in the progression of numeracy acquisition, they are not ready to move on to even the most rudimentary aspects of the computational work in the Waldorf first-grade arithmetic curriculum.

Dr. König’s lectures didn’t reference a link between a lower sense and a higher sense for counting/subitizing. But I believe it is safe to add the connection sketched into the diagram on the right:



Children can be helped to enter the house of numbers through the first doorway of the Touch sense. This underlines the importance of working with all sorts of manipulatives in early childhood and grade one classrooms.

Jeff Tunkey, a graduate of the five-year *Special Dynamics* training, created a blended athletic and educational support program at *Aurora Waldorf School* (near Buffalo, NY) where, since 1991, he has taught *Extra Lesson*, games/gym/gymnastics, and team sports. He has also served as the school’s *Educational Support Coordinator* and *Chair of the College of Teachers*. Jeff is an instructor for the *Association of Healing Education*, and a mentor to multiple Waldorf schools and teachers throughout the country.

The Care Group¹

Referrals, Assessments, Therapies, Academic Support

Elisabeth Auer

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or many years it has been recognized that students in the classroom often need extra support beyond the regular curriculum and the time and availability of the class teacher. In many schools, committees have been formed to coordinate this support as a service to the classroom teacher and the students in need.

What is a Care Group?

The term “Care Group” over time has been adopted by many support committees in a considerable number of schools all over the nation. In the first Waldorf School Rudolf Steiner held faculty meetings where students were discussed, and since then students with various needs have been brought up for discussion in faculty meetings, either as a class/group or as individuals. These studies have frequently been referred to as “child studies” and, depending on the school, take place on a frequent basis throughout the school year. Over time, it was felt that a committee of teachers were needed to take the recommendations from the faculty study and to organize the support needed for the student.

The Constellation of the Care Group

Depending on your unique school situation, the Care Group can consist of three or more individuals who have a special interest in academic or therapeutic support and who represent the various age groups in the school. Typically, the Early Childhood program, the lower school, and the middle school are represented. If the school’s budget permits, a trained remedial Extra Lesson teacher will be part of the group and may also be the chair. Whenever possible, responsibilities are shared, with a chair taking care of the organization and delegation of different tasks.

Tasks of the Care Group

These vary from school to school but could include the following:

- To meet at regular times and frequency

- To take minutes of each meeting for future reference
- To support class- and subject-teachers, including observation of students in and out of the classroom and making recommendations
- To receive and process referrals from teachers and parents
- To organize and lead child studies in faculty meetings
- To follow up on faculty input and organize/arrange for educational support
- To meet with school district educational support teams for local public school assessments, individualized education plans (IEPs), and funding
- To invite speakers/experts to present to the faculty or the Care Group
- To meet with parents and teachers as needed
- To create forms that could be used for parent meetings, referrals, assessments, educational support reports, educational support invoices, etc.
- To communicate with the members of the support team, create schedules, and organize spaces for them to work
- To monitor educational support, provide forms for reports and invoices
- To organize the first grade screening and the second grade assessments and facilitate the follow-up with the teacher
- To develop an up-to-date referral list of independent evaluators, doctors, therapists and tutors and to present them to the faculty for general awareness.

Child Observation

The teacher begins observing children from the time that the teacher first becomes acquainted with them. If the teacher is taking on a first grade, the first meeting will be at the first-grade readiness assessment when the student visits the school for the first time as an applicant. Upon acceptance of admission, the second meeting may take place at the student’s home,

¹ This article appeared as an introductory chapter to Elisabeth Auer, ed., *Helping Children on Their Way: Educational Support for the Classroom* (Chatham, NY: Waldorf Publications, 2017). The Research Bulletin is grateful to the author’s permission to reprint the article.

generally referred to as home visits. The teacher can observe and get to know the student as well as the parent in the home setting and begin to create the special bond between both student and teacher and parent and teacher. Once school begins, observation of students happens on a daily and weekly basis and a picture of the child gradually emerges.

Referrals

A class teacher or subject teacher who recognizes a student's needs beyond the classroom setting can refer the student to the Care Group chair. The form will have the student's name, date of birth, grade, class-teacher's name, and a brief description of the student's needs. The members of the Care Group who receive the referral discuss the student and determine whether a child study is needed before it is decided what type of support may be appropriate. A further referral may be made for an assessment by a remedial support teacher or with the local school district.

Criteria for Referrals for Therapeutic Eurythmy, Extra Lesson, Speech, Art and Music Therapy and Spatial Dynamics

The therapies available are given once per week (except for therapeutic eurythmy, twice per week for a shorter duration of time) and either for six or seven consecutive weeks, depending on the school's arrangements with the therapists. This allows the student a break and allows for the therapists to give other children a turn. The referral may be repeated later on in the year, or in the following year. Results of therapies are not necessarily immediately apparent as the therapies work slowly and deeply on the individual and are not always tangible. The overall desired result is that the child unfolds at her own pace in her development, becomes more comfortable in her body and grows in confidence in her social and academic endeavors.

What follows is an outline of what the therapies work on.

Therapeutic Eurythmy works on:

- Spatial orientation, co-ordination, movement in space, forms on the floor
- crossing midlines, working with copper rods
- body awareness, grace in movement
- concentration, focus, rhythm

Extra Lesson works on:

- Balance
- crossing midlines

- anxiety, nervousness
- body geography
- incarnation process
- eye-hand co-ordination
- eye tracking
- spatial orientation
- relationship to numbers
- writing, spelling, and reading

Speech therapy works on:

- Clear pronunciation
- relationship to the spoken word

Art therapy works on:

- Individual stories/biographies
- immersion in colors
- behavioral concerns

Music therapy works on:

- Auditory processing
- sharpening the senses to tone etc.
- nervousness and anxiety

Spatial Dynamics works on:

- Enhancement of the relationship between the human being and space

Screenings and Assessments

There are several different assessment options for the class teacher and the students. These consist of

- the first grade readiness screening
- the second grade assessment
- an Extra Lesson assessment
- a school district assessment
- a private assessment with a specialist

The Care Group can help determine with the teacher as to which direction to follow. In addition, other options include an ophthalmology assessment and an auditory or speech evaluation. Once the assessment is completed, it is reviewed by the teacher together with the Care Group and a decision is made as to further steps that need to be taken.

Support Programs

Support programs can come in a variety of forms once the need has been determined. In the lower school years, the type of support recommended is often that of movement that works with the lower sense to strengthen the foundation for learning. (This might include therapeutic Eurythmy, and Spatial Dynamics, as

well as Occupational Therapy and Sensory Integration. Music or Art Therapy may also be recommended. Some of these therapies, such as Therapeutic Eurythmy, may take place at the school during the school day. Other therapies, such as Occupational therapy, would be scheduled for after school hours and at the therapy off-site location.

Tutoring in math and language arts typically may be provided in the later years beginning in fifth grade, sometimes as early as fourth grade. Tutoring can be scheduled during school hours at the school, or after school hours at the school or in the tutor's work location.

Craniosacral Therapy

Craniosacral therapy is a gentle, hands-on approach that releases tensions deep in the body to relieve pain and dysfunction and improves whole-body health and performance. It was pioneered and developed by Osteopathic physician John E. Upledger.

The craniosacral system is made up of the membranes and fluid that surround, protect, and nourish the brain and spinal cord. A craniosacral practitioner uses a soft touch that releases the restrictions in the soft tissues in the central nervous system. The practice is increasingly used as a preventative health measure for its ability to bolster resistance to disease and it is effective for a wide range of medical problems associated with pain and dysfunction.

The therapy addresses the following conditions:

- Migraines and headaches
- Chronic neck and back pain
- Autism stress and tension related disorders
- Motor coordination impairments
- Infancy and childhood disorders
- Brain and spinal cord injuries
- Chronic fatigue
- Fibromyalgia and more

Sensory Integration

Sensory Integration is the life work of Jane Ayres, an occupational therapist and educational psychologist. Her work indicated to her that children, who have irregularities in sensory processing, can develop challenges and problems, such as inattention, over or under sensitivity to sensory stimulus and input, lack of muscle

tone and coordination, as well as speech and language problems and behavioral concerns.

Dr. Ayres developed a series of tests to assess the basic components of sensory integration, such as touch reception, balance, spatial orientation, hand-eye coordination, bilateral integration, and motor planning.

Sensory Processing

This is the neurological process that organizes sensations from the body and the environment to enable the body to be used effectively in the environment. The typically developing child does not need specialized therapy because play naturally provides her with the sensory experiences her brain needs and allows her to respond in a meaningful way to stimuli. Each child is unique and has different neurological needs. Sometimes the encoding of the sensory information does not function efficiently, causing a

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) that can cause postural control problems, poor motor control, and sensory modulation disorder.

Therapies for Different Senses

Therapies vary widely and many of the suggested exercises dovetail with those for occupational therapy. For instance, therapies for the vestibular system (balance) include movement on swings, spinning, rolling, somersaults and cartwheels. Therapy for the proprioceptive system (body position, spatial orientation) involves bouncing on a trampoline, skipping, or pushing large objects. Typically the sensory integration therapist has a wide variety of equipment for all kinds of activities to provide for the child all sorts of opportunities for full body movements as well as finer movements such as manipulating objects.

Sensory Integration therapy is most commonly used together with occupational therapy programs and is one of the approaches used by the specialists who treat children with autism, attention deficit disorders, and other learning disabilities.

Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy practitioners work with children, youth, and their families to promote active participation in activities or occupations that are meaningful to them. Occupation refers to activities that may support

The overall desired result is that the child unfolds at her own pace in her development, becomes more comfortable in her body and grows in confidence, in her social and academic endeavors.

the health, well-being, and development of an individual. For children and youth, occupations are activities that enable them to learn and develop life skills (e.g., school activities), be creative and/or derive enjoyment (e.g., play), and thrive (e.g., self-care and care for others), as both a means and an end. Occupational therapy practitioners work with children of all ages (birth through young adulthood) and abilities. Recommended interventions are based on a thorough understanding of typical development and the impact of disability, illness, and impairment on the individual child's development, play, learning, and overall occupational performance.

Occupational therapy practitioners provide services by collaborating with other professionals to identify and meet needs of children experiencing delays or challenges in development; identifying and modifying or overcoming barriers that interfere with, restrict, or inhibit a child's functional performance; teaching and modeling skills and strategies to children and their families to extend therapeutic intervention; and adapting activities, materials, and environmental conditions so children can participate under different conditions and in various environments.

Developmental Needs

The primary occupations of young children are play and interacting with caregivers. Occupational therapists evaluate children's development and provide intervention to improve skills and/or modify environments when concerns arise about a child's functional performance. Some examples are:

- Facilitating movement to help a child sit independently or crawl
- Helping a child learn to follow 2- or 3-step instructions
- Helping a child develop the ability to dress independently
- Helping a child learn to cope with disappointment or failure
- Reducing extraneous environmental noise for a child who is easily distracted
- Building skills for sharing, taking turns, and playing with peers
- Helping a child develop the ability to use toys and materials in both traditional and creative manners

Educational Needs

Occupational therapy practitioners work with students in preschool, and elementary, middle, and high school

to support successful learning, appropriate behavior, and participation in daily school routines and activities.

Academic Support

Academic support is usually offered for language arts and math. The process of reading and writing can be augmented by a specialist in the Orton-Gillingham and/or Wilson method, where the student is usually seen on an individual and weekly basis as a supplement to daily work done in the classroom. With math, processes and times tables are supported and practiced in the lower grades, along with a focus on number awareness, depending on the need of the student. In the middle school, students can receive tutoring by math specialists.

The Orton-Gillingham Method

The Orton-Gillingham philosophy is based on a technique of studying and teaching language and on the understanding of the nature of human language, of the mechanisms involved in learning and of the language-learning processes of individuals. Inherent in the language acquisition process is emphasis on the meaning and comprehension of the material that is written and read.

The Orton-Gillingham method is a program that was developed for the student to acquire skills through a multi-sensory approach that is phonetically based, structured, sequential, cumulative, and rational.

The Wilson Reading System

This is an intensive Tier 3 program for students in grades 2-12 and adults with word-level deficits who are not making sufficient progress and who have been unable to learn with other teaching strategies therefore requiring multisensory language instruction, or who require more intensive structured literacy instruction due to a language-based learning disability, such as dyslexia.

As a structured literacy program based on phonological-coding research and Orton-Gillingham principles, the Wilson Reading System directly and systematically teaches the structure of the English language. Through the program, students learn fluent decoding and encoding skills to the level of mastery. From the beginning steps of the program, students receive instruction in:

- Phonemic awareness
- Decoding and word study
- Sight word recognition
- Spelling
- Fluency

- Vocabulary
- Oral expressive language development
- Comprehension

The Lindamood-Bell Program

Lindamood-Bell is an individualized instructional or tutorial program used in a therapeutic setting. This approach can be used with dyslexic and severely disabled, poor readers of all ages. The program emphasizes three sensory-cognitive functions that underlie reading and comprehension:

- Phoneme awareness – the ability to auditorily perceive sounds within words
- Symbol imagery – the ability to create mental imagery for sounds and letters within words
- Concept imagery – the ability to create mental representations for the whole: actions, scenes, movement etc.
- The school district assessment and the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process

This is a summary of the assessments available at local school districts and how the process of obtaining an IEP for a student works. Availability and process will vary from state to state.

What is an Individual Educational Program?

An individualized educational program (IEP) describes the educational plan that has been designed to meet the student's unique needs. Each child who receives special education and related services must have an IEP. The IEP process creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, and related service professionals to work together to improve education for children with learning disabilities.

The IEP is a legally binding document that establishes a plan for an individual student. The eligibility criteria for an IEP include the following:

- Autism and Asperger's Syndrome
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD)
- Emotional impairment
- Physical impairment
- Communication impairment
- Developmentally delayed learning disorder
- Sensory impairment
- Limited cognitive function
- Specific learning disability
- Health issues

(The criteria for receiving an IEP will vary from state to state.)

A summary of what is contained in the IEP (where appropriate and needed):

- The student's disability
- A vision statement of the student's long-term goals
- Description of how the student's disability affects their progress in the classroom
- How the student's progress towards these goals will be measured
- Accommodations
- A program designed to address emotional and behavior issues
- Summer services
- Transport needs
- Type of placement

When to refer a student for a school district assessment:

- A student is struggling academically or not performing at the same level as the other students in the class. A student struggling to read is one of the major reasons students are referred for an IEP.
- Behavior difficulties at home or at school. The student may exhibit unusual stress or anxiety.
- The student may exhibit attention issues such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyper activity Disorder (ADHD)
- Depression
- The student has memory difficulties, short-term or long-term.

The IEP Team

The Federal law, entitled Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), defines the IEP team as a group of people who are responsible for developing, reviewing, and revisiting the IEP for a student with a disability.

The team includes:

- Parents
- Teacher
- School system representative
- Special education provider
- A professional who can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation results

Types of Evaluation

There are several types of evaluations/assessments that can be done by the school system or by an independent evaluator. The school system evaluations assess all

areas of suspected disabilities. An independent evaluator may only evaluate one aspect, such as speech.

A school system assessment includes:

- Educational evaluation
- Psychological evaluation
- Neuropsychological evaluation
- Functional behavior assessment
- Speech and language evaluation
- Auditory Processing evaluation
- Occupational therapy evaluation (OT)
- Physical therapy evaluation (PT)
- Assistive technology assessment (TA)
- Home assessment
- Teacher assessment/observation

Educational Evaluation – an assessment of reading, written language, spelling, math. The reading evaluation includes assessment of word analysis skills, (word decoding, word recognition, oral reading rate, and comprehension).

Psychological Evaluation – an intelligence test measuring general cognitive ability. Sensory, motor, language, perceptual, attention, cognitive, affective, attitudinal, self-image, interpersonal, behavioral, interest, and vocational factors are evaluated in regards to the student's maturity, integrity, and dynamic interaction within the educational context. The assessment is based on the student's developmental and social history, diagnostic observation of the student in familiar surroundings (such as the classroom), and psychological testing as indicated.

Neuropsychological Evaluation – provides a profile that tells the parents and teachers how the student approaches learning and doing things, based on patterns of strengths, weaknesses, and integration among a range of neurological measures. (ADD, Autism, PDD or specific learning difficulties are assessed in this evaluation.)

Functional Behavioral Assessment – is a problem solving process for addressing student problem behaviors. It is used to create behavior plans that contain strategies and skills the student needs in order to behave in a more appropriate manner or plans providing motivation to conform to required standards. The plan should be pro-active with positive intervention plans that teach new ways of behaving and address both the source of the problem and the problem itself.

Speech and Language Evaluation – an assessment of receptive language, expressive language, phonological

processing, articulation, voice, auditory memory and pragmatics (the ability to use language with others).

Auditory Processing Evaluation – an evaluation by an audiologist who identifies, measures and treats hearing disorders as well as loss and central auditory processing issues.

Occupational Therapy Evaluation – assesses gross and fine motor skills, visual motor integration and visual perception or visual processing.

Physical Therapy Evaluation – assesses physical activities such as sitting, standing, crawling, walking, running, and climbing. It looks at the student's body strength, coordination, balance, and symmetry as she moves and controls her body, and how she plans new motor activities.

Assistive Technology Assessment – determines if devices can assist the student's learning process.

Transition Assessment – this assessment may include independent living assessments, aptitude tests, intelligence tests, achievement tests, and measuring of self-determination.

Home Assessment – conducted by an authorized social worker, nurse, guidance counselor, teacher, or psychologist to ascertain pertinent family history and home situation factors including, with parent consent, a home visit.

Teacher Assessment/Observation – an assessment by the teacher to include current information on the student's present level of performance in the general curriculum.

How does the process begin?

The IEP process begins with a referral from the teacher or the parent of a student to the Care Group. In most cases, the Care Group will already have an awareness of the student's challenges and remedial work will have taken place or have begun. There may or may not be in place an informal in-house IEP for the student that has been carefully planned by the student's teacher together with the Care Group.

The Care Group serves to help the teacher and parent make the best possible conditions for their students to learn to his/her best capacities. It may take several years for an IEP process to be initiated from the date of the student's enrollment at the school. Typically, students are given a chance to develop and mature into school-ready children. Some students in the first years of school benefit from Therapeutic Eurythmy to help them feel at home in their bodies and orient them in the space around them. The second-grade assessments done during the second half of the year may indicate

challenges and Extra Lesson will be recommended. Typically around and usually not before grade three, it may become apparent that the student is unable to keep up with his or her peers for certain reasons. Tutoring begins mostly in fifth grade. An IEP process, if and when needed, may be implemented at this time. (There are cases of young students coming from other schools who already have an IEP established by their school district. In this case the IEP would be reviewed by the admissions team in conjunction with the teacher and the Care Group.)

This process towards an IEP then typically serves students who are unable to keep up with their academic work in the classroom or students who may need help beyond the regular help that the school can provide. The IEP process is carried out under the overview of the Student Administration Unit (SAU) of the local school district both for public and private schools.

The IEP process follows specific steps in sequence:

1. Identification of the student and referral process

The teacher and the case manager (or Care Group chair) of the student meet with the parents to determine the need. Parents are asked to sign a permission form for the assessment/evaluation if the need is determined. (Parents may initiate the meeting with the teacher.) The case manager of the student at the school then communicates with the special education teacher at the local school and sets up a pre-evaluation meeting for the team. This can be followed up with a written referral explaining what the learning challenges are. Any report from, e.g., a Developmental Optometrist or a Neuro-Psychological evaluation is copied and submitted for review before the second meeting.

2. Pre-evaluation meeting

Parents or teachers can request a pre-evaluation conference to talk with a school professional about the 4 Ws: Who, What, When, Where:

Who will conduct the evaluation; *What* evaluations would be helpful; *When* the student will be taken out of class to be evaluated; *Where* the evaluations will take place. Also to be determined is who will explain why the evaluations are happening.

The team members meet and review the referral material submitted and any pre-existing submitted materials. The evaluations decided upon depend on the individual student. Testing will be conducted by trained, licensed evaluators. The testing is usually done within school

hours at the school in the privacy of one of the rooms that are set aside/available for these purposes.

3. Determination of eligibility and post evaluation meeting

The team meets this time to review the results of the testing and to determine whether the child is eligible for special education services. To be eligible, the child must have a disability and require special education or special education *and* related services to benefit from education. The child will then be identified or 'coded' with a specific classified disability. Parents are asked to sign a document stating that they agree with the findings of the testing. Without the parent's signature further IEP

planning cannot take place. Parents have the right to waive the signature and end the process. If parents disagree with the results of the testing, conflicts can be resolved through discussion and information sharing. If issues arise that cannot be settled informally, formal dispute resolution procedures are available. (A list of organizations/agencies that help parents understand the special education process and resolve disputes should be available).

4. Development of the IEP

Within 30 days after the student is found eligible for special education, the team meets to develop an individualized education program for the student. Once a student has an IEP, it is reviewed/revised annually and must be in place at the start of the school year. The IEP becomes effective once the parents have signed the document. The team meets once more to determine the least restrictive environment in which the child can receive educational services described in his/her IEP.

5. Monitoring

Once the IEP is in place and implemented, the educators involved monitor the student's progress on an ongoing basis to ensure his/her educational needs are met. If concerns arise about the student's progress, a meeting of the team may be requested. The IEP is typically reviewed after three years to determine if services need to be continued.

Services

Services for support by the school district vary from district to district, state to state. They are mostly only available if the student attends the school where the assessment took place. If this is not deemed advisable, the Care Group team with the parents can devise an in-house IEP with accommodations in the classroom.

In the lower school years, the type of support recommended is often that of movement that works with the lower sense to strengthen the foundation for learning.

Parents with a student who has an IEP can also opt to have tutoring services done at the Waldorf school and that are paid for by the state, such as a Title 1 program. In this case the tutor, who is often a reading and/or math specialist, comes to the school during class time.

Note: Currently it is stressed by the school district that the student referred needs to be receiving adequate instruction and teachers need to be prepared to explain and defend the Waldorf methods of teaching reading, writing, and math. You, your Care Group chair, or your school administration may need to provide the school district with a document to this end, in order for the school district team to agree to have the student tested. In the case of a newly admitted student, a careful checking of prior school records and reports will need to be made to determine if the student has had adequate instruction prior to being admitted. In addition, the student needs to be failing to make adequate progress academically, even though supports and modifications have been tried before the referral is made. Many students have needs, but they do not necessarily have a learning disability and will not always be granted an IEP.

The 504 Plan

Congress passed a civil rights law in 1973 that protects people with disabilities by eliminating barriers and allowing full participation in areas of life such as education and the workplace.

Executive function, ADD/ADHD, and memory issues fall into this category. A physician must make a diagnosis for the student to be eligible for modifications that support his/her with this disability. It is known as Section 504 or the 504 Plan.

The 504 Plan is a plan based on the student's medical disability and designed for students who have a disability, have a record of a disability, or are treated as having a disability *but do not qualify for special education services under IDEA*. For example, a child has cerebral palsy. While it does not interfere with the student's progress in the general curriculum, it does require the child to use special equipment to access his/her education. Therefore, this child would qualify for a 504 Plan.

Before deciding whether a student is eligible for this type of plan, the child must be assessed, and the school team must agree that the child has a substantial and pervasive impairment in order to be eligible under this federal law. The purpose of a 504 Plan is to level the playing field and allow a student to get the accommodations and modifications needed to access the curriculum at the same level as his or her peers.

For further reference to the IEP see US Dep. of Education guide to the Individualized Education Plan.

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Audrey McAllen's 'The Extra Lesson' ¹

Joep Eikenboom

Audrey McAllen, a veteran English Waldorf teacher, first published her research findings in the original printing of *The Extra Lesson* close to 50 years ago. Through extensive observation of mostly middle school children, she experimented with Rudolf Steiner's explanations of the inner workings of the human being and earth currents found in Steiner's 1909 collection of lectures, *Body, Soul and Spirit*. Interest in her work spread and she continued to consult with professionals in the pedagogical and developmental fields resulting in other, broader editions of the book. *Extra Lesson* is now taught worldwide.

The Origin and Source

Years before the first Waldorf School was founded, Rudolf Steiner unfolded his views and insights on the education of the child. The first stage of development takes place on a bodily level. The child learns by moving, playing and using the total system of the senses. The nerve cells are fully developed at birth, but there is a limited number of connections between them. During the first years the brain and nervous system are further developed while the child explores the environment and the senses and movement system matures.

The sense of touch gives the child an inner image of the physical space that she occupies, the sense of life supports the general rhythm of life and brings an awareness of the general, organic or constitutional condition of the child's body. Essential for the coordination of movement are the senses of balance and self-movement. The foundation for learning is laid by the development of these four basic senses; it consists of the capacity for spatial orientation and one's own body awareness—body geography.

Modern science has confirmed the importance of sensory-motor development. The senses for balance and movement play an important role in visual and auditory processing, which are essential for learning, and support the ability to focus and concentrate. When, in the early 1940s, Audrey McAllen trained to become a Waldorf teacher, Rudolf Steiner's pedagogical lectures 'The Foundations of Human Experience' were not yet translated into English. At the time, her instructor, Elly Wilke, held a series of lectures about

'The Understanding of Human Beings', a subject that covered the anthroposophical insights in the human body, soul and spirit. Miss Wilke's teaching was based on Rudolf Steiner's lectures, given in Berlin between 1909 and 1911, now published in *Wisdom of Man, of the Soul, and of the Spirit* (GA 115). In the first section (four lectures held in 1909), Steiner speaks about the senses and the human physical body built up by flowing super-sensible currents. Later, when Audrey McAllen was asked to work with children with learning difficulties, these same lectures became the inspiring source out of which she developed the Extra Lesson.

Archetypal Steps in the Child's Development

The exercises given in the book *The Extra Lesson*, as well as new exercises developed according to these concepts, help the incarnating individuality of the child to connect with the universal architecture of the human body and of planet earth. As Audrey McAllen puts it: "The Extra Lesson Concept doesn't focus on the soul of the child, but it works with the spiritual laws behind the architecture of the physical human body, and with the spirit of the earth. The exercises integrate the movements of the child into the universal movement patterns of the earth."

Thus, the Extra Lesson directly addresses the evolutionary aspects of the human being and the earth during earlier developmental stages which, according to Steiner, are mirrored in the first seven years of the child's development.

General Pedagogy and Medical Therapies

In the case of the child with a specific pedagogical problem, such as an extreme temperament, an enhanced constitutional type, or a psychological or moral issue, one is concerned with the Ego, which, in the Earth period, has been sucked into the astral body and into the personal problems that the individual soul is struggling with in this incarnation.

The Extra Lesson offers pedagogical exercises in movement, form drawing, and painting, which prepare the road towards the learning process in writing, reading and mathematics. Steiner's indications on the

¹ This article first appeared on the *Online Waldorf Library* website in December 2014.

development of the human sense organism, and the total mirroring sequence in the sensory processing, i.e., what happens in the super-sensible members of the human being, are the other essential components of the Extra Lesson.

The exercises are built upon the archetypal human movement possibilities, gestures that are also found in household activities, hand and craft work, folk dances, etc. These movements correspond with the movements of the earth in relation to the sun, moon, and planets of the solar system, as well as the movements in the currents of the oceans and rivers, and in the currents in the air and weather systems of our planet. By offering the child these archetypal movement patterns, the child is helped to prepare her body to become a proper vessel for her individuality.

Because Extra Lesson is developed on the principles of Waldorf pedagogy, breathing and sleeping-waking rhythms are further essential components.

Qualities of Extra Lesson Exercises

Extra Lesson exercises have an archetypal character. Therefore, they can be used for all children and are not just for a specific teacher with a specific child, nor do they address specific temperaments.

The exercises are developed according to archetypal laws of neurological and movement development of the first seven years or are actual steps in this neurological development. This neurological and movement development produces capacities needed for learning skills, such as writing, reading or jumping rope. The movements of these exercises are connected to the movement patterns in the human being and the earth as indicated by Rudolf Steiner in the 1909 lectures 'Anthroposophy'.²

In these exercises, we find a rhythm between "stretching" and "lifting" movements, between tension and relaxation. They help to integrate the postural system, particularly the senses of balance and self-movement. By means of this rhythmical element, and by repeating the exercises for several weeks or months, the movements start to penetrate and activate the life forces or etheric body of the child, which is the carrier of habit patterns. The etheric body will become enlivened, the child will look healthier. These exercises

are not purely physical training or patterning. The rhythmical repetition often requires the teacher's pedagogical support to motivate the child.

Rudolf Steiner indicated in the aforementioned lectures that, in the sense of self movement, the astral body moves in the opposite direction to the movements of the physical body. The movements through which the astral body is activated contain the archetypal patterns of the spiral or of the lemniscate. Through these, the exercises become dynamic and rhythmical. Other archetypal elements that are used are: the straight line, point and circle, which are a picture of the Ego organization. The six-pointed and five-pointed stars are archetypal pictures of man incarnating.

The astral body can connect properly with the physical and etheric body through rhythmical repetition of the exercises. Often, the day-wake consciousness becomes a little diminished, but the sleeping will—the subconscious—is activated. The child thus incarnates better into her body. Sometimes only then personality or constitutional problems of the astral body (the lower and not the objective astral body) appear.

The Ego is called upon by the lifting element in the movement patterns. The eyes need to follow the movements of the limbs if possible, and the feet need to be kept parallel. In the rhythmical movements there needs to be a pause. In the pause, the astral body can come to rest and the ego can imprint the movement pattern into the etheric and physical body. The exercises have an indication of the minimum age of the child doing the exercise.

Educational Support Lessons

An Educational Support teacher, working one-to-one, can compose lessons with movement exercises for spatial orientation, body geography, lifting and stretching, rhythm and breathing, speech, form drawing, and some academic work. Most find that a schedule of twice weekly meetings has an effect. It is advisable to end each lesson with a short painting exercise, in order to work the forces that were called upon by the movement exercises to penetrate into the organism of the child—as Rudolf Steiner has indicated for ending eurythmy and gymnastics lessons.

² Published as *A Psychology of Body, Soul and Spirit: Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, and Pneumatosophy* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1999).

Key Exercises

It is advisable to have all students recapitulate the movement development from two-dimensional into three-dimensional space, i.e., from the horizontal to standing up and walking upright.

A sequence of crawling exercises helps to integrate early movement patterns. Although it will not always show from the beginning, very often improper integrated early movement patterns are hidden deep in the movement system of the child, and are interfering with the functioning of the sense and movement organization.

Breathing is the healing element in education. A unique exercise for healthy breathing is the *Copper Ball* exercise, always followed by the *Moving Straight Line and Lemniscate* form drawing exercise. Both exercises are designed according to universal developmental steps.

The *Moving Straight Line and Lemniscate* form drawing exercise addresses the activity of the left and right sides of the body, the conscious coordination and the rhythmical movement and breathing. The lemniscate and straight line are archetypal forms that address the super-sensible organization of the child.

Another unique exercise is the *Right-Angled Triangle*, which addresses the total movement system, including legs, arms, eye muscles and movement coordination. This exercise also connects the super-sensible forces of the bodily organization of the child with the spiritual forces that have built up his body and the planet earth. In this exercise, breathing activity is also strongly involved, including the rhythmic flow of the cerebrospinal fluid. Thus, the conscious will of the child is activated.

The painting activities in Extra Lesson all have an archetypal character. Therefore, form and color indications might seem limited. Developing creativity is not the primary goal here.

Classroom

Class teachers can also use the Extra Lesson exercises in their teaching, either for individual children or with the whole class. The latter needs to be well organized because one wants all the children to do the exercises correctly. The teacher should be able to demonstrate the exercises properly because the children's forces of imitation are involved. To observe the children's

movement development one can have them perform the exercises in small groups.

The effect of this might be different from a one-to-one approach, since this works more as a hygienic intervention than in a pedagogical-therapeutic sense. However, doing these specific and focused exercises with a whole class and taking turns in smaller individual groups is highly recommended. Class teachers should be aware of the fact that the foundation for learning lies in the physical development of the first seven years. Extra Lesson exercises are successfully done in Waldorf schools in blocks of various lengths.

Individual soul requirements and constitutional issues are the province of the class teacher and/or school medical doctor, and these should be addressed by them and/or by curative (therapeutic) eurythmy or art therapy.

Extra Lesson is a valuable solution to learning difficulties, and, as described above, its methods come directly out of classroom pedagogy and general anthroposophy. Extra Lesson stands within the pedagogy for the normal child. It is an important aid to child study. It can be supported by gymnastics, artistic therapy, curative eurythmy, the doctor's interventions—as the class teacher responsible for the child sees they are required, or as suggested to them by the Extra Lesson teacher.

Extra Lesson activities can be part of the classroom routine. One must keep in mind that working with Extra Lesson is a pedagogical approach of a teacher. The goal is to support the children in their learning process. Reintroduction to formal work in writing, reading, and arithmetic is part of the concept.

Joep Eikenboom has been a Waldorf teacher in primary schools since 1980. In the early 1980s he met Audrey McAllen and started to work with her ideas. Between 1987 and 1990 he worked as an educational support teacher. He studied the anthroposophical background of Audrey McAllen's work in close contact with her. He is now a class teacher at a Waldorf school in the Netherlands and one of his goals is to bring the Extra Lesson into the classroom. In his book, *Foundations of the Extra Lesson*, he shares the spiritual and pedagogical background of the Extra Lesson concepts.

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Supporting Adolescents with the Extra Lesson

Connie Helms

The Extra Lesson is a concept of movement, drawing, and painting exercises developed by British Waldorf educator, Audrey McAllen, in the 1970s. It is now used by trained practitioners and class teachers around the world, all for the purpose of helping children and adolescents to be firmly grounded in their physical bodies. A premise of the Extra Lesson work is that difficulties in reading, writing, math, and executive function are possibly due to inadequate spatial orientation, poor body geography, and sensory integration challenges if a person has missed important developmental stages in the first seven years of life. In our modern world, it is no longer a given that babies and young children will experience all the movement opportunities needed to support their development. Beginning with the decades of television-use and now computer and small devices, along with fewer daily physical tasks done by hand and less walking, etc., the physical body of the developing child is compromised in the process of becoming a fully upright human being.

A task that needs to be completed for children is the anchoring of the Ego into the physical body. The young child should have completed this anchoring of the ego in the physical body by age 7, because then the ego should work on anchoring itself in the etheric or memory body in the next seven years, and by age 14 the ego should focus on anchoring itself in the astral or soul body. So by first grade, the physical body should be an ego bearer. We know that in today's culture this is a rarity.

In the beginning of *Balance in Teaching*, lecture 4, Rudolf Steiner describes the process of the incorporation of the ego: *"Out of the spiritual world into this one comes – we could say, on astral wings, the human ego being. Observing children in the early years of life, ... how they gain more and more control over their organism; what we see in this process is essentially the incorporation of the ego."*¹

We often notice adolescents who are very savvy in the way they dress, speak, and act with peers or adults, but on emotional, physical and/or organizational levels they are not necessarily well grounded; they might be disorganized or lacking in confidence. They are not

"captain of their ship," as my mentor used to say many years ago. When I relay this to parents, they concur.

When I am working with an adolescent whose physical body is not yet firmly anchored by the Ego, I am addressing something that should have happened two seven-year stages previously. Although they cannot articulate it, but perhaps do sense it, they are always behind in their development. This is because, as Steiner also states in lecture 4, the Ego must be anchored into the physical, etheric, and astral bodies. The Extra Lesson work anchors the Ego into the physical body. Doing the work is essential, but it can also be fun, relaxing, interesting, and stimulating for adolescents. It goes without saying that building a relationship with warmth and humor is a very important aspect of this work. My experience is that the work creates more resilience, more will forces, and a greater sense of competency.

Journey Through Planetary Stages

In a paper titled, *"The Physical Body as Spiritual Archetype of the Human's Spiritual Being,"*² Audrey McAllen writes:

In a very important lecture on the senses (*"The Zone of the Senses"*, Dornach, December 30, 1917), Steiner defines the physical body as the "sum-total of the senses working together." This directs our attention to recognizing the physical body in its Zodiacal connection; the physical body as an archetype is formed from the cosmic forces working in surrounding space, or conversely Steiner says also that the zodiac works through physical forces (*"Cosmic Forces in Man"*, Christiania, November 24, December 4, 1921).

In our evolution as humans, the spiritual hierarchies gave a blueprint, that the archetype of the physical structural body was prepared to be an *ego bearer*. The body, we are told by Rudolf Steiner, is the sum total of the twelve senses. The bones, muscles, and nerves respond to the environment via the senses, and growth and development proceed from these responses. This is why, when the Extra Lesson starts to take effect, we literally see

1 Steiner, Rudolf, *Balance in Teaching* (Steiner Books, 2007).

2 Later published in the collection *Learning Difficulties: A Guide for Teachers Waldorf Insights & Practical Approaches*, edited by Mary Ellen Willby (Fair Oaks, CA: Rudolf Steiner College Press, Second Edition, 1999).

the child coming more into his or her body—it's as though a switch has turned on a light, because the Extra Lesson recapitulates the stage of preparing the physical archetype, so that the body can *bear the ego* as it was designed to do.

If the physical body is not prepared as a vessel to receive the ego, the child or adolescent may be at a disadvantage in their development, and therefore not fully ready for their ego to awaken in the consciousness soul period in their biography, between ages 35 and 42. In this later period, ideally the human recognizes oneself as a spiritual being.

When observing an adolescent, it is possible to see this quality of not being fully incarnated.

Physical sexual changes occur in puberty, but this does not mean the individual has incarnated properly into the physical body. If the incarnation process does not go smoothly in childhood, then the 12-year change may be more difficult. Audrey McAllen took indications from Rudolf Steiner about the nature of the human being—that the physical body is a vessel holding the soul and spirit of the person and that our bodies have an inner gyroscope that helps us feel oriented in ourselves and also in the world around us. The Extra Lesson uses archetypal forms in physical movement, in form drawings, and in paintings to help anchor the soul and spirit more firmly into the physical body. It helps people feel and appear more at home in their bodies, their faces light up, and they stand taller in the world. Efficient, functional patterns of movement replace cumbersome ones, and everyday tasks are done more easily.

Pitching the Extra Lesson to Adolescents

When I first meet with an adolescent, it's because their teacher or parent has approached me with concerns. Adolescents may not exactly be thrilled when told they are going to see this teacher who can help them. Being sensitive to their unease or curiosity, I explain to them that the work is strengthening, that sometimes teenagers tell me they are able to get their homework done more efficiently, or get it done, period. Parents, teachers, and even students themselves report that following the Extra Lesson, they have more initiative. My description includes the mention of movement, form drawing,

A premise of the Extra Lesson work is that difficulties in reading, writing, math, and executive function are possibly due to inadequate spatial orientation, poor body geography, and sensory integration challenges if a person has missed important developmental stages in the first seven years of life.

and painting exercises. I also say that it enhances executive function skills and also fine motor skills, such as handwriting. Math may become easier, too. Then

I explain how it helps them to be better drivers, because of all the practice with spatial orientation and executive functioning. Hearing me explain that when driving, they have to be thinking about left and right, looking straight ahead with an awareness of their backspace via the rearview mirror, and using hands and feet for different tasks, many of them are inspired to really be invested in giving a try to the Extra Lesson work. Sometimes, the work is not to help the student improve academically, but to help them balance out their threefold nature, especially to enliven the metabolic and heart forces, if, for example, they tend

to be very cerebral. Often my explanation ends with me saying, "Your teacher (or parent) thought this would be a really good thing for you to do."

A Typical Protocol with Adolescents

After the Extra Lesson assessment, which is a screening that takes about 90 minutes, the student begins a series of at least twelve sessions. It is not a therapy, but rather a set of repeated activities that are practiced once or twice a week ideally. Sessions in school are 40 to 45 minutes long, but in private practice they extend to one hour in duration. When an adolescent asks why certain exercises are done, I give a brief but authentic explanation, often referencing executive function skills and spatial orientation.

After an initial greeting and sometimes jumping rope as a warm-up, I ask them to think of a sentence of five or six words. It's interesting watching this process as some find it very challenging while others find it quite easy. I then instruct them to speak the sentence out loud, matching one footstep per word. This must be done several times to help the words imprint into the memory, yet combined with the movement component; it is not merely a mental task. An ideal challenge is to walk on a balance beam (3"- 4" wide), forwards and backwards.

In lecture seven of the Curative Course, Rudolf Steiner states in reference to a young child of six, "*Then he was given speech exercises; he had to speak sentences forwards and backwards. This was done on my advice. The*

boy has weak astral and weak ego organization.” Later in the lecture, Steiner states, “...in regard to the speech exercises that were begun with him at four years of age, that whenever they are done in this way, first forwards and then backwards, they help to regulate the connection of the ether body with the astral body. The exercises ... had this end in view: to induce a harmonious co-operation of astral and ether bodies.”

Therefore, the next step with this exercise is to say the sentence in reverse order, while walking in reverse and still matching one word to each footstep. It’s a satisfying process to observe over the weeks how this task, which seemed so simple upon explanation, finally becomes manageable. Making a mental blackboard is key; this trains the mind to focus on the sequence of words. Progressing to ten words or more over the weeks is a challenge, but this skill grows over time. As Rudolf Steiner states in *Study of Man*, “memory arises from antipathy.” One has to wrestle with the sentence to make it accessible in reverse speech order while also walking in reverse.

In lecture six of *Foundations of Human Experience*, Steiner says,

*But at present the will is asleep. ... You must know how to awaken the will in this kind of child... by hammering in some things which will work strongly on the will, by letting him walk while he speaks... In this way you combine the whole human being in the will element with the merely intellectual element in cognition, and you can gradually bring it about that the will is awakened into thought in such a child.*³

When this simple activity is done over several weeks, one can see this invigorating of the will; adolescents often observe this change in themselves.

Other movement activities in a typical session include working with copper rods and bean bags for spatial orientation, rhythm, and coordination, usually with speech too, such as saying a verse or reciting a number pattern forward and in reverse. The Extra Lesson always includes form drawings and paintings. Neither of these are artistic activities but rather are for strengthening spatial orientation on a flat surface, now in two-dimensional space, while the movement activities were practiced in three-dimensional space.

Core Exercises

A few of the Extra Lesson exercises are known as ‘core exercises.’ This refers to their ability to create harmonization between tension and relaxation, also referred to as “stretching and lifting” movements that occur in all human beings. They also enhance developmental and neurological movements in order to build capacities for learning. By engaging in these exercises over twelve or more sessions, old patterns are replaced by healthier patterns, helping the student to take more command of their actions and inner and outer organization.

Several of the core exercises involve geometric forms such as right-angle triangles, spirals, five or six pointed stars, and lemniscates (figure 8s). These forms may be traced by the limbs in various combinations to encourage the astral body (or soul and movement body) to align properly with both the physical body and the etheric body, or the life force and memory body. Some are also drawn in form drawings or painted. Many of these exercises invite the eyes to move along a path, helping to retrain the eyes to calmly engage in activities in a more focused manner.

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The Importance of the Pause

All of the Extra Lesson activities incorporate a pause between movements. Without this critical aspect, the effects of all the exercises are weakened, to say the least. When the pause occurs properly, the astral or movement body is able to rest, making an inner imprint of the intended movement in the exercises, allowing the ego forces to take command over the movement body. Otherwise, the movement body of the person may literally spiral out of control, ruling over the inner organization. Meanwhile, the “captain” who is supposed to be in charge of the ship is off duty. We see this in constant forgetfulness, academic challenges, writing from the bottom up or from right to left, and a lack of balance and focus, among other indicators.

Painting Exercises as a Key Component

The many watercolor paintings in the Extra Lesson are a crucial component of the work. Joep Eikenboom, author of *Foundations of the Extra Lesson*,⁴ developed

³ Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1996).

⁴ Joep Eikenboom, *Foundations of the Extra Lesson: Beyond What Is Seen in the Exercises* (Fair Oaks, CA: Rudolf Steiner College Press, 2007).

a simple painting that is also found in the Extra Lesson book. He knew Audrey McAllen and also Liane Collot d'Herbois, a friend of Audrey McAllen's who developed a method of painting for soul and medical issues. Like Audrey McAllen, Collot worked with indications from Rudolf Steiner's lectures and from Ita Wegman, the first anthroposophical doctor. From Collot's work comes the knowledge of the healing power of magenta. Therefore, Joep Eikenboom states:

The painting of green and magenta, which has been developed by me on indications by Liane Collot d'Herbois, and which is published in the Extra Lesson, is therapeutic. The green brings in the Ego activity into the sense of sight (eyes). The magenta is used to bring balance to the viridian green. Magenta brings life forces.

This enlivening of the life forces is one of the changes the Extra Lesson work manifests. When adolescents ask me why we do that painting, I reply that the green is for *clear thinking* and the magenta is for *grounding*. (The viridian green is a color we see when looking sideways at a pane of glass.) I say it casually, not intellectually, and they accept this explanation. Working with these colors, and also with blue, red and other colors has effects on many levels. As the colors flow on the paper, it is a reminder that our emotions flow as well. Adolescence is a time when emotions are living strongly, both inner and outer; these painting exercises offer a healing quality to help loosen what needs to become unstuck.

Case Studies

Carl

A seventh-grader I'll call Carl had ten sessions with me, as we were unable to fit in the final two. Carl was very willing to engage in the Extra Lesson work; he paired well with a classmate once a week and also came by himself once a week. He appeared to undergo a change during the five weeks of working together. When he first came, he seemed unable to stand tall and maintain good eye contact. As the weeks went by, he was more upright, his face appeared brighter, and his gaze met mine with purpose. He took more initiative and sometimes offered helpful suggestions to the student from his class with whom he was paired once a week. On the last day, Carl increased his jump rope record to over 60; prior to that, he could not go beyond 25 or so. When walking on the balance beam and speaking sentences forward and backward, Carl was not always fully attentive to the task. On certain occasions, Carl had to walk backwards and say the sentence in reverse; he would be walking forwards and say the sentence in reverse, not noticing the incorrect movement. After performing

another task incorrectly, he was able to say, "I guess I wasn't paying attention." This self-reflection was a testament to how Carl's focus increased within a short time.

Max

An eighth-grader I'll call Max was fun to work with in our Extra Lesson sessions. As he got to know me better, his humor came out more and he tried to get me to let him off the hook for doing some of the exercises depending on his energy level. His skill when walking on the balance beam and speaking sentences forward and backward improved. Again, trying to avoid the responsibility assigned to him, he would ask me to make up a sentence for him; naturally, I'd put the ball back in his court. At times Max thought he had said a sentence in the correct reverse order, only to realize he had the wrong order or omitted some words. Max worked carefully at the painting series of the blue and red lines that formed a staircase pattern. He knew that many of the exercises had an eye-tracking component, and I appreciated that he told his mother it was like the other eye exercises but "Waldorf style." He had had eye tracking issues that were not addressed back in second grade.

Bill

Another eighth-grader, Bill, came willingly to the sessions, even though he started two weeks later than his peers. We were only able to fit in eight sessions. While his peers were referred to me by the class teacher for various organizational issues, Bill came because his teacher had an intuitive hunch that he was meant to receive the Extra Lesson work to help him be less "in his head" and more balanced in thinking, feeling, and willing. He was very conversational and had many interesting things to tell me about his relatives. A noticeable feature in his painting and geometric drawings was that he was precise in his execution of the forms but was reluctant to use color. In a drawing exercise that resembles rowing a boat but works on large motor coordinated movement for the upper body, he was told to select two block crayons from a selection of sixteen crayons. True to his word, he told me he was not a fan of color. He chose teal and black the first time and later chose grey and black during the other seven sessions. However, he used the magenta paint liberally in the simple painting where the viridian green should be painted in left-to-right strokes three-quarters down the page followed by one-quarter magenta, often having the magenta creep up the page to cover more than one quarter of the page. One day, Bill asked if anyone ever switched the color ratio around. To me this indicated he needed to paint the magenta three-quarters, as opposed to one-quarter. On the last day, he also did this, unconsciously. He needed a fuller experience of

the heart color, not the thinking clarity that the green brings. This validated to me and to the class teacher that his heart forces needed to be more in the forefront. After our work was done, by coincidence, the teacher had Bill step into a major role in a musical play production, since the actor originally selected for the part was not prepared. With a big heart, Bill saved the day for his entire class by stepping into a role at the last minute, with grace and skill.

The Odd Couple: Kevin and Jasper

Kevin came to the Waldorf school in fourth grade. I noticed him in his seventh-grade year on a visit to the school, and I attended a child study on him in a faculty meeting. He was decisively gravity-bound and a large headed child; he did not like to do physical work; he liked instead to use his thinking, while doing as little physical work as possible. He also had long piano fingers and was very gifted musically. In seventh grade he used a backpack with wheels, clearly the only one in his class to have this item. When I watched him in movement class and in cross country after school, he was always the last student up the hill, requiring immense effort to pull his body along. When he came to me for the first Extra Lesson session, he had a dark expression on his face and was slumped in a chair.

"Why am I here?" he asked in a low, monotone voice. I explained that I had spoken to his mother and teacher and that it was agreed he could use some help with fine motor skills to strengthen his handwriting. "So this is a handwriting class?" he replied with surliness. "Not directly," I said, but we would work on things that would strengthen his overall skills too. He made a comment about how his work was fine. Before losing any more ground by getting caught in his adolescent inquiry and urge to argue, I gave him a paintbrush and we launched right in. Two days later, he came in surly again, not impolite, but grumpy for sure.

"Why am I here?" He complained about missing Spanish class and chorus and hence about the work, so I took the time to ask him what would work for his schedule. He asked if he could miss gym class, which met two periods a week. (I had to laugh to myself when he asked to get out of gym class because it is naturally what a large headed child would desire!) He completed the exercises that day and left, feeling that I listened to him. Normally, I never take someone out of a movement class but in this case, I needed all the

leverage I could get. After conferring with his teachers and looking at our overall goals for Kevin, we agreed to have him miss one gym class and one instrumental music class, but not Spanish.

Another classmate was referred for sessions: Jasper was very light-hearted and would arrive to the sessions ready to chat up a storm. "What's your favorite movie, Mrs. Helms?" He would talk through an entire session if I let him, often about history, which he loved. He needed to take things a little more seriously, however, and within a few days of thinking about these two boys, I had an inspiration: Wouldn't it be great if they could work together? I called the teacher to mention this idea, but we made no decision.

The next week, Kevin was sick on a Monday, which was the movement class slot when he would come for a session. I called his mother and said that if he wanted, he could make up for the session later that week by coming when the other student came. I emphasized that it was truly optional for him to come, but that I would like it if he could. To my delight, Kevin walked in the door with Jasper two days later. The universe was probably planning this all along, and I just got a preview of it in my earlier moment of inspiration.

For the next four weeks, each student came once a week on their own and once a week together. For me it was a humorous picture of the "Odd Couple." One was serious, clearly gravity-bound, while the other was laid back, full of levity, and a bit oblivious to the details.

My inner observation was that the gesture of large-headed Kevin to his classmate was, "Can you please be a little more serious?" and Jasper's gesture was, "C'mon, man, lighten up!" The class teacher and subject teachers concurred. Near the end of our sessions, it was gratifying to hear the following feedback from Kevin's teachers.

His English teacher said he volunteered to do something in class and she was "floored," this had never happened before! His former passivity transformed into action. His physical education teacher noticed a change in the social inclusion work the eighth-graders did with the fourth-graders; Kevin took charge of a social dynamic instead of remaining passive. (Also, the following school year he became an active runner in the cross-country season.)

The quality of being disorganized and appearing to be lost in space is known as vestibular dysfunction. Found in the inner ear, the balance or vestibular system affects vision, hearing and our relationship to gravity.

The school administrator offered a fun anecdote. One afternoon as she was on dismissal duty at the end of the day, she did a double take when she saw Kevin, thinking there was a new student in the class. His whole face lit up in a new way that she did not recognize.

Then from Kevin's mother: 'My husband and I cannot believe what we are seeing. He's going for long walks with the dog for 30-45 minutes. He went running with his brother twice (very unusual!). He did some chores the other day that we did not have to ask him to do.'

The overall theme was that something in Kevin has changed; there was a new impulse to put thought into action and his face and smile shone with new light.

Mateo

A tenth-grader I'll call Mateo did a full twelve sessions and relayed the following to me towards the end of our time together: "You know what I did the other day? I fell asleep in the afternoon and slept through dinner. I got up at 2 a.m. to do homework, finished it and went back to bed and slept until 6:30 in the morning." His parents were amazed about the changes they saw in him. His science teacher declared, "He is a changed man since working with Connie Helms."

Joe⁵

Joe, a private client from public school, came to my office for an Extra Lesson assessment, accompanied by his mother and shortly before his fourteenth birthday. Almost immediately after shaking my hand, he sighted a large physioball in the room and sat down on it. He unconsciously cued in on something that he needed to address – balance issues. This initial observation told me he would be well suited for the Extra Lesson work.

In our first meeting, I asked Joe about favorite and least favorite things in school. He answered, "Social studies and 2:40," for the former and "math and gym," for the latter. Clearly "2:40" meant dismissal time. The rest of the hour was spent engaging Joe in a few gross motor tasks such as skipping, hopping on one foot, using a balance beam, then tracking a pencil with his eyes and doing some writing and drawing tasks. More observations about Joe became clear after he wrote a few sentences with misspelled words in disjointed print, tried unsuccessfully to copy some geometric forms, and drew some pictures that looked as if drawn by a child younger than typical seventh grader. However, he did read aloud very fast with few errors and with

excellent comprehension. It appeared that his challenges were with balance, spatial orientation, and fine motor control.

Joe's mother initially called me because her son was struggling with penmanship and coordination. A conversation with his parents about his developmental history included the mention that, as an infant, Joe pulled himself to standing at four to five months (which is early) and was frustrated with the crawling process at six months, (also early for crawling). At seven months, he crawled in an asymmetrical pattern, but he spoke in complete sentences at eighteen months and taught himself to read at age four. He sucked on his shirt sleeve in the early school years and now, in

eighth grade, he always had an object to fiddle with, which he kept in a pocket.

Knowing that Joe would apply for his driving learner's permit in a year, his parents understood that he needed to have a stronger sense of where he was in space (spatial orientation), before getting behind the wheel of a car. I explained to them that it takes a year for the physical body to change in terms of releasing old habits and adopting new skills. I also recommended that Joe receive a few craniosacral sessions to help his body free itself from restrictions in his central nervous system.

The picture that formed for me, as I began to work with Joe, was that he had not successfully navigated the developmental stages of the first seven years, especially during his first year of life. While his speech and intellect were superior, he was clumsy in his body and did not appear well oriented in space. As we began weekly sessions, he would enter the waiting room, drop his backpack on the floor, leave his shoes scattered on the floor, and aim for that large yoga ball to sit on. I remembered thinking to myself, "Wow! And he's going to be driving in a year?"

The quality of being disorganized and appearing to be lost in space is known as vestibular dysfunction. Found in the inner ear, the balance or vestibular system affects vision, hearing, and our relationship to gravity. This system mediates all sensations traveling between the brain and the body; if we have a proper relationship to gravity, school learning may be relatively successful. But in Joe's case, not being centered in his body was causing challenges. Symptoms of vestibular dysfunction may include poor balance, dislike of crowds, poor organizational skills, poor motor planning, and clumsiness. These fit the description of Joe.

⁵ An earlier version of the case study on "Joe" appeared in LILIPOH's Winter 2007 issue 50, volume 12.

You should always pay particular attention to the deepest currents, because only that can drive the ship to the shore.

Over the months, we spent time in every session using different ways to strengthen Joe's balance. He sat on the yoga ball, as we tossed a ball back and forth, and fell off quite a bit. On the balance beam, he at first ran when trying to get to the other end. He fell off repeatedly, until he learned to walk slowly, trust, and look straight ahead. We took a break from the beam for a month, and when this activity resumed, it was time for Joe to walk and talk on the beam, saying a sentence forward and back. It took several months for Joe to manage his coordination of one step per word, but success came. The fun part for me was that his sentences were about national politics and scandals. Using his intellect via speech, a higher cortical function, while strengthening a lower cortical function (balance) was pivotal in making gains. With a great feeling of accomplishment, Joe was able to look back a year later and see how well he could execute the balance beam with confidence, compared to his initial struggles.

Going through the many core Extra Lesson exercises over the course of a year strengthened Joe on many levels. He became more centered in his whole being. Other activities also contributed to his improved balance, coordination, and spatial orientation, including drawing geometric forms and doing the many paintings. Most of the paintings were done several times, but it took Joe a year to paint with more care and not create puddles all over the paper when his spatial orientation improved his innate understanding of "left to right," "top to bottom," and "forward and back."

It was obvious that Joe was growing into his body in a healthier way. He navigated space around him with greater ease, was more in command of his body, and, most of all, was feeling good about his newly acquired skills.

Joe came to me as a teenage boy who had appeared unsure of the space around him because he was not quite at home in his body. The process of Joe becoming a truly vertical human took almost a year.

In the summer before starting high school, Joe went to camp for a month and then returned with only four more sessions to go. One day he arrived with a driver's manual in his hand; inwardly, I smiled while thinking of how far he had come. Although improved, his handwriting was still not great, but his sense of self-assurance was palpable. The next time Joe came, he told me he had driven to the session and his mother confirmed that Joe was a good driver. A follow-up to Joe's story is that almost ten years later, I ran into his mother in a coffee shop. He attended college, taking mostly math courses, and then—the best news of all—she said he had hiked the entire Appalachian Trail by

himself. All that balance and orientation work likely had a profound influence on his ability to be agile enough to tackle such a challenge!

Supersensible Currents in the Human and the World

One reason why the Extra Lesson is effective and produces lasting results is that it works with the *Supersensible Currents*. Audrey McAllen deepened her knowledge of these when she studied Steiner's October 1909 lectures called "Anthroposophy," now found in the book, *A Psychology of Body, Soul and Spirit*.⁶ From lecture 3, Audrey realized that the earth has currents but that the human body also has currents, and that these earth currents and human currents run at right angles to each other, forming a cube. Each of us has the archetype of this cube within us. Steiner describes this as resting in our chest cavity. It is our inner gyroscope in terms of orienting us to three-dimensional space, and in the hollow lives the breath of Jehovah, the Christ Being.

In *Balance in the World and Man: Lucifer and Ahriman*,⁷ Steiner states: The truth is, the whole form of man has been put together by forces working from without. It receives its distinctive character from outside itself, and we do not understand the form of man so long as we consider it merely as it appears at first sight; we only understand it when we know how it is connected with the whole cosmos of space, when we are able to see how from right and left, from above and below, from before and behind, Luciferic and Ahrimanic forces are bearing in upon man, and giving him the character of a *being of space*.

A time will come in the future when men will say: "We are told in the Bible of the breath of Jehovah which was breathed into man. But into what part of man was the breath breathed?"

If you recall all that I have said in this lecture, you will be able to see that the region into which the breath was breathed is the intervening region that is in between the onsets from before and behind and from above and below — there, in the middle, where Jehovah created man, as it were in the form of a *cube*. ... Here in the midst, bounded above and below and before and behind, is an intervening space where the breath of Jehovah enters directly into the spatial human being.

⁶ Rudolf Steiner, *A Psychology of Body, Soul and Spirit: Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, and Pneumatosophy* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1999).

⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *Balance in the World and Man: Lucifer and Ahriman* (Rudolf Steiner Press, 1983).

Gratitude for the Work of Audrey McAllen

Those of us trained in the Extra Lesson are deeply grateful for Audrey McAllen insights and her life's work – understanding how the human being is a spatial being, as Steiner describes it. An interesting aspect of Audrey's biography is the fact that her father was a ship's captain on a merchant vessel. Audrey paid attention when he studied his navigational charts, and he told her: "You should always pay particular attention to the deepest currents, because only that can drive the ship to the shore." This was a motto that Audrey later frequently used in her presentations, when she talked about children with learning disabilities: "Find the deepest layers, the causes of learning disability."

When we work with children and adolescents to address their challenges, we are working with deep layers to recapitulate developmental stages to enable them to build a healthy foundation as an upright human being. Through this process, they become "captains of their ship," steering towards their destiny.

Resources

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Extra Lesson¹

First Grade Readiness Screening and Second Grade Assessment

Maggie Scott and Elizabeth Auer

The capacities needed for learning lies in the developmental process of the first seven years of a child's life. Normally, early childhood through the development of the lower senses provides for the child: movement coordination, spatial orientation, and the visual perception to move between two and three-dimensional images effortlessly. This, along with good body geography and established dominance are the foundations for learning. The Extra Lesson addresses the needs of a struggling student by first assessing what areas of development might be weak or missing, and then offering a series of exercises to further develop those areas.

The Extra Lesson was developed by Audrey McAllen, in England, during the early nineteen seventies. She was an experienced Waldorf teacher who had been inspired by Rudolf Steiner's many lectures on the developing human being and her work with children who had learning difficulties. It was out of her teaching experience, her deep study of Steiner's work, and her observation of children with needs that Ms. McAllen developed first an assessment, and then a curriculum of movement, speech, drawing, and painting exercises to support the further development of children who are struggling in the classroom.

The Extra Lesson is meant to be used as one part of a solution with other interventions, which might include: nutritional/diet support, osteopathy, therapeutic eurythmy, art or music therapy, and, for older children, academic support. Ideally, an individual student will have an Extra Lesson once or twice per week for an hour, as well as a short daily home practice. A typical lesson often consists of floor exercises, speech work, form drawings, beanbag and ball exercises, working with copper rods and balls, and it concludes with a painting lesson.

The Extra Lesson is not designed only for individual children, it can also greatly benefit an entire class. Much of the Extra Lesson work can be used in addition to other exercises such as 'Take Time' in the classroom to support every child's ability to learn, focus, and engage socially. Many of the exercises can also help a teacher bring focus and concentration to a class when

needed. If possible, it is helpful to have another teacher come and serve as an extra set of eyes to help observe a class while doing the exercises to reach a clearer understanding of what a class teacher might want to focus on.

Not all schools are fortunate enough to be able to employ an Extra Lesson specialist full-time. Some schools have an Extra Lesson teacher work on a part-time basis, say two days per week, or employs a specialist for a block of time to do the screenings for both first grade readiness and the second-grade assessment.

Exercises the teacher can do in the classroom with the whole class

Note: some of these exercises can be done with the class with the students standing behind their chairs or in a circle. Others will need more space for movement, especially the exercises for integrating the early movement patterns.

To support the development of body geography:

Simple Simon says, asking the students to touch parts of the body, with both hands, right or left hand crossing over, e.g., place your pinky from your left hand on your right big toe.

To support the development of spatial orientation:

- **Bringing awareness of left and right:** Two soft felt balls, blue and red. Students have one in each hand. Ask them to throw up the one in the right hand while passing the ball in the left hand to the right hand, catching the returning ball in the left hand.
- **Awareness of above and below:** Students hold ball in each hand and throw it under the right leg and catch it with the same hand, then throw the ball in the left hand under the left leg and catch with the same hand. When rhythm is established, students walk forward and backward while saying the times tables.
- **Awareness of forward and backward:** Students grasp a copper rod vertically with the right hand above the left at arm's length and walk forward and backwards counting out loud or saying a chosen sentence, stepping on each number or word. Change the position of the rod to behind the

1. This article appeared in Elisabeth Auer, ed., *Helping Children on Their Way: Educational Support for the Classroom* (Chatham, NY: Waldorf Publications, 2017). The *Research Bulletin* is grateful to the authors for their kind permission to reprint their work.

back with the same walking and speaking. For very bad posture: hold the rod horizontally across the shoulders.

To help establish dominance:

For the hand: Games such as looking-aim, skittles, throwing rings over a hook. For the foot: hopping and stamping with the dominant foot.

To integrate early developmental movement patterns:

Note: *These exercises can be done with the whole class taking turns on the mat on the floor, lining up to take their turn. Working with half the class is best while the other half is busy with something else, otherwise it may take too long for the children to take their turn. In some schools the movement teacher incorporates these exercises into the movement lesson, or the school employs an Extra Lesson teacher who works with the class say once a week.*

- Creeping on the floor like a lizard, using both arms and legs with stomach on floor
- *Caterpillar crawl:* lying on the back pushing with heels backwards along the floor without the help of the arms
- *Circus seal:* students lie on mat and roll along, keeping their body straight and hands up above head. You can make this progressively more challenging by placing a beanbag between the knees or feet and as they roll along the beanbag needs to stay in place.
- *Eagle:* Students lie down on their stomachs and first place their arms at the sides. Ask them to slowly raise their arms up with hands under their shoulder blades as though spreading their wings, lifting head and also lifting their legs that need to be kept straight.
- *Roly Poly:* Students lie flat on their backs, bring their knees up towards their chins, clasp the knees around with a two-handed clasp and rock the body back and forth, keeping their balance
- *Crabwalk:* Forwards, backwards and sideways, keeping bottoms off the mat.

To integrate the horizontal and vertical midlines:

Wool winding, skein twisting, braiding and modeling with beeswax, juggling, table tennis, sweeping.

Other exercises the teacher can do with the whole class

- *Stretching and lifting:* With eyes gazing straight ahead, ask the students to lift the toes as high as they will go without the soles of the feet lifting from the floor. Now ask them to lower the toes and press them hard against the floor gripping it as strongly as possible. Repeat twice more, the raising the heels, stand on the toes, with the ball of the foot up from the floor. The hands should remain at the side of the body. This exercise helps to release tensions and to experience the lifting element in which the will forces are working. It also helps the student with spatial orientation.
- *Bouncing balls:* Each student has a ball in each hand, bounces the ball from the one hand on the floor and turns the hand and catches it with the same hand, then repeat with the other hand. Alternating hands, the students count forward to a given number and then back again. This exercise brings great flexibility between the stretching and lifting element and requires will forces and concentration.
- *An obstacle course:* For the young children an obstacle course is a wonderful way to get them to crawl under and jump over objects, as well as squeezing and wriggling through a narrow tunnel. You can include a station where the students have to use fine motor skills such as turning pennies or buttons over from one side to the other; include also the bunny hop, hopping through rings, balancing along a balance beam – in short whatever you can come up with that challenges the students. In the very early years, a story to go along with the journey through the obstacles is ideal. (Try pairing up children and have one lead his blindfolded partner through the course.)
- *Writing with feet:* This is a wonderful exercise and can be done in the classroom while the students are seated behind their desks. Each student has a slate on the floor in front of their feet and a white piece of chalk between their big toe and second toe. Each student practices writing their name on the slate in front of them. This can be very challenging for some who will need encouragement as you circle around the room.
- *Finger walking on a rod:* Each student holds a rod horizontally with two hands and the fingers move to the side and back again to the middle. Variations include holding the rod vertically with one hand and moving the fingers up and down.
- *Painting the lemniscate (the figure of eight):* This is a painting that can be done in a regular painting

lesson and is a marvelous exercise. First paint a large figure of eight, *horizontally*, in yellow. Then fill in the left center loop with cobalt blue and take this across the yellow to surround the outside of the right-hand loop of the figure of eight. Next fill the right-side center with red and paint this across the yellow to surround the outside of the left hand loop. The painting movements should be from above to below,

- *Form drawing:* There are many forms that can be drawn here, but one of the special forms that McAllen created is the Flower Rod Exercise. This form is also a lemniscate, drawn vertically with a centering line. McAllen states that “In this exercise we can see if the student has the capacity to move inwardly from the convex to concave mirroring and the willingness to be receptive.”

NOTE: *There are many other exercises in the Extra Lesson book that are best left to the Extra Lesson specialist who can work with the students individually. For further reading and understanding of the above exercises, see Audrey McAllen’s Extra Lesson book.²*

Home Program:

Some activities that support a child’s capacity for learning at home or at recess, include:

Activities for vestibular stimulation:

- Play with a large beach ball – lie on it, under it, place feet on top while holding a pushup position (with supervision)
- Rolling and sliding in a box down a hill, wheelbarrow rides
- Balance boards, trampoline jumping
- Merry-go-rounds, swings, slides, teeter totter, Jungle Jim
- Climbing up stairs and jumping down with feet together
- Hammock play
- Jumping rope games

Activities to improve tactile perception:

- Playing with varied textures: sand, clay, paint
- Draw on a carpet square with chalk – numbers, letters, shapes, tic-tac-toe, and erasing chalk with hands, feet, and forearms
- Find common household items such as a key, paperclip, marble, silverware, cork, pencil, nail,

etc. (can use pairs of items) and hide them in a box of millet, having the child identify or match each object while blindfolded. Provide a box of mixed beans for the hands and feet to sift through.

- Drawing in the sand with hands or feet
- Massage with lotion or a firm pressure rubdown after bath time and before bed

Activities to improve gross motor skills:

- Crawling on all fours through hula hoops, under tables, etc.
- Hitting a balloon on a string
- Swimming
- Shaking sheets/towels out for spreading and folding
- Drawing/writing upright on a chalkboard or easel
- Chores such as carrying trash, raking, carrying and washing dishes, moving furniture
- Jumping over obstacles, lines, and cracks
- Jumping with one or both feet
- Ball throwing and catching
- Hula hoop
- Balloon volleyball
- Simon says
- Follow the leader
- Tug of war

Activities to improve fine motor skills:

- Kneading dough and mixing batter
- Using a hole puncher
- Wringing out clothes, face cloths
- Hanging up clothes using clothespins
- Using cake decorating tools
- Stretching rubber bands around an object
- Stringing beads, macaroni, cheerios, straws, paper clips
- Finger puppets
- Paper folding/origami
- Flicking coins or ping pong balls into a cup
- Turning over/shuffling cards, checkers, and coins

Activities for perceptual skills:

- Sorting a deck of cards, beads, buttons, or shells by shape, size, and color
- Sorting laundry socks
- Copying designs with pipe cleaners, toothpicks, popsicle sticks, coins, playdough
- Pick out items on a grocery list

2. Audrey E. McAllen, *The Extra Lesson: Movement, Drawing, and Painting Exercises to Help Children with Difficulties in Writing, Reading, and Arithmetic*, 6th edition (Fair Oaks, CA: Rudolf Steiner College Press, 2013).

- Itsy bitsy spider song with hand movements
- Simple Simon
- Construction toys such as Legos, waffle bricks, Lincoln Logs
- Pin the tail on the donkey

Activities for visual motor skills:

- Use a paint brush or giant chalk on slanted surface
- Cutting with scissors
- Using a squirt bottle
- Using an eyedropper with colored water to paint on paper
- Rolling, tearing, or crumpling colored tissue paper to stick onto clear contact paper
- Stringing beads, macaroni, straws, paper clips, cheerios
- Picking up rice, popcorn, or other small objects with tweezers
- Using chop sticks
- Pinching clothespins with thumb and finger tips
- Sealing zip-lock bags
- Crawling on all fours, rocking back and forth in this position
- Swinging on swings and playing on monkey bars

The Extra Lesson Assessment

A general Extra Lesson assessment may be requested at any time during the elementary school years. A student may be referred in any of the grades, especially as they arrive in the middle school years when the work becomes more challenging. New students are given some time to settle down in the class and their new school environment and often have to catch up on their artistic work as well as at times academic work. At times, teachers will refer a student for a school district or a private neurological/cognitive evaluation that goes beyond the Extra Lesson Assessment.

A general Extra Lesson assessment looks at the student's physical development, gross and fine motor skills, dominance, integration of early movement patterns, body geography awareness, spatial orientation in space and time, finger grip and posture, writing, reading, spelling, math, form drawing, listening and hearing, speech, eye-tracking, short term memory; it usually finishes with asking the student to draw a person, house, and tree picture. Observations are made as to how the student cooperates, follows instructions, relates to the assessor, moves around in the room, and manages all the assignments (see additional notes on *criteria for observation* below).

In addition, there are two mainstay Extra Lesson assessments that take place every year, one for first grade readiness and the other for a general development progress check.

First grade readiness screening

This screening is provided for children who are chronologically ready for first grade and who have been deemed by the Kindergarten teachers to be ready for formal instruction. It is also an assessment for prospective students who come from other non-Waldorf schools. Over the years, Waldorf schools have developed various modes and processes for this assessment; how it is handled and organized will vary from school to school. The following process is an example of how it *can* be organized.

The Kindergarten teacher(s) present the class of children to the faculty in January and give an outline of the potential students who are ready to move on to first grade. This is followed by the organization of the assessment by the Care Group chair and a team consisting of the leading teacher and observers. The eligible students are split up into groups of four or five and a suitable time is set for the assessment.

The assessment

Students are fetched from the kindergarten in small groups and led to the Eurythmy room or other suitable space where the lead teacher and the observers are waiting for them. They have prepared and set up the room with a balance beam, rings on the floor, jump ropes, bean bags, crayons and paper by a bench in the corner, etc. The lead teacher greets them and begins the storytelling while the children travel around the room, balancing over the bridge, tossing bean bags, hopping on one foot along the rings, bending over to go under a chair, stepping up and over a chair and so on. The observers each have a couple of students to watch, and they take notes on each. They look for various criteria: dominance, fine and gross motor control, listening and focusing ability, crossing midlines, being able to touch the left ear with the right hand stretched over the head, ability to move with the group, the person-house-tree drawing, as well as a form drawing and other aspects.

The follow up

A meeting is arranged as a follow up to the assessments and the team discusses the findings together with the admissions director. It can happen that a particular student is deemed not quite ready, and a request may be made for a follow up assessment in May with some physical exercises, such as jumping rope, suggested for the student to work on before the re-assessment. Most often, the Kindergarten teachers have a fine sense of

which children are ready, and for the most part the assessment is a confirmation of the students' readiness. There are times when parents deem their child ready, while the teachers feel she needs more time. This calls for careful mediation between the parents and the Kindergarten teachers.

Students from other schools

At times it is possible to have students from other schools that are applying for first grade to be assessed with the group from the 'in-house' Kindergarten(s). This can be coordinated with the admissions director. Some teachers prefer to do the screening with individual students; other teachers prefer to do the screening in small groups so that the social interaction of the student within the group can be observed.

The second-grade assessment

This assessment is also under the purview of the Extra Lesson and takes place during the second half of the second grade. After giving the student time to settle into the class and to be introduced to writing and reading, as well as all the other subjects, it is time to take a reading on how the students are developing their physical and academic skills. The assessment is similar in some ways to the first-grade readiness assessment, with the addition of assessing for early (primitive) reflex retentions, and the newly acquired skills such as spelling, math, reading and writing. The other big difference is that the students are each assessed individually and not in a group. Typically, the assessor is an Extra Lesson specialist who schedules an hour for each student.

Criteria for observation

- Dominance: is it established? Is it mixed? Are their signs of ambidexterity?
- Gross motor skills: jumping rope, running/accelerating/dead stop, high jump, long jump, throwing and catching a ball, kicking a ball, hopping on one foot, hopping on two feet, balancing on a beam or rope
- Fine Motor skills: threading a needle, turning pennies over
- Toe dexterity: picking up jewels with toes, writing name with pencil between toes
- Spatial orientation: backwards, forwards, sideways, centered, diagonal
- Time of year: season, weekday, yesterday and tomorrow
- Sense of symmetry: Form drawing, simple symmetry vertical and horizontal, crossing midlines
- Math: simple computations showing understanding of all four processes

- Writing: alphabet in order and in caps and lowercase—any reversals? hesitation? repeatedly having to start all over again from the beginning?
- Numbers: any reversals?
- Finger grip: correct? poor?
- Writing a sentence: does it have a verb and a noun? hesitation?
- Spelling: list of typical words covered in class
- Reading: list of typical words covered in class
- Person-House-Tree drawing: Are all three elements there? Is there a ground and a sky/sun? Is the figure three-folded? Does the house have windows, a door with a handle?
- Reflex retention check: Does the neck move freely sideways and the head up and down? bilateral integration etc.

The follow up

The Care Group team meets with the class teacher to discuss the observations and any resulting concerns from the individual assessments. This discussion may also include any behavior or social concerns in the classroom or out at recess. Recommendations may be made for students who are showing challenges with any of the criteria assessed, such as reading challenges. Further recommendations can refer to music or art therapy, therapeutic Eurythmy or Spatial dynamics.

Observations on each student are stored in the student's file and generally kept as in-house information.

Maggie Scott's passion for Waldorf education began with the birth of the eldest of her four daughters, nearly twenty years ago. After attending the Rudolf Steiner College for both her class teaching and Extra Lesson education, Maggie has worked in Waldorf schools teaching in the kindergarten, as a class teacher, and as the director of educational support programs. She currently runs the Cabinet Mountain Cooperative School, a Waldorf inspired program, in northern Idaho.

Elizabeth Auer. See bio on page 27.

The first task to be achieved on the basis of anthroposophy in education... is to see that the teachers, the educators, are people who perceive the human being in the deepest sense and, having developed this attitude of genuinely observing the human being, approach the child with the love that results from such an attitude.¹

Rudolf Steiner

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

After reading Peter Selg's *The Therapeutic Eye*,² in which the author describes Rudolf Steiner's extraordinary ability to perceive and understand other human beings, I resolved to conduct a case study of a child with autism. Steiner spoke of the importance of the intentional effort to see and understand children as one of the most important preconditions to any kind of educational or therapeutic work. While reading this book, my thoughts turned to Nathan, an autistic child in my class, who has been with me since the beginning of Grade 1. Out of all the children in this class, Nathan remained the greatest mystery in many ways. I wondered how to develop the capacity to understand this child, to gain insight into his inner world, and through this to better understand how to support him.

I sensed that this journey to penetrate Nathan's world, to develop the ability to perceive his inner nature and understand his development, would require a tremendous amount of personal inner work and self-development, but I also knew it would help me grow as a teacher and a human being.

Reflecting on the work done so far, I note that I have indeed acquired many new capacities and qualities I have realized throughout this journey: stimulating my inner growth and making me a stronger and better teacher.

At first, the contribution of this journey into Nathan's story would be, in terms of adding to existing research, like releasing a drop of water into the ocean. There are so many other children in the world with similar conditions; looking at one case is clearly an important, but still a very small step. On the other hand, I later

realized, the outcome of this case study turned out to be greater than initially envisioned. On a personal level, the capacities, skills, and abilities I developed throughout this work are transferable to working with other children—observing and understanding them better, and developing towards them an unconditional love fostered by understanding.

This study, then, is a mere drop in an ocean of the effort to understand children with completely different mind-sets and world perceptions. However, I also hope that some of the revelations and the findings, along with the journey itself, would prove helpful and inspiring to other teachers who work with autistic children.

Background

Nathan was, at the beginning of this project, an 8-year-old boy and, second grade student at the Halton Waldorf School in Ontario. He was formally diagnosed with Autism. His first encounter with Waldorf education was through a summer camp he attended in the summer of 2018. At that time, 6-year-old Nathan completed first grade in a public school. He required educational support from a variety of sources, including individual educational assistance.

Nathan's report from the public school stated that he had difficulty following instructions and was unable to orientate himself during transitions. He was behind his peers academically and seemed challenged in establishing personal connections with his teachers and his classmates. The Halton Waldorf kindergarten teacher, Aniko Gereb, who ran the camp that summer, reached out to me, as the rising first grade teacher, and suggested that Nathan could be a good candidate for my class. She believed that the rhythm of a Waldorf school, its nurturing environment, holistic approach, and the strong loving authority of the teachers would benefit Nathan. He might be able to develop and progress well in this Waldorf environment.

After reading his report-card from the public school, my initial reaction was that our school could not serve a child with such high needs, as we do not have the same level of individual and remedial support and tutoring opportunities as public schools do. However, after meeting Nathan in person, I had a strong feeling that we should give Waldorf education a chance to meet Nathan's needs. Nathan's mother met this suggestion with trust and enrolled him in first grade.

¹ Rudolf Steiner, *The Essentials of Education* (London: Anthroposophic Press, 1997).

² Peter Selg, *The Therapeutic Eye: How Rudolf Steiner Saw Children* (Great Barrington, MA: Steiner Books, 2008).

It wasn't clear what would be required to support Nathan's needs, but we decided to embark on this journey together with him and find answers to many questions along the way. It really was the moment Nathan entered the class for the first time that this case study of Nathan began.

Determining the Method

The first step of this study was developing a methodological approach to gaining a deeper insight into the nature of Nathan's inner world. Rudolf Steiner's extraordinary ability to observe children served as an inspiration for this study; however, his advice to teachers in how to observe children in an anthroposophical way was scant. In fact, Dr. Steiner demanded that the first Waldorf teachers in the Stuttgart school should refrain from following any prescribed anthroposophical approach, and should rather study the children in a very real and individualized way with the greatest attention to the child's soul. He emphasized that in developing a psychological eye, it is important to see the individual nature of the child and to refrain from any preconceived ideas.³

In the process of establishing a method to use to study Nathan, my mentor Elyse Pomeranz encouraged me to try something that was new for me, yet that worked very much in line with what Rudolf Steiner suggested to the first Waldorf teachers. She recommended refraining in the early stages of this study from reading existing methods of research or literature describing previous approaches to similar cases. Instead, Elyse recommended seeking inspiration and insights from the spiritual world and from my own inner being, through observation, meditation, night work and artistic experiences. This was a new and unusual way for me of taking on a study. Having worked in neuro-linguistic research for many years, the method I was used to always started with research by browsing mountains of literature on the topic, thus gaining as much factual information from outside sources as possible.

Looking inwards before looking out constituted a new research method for me, but it seemed relevant and applicable for this type of study. I decided to give it a try, and was looking forward to this experience. My gratitude to Elyse, for giving me the courage to embark on research in this new way and for her support throughout this journey, is substantial.

So, the steps included in this case consist of:

- Observation
- Meditation, including "night work"
- Artistic work
- Analyzing Nathan's work
- One-on-one work with Nathan

Aims

The primary aim of this study was to gain insight into Nathan's inner world, gather understanding of his perception of the people and world around him, and, if possible, see into his imagination. From a very practical standpoint, the goal was to determine how to best meet Nathan's academic needs. A long-term goal was to gain a better understanding of how to meet his unique personality—who is he—to challenge him in a helpful way, free from the aim to change him.

Embarking on this study could mean that the result of this process would provide more questions than answers. My personal goal was not to push towards getting answers; rather, it was to open myself to receive whatever observations that may come, while allowing as much time as needed for the process to unfold.

Observations of Nathan at School

When Nathan first came to the class in first grade, he seemed quite disoriented. I had to find new ways (quite different from approaches used with other students) of helping him settle into the daily rhythm and establish a connection with his classmates as well as with me as his teacher. Things that were quite obvious to other children would not immediately make sense to Nathan and often needed to be explained. For example, it took him time to internalize the practice of raising a hand when wishing to respond to the teacher's question, or that of responding to the ringing of the bell by lining-up at the bell tower. Nathan would often raise his hand when everyone else did, only to reveal that he did not have a response to the specific question asked by the teacher.

During recess, Nathan at first spent most of his time on his own, but then gradually started participating in active and imaginative games with other children; he was often invited to join in by his classmates. He seemed quite content, confident, and happy in his being. It often seemed to me that the other children could sense his inner strength and positive disposition. That's why, despite the fact that he did not put too much effort into establishing contact

I wondered how to develop the capacity to understand this child, to gain insight into his inner world and through this, better understand how to support him.

³ See Peter Selg *The Therapeutic Eye*.

with his classmates, he was well received, loved, and respected by everyone in the class from the very first moment. Nathan participated well in every part of the lesson, following instructions and rules and doing his best. From the beginning of first grade, he demonstrated aptitude for math and reading, yet he was often challenged by new concepts, struggling to understand what was being asked of him.

New material introduced through images and pictures did not make sense to Nathan. He did not seem to make a connection between the image and the concept that it represents. For example, he would memorize the letter “B” easily, but would struggle to tell what connection it has with a Bear (a drawing of a Bear in the shape of “B” was used to teach this letter). He had a good grasp of the four basic math operations, but could not make a connection between the four characters—Farmer Plus, Mr. Minus, etc.—that were used to represent these operations. This raised many questions for me as a teacher, as to how my teaching could not only engage Nathan’s thinking, which seemed quite able to respond well, but also his feeling life and imagination—in other words, how to bring it all together for him.

In artistic work, Nathan was always settled, quiet, and very focused, trying to follow my instruction as precisely as possible to “do the right thing.” However, when my instructions were less restrictive, for example by asking the class to add details out of memory or imagination, he would often be quite lost, not knowing what to do. In his Main Lesson book, he layered the colors with lightness and elegance, yet struggled to bring his drawings to form. During free drawings, he would usually be the first one done, most of the time repeating a simple drawing of a tree and a sun. During painting classes, Nathan seemed most comfortably at home, blending the colors with ease and courage. He seemed to have a much better relationship with color than with shape. I noticed that allowing him to work with color and not encouraging him to put shape on paper would help him relax and breathe deeply, helping him awaken his imagination and look within himself.

During story-telling time, Nathan would sit quietly, maintaining good posture, yet it would appear as if he was not engaged with the story, as he did not maintain eye contact and often looked dreamy. He never participated in the recall portion of the lesson, and when asked to remember the story, he did not seem to

have retained any of its content. For the longest time, it appeared that Nathan did not understand or remember the stories told, until one day, in February, he surprised me with a birthday card that had characters of the “Mary’s Little Donkey” story, which I had read to the children during the days leading to Christmas in December. He presented this card to me on my birthday and said that he drew Mary, Joseph, the donkey, a boy who went for a ride on the donkey, and the children from the village, because ‘I loved that part of the story.’

During the reading of the story he did not seem to make any connection with what he was hearing, yet in February he presented me with the card, demonstrating a clear familiarity with the characters and the events of the story. This immediately altered my wrong assumption

that Nathan was not retaining any content of the stories he hears. Clearly, further investigation into Nathan’s comprehension and relationship with the stories and with time was in order.

Nathan is very musical and loves singing. When spending time outdoors, he often walks around singing one of the songs learned in the class. His mother says that he also sings often at home. On the other hand, recorder playing was and still is challenging for Nathan. He finds it hard to understand the fingering. It led to a lot of frustration in music classes.

In Handwork, similarly, it took Nathan almost six months to master knitting, as he could not grasp the sequence of movements in making a stitch. Then, one day, he “got it” and became the best knitter in the class. His work is exquisite—the stitches are perfectly even and his choice of color combinations is always beautiful. Notably, he always picks earth colors for his handwork projects. Different shades of brown, dark red, and green are among his favorite colors. He seems to have a natural eye for how to blend the colors in a beautiful, harmonious way.

In Movement class, Nathan displays a good sense of rhythm and balance. He can follow along with all the activities in the class. Sometimes, new activities that involve fine motor skills are challenging for him, but with some practice he is always able to master them.

In his relationship with teachers, once Nathan has established connection, he is loyal, respectful, and always willing to follow the rules, though he can be quite disoriented and lost with new teachers and new rules.

My initial reaction was that our Waldorf school could not serve a child with such high needs, as we do not have the same level of individual and remedial support and tutoring opportunities as public schools do.

Often, he would insist that things are done exactly the way I, “Ms. Markh,” expects them to be done and can get quite stubborn if he hears otherwise. On a couple of occasions, it went as far as a temper tantrum. Once, when a new teacher took over the Optional Afternoon Program, I was called in to school, because Nathan was crying so hard that no one could understand what happened. One of the girls in the class got hurt and Nathan knew that when somebody is hurt in our class, you give them a pat on the back, say “it’s OK” and offer the injured something to drink.

Apparently, Nathan performed the first two actions on this list, but as he was about to offer a drink to his friend, the teacher insisted that he come back into the classroom and allow someone else to take over looking after the hurt student. This instruction did not make any sense to Nathan. He was desperately yearning to offer his friend a drink, but the teacher did not understand it. It led to frustration and ended in a temper tantrum. When I arrived at school, and figured out what was going on, we called out the classmate who was hurt and Nathan offered her a drink. He felt better after that, but still said that it happened too late. I will be addressing Nathan’s relationship with time shortly. It is unique!

Most of the time Nathan and his teachers can understand each other well and find common language. If things are done differently by a teacher, it is important for Nathan to know the reason and to be informed in advance of any new rules or changes of course.

Overall, Nathan is a happy and easy-going child, who loves every aspect of his school.

Determining Temperament

Trying to determine Nathan’s temperament has remained elusive to this day. Every Waldorf teacher knows of the importance of working with temperaments for therapeutic and pedagogical purposes. The types of stories that would appeal to the child, the tone of the teacher’s voice, the position of the child’s desk in the class, dietary recommendations, etc.—all can be established based on a child’s temperament. This helps to understand the children and makes working in the classroom more effective. Yet, I found myself at a loss when trying to determine Nathan’s temperament, which would be important for any activity requiring division of the class into groups by temperaments, or, for example, when asking children to act out a character in a story in a way that would represent the individual’s

dominant temperament. Nathan seemed to fit equally well in any group, or not to fit into any at all.

To bring structure to this segment of my investigation, I printed out a chart that lists the qualities of each of the four temperaments, placed it on my desk and marked all observations. After a week I realized that this was a draining and unrewarding experience, and that it was leading me nowhere but to disappointment and frustration. So, I’ve put my chart away and hoped for some inspiration on how to proceed in determining Nathan’s temperament to arrive from elsewhere.

Another week passed and no new ideas came along. Returning to Rudolf Steiner’s work, I tried to find some guidelines relevant to difficulties in determining a temperament, or any other words of wisdom and inspiration that would help me move ahead. A reference in *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner*⁴ explains the importance of judging a child’s temperament rightly, with an indication that everything else would then follow of its own accord.

In the same segment, the directive to approaching children with “no preconceived idea that they should be such or such,” caught my attention anew, raising a new question in my mind: What if this child is so different

that categorizing him by temperament as we do with other children simply does not make sense? The rate of diagnosed autism in society has increased dramatically in recent decades, suggesting that autistic children were much less common in Steiner’s time than they are these days.⁵ Still, Rudolf Steiner often talked about the anticipation that human beings are to evolve in a new way. What if these new generations of autistic children are following a new path in human

evolution? What are they teaching us about the world, about people, and about themselves?

There was great relief in letting go of the goal to determine Nathan’s temperament and simply allowing

Looking inwards before looking out constituted a new research method for me, but it seemed relevant and applicable for this type of study.

4 *Faculty Meetings with Rudolf Steiner* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1998).

5 Based on data from a set of CDC studies, the Autism Science Foundation website reports the following:

In 2018, the Centers for Disease Control’s Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) reported that approximately 1 in 59 children in the United States has been identified with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This estimate is a 14% increase from the 1 in 68 rate in 2016 and a 47% increase from the 1 in 88 rate in 2012. In the 1980s autism prevalence was reported as 4 in 10,000. In the nineties, prevalence was 1 in 2500 and later 1 in 1000.

(<https://autismsciencefoundation.org/what-is-autism/how-common-is-autism/>)

myself to observe, pose questions, and contemplate. Instead of ticking the boxes in the chart, I would ask for help from the spiritual world, doing my best to meet Nathan with an open mind, watching, listening, observing and remaining open to whatever might come, letting intuition guide me towards what works best specifically for Nathan.

The best position for him to sit in the class became the seat in the very center of the room, at the very center of the temperament groupings of the rest of the class, where he is surrounded by his peers from all sides, feeling their warmth and feeling physically part of the group. I found that the voice that works best to converse with Nathan, to call and sing his name, is a strong and confident voice, the one I would usually use with choleric children. He often acts out choleric characters in our acting work, being the king who gives direction to the group, for example. In social interactions he seems to have many sanguine qualities. In working with color he tends to gravitate towards earthly colors of the melancholic.

Temperaments do arise in relation to the four bodies – astral, etheric, physical, and ego. Wanting to study Nathan's relationship to these bodies more deeply, I requested that our faculty at the Halton Waldorf School do a child study with Nathan as the focus. The perspective of other teachers and their impressions of Nathan would help me gain new insights for my own study. The child study, as always, consisted of four parts, representing the four bodies: physical, etheric, astral, and ego. We started by describing Nathan's physical body. Looking in detail at his appearance – his body type, posture, the proportion of his head, torso and limbs, the shape of his ears, fingers, etc. We shared observations related to his etheric body through the seven life processes: breathing, warming, digestion, secreting, maintaining, growing, and reproducing. Through observing his thinking, feeling and willing, as well as his likes and dislikes, we tried to gain insight into his astral body qualities. Looking at his ego consisted of creating a deed that comes from a higher place in Nathan, we then shared our insights and imaginations.

In relations to temperament work, after the child study it became obvious that Nathan is, in fact, unique. The alignment, association of temperaments with the four bodies, is not the same in him as with most other children. While he seemed connected to each temperament, he is not aligned with one.

If things are done differently by a teacher, it is important for Nathan to know the reason and to be informed in advance of any new rules or changes of course.

The child study gave better insight into how temperaments work in Nathan, which was the original question posed before the child study. In the end, however, it was not the temperament alignment that became the greatest revelation of the process.

After the child study there was a significant shift in Nathan's performance in the class and in his inner being. He was, as if suddenly, thriving at school; he was more settled and noticeably happier than before the study was completed. It was inspiring to witness how the act of "seeing" the child together with other teachers in the school had "reached him." He seemed aware of the work done, of our thoughts and care on a level of supersensible perception. It was a powerful firsthand experience

of how merely "seeing" a child, holding him in our attention, hearts and thoughts can cause a shift in the child's wellbeing. It helped immensely.

Meditation and Artistic Work

The child study I described happened in November of the second grade. After the study I was inspired to focus my meditative work, seeing the powerful effects of the child study and hoping that this would lead me to more insights into Nathan's personality.

Many aspects of the Waldorf curriculum seemed to work remarkably well for him. He thrived in our daily rhythm, shone in artistic work, and he even shifted in his understanding of the imaginary component. He made a perfect connection between the concept of place value and the character of Squirrel Nutkin, who gathered acorns into bags of 10, baskets of 100, and wheelbarrows of 1000. Nathan enthusiastically raised his hand to share his answers to word problems.

I practiced evening meditation which involved thinking in a focused way of Nathan before sleep. In dreams there were often images of being in the classroom with Nathan standing outside. He might be showing me something in the forest, but I could not quite see what it was through the window. After these dreams, I always woke up in the morning with a warm feeling.

Interestingly, when I engaged in artistic practice with Elyse, I painted myself in relation to Nathan and then imagined how Nathan would paint me in relation to him; both paintings represented me, the teacher, as smaller than the child – Nathan filled up almost the whole page. I did not intend to go deeper into analyzing my dreams, but the general conclusion was that his world is big, and although I cannot clearly see what he

is showing me, this relationship is definitely widening my own world, and in turn securing and preserving his.

In the beginning of December, I received a wonderful gift from Elyse, a gift that was remarkably timely and relevant to my work with Nathan. She offered me a four-part meditation for the four weeks leading up to Christmas and Solstice. I did this meditation beyond Christmas through the following twelve days, the “holy nights,” and it brought my work with Nathan to a whole new level of understanding and of “seeing” him. On the first week of this meditation, I imagined Nathan’s physical appearance and presented him with a mineral. I then closely watched his reaction to this mineral and the way he inwardly experienced it—its texture, shape, temperature. On the second week I did the same with a plant, on the third, I presented him with an animal; and on the third week, I combined all the previous three parts and then imagined him into the world of people.

Out of all the practices I did throughout this study, this meditation was the most revealing for me. Not only could I see Nathan more clearly, I started to get a sense of what it is like to be Nathan. I remember feeling the warmth of the smooth rock in the palms of his hands, how the warmth was spreading through his body, and how a feeling of peace came over him. Reflecting on this feeling, I remembered how Nathan gravitates towards warmth (often *human* warmth) in his daily life. He loves to hug, he loves to be in the middle of the class, surrounded by people. When we go on nature walks, he often asks to hold my hand and then leans towards me as we walk. In these moments, there is incredible warmth between us. He loves to lie on the bench in the sun. In these moments he is genuinely happy and content.

In the context of his relation to plants, I experienced Nathan’s fascination with the shape of the plant. I imagined him looking at the proportion of the petals and noticing beauty and harmony in it. I already mentioned here that in the artistic work Nathan seemed to connect with color, but his relation to form was tricky.

Interestingly, soon after this meditation, we started learning the times tables through the circles of 12, connecting the dots and creating different ornaments. Nathan was fascinated by the patterns the sequence of numbers can create. One morning, when we had gone through about half of our times tables, he entered the class and offered to show me the rest. He had figured them out at home. He often drew these circles in his free drawings, on the ground outside. He also chanted the times tables’ intervals outside, while on nature walks. His natural aptitude for math and connection with hierarchical forms were represented in so

many natural elements. This included the flowers that appeared in my meditation and dreams. These all came together and gave me insights on how to bring form and color in relation to academic concepts in a way that would appeal to Nathan.

In relation to animals, Nathan often appeared in my imagination with a baby tiger cub in his hands. This tiger cub was small, helpless without his mother, but full of inner strength, might, and potential to grow into a big and powerful animal. This became for me the picture of Nathan as a human being.

The last part of the meditation, imaginatively releasing Nathan into the world of people, was very vivid. I saw him walking forward by himself in confident steps with people surrounding him with warm presence, while slightly distant in physical spacing. This part of the meditation probably reveals something about Nathan’s future. I hope that he grows up to be a strong person, and that he has enough strength and confidence to be exactly who he is.

After the “holy nights” meditation, I felt more connected with Nathan. I felt that merely seeing him, accepting him, and loving him for who he is might be greater than having answers to all the questions I was asking. His unique personality will reveal itself more and more as we work together. There is still a great deal to learn from him.

Working with Nathan one-on-one offered insights into his relation between number sequences, shape and natural elements. The plan to do a series of artistic exercises, designed in collaboration with our art therapist, Elizabeth White, was eliminated once the pandemic set in. Unfortunately, distance learning in the third term doesn’t allow for this more focused individual work. Looking forward, these activities with Nathan could happen during third grade. I am looking forward to an even better understanding of how to serve Nathan academically and how to bring the curriculum in a balanced way for Nathan and the class.

Observing Nathan’s relationship with number sequences, form, and elements of the natural world reminded me of Daniel Tammet, a British scientist, writer, and poet with Asperger’s and savant syndrome. In his biography, *Born on a Blue Day*,⁶ Tammet describes his unique perception of number through all his senses: taste, temperature, touch, shape, etc. He writes of how he experiences the correlation between certain number sequences and natural elements. For example, he can transform number sequences into landscapes. These

6 Daniel Tammet, *Born On a Blue Day: Inside the Extraordinary Mind of an Autistic Savant* (New York: Free Press, 2007).

abilities seem quite extraordinary for the non-autistic person; however, people on the autistic spectrum can often make connections that many others cannot.

As I continue working with Nathan, insights into the way he connects with number, form, and nature will deepen understanding, and through this understanding my teaching and work with him would better support him in his learning.

Findings and Conclusions

As addressed in the beginning, the primary method for this study was inner, observational, and meditative work, and I consciously chose to refrain from reading literature on the topic of autism before registering my own findings. Reflecting on this journey, this method was productive. It not only revealed many things about Nathan, but it also stimulated my personal inner growth.

Having completed steps of this study involving observation, meditation, night work, and artistic practices, the final step, instead of the first one, was to discover what was previously done in the field of anthroposophical autistic research. The first book on my list to read was *Autism: Meet Me Who I Am*⁷ by Lakshmi Prasanna and Michael Kokinos. This book aims to provide an understanding of a child with autism through deep connection. Interestingly, many of the aspects described in this book were quite similar to discoveries through my own study with Nathan. The key similarity, as the book's title suggests, is that autistic children have to be met for who they are. To achieve this, a loving connection with the child must be established—to accept them and hold them in heart and thought. Being seen, accepted for who he is, valued in his uniqueness and loved by his teachers—all these played a nourishing role in Nathan's development and helped him succeed academically.

Through my journey with Nathan it has become obvious that this Waldorf setting, as predicted by his Waldorf kindergarten teacher/camp counselor, suits him well. The authors of *Autism* further taught me that this educational approach benefits many other children with autism, including those on the low functioning autistic spectrum. Striving to meet the child in his or her essence lies at the core of Waldorf education and is crucial when working with autistic children, who are unique each in themselves.

Research revealed the happy evidence that there are increasing numbers of Waldorf schools opening around the world that work specifically with autistic children. Particularly inspiring is the Steiner School Warrah, in Australia. Their curriculum and approach, as well as their beautiful natural setting, look like an ideal place for autistic children. More autistic children around the world, with any luck, will get a chance to be Waldorf educated, whether it is in regular or in a specialized Waldorf school.

Predictable daily, monthly, and yearly rhythms are good elements for all children and are elements that over time helped Nathan make connections and understand more clearly what is taught. In Nathan's case, it helped him settle in, feel safe, and gain a clear understanding of the expectations. Main Lesson blocks, rotating monthly, with predictable rhythms within the lesson, helped him to absorb and comprehend academic concepts and artistic pictures and to make sense of the more abstract Math concepts. For example, Nathan was not able to relate to the pictorial characters of Math such as characters of different temperaments to introduce the processes of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing; or Squirrel Nutkin, mentioned above, to help in picturing place values, borrowing, and carrying; these methods are used widely in Waldorf schools to

help children in forming memorable connections to the abstract mathematical concepts they represent. Still, even as this did not immediately assist Nathan, it has been shown to have been of extremely helpful in educating other autistic children. However, after working with pictures and the concepts, over several months, Nathan showed a grasp of these concepts and could use the pictures productively. It has become clear that Nathan's personality and his inner world are unique, needing a unique teaching approach, that is often quite different from what would apply to other children. The uniqueness of the Waldorf curriculum allows for the flexibility to find these specific approaches needed for an autistic child. The unique case of Nathan, justifying the kind of individual study that I've been reporting here, is also a good example to how Waldorf education could meet the unique case. The specific observation, that Nathan's four bodies are not aligned with a temperament in a way we see it in most other children gives another generalized example of the benefits of an individual approach beyond the ordinary one when working with the temperaments in a class.

What if this child is so different that categorizing him by temperament as we do with other children simply does not make sense?

⁷ Lakshmi Prassana and Michael Kokinos, *Autism: Meet Me Who I Am: An Educational, Sensory and Nutritional Approach to Childhood Autism* (Great Barrington, MA: Steiner Books/Anthroposophic Press, 2018).

Doing an extensive, observational, and a “tailor-made” case study of Nathan has provided me with many new insights as a teacher. Not only has it helped me in my work with Nathan, it also served as a great tool for my inner spiritual growth.

The capacities I gained as a teacher, including a more observant eye, will benefit my work with other children.

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Linda Atamian

Rudolf Steiner set the teaching of language arts in an overall sense of the structure of language and the wisdom of language.

M.C. Richards (1980)

Reading is “the art of entering with one’s whole soul into an experience outside oneself. It is a gleaning of the sunlight hidden in the hard kernel of the word.”

Henry Barnes (1969)

Learning to read and write is a long but magical journey, but how do we support students who might need to take a slightly different route?

What are the Stages of Reading?

Waldorf educators will find commonality with Dr. Jeanne Chall’s “Stages of Reading.”² The renowned Harvard professor developed these stages by keenly observing children during her clinical work and then combining her observations with developmental theories. She intended the stages to be connected, overlapping, and continuous sequences, and she hesitated to link them to specific grade levels. Dr. Chall emphasized that learning to read takes a lifetime, and in her introduction to *Stages of Reading Development*, she reports that when Goethe was very old someone asked him when he had learned to read, and he responded that he spent a lifetime learning and was still learning.

Like Waldorf education’s early childhood approach:

Stage 0 focuses on oral language development.

Stage 1 (grades 1-2) emphasizes alphabetic-phonics where children learn to associate sounds to letters and letters to sounds. According to Dr. Chall, “*in a sense, it is as if the child has recapitulated history from... the discovery of picture writing...*” (Chall, p. 16).

The focus of **Stage 2** (grades 2- 3) is fluency. Students read what is already familiar to develop automaticity and confidence. “*What kind of environment fosters the development of Stage 2? Essentially, it requires an*

opportunity for reading many familiar books – familiar because the subjects are familiar, or the structure is familiar, as in fairy tales or folktales” (Chall, p. 19).

Stage 3 (grades 4-8) begins the transition to “reading to learn,” but it is also about “learning how to read to learn,” isn’t it?

Stage 4 (high school) requires dealing with more than one viewpoint, and

Stage 5 (ages 18 and above) may be characterized as constructive reading: the reader builds his or her own knowledge through reading.

“Reading is an extremely complex matter which plays itself out on various levels. It is not merely decoding; it is not a one-to-one transfer of symbols into information. Reading must involve the inner activity of the reader. It is never, in terms of its true character, mere intake of information. To understand the contexts of meaning within a text, I always add something of my own, something of my current knowledge of the world, my own will and my own experience.”

(Martina Maria Sam)

Learning to Read, Write, and Spell

Young children learn best when their feelings are engaged in a warm and enthusiastic manner. Rudolf Steiner reminded educators: “*It is not only important what a teacher does, but who the teacher is, the attitude in his or her soul*” (Steiner, 1998, p. 237). “*What we need is a certain kind of enthusiasm, a kind of inner activity...*” (Steiner, 1998, p. 400). So, let us kindle our enthusiasm as we consider ways to support students on this remarkable journey learning to read, write, and spell.

Human beings come to earth prepared to learn to speak through interactions with other human beings: their family members and caregivers. Waldorf early childhood educators know this well! Although formal reading instruction comes later, learning to read really does begin in early childhood with its emphasis on oral language and bodily development. Stories, warm conversations, poems, songs, nursery rhymes, and circle games—all these lay a strong foundation for oral language. Children learn so much: the meanings of

1 This article was excerpted and slightly edited from Elisabeth Auer, ed., *Helping Children on Their Way: Educational Support for the Classroom* (Chatham, NY: Waldorf Publications, 2017). The *Research Bulletin* is grateful to the author’s permission to reprint the article.

2 Jeanne S. Chall, *Stages of Reading Development* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983).

words; recognizing that some words begin and end the same; that there is rhythm, tone, and pitch involved in reading; and that stories and books are entertaining and informative and can be a shared experience.

Since reading is fairly new for human beings, it takes time to become ready for formal reading instruction. What is the best teaching approach? We might ponder Steiner's indications in *The Child's Changing Consciousness and Waldorf Education* (1983). He discusses three methods as they were described in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (not to be confused with modern definitions): the spelling method (making words by adding single letters), the phonetic method (developing a feeling for the quality of sounds), and the whole word method (progressing from sentences to words to single sounds), but he goes on to say that "everything needs to be considered from different angles" (Steiner, 1983, pp. 88-89).

"If the letter forms have been gained through painting, drawing, and drawing-painting, and if one has gone on to a kind of phonetic or whole word method, which is now appropriate because it leads the child to an appreciation of wholeness, and prevents it from becoming too fixed in details—if all this has been done, there is as yet something else which has been overlooked... It is this—the single sound by itself, the separate M or P..." (Steiner, 1983, p. 90).

In Grade 1, children learn to write their letters first. The symbols for the consonants emerge from drawing picture elements connected to stories. Steiner indicated that we should begin with the whole word: King. Then, a drawing of the "kind king" evolves into an artistic representation of the letter K. The letters are introduced imaginatively, and they artistically connect movement and shape through a word to the sound. Today, explicit instruction is considered a best practice for teaching early literacy skills to all children (The National Reading Panel Report, 2003). "The hallmark of programs of systematic phonics instruction is the direct teaching of a set of letter-sound relationships" (Put Reading First, 2003). Class teachers explicitly link a key word with its sound and its letter: king k /k/.

Dyslexia

It is estimated that as many as one in five students in every class is apt to struggle to learn to read, write, and spell. For these students, being ready to read and write takes longer and requires an explicit, sequential, multisensory, structured language approach. It also takes soul warmth! Further, dyslexic students benefit from lots of practice and may spend a longer time in Stage 1 and Stage 2.

The word *dyslexia* came into English from the German word *dyslexie* through combining the Greek morpheme *dys* "difficulty with" and *lex* "having to do with words" or *difficulty with words*. The National Institute for Children's Health and Development (NICHD) and the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) define dyslexia as

a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. (IDA, 2002)

According to the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE), the certifying body for Orton-Gillingham practitioners,

Dyslexia has its genesis in human biology. While not the result of neurological damage, it is the product of neurological development. Dyslexia commonly runs in families and varies from mild to severe. Most importantly, the use of the Orton-Gillingham approach by a skilled and experienced teacher can significantly moderate the language learning and processing problems that arise from dyslexia. Indeed, the approach, used early enough and by qualified practitioners, has every likelihood of eliminating the emergence of notable reading and writing problems.

(Academy of O-G Practitioners and Educators)

What might signal dyslexia?

No two dyslexic students are exactly alike, but they demonstrate some common characteristics that "persist over time and interfere with learning" (IDA Dyslexia Handbook: What Every Family Should Know). In addition, some dyslexic individuals may have related challenges like ADHD – attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, dysgraphia (writing), dyscalculia (math), dyspraxia (motor skills), or executive dysfunctions (e.g., planning and organizing). The list below is guided in part by Dr. Sally Shaywitz from her book *Overcoming*

*Dyslexia*¹ and from *IDA Dyslexia Handbook: What Every Family Should Know*.²

In the preschool years, a student with dyslexia

Finds it challenging to

- Learn new words
- Retrieve known words for expressive language (rapid automatized naming)
- Remember nursery rhymes and songs, recognize rhyme or generate rhyme (phonological awareness)

Shows signs of:

- Mixing up sounds or syllables in longer words (e.g., “pasketti” for “spaghetti”) (phonological memory)

In the early grade school years, a student with dyslexia

Finds it challenging to

- Blend sounds to make words or segment sounds to spell words (phonemic awareness)
- Associate sounds with letters (phonics)
- Spell words (orthography)
- Produce consistent work

Show signs of:

- Transposing sounds when reading
- Omitting or misreading short words
- Reading slowly and choppy (fluency)
- Needing lots of repetition to learn skills and concepts

In the later grade school years and high school, a student with dyslexia, in addition to the items above:

Finds it challenging to

- Learn a second language

Show signs of

- A wide discrepancy between verbal and written expression
- Avoiding literacy tasks or not wanting to attend school
- Complaining of headaches and stomach aches
- Expressing feelings of failure

How is dyslexia diagnosed?

An evaluation process begins with conversations at parent/teacher conferences as early as kindergarten. Of course, children should be assessed for vision and hearing. There will be further conversations if the child

shows signs of dyslexia in grade one and/or two. There may be a remedial consultation and/or the care group may take up the question. When parents and teachers work together, much can be accomplished. Before too long, the student will need a formal psycho-educational or neuropsychological evaluation done by a highly qualified individual or group. Some families begin with their public school district. Others opt for an independent evaluation. The evaluation will culminate with a guiding document that will usually confirm what parents and teachers already noticed. But the document will also present the results of formal testing. A *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fifth Edition* (WISC-V), which does not involve reading, will reveal specific cognitive strengths and challenges within the areas of Verbal Comprehension, Visual-Spatial, Fluid Reasoning, Working Memory, and Processing Speed. Additionally, a full-scale score will usually be reported. In addition to the WISC-V, evaluators will use other standard assessment tools to examine academic achievement or may look further at areas like memory, phonological awareness, etc. Sometimes evaluators will recommend further assessments by a speech and language pathologist or an occupational therapist to attain additional insight. The document usually ends with specific recommendations. For a dyslexic student, this usually includes explicit, multisensory *structured literacy* instruction, like Orton-Gillingham, with plenty of opportunity for practice.

What type of instruction supports dyslexic students?

Dyslexic students benefit from instruction taught by a highly trained teacher or tutor. The following components should be included: phonological awareness, phonics, handwriting, spelling, and fluency. Later the focus will shift towards vocabulary, comprehension, and written expression, as well as study skills and learning strategies.

Orton-Gillingham is a *structured literacy* “approach” to teaching students of all ages to read, write, and spell. It is not a method or program, though there are many commercial programs that are based on Orton-Gillingham such as the Wilson programs and the Slingerland Approach. These programs and trainings are widely used in schools with good results.

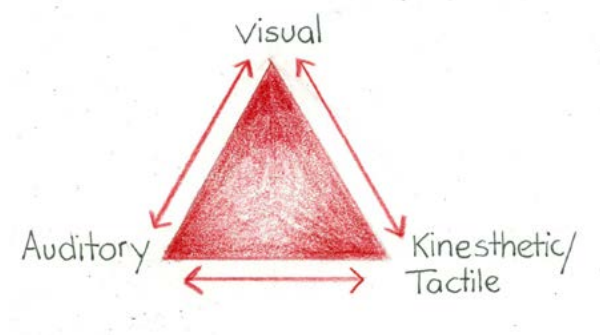
The Orton-Gillingham approach is considered the gold standard; it requires rigorous training and practicum experience taught and supervised by a Fellow of the Academy. There are several levels.

1 Sally E. Shaywitz, *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 2003).

2 IDA *Dyslexia Handbook: What Every Family Should Know*, International Dyslexia Association, Accessed February 24, 2016. <http://eida.org>

1. Parents and teachers may get a general overview through a *Subscriber* level course (available for a minimal fee online at the Academy website: www.ortonacademy.org).
2. The *Classroom Educator* level, developed for teachers or specialists who provide whole class and/or small group instruction within a school setting, involves 30 hours of instruction and a 50-hour supervised practicum.
3. The *Associate* level is step one on the track towards certification as an Orton-Gillingham practitioner. This level includes a 60-hour course and a 100-hour supervised practicum.
4. The *Certified* level involves another 100 hours of instruction and another 200-hour supervised practicum. After successful completion of the *Certified* level, teachers may apply to the Academy to become certified Orton-Gillingham practitioners.
5. The *Fellow* level qualifies individuals to provide Orton-Gillingham training to teachers and interventionists.

Orton-Gillingham remedial language specialists learn the structure of the language and how to break it down to create a personalized program that leads to success for each student. Every Orton-Gillingham lesson approaches instruction by combining a synthetic and analytic approach; students go from the whole to the parts and the parts to the whole. Students read, write, and spell in an integrated lesson. Throughout the 40 to 60-minutes teacher-created lesson, taught from two to five times per week, students follow a routine in which they receive simultaneous feedback through the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile modalities based on Dr. Orton's Language Triangle (Gillingham & Stillman, 1997). The approach is sequential, structured, systematic, and multisensory. Lessons are cumulative; skills are not taught in isolation. New information is connected to previously taught information and practice continues until skills become automatic.



"A great part of educational method depends on finding the most rational way of linking the new things we have to teach the children to what we can draw from their store of memories."

(Steiner, 1983)

When should students be diagnosed and provided with intervention?

In her book, *Overcoming Dyslexia*, Dr. Sally Shaywitz, warns

...underidentification of reading disabled children is particularly worrisome because even when school identification does take place, it occurs relatively late – often past the optimal age for intervention... Reading disabilities diagnosed after third grade are much more difficult to remediate... Moreover, once a child falls behind, he must make up thousands of unread words to catch up to his peers who are continuing to move ahead. Equally important, once a pattern of reading failure sets in, many children become defeated, lose interest in reading and develop what often evolves into a lifelong loss of their own sense of self-worth.

(Shaywitz, 2003, pp. 30-31)

Waldorf teachers employ the oral tradition as an essential teaching approach; therefore, it may be possible for dyslexic students to feel successful during the first few grades. But before long, their peers will read books, and the sense of failure will set in quickly if they do not receive the support that they need. And even if they are exposed to sophisticated text, by being read to or listening to audio books, they are still not seeing the words that they are hearing.

It is essential to the wellbeing of children that Waldorf Schools find ways to support children as soon as possible. Waldorf schools can forge a path that is unique to their curriculum and understanding of child development. There is an opportunity for parents, teachers, care groups, remedial teachers, school doctors, and tutors to work together to support students within the Waldorf School environment.

Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, and Phonics

Connecting the shape to the sound

"Picture, movement and sound- all these lie behind the letters.... Most teachers find that children differ very much in their abilities to grasp what they learn. Some more readily relate themselves to the picture element, while others are more aware

of the sound. A few can form their letters very beautifully without waking to any consciousness of either picture or sound...We should bear all these in mind, and in the teaching of the letters, pictures, movement and sound must all play their part so that the different children become harmonized."

(Eileen Hutchins, "The Teaching of Writing")

In a Waldorf School, first grade children learn their letters joyfully – in fact, they often have favorite letters. Through a multisensory approach, they recognize the shape of the letter while they feel the formation as they move it in space, skywrite it, and form it with beautiful colors. At the same time, they learn that the letter "K" makes the sound they hear at the beginning of king: /k/. They recite alliterative verses that reinforce the sound: "Kickamore, kackamore, on the king's kitchen door..." They may even clap or stamp their foot each time they speak the sound /k/.

We know that children learn at different rates and in different ways. Dyslexic students have a more difficult time recognizing the phonemes or separate sounds of their language. They may have trouble blending sounds to read and segmenting them to spell. They may even have trouble with broader phonological awareness: recognizing and generating rhyme and understanding that certain words begin the same or end the same. They may change the sequence of syllables in words or omit syllables in their speech. They not only take longer to gain this awareness but they do so only through explicit instruction with an opportunity to practice over time. They don't usually infer knowledge from exposure; they learn best through direct instruction with guided practice.

[...]

Reading Fluency

Waldorf teachers model fluent speaking and reading. Students need to read fluently to comprehend what they read and to find reading an enjoyable or useful activity. According to Hasbrouck and Glaser, fluent reading is "reasonably accurate reading at an appropriate rate with suitable prosody that leads to accurate and deep comprehension and motivation to read" (Hasbrouck and Glaser).

Besides modeling fluent reading so students can imitate it, teachers can provide opportunities for repeated reading of what is familiar. This is the best way for students to become fluent readers. Students might reread

Reading must involve the inner activity of the reader. It is never, in terms of its true character, mere intake of information.

their main lesson books. Since we know that repeated reading – to simply memorize words – is not the best approach for students, we need to provide them with practice reading decodable text. Teachers can create decodable text for main lesson books and underline words that are not decodable: "*The king was sitting on the throne.*" This sentence, for example, is decodable for a student who knows short vowels, the -ng family, closed syllable type, vowel – consonant-e syllable type, and VC/CV syllable division pattern. After a dyslexic student I worked with was provided some Orton-Gillingham instruction and was practicing reading decodable text, he told me that he used to memorize books so he could "read" them. He wondered why he had not been taught to "break the code" earlier, and he felt he had been cheated or tricked into thinking that reading meant memorizing. Schools need to create and

purchase decodable text. Flyleaf Publishing offers two sets of beautiful books that are decodable. Other sets of decodable text are available for sale through various vendors.

If students lose their place, which will affect fluency, guide them to hold a line marker *above* what they are reading. Readers need to see the words and punctuation marks that are coming, so they shouldn't hold their line marker below what they are reading.

Dyslexic students can reread their main lesson books and decodable books in small reading groups at school as well as to their families at home. This will provide them with the safe practice they need; it will boost their confidence and lead to success. Once their peers are reading real "books", a service such as *Learning Ally* (formerly *Recordings for the Blind*), can provide assistive technology so students can see and hear text at their interest level. This assistive technology allows dyslexic students, who need more time to learn how to read, to gain access to the same books their friends are reading. This accommodation supports their souls! We wouldn't deny eyeglasses for a student who needs them. Thoughtful use of technology to accommodate dyslexic students is worth considering.

All Waldorf schools serve dyslexic students, and these children, like all children, are eager to learn. It just takes leading them along a slightly different route.

Handwriting

"If we turn now to the act of writing, we will find that it is one of the most complicated and hidden of all human activities."

Dr. Karl König

What are some ways to provide practice with handwriting?

Teaching correct letter formation is a first goal. But it must be followed by opportunities for guided practice in order to achieve fluency and automaticity.

Class teachers can focus on teaching and reinforcing proper letter formation. Steiner reminded us: "Children will not improve much when you want to make them learn to write better by improving their writing. You need to improve their dexterity; then they will learn to write better" (Steiner, 1998, pp. 99-100).

Beginning in early childhood and extending into the grades, Waldorf education supports the development of dexterity throughout the curriculum. Extra Lesson or remedial work in the grades also provides extra work on dexterity and the bodily foundation that are essential. Improving dexterity, however, won't improve accurate letter formation; that relies on *direct instruction* and *practice with corrective feedback*.

First, teachers need to make sure they know how to form the letters correctly themselves. They also need to pay attention to children's posture and pencil grasp. Children should be seated with their feet flat on the floor and should hold their paper stable with their non-dominant "helping" hand. They should hold their writing tool with a proper tripod grasp. Desk and chair heights matter. According to Audrey E. McAllen, "The desk height should not push the arm upward so that one shoulder is higher than the other. The chair should be 10 inches lower than the desk height. The child should sit so that both feet are firmly on the floor with the knees higher than the hips. This angle between knee and hip joint is vital. The child should really be sitting in his hips so that the movement of the hand-arm can flow to the base of the spine" (McAllen, 1977). She recommends presenting this as a picture to the children of a king signing a kingly decree.

Whole Class Practice

Children can wear their royal crowns during handwriting practice as a gentle imaginative reminder to hold

their heads aloft so their heavy jeweled crowns won't slip off.

To begin, use unlined paper and focus on correct letter formation. Use imaginative, pictorial language cues to guide children through the correct formation. 'Start at the king's crown and straight down to his boot. Then, pick up your crayon and start at the king's hand and move to his belt buckle and then down to his other boot.'

For practice, group letters with similar motor movements. For example, the letters that begin like r: r, n, m, h, and b.

Sand: Provide each student with a large, sturdy red paper plate. Good quality plates can last for years. Sprinkle in some fine sand. Model the proper letter formation for the group on the blackboard and then move from desk to desk as the children practice forming the letter correctly. Three is a magic number so children should practice each letter correctly at least three times. Writing in sand is forgiving, especially for a child who has trouble; a little shake and the mistake will disappear. The teacher can even model the shape in the child's sand and leave a path for the child to follow. Walk about and provide help as needed. This is a wonderful way to practice the letters that have been introduced and to informally assess children as they progress.

Every Orton-Gillingham lesson approaches instruction by combining a synthetic and analytic approach; students go from the whole to the parts and the parts to the whole.

Main Lesson book: After the children know how to form a letter correctly, the work in main lesson books can take place with size and space considered. Some children benefit from target lines: the sky line, the bird line, the grass line, and the worm line (adapted from the Wilson Language Trainings' *Foundations*) or the image of a house with the basement, first, and second floors. This kind of guided practice sets children

up for success. It is also easy to slip a paper with the guidelines under the main lesson book page as a support for children who need it.

Some schools teach uppercase and lowercase print letters in the first grade and then teach cursive in second grade.

There are common pedagogical practices that may need to be considered further. For example, is it a good idea to write words with all capital letters when this will need to be unlearned? Or is it better to write words only after the lowercase letters have been taught?

Writing Difficulties

There are children in each school who have difficulties with the art of handwriting. For these children, writing can be a chore, at best, and, at worst, an activity that can cause real frustration. It can take them a lot of effort and time and it can result in fatigue and frustration. Children who experience these challenges need the teacher's attention and understanding, as well as intervention and possible classroom accommodations.

What is dysgraphia?

Some students are diagnosed as dysgraphic during their formal evaluation.

Dysgraphia is another Greek word. The suffix "ia" suggests "a condition." The prefix "dys-" indicates that there is a difficulty, while the base "graph" refers to both the role of the hand in letter formation and to the letters that are formed. According to IDA, dysgraphia is disabled handwriting, in which impaired handwriting can also interfere with the speed and spelling of written text.

According to IDA, "children with dysgraphia do not have primary developmental motor disorder, another cause of poor handwriting, but may have difficulty planning sequential finger movements such as the touching of the thumb to successive fingers on the same hand without visual feedback."

In addition, there may be a challenge with orthographic coding linked to working memory. "Orthographic coding refers to the ability to store written words in working memory while the letters in the word are analyzed or the ability to create permanent memory of written words linked to their pronunciation and meaning" (IDA). Therefore, dysgraphia can result in poor spelling. In fact, dysgraphia can impair handwriting (alone), spelling (alone), or both handwriting and spelling.

The causes and diagnosis of writing difficulties

Writing is a highly complex process that involves several senses, muscles, and areas of the brain. When there are problems with any of the areas connecting and functioning effectively, writing difficulties may arise. These may not all fall under the mainstream label of dysgraphia. For example, there may be retained reflexes that are hindering the child from writing fluently.

As the teacher observes children during early form drawing and handwriting lessons, it is important to recognize when children may need help beyond regular instruction in the classroom. Much can be done through correct identification and intervention.

Effective handwriting instruction with guided practice that includes corrective feedback is critical. It is possible to teach most students, including many dysgraphic students, to write by hand through effective instruction and intervention. And, it is never too late to begin.

When not served early enough, children will struggle more during the later grades. By the time a student is in grade four and is assigned to write an animal report, it can become very apparent that writing is not going as well as it should. Instead of focusing on the expression of ideas, the student will be hindered by his/her lack of writing fluency. By sixth grade, frustration can mount to high levels as the writing workload increases and becomes ever more important in all the studies. Hopefully, through early identification and explicit instruction, these challenges can be minimized. In any case, even when a struggling student has learned to form letters correctly and can write accurately, the hindrances may still interfere with fluid and legible written output.

What else can be done in the classroom?

Some students will benefit from extra handwriting intervention. They might begin with practice that includes painting the letters with a wet paintbrush on a chalkboard. Or their tutor might use Dr. Orton's folded paper technique: An unlined paper is folded into thirds. In the

first column, the child traces a teacher's large colorful model; in the second column, the child makes his or her own letters with the original model in view. Column one is folded over column two, and in column three, the child next makes the letter without a model. If needed, the paper can be unfolded to reveal the model. Finally, the paper is folded over so a fourth column appears from the back. Here, the child closes his or her eyes and makes the letter without looking. This enhances the kinesthetic and tactile reinforcement of the letter formation (Gillingham-Stillman, 1997).

Explicit instruction and remediation are the most important responses. But additional classroom accommodations may be needed to support students for success within the classroom setting.

- Reduce the writing workload for assignments (for homework and class work).
- Provide the student with a copy of notes or blackboard text.
- Provide speech to text software, when deemed necessary. Few students will require this accommodation.

Every child can succeed when guided by understanding, support, and, most importantly, soul warmth.

- Provide a word processor as an important accommodation for written expression, especially for lengthy writing assignments. This also requires providing proper keyboarding instruction.

In any event, today's graduating high school students all need to be able to write in print (labeling diagrams or maps), cursive (note-taking), and keyboarding (written expression of essays and reports).

Successful reading and writing relies, at a minimum, on the creation of a strong bridge between reading, writing, and spelling. Every child can succeed when guided by understanding, support, and, most importantly, soul warmth. Then the child will be able to make the journey needed to "glean the sunlight hidden in the hard kernel of the word."

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The Remedial Staircase

A Holistic Approach to Remediating Reading Problems and Other Learning Disabilities

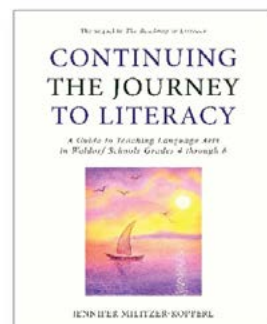
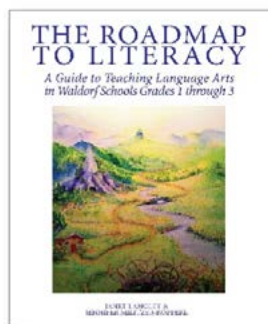
Jennifer Militzer-Kopperl

Something was clearly missing—the data did not make sense. Two remedial reading students with average intelligence and a diagnosis of dyslexia presented with nearly identical scores on a battery of tests that measure reading skills. Both students scored in the low range in all skills tested (less than 10th percentile). Both had undergone the same treatment to remediate weak reading skills (a six-week intensive remedial reading program). At the end, they were both retested. The first student's scores now ranked within the 50-80th percentile (average to above average), while the other student's scores remained virtually unchanged. Why did one remedial student make several years of academic progress in six weeks of intensive instruction while the other remedial student made no progress whatsoever? What were the tests missing?

This question was the genesis of my own personal journey that began twenty years ago. I left Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes®, a private remedial education company, to find out why remedial students have variable responses to treatment and what teachers can do to help.

The journey led me to Waldorf education, where I discovered the germ of an idea that could be used to transform remedial education; however, I also discovered that Rudolf Steiner's language arts curriculum, originally developed for the German language, was being used to teach English, with predictable results. Waldorf-Steiner schools that assessed all their students' reading skills were discovering that large percentages of students had gaps. In one area school, one third to one half of each class qualified for remedial reading instruction.

I co-authored a book to address the latter problem, *The Roadmap to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 1 through 3* (Langley and Militzer-Kopperl 2018, 2021), and then I authored its sequel, *Continuing the Journey to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 4 through 8* (Militzer-Kopperl 2020). These books are part of *Renewal of Literacy*, a program I created to improve language arts instruction in Waldorf schools. In both books, I included a chapter summarizing my research on remedial issues; the current article is based on that work.



I will summarize here my work on remedial issues and will include a foretaste of material to be published in the upcoming *Renewal of Literacy* Edition of *The Roadmap to Literacy* (due out end of 2021). In the following pages, I will explain what current academic assessments are missing and what can be done to help more remedial students. I will lay out the basis for a framework that teachers can use to bring the best of Waldorf education and the best of academic research into a living dialogue to spur further improvements in remedial education. In a nutshell, I recommend addressing learning disabilities such as reading problems by doing the following: 1) removing impediments; 2) strengthening capacities; 3) improving academic instruction; and 4) addressing the environment. A successful implementation of this framework, I believe, will lead to fewer students qualifying for the label *learning disabled* and more students being able to take their place in the world as healthy, well-educated human beings.

The Case of Otto Specht

The Genesis of a Waldorf Approach to Remedial Students

Rudolf Steiner faced an unusual situation. As a tutor, he worked with four brothers, three of whom needed some preparatory instruction and assistance in school. The fourth brother, Steiner reports, was “so subnormal in his physical and mental development that the family had doubts as to his capacity for being educated.”¹ The boy's name was Otto Specht.

1 Rudolf Steiner, *The Story of My Life* (London: Anthroposophical Publishing, 1928), Chapter VI.

Steiner reports that Otto had had years of academic tutoring before Steiner worked with him, but the tutoring had not had an effect. Steiner took Otto's education in hand. He became solely responsible for educating the boy and lived with the Specht family.

Steiner concluded that Otto had great intellectual potential, but his faculties of soul were asleep, and he could not gain mastery over his body. Developmentally, Otto was at a preschool level. Steiner began a program to help him. He took great care in preparing Otto's academic lessons to awaken his capacities for thought, feeling, and will. Steiner spent two hours of preparation for each half hour of instruction in order not to strain Otto's mental and physical powers, so Otto would attain his highest capacity for academic achievement. Steiner reports that he won Otto's love so that the relationship between the two of them would help awaken Otto's sleeping faculties of feeling. In the course of his work with Otto, Steiner offered many suggestions to help address Otto's impediments.

The work paid off. Steiner reports, "I had the satisfaction of seeing the child in the course of two years accomplish the work of the *Volkschule*, and successfully pass the examination for entrance to the Gymnasium. Moreover, his physical condition had materially improved. The hydrocephalic condition was markedly diminishing."²

The case of Otto Specht is important because it illustrates a Waldorf-Steiner method of addressing learning problems:

1. Work at the student's developmental level. Otto's development was at a preschool level—hence, remedial instruction needed to begin there.
2. Strengthen capacities (of thinking, feeling, and willing). For example, Steiner made a point of gaining Otto's love and trust so that their relationship would educate Otto's capacity for feeling.
3. Provide appropriate academic instruction to bring the student's skills and knowledge up to grade level. Steiner took pains to prepare an academic curriculum specifically for Otto: he spent two hours of preparation for each 30 minutes of teaching. He also took great care in ordering the lessons. At the beginning of their work together, Steiner had to limit lessons to 15-30 minutes.
4. Improve the student's environment so that it does not undermine the remedial process. Steiner lived

with the Specht family when he was working remedially with Otto.

Following this protocol paid off handsomely for Otto. In two and a half years, Otto had progressed enough to do the work of grammar school, and his health improved. With regular academic tutoring, Otto was able to continue schooling—including attending a public school with other children. Through the remedial program Steiner created, Otto completely overcame his learning problems, studied medicine, and later took his place in life as a medical doctor.

Combining all of these four elements can be powerful. Teachers who do so are able to help a lot of students, just as Steiner helped Otto. However, it would help to flesh out this protocol. In the next section, I will describe the fruits of my own research to begin the creation of a framework Waldorf teachers can use when addressing the needs of remedial students.

The Remedial Staircase

A Framework for Working with Remedial Students

Otto Specht's story provides a partial answer to the question I posed at the beginning of the article: Why do some remedial students make several years of academic progress with structured, intensive, academic instruction while other remedial students make no progress at all?

The first part of the answer is simple: Students who have not completed key aspects of child development will continue to struggle with academic work. To help these students, it is necessary to go backwards as Steiner did with Otto, but where to begin?

Child development can be described as a staircase. Each step depends on the one before it. Academics depend on sensory-cognitive functions, capacities, and reflexes. Therefore, if a child is presenting with problems in academics, the preceding steps should be considered and any weaknesses addressed. Children climb up the staircase as they develop and begin school; therefore, teachers should ascend and descend the staircase looking for clues to students' learning challenges, as shown in figure 1.

² Ibid.

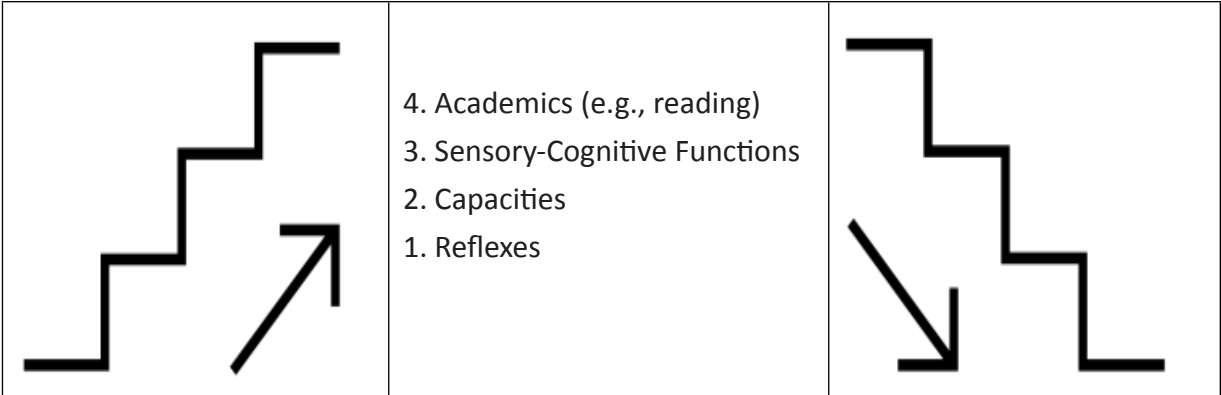


Figure 1: The Remedial Staircase

Each step is introduced below; advice for addressing each step is given later in the article.

Step One: Reflexes: “Reflexes, or *Early Movement Patterns*, as they are sometimes referred to in Waldorf schools, are a sequence of stereotypical movements that young children progress through in their first years of life. They provide the physical foundations for capacities (both physical and psychological).”³

Step Two: Capacities: “As the child is mastering her reflexes, she simultaneously begins to develop physical and psychological capacities. After the reflex work is finished at age three and a half, the child continues to develop these capacities in the following areas: 1) She is able to perform more difficult, coordinated movements like skipping or swinging a golf club. 2) She begins to strengthen her ability to pay attention and develop her imagination. 3) She matures in her understanding and utilization of the information gained from her senses. 4) She is able to cross the midline freely and develop dominance.”⁴ In other words, she develops her soul capacities of thinking, feeling, and willing and her ability to work with her senses.

Step Three: Sensory-Cognitive Functions: Sensory-cognitive functions first emerge as an aspect of physical and psychological capacities in preschool and kindergarten, but to develop fully, they require formal academic instruction. As shown in figure 2, there are three sensory-cognitive functions: 1) phonemic awareness; 2) symbol imagery; and 3) concept imagery.

Phonemic awareness is the ability to detect the individual phonemes, or sounds, in words and manipulate them. For students who do not have developmental dyslexia, phonemic awareness begins to develop as part of capacities. Its full development depends on academic education and makes further academic education possible (e.g., phonics instruction). How many sounds are in the word *cat*? (Three) What are they? (/k/ /a/ /t/) What happens if you remove the sound /k/? (The word becomes *at*.) These are aspects of phonemic awareness.

Symbol imagery is the ability to visualize letters and words. Close your eyes. Imagine the spelling of the word *cat*. If you can see the letters *CAT* or *cat*, you are using symbol imagery.



Figure 2: The Three Sensory-Cognitive Functions: Phonemic Awareness, Symbol Imagery, and Concept Imagery⁵

3 Langley and Militzer-Kopperl, *The Roadmap to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 1 through 3* (Maitland: Mill City Press, 2021), p. 545.

4 Ibid., p. 548.

5 Ibid., p. 168 (picture 2), p. 194 (picture 3).

Concept imagery is the ability to create a mental image on the basis of language. Close your eyes. Imagine a cat. If you see a furry mammal with whiskers, you are using concept imagery.

Note: The terms *symbol imagery* and *concept imagery* sometimes go by the umbrella term *mental picturing*; however, they are separate sensory-cognitive functions. Practice in one function does not cause concomitant growth in the other.

Step Four: Academics: Academics refer to any mental skill or subject a child learns in school (e.g., reading, math, history, science, etc.). For the purposes of this article, the term ‘academics’ will refer primarily to reading and its related skills; however, any skill or subject could be substituted in the Remedial Staircase.

The four steps of the Remedial Staircase comprise an important part of the remedial process, developed below. Before that, we must consider one final piece.

The Environment

A school in California was the source of a cancer cluster among faculty. Milham [a physician-epidemiologist who specializes in public health] was investigating the school to determine the cause. The school had numerous challenges, including fluorescent lighting, a cell tower adjacent to campus, and dirty electricity, a form of electromagnetic pollution that occurs when wires are carrying too high of a load. It was noted that the 4th Grade teacher complained that her students were hyperactive and unteachable.

Milham measured the 4th Grade classroom for dirty electricity. A safe reading is less than 50 Graham/Stetzer units. The 4th Grade classroom measured 5,000 Graham/Stetzer units.

Milham provided a simple environmental solution to address the dirty electricity (Stetzerizer filters). The dirty electricity levels dropped back to acceptable levels. Interestingly enough, there was a concomitant change in the students’ behavior. The 4th Grade class calmed down and could focus.

The teacher was curious. Were the filters responsible for this change? She unplugged them. Within 30–45 minutes, the students returned to their old ways: hyperactive and distracted. She re-plugged the filters back in. Sure enough, within 30–45 minutes, the students calmed down and focused again. Every time she removed the filters, the same thing happened. Removing the dirty electricity from the environment had a profound effect on the students’ ability to learn.⁶

The environment is the second half of the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this article: Why do some remedial students make several years of academic progress with structured, intensive academic instruction while other remedial students make no progress at all? Environmental factors can also undermine a student’s success with a remedial program. Therefore, the Remedial Staircase needs to be amended to include the environment, as shown in figure 3 by the inclusion of the shaded background.

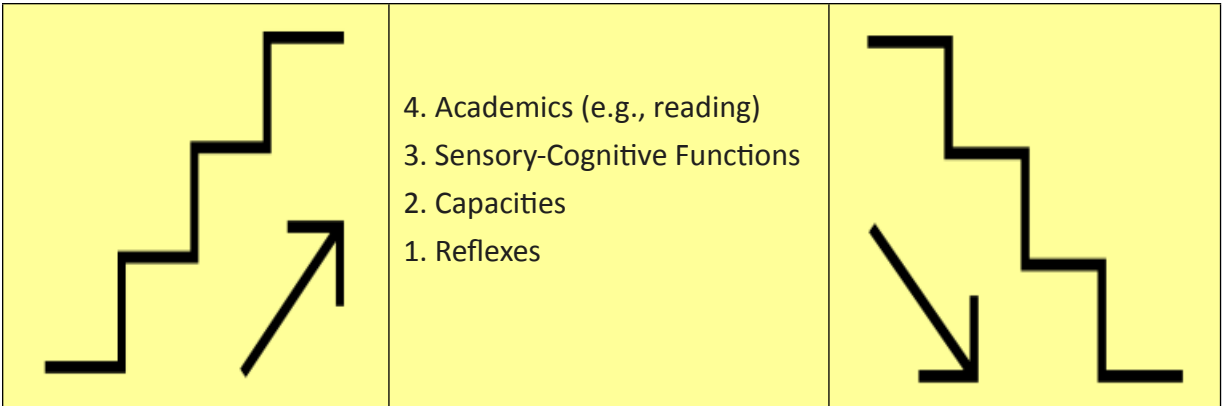


Figure 3: The Environment (shaded area) Impacts Every Step on the Remedial Staircase

The rest of this article, adapted from *The Roadmap to Literacy* and *Continuing the Journey to Literacy*, offers suggestions for how teachers can work with

remedial issues by using the Remedial Staircase and the environment. A few common issues will be pulled out to discuss separately.

6 Ibid., pp. 557–558.

Is a Remedial Response Necessary? What about Late Bloomers?

Mrs. Davidson was faced with a student who was not learning to read: Kurt. In first grade, she had concluded that Kurt was a late-bloomer and dreamy and had told his parents that Kurt just needed more time. It was the middle of second grade, and Kurt was still struggling with basic reading skills. Should Mrs. Davidson double down on her original position or question it?

Science has provided an answer to this question. An article from the American Federation of Teachers entitled, “Waiting Rarely Works: Late Bloomers Usually Just Wilt,” summarizes three studies:

In the simplest terms, these studies ask: Do struggling readers catch up? The data from the studies are clear: Late bloomers are rare; skill deficits are almost always what prevent children from blooming as readers. This research may be counter-intuitive to elementary teachers who have seen late-bloomers in their own classes or heard about them from colleagues. But statistically speaking, such students are rare. (Actually, as we’ll see, there is nearly a 90 percent chance that a poor reader in first grade will remain a poor reader.⁷

In other words, most students who are failing to read at so-called grade level have not mastered the necessary academic skills. Giving these students more time to catch up just exacerbates the problem because skills build on top of each other. The longer teachers wait to intervene, the longer it will take to remediate the academics step of the Remedial Staircase. Furthermore, taking a wait-and-see approach just postpones work on lower step(s) if the root cause of the learning challenge is lower down on the Remedial Staircase. For these reasons, Mrs. Davidson is advised to question her position. What follows is a framework teachers can follow.

Things to Rule Out Before Beginning the Remedial Process

There are three areas to rule out before beginning the remedial process: 1) problems with instruction; 2) problems with the student’s eyesight; and 3) problems with the student’s hearing.

Problems with Instruction

A leading cause of learning problems in a Waldorf classroom is an insufficient language arts curriculum, and/or an insufficient amount of time to teach it.

First, review your language arts curriculum. The curriculum given by Rudolf Steiner is for a foreign language (German); consequently, it is a poor fit for English. English-speaking students need different instruction and more of it due to difference in the languages. I have explained the problem (English is not German) and outlined a language arts curriculum for grades 1–3 and grades 4–8 in the *Renewal of Literacy* books. Readers are encouraged to consult both books for information on how to teach language arts in English and to consult the *Renewal of Literacy Edition of The Roadmap to Literacy* when it comes out, as it will provide proof that the language arts curriculum contained therein aligns with Steiner’s indications.

Second, review the amount of time available to teach your language arts curriculum. A main lesson class in language arts should feature two full hours of instruction and follow up practice in skills, and there should be practice classes during the off blocks. If there is not enough time in your schedule to teach language arts skills and have students practice them, some students will fail to learn. This subset of students does not necessarily need a remedial program—just a more robust academic one.

Waldorf teachers are reminded that Steiner asks them to use soul economy (economy in teaching) when preparing a curriculum: two to three hours of concentrated preparation for each half hour of instruction. Steiner states, “The aim of Waldorf education is to arrange all of the teaching so that within the shortest possible time the maximum amount of material can be presented to students by the simplest means possible.”⁸

Problems with a Student’s Eyesight

There are three areas to consider:

1. **Glasses** Ask the student to read from the board and from a book in front of her. Try different sized fonts. Note any difficulties in reading and any signs that the student cannot see well (e.g., squinting, moving the book closer or further away, etc.).
2. **Vision Therapy** Sit in front of the student. Ask her to track your finger without moving her head. Slowly move your finger left to right, up and down, diagonally, and further and closer to the student’s nose. Note any difficulty the student has tracking your finger such as the following: eyes may jump ahead, lock in place, stutter, lag, etc. A student should have no problems tracking your finger. Refer student to a vision therapist for a full screening if the student struggles to do so.

⁷ American Federation of Teachers. “Waiting Rarely Works: Late Bloomers Usually Just Wilt.” *American Educator*: Fall 2004. <https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/fall-2004/waiting-rarely-works-late-bloomers-usually-just-wilt>

⁸ Rudolf Steiner, *Soul Economy: Body, Soul, and Spirit in Waldorf Education* (Anthroposophic Press, 2003), 118.

3. **Irlen Syndrome** This is a visual processing problem that causes difficulties in reading. Students afflicted by this syndrome have difficulty processing all the wavelengths in visible light. As a result, they see distortions when they look at text and/or experience physical fatigue and/or discomfort while reading. In general, 12–14% of the population tests positive for Irlen Syndrome, but the percentage jumps to 45% among students who have difficulty reading.⁹ It is relatively easy to address the problems created by this syndrome. A colored overlay reduces the symptoms of Irlen Syndrome for most students. Colored Overlays Sample Pack of 10 can be purchased at the following address: <https://irlen.mybigcommerce.com/colored-overlays/>.

If you suspect Irlen Syndrome, do a quick screening by asking the students to try different colored overlays to see if any make it easier to read. If so, let the student pick the color that works best and get her an overlay for reading. Ask parents to follow up with an Irlen specialist, provided there is one in your area, for a diagnosis and other treatment options, such as Irlen lenses. Just as glasses prescriptions change as students mature, so too can the preferred color. Reassess every 1-2 years.

Problems with a Student’s Hearing

- 1. Screen a student informally: Sit behind the student. Ask her to repeat nonsense words. If she struggles, try the same list again but this time facing the student so she can see your lips. Refer to a professional for a hearing assessment and consider dyslexia.
- 2. Set the student in the front row and insist the class be quiet when you are presenting information so this student will hear better.

Address these three factors first and then continue to the next section, remediating environmental factors, if the learning problem is not resolved.

Remediating Environmental Factors

Once you have ruled out common problems with the senses and reading problems persist, it is time to consider a remedial program. Begin by considering environmental factors, as these may be the sole cause of learning problems or a contributing factor, and keep them in mind at each step of the Remedial Staircase. There are four areas to consider: 1) Maslow’s Expanded Hierarchy of Needs; 2) Simplicity Parenting; 3) Electromagnetic Pollution; and 4) Screen Technology.

Maslow’s Expanded Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow’s Expanded Hierarchy of Needs is a useful tool for identifying environmental factors that can undermine education. An excerpt with examples is shown in table 1.

Maslow’s Expanded Hierarchy of Needs	Sample Consequence to Students
Biological and Physiological Needs (e.g., food, water, sleep, etc.)	Academic instruction will not register until basic needs are met.
Safety Needs (e.g., security, order, stability)	The student will focus on the danger at hand rather than the lesson.
Love and Belongingness Needs (e.g., friendship, acceptance, etc.)	The student is able to function academically but will be a drag on self and others.
Esteem Needs (e.g., self-esteem, achievement, mastery)	The student is able to function in the classroom but has a chip on her shoulders and may lie about her work.
Cognitive Needs (knowledge and understanding, curiosity)	This is the optimal level for students in school.

Table 1: Excerpt of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Effects on Education¹⁰

9 Helen Irlen,. *The Irlen Revolution: A Guide to Changing Your Perception and Your Life* (Garden City Park: Square One Publisher, 2010), pp. 75, 77.

10 Langley and Militzer-Kopperl, p. 542.

Address any unmet needs in the first four levels so students can focus on cognitive needs in class. Involve the parents as the home environment affects students even more than the school environment.

Simplicity Parenting

Simplicity Parenting is a program by Kim John Payne, M.Ed. It reduces environmental stress on the child. Payne suggests that students who qualify for diagnoses such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) are often just sensitive children who are so stressed by their environments that their quirks become illnesses. When the stress is removed or reduced, they no longer qualify for such a diagnosis. Payne's program targets four areas for simplification: 1) environment; 2) rhythm; 3) schedule; and 4) filtering out the adult world.

In his book, *Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier, and More Secure Kids*, Payne walks parents through ways they can simplify any or all four areas. Payne has found that up to two-thirds of children who undergo Simplicity Parenting no longer qualify for a diagnosis after completing the program.¹¹ In other words, once the environmental stress(es) are removed and their environment made more child appropriate, many students no longer need medication or therapy.

Waldorf teachers and schools can work with Simplicity Parenting. Some have formed book study groups and parental support groups. There are also Simplicity Parenting family life coaches available. Teachers can refer interested parents to the following website: <https://www.simplicityparenting.com/the-movement-an-overview/parent-groups/>.

Electromagnetic Pollution

Electromagnetic pollution is an environmental factor that can compromise every level of the Remedial Staircase. It is generated by modern technology including cell phones, cell towers, Wi-Fi, smart meters, devices wired for the Internet, faulty wiring, overhead power lines, etc. Electromagnetic pollution comes in many forms, including dirty electricity (i.e., high voltage transients that result when power lines are carrying too high a load) and electrosmog. Unlike other polluting smog, this type of environmental pollution cannot be seen, but it is ubiquitous in modern environments.

Waldorf teachers can study the book, *Zapped: Why Your Cell Phone Shouldn't Be Your Alarm Clock and 1,268 Ways to Outsmart the Hazards of Electronic Pollution*,

to learn more about the subject. Chapter nine "Zap-Proof Your Kids" offers usable suggestions.

If a student is struggling to learn, there is a protocol parents can follow to see if electromagnetic pollution is a factor, written by Katie Singer who studies the harmful effect of advanced technology. The protocol, entitled "Calming Behavior in Children with Autism and ADHD: The Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR)-Lowering Protocol," can be downloaded at <https://www.electronicssilentspring.com/calming-behavior/>. Despite the title, it can be applied to students with any type of learning or behavioral challenge.

Screen Technology

Amanda's challenges were odd. With a tested IQ in the 120s, Amanda was not a typical student who needed tutoring. She was also popular with her peers, a group of eighth-grade Waldorf girls who had just adopted a new form of communication with a brand-new technology: texting with smart phones. However, Amanda had suddenly developed memory trouble, and it was starting to affect her schoolwork and her social life. "I literally can't remember what someone just said," Amanda stated. What was the source of her problem?

A visit to Amanda's house revealed that she slept with several electronic devices under her pillow—an iPod and her new smart phone. She was using both in bed when she was supposed to be asleep. Amanda's nocturnal use of screen technology was causing her to miss out on much needed sleep; consequently, she was having short-term and long-term memory problems.¹²

As it turns out, interfering with sleep was only one of the ways Amanda's use of screen technology was undermining her education. Television, movies, cell phones, tablets, and computers all have an effect on a child's ability to learn. In *Continuing the Journey to Literacy*, I devote an entire chapter, "The Anti-Language Arts Curriculum: Screen Technology" (pp. 852–877), to the effects of screen technology. Teachers are encouraged to read, so they could better educate parents on this topic.

In addition to addressing the environment, it is often necessary to remediate the steps of the Remedial Staircase.

Remediating Reflexes

The first step on the Remedial Staircase calls for remediating reflexes. Reflexes come in several types. Problems in the classroom result when primitive

¹¹ Kim John Payne, *Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier, and More Secure Kids* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009), p. 28.

¹² Jennifer Militzer-Kopperl, *Continuing the Journey to Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Language Arts in Waldorf Schools Grades 4 through 8* (2020), p. 849.

reflexes are not inhibited and/or postural reflexes are underdeveloped.

Primitive reflexes are movement patterns a baby is born with that help protect the baby and help it develop its muscles and senses. The grasp reflex is an example: if you put your finger in a baby's palm, the grasp reflex is triggered, and the baby will hold on to your finger with enough strength that you can lift her off the ground. If this reflex is not inhibited, it will prevent a school-aged child from holding a pencil correctly. Primitive reflexes are inhibited around the age of six months to one year.

Postural reflexes emerge when the primitive reflexes are inhibited, and they support conscious movement. They help coordinate the muscles so a child can sit, stand, skip, play, etc. They should be completely developed by the age of three and a half years. If they are not fully developed, a child will struggle.

In the classroom, typical reflex problems are manifested in students who have difficulty sitting at their desks, paying attention, and/or holding their pencils correctly. These students must exert extra effort to overcome the effects of their reflex problems. In addition, there is a correlation between retained primitive reflexes and underdeveloped postural reflexes and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Many learning problems are reduced when reflexes are addressed.

The best time to address reflex problems is early childhood. Waldorf schools can encourage their early childhood teachers to work with reflexes. AWSNA has a wonderful book called *Developing the Observing Eye: Teacher Observation and Assessment in Early Childhood Education* by Cynthia Murphy-Lang. It has more information on the subject and has developmentally appropriate assessments early childhood teachers can use.

Waldorf grades teachers can work with reflexes too. Sally Goddard Blythe has a series of exercises called "Early Morning by the Pond," in the book *The Well Balanced Child: Movement and Early Learning* (2005 edition, pp. 205–237). The exercises consist of images and developmental movements that can be done with students.

Note that environmental factors can cause reflex problems to re-emerge or not resolve. Primitive reflexes can re-emerge later in life if a person is threatened, and electromagnetic pollution can trigger the re-emergence of reflexes in some individuals. Therefore, it is wise to address the environment before working with reflexes.

If reflex issues are quite pronounced and/or are not responding to intervention in school, refer students to professionals. Some Extra Lesson practitioners have training in this area, as do some occupational therapists.

Bear in mind that the zoo exercises are not recommended for reflex remediation because they are not presented in a developmental sequence. They are, however, useful at the next step.

Remediating Physical and Psychological Capacities

The second step on the Remedial Staircase focuses on physical and psychological capacities. These include movement, attention, and the soul capacities—thinking, feeling, and willing. Once reflexes are addressed and determined to be functioning as they should, it is desirable to address any deficits in capacities that can undermine learning. They include but are not limited to 1) movement; 2) psychological issues; and 3) sensory integration.

Movement

There are many movement programs available for class teachers. A short list includes:

- *Take Time/Move in Time* from the book *Take Time: Movement Exercises for Parents, Teachers, and Therapists of Children with Difficulties in Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Spelling* by Mary Nash-Wortham and Jean Hunt.
- Bal-A-Vis-X is a series of rhythmic balance, auditory, and vision exercises for brain and body integration invented by Bill Hubert. They are similar to *Take Time* but include more challenging exercises that can be done with sandbags and/or racquet balls and exercised either alone or with partners. For more information, see <http://www.bal-a-vis-x.com/>.
- Zoo Exercises are a series of exercises included in some Waldorf teacher training programs. They can be useful in the classroom setting.

Psychological Issues

Psychological issues impact classroom success, but it is not advisable for a class teacher to work with psychological issues. Teachers are advised to refer students to appropriate professionals.

Sensory Integration

Minor problems with sensory integration can be addressed through some movement programs such as Bal-A-Vis-X, but students with more severe sensory integration problems should see a professional.

Remediating Sensory-Cognitive Functions

Sensory-cognitive functions are the third step on the Remedial Staircase.

Sensory-cognitive functions are the meeting point of child development and academic work. These functions

start to develop on their own as part of child development but require academic training to reach their full potential. The sensory-cognitive functions then support further academics. For example, children without developmental dyslexia begin to develop phonemic awareness around age four or five when they begin to rhyme words; however, full development of phonemic awareness depends on education. Introducing the letters of the alphabet is the primary way to bring children's awareness to the level of the phoneme or individual speech sound. For example, once students learn that the letter *B* has the sound /b/ as in *bear*, they can become aware that the sound /b/ is in other words, too: butterfly, bath, tub, bib, bulb, etc. As they learn the letters and sounds, they can then be taught to segment words down into their individual sounds and discover that *cat* has three sounds: /k/ /a/ /t/.

All teachers in grades 1–3 should teach the sensory-cognitive functions as part of teaching academic work. Direct instruction improves students' capacities for thinking and makes it easier for students to learn academic skills.

Providing information on how to teach each sensory-cognitive function is outside the scope of this article: it would take a separate article for each function to do justice to the topic. However, the information is already written and available in *The Roadmap to Literacy*. I wrote a chapter on how to teach each of these sensory-cognitive functions based on my work at Lindamood-Bell (1999–2001) and tutoring Waldorf students from 2005–2015. Consult the following chapters in *The Roadmap to Literacy* (Langley and Militzer-Kopperl, 2021):

- Chapter 3.3: Phonological and Phonemic Awareness: The Key to Encoding and Decoding
- Chapter 3.5: Symbol Imagery: The Key to Sight Words
- Chapter 3.7: Concept Imagery: The Key to Comprehension

Teachers who provide direct instruction in sensory-cognitive functions will discover that their students learn basic literacy skills more quickly and easily.

Remediating Literacy Instruction

The fourth and final step on the Remedial Staircase deals with academics (in this case, literacy instruction).

Instruction for children who are at risk of reading failure needs to be different from the instruction provided to the full class. Joseph Torgesen has identified three key components in his article, "Avoiding the Devastating Downward Spiral: The Evidence that Early Intervention

Prevents Reading Failure."¹³ They are: 1) strong core classroom instruction; 2) screening [assessment] to identify children at risk of reading failure; and 3) appropriate—and extra—instruction that matches at-risk students' needs.

Strong Core Classroom Instruction

Research has discovered an important truth: a handful of early reading skills are critical if students are to master reading. If a student is not learning in class, it is time to consider explicit teaching of key skills. The critical components are as follows:

- Phonemic awareness
- Decoding skills
- Fluency in word recognition
- Fluency in text processing
- Reading comprehension strategies
- Vocabulary (oral language)
- Spelling skills
- Writing skills

Screening [Assessment] to Identify Children at Risk of Reading Failure

A 3rd Grade teacher was asked by her new mentor for her student tracking forms, so that she could get an idea of the progress her third graders were making in language arts and math. The teacher informed her mentor that she did not need to give planned assessments or officially record student progress because she had been with these students for almost three years and knew where each student was in each academic area.

The mentor decided to explore the accuracy of this approach to find out if it was truly as effective as the teacher thought. . . .

After spending some time with one of the class's reading groups, the mentor . . . discovered two students who still had not developed full phonemic awareness or decoding skills. . . . These two students easily read grade-level texts because of their strong visual memories (symbol imagery), but they had no decoding skills when it came to sounding out a word they had never seen. These deficits came as a surprise to the teacher. Initially, she had indicated that they were two of her best readers. She had no idea that they had not developed two core reading skills and were thus in danger

13 Joseph K. Torgesen, "Avoiding the Devastating Downward Spiral: The Evidence that Early Intervention Prevents Reading Failure", *American Educator*: Fall 2004. (The American Federation of Teachers. <https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/fall-2004/avoiding-devastating-downward-spiral>)

of needing reading remediation in the upcoming grades.¹⁴

Teachers will not necessarily know which students are at risk unless they assess the class's learning. There are many assessments created by educational testing groups available on the market. These assessments allow teachers to determine which students have learned which skills. Some of the important skills to assess are:

- Letter-name knowledge
- Phonemic awareness
- Letter-sound knowledge
- Vocabulary
- Word-level reading
- Oral reading
- Comprehension

These assessments are administered individually and are not group-administered standardized tests. Screening assessments are brief, often just 5–10 minutes per student. They are administered several times a year, initially for screening and then for progress monitoring, to determine which students need extra help and to check that no students are falling behind.

Note: A few assessments that are recommended in *The Roadmap to Literacy* include: 1) *Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures for Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade, 2nd Edition or higher* (CORE); 2) *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS); and 3) AIMSweb. However, these assessment tools need to be modified for off-grade use for Waldorf schools to accommodate the fact that Waldorf students begin reading instruction in first grade, not kindergarten, yet are expected to be caught up by the end of third grade. Modifications for *Assessing Reading Multiple Measures* are included in *The Roadmap to Literacy*, and modification for DIBELS will be included in *The Roadmap to Literacy Renewal of Literacy Edition*, which is coming out late in 2021 or 2022.

Appropriate—and Extra—Instruction that Matches At-Risk Students' Needs

Teachers then use the assessments to direct extra resources to the students who need the most help. A good way to deliver this instruction is in small groups of children with comparable skill levels and needs. Keep in mind three points:

- **Explicit:** Instruction for this group must be more explicit than for the other students. Teachers cannot leave anything to chance.

- **Intensive:** Instruction must be more intensive than for other students. It is good to meet with intensive groups 20–45 minutes per day, 4–5 days per week.
- **Supportive:** Instruction must be more supportive than for other students. In addition to providing positive emotional feedback, scaffold the instruction so that skills build very gradually and provide a dialogue between teacher and students to show the students what they are doing wrong and to help them get to the right answer.

When taught in this manner, many struggling students get the instruction they need to master academic skills, and the rate of students who learn to read proficiently increases.

Waldorf Remedial Therapies

A middle school student had dysgraphia, a condition that made it difficult for him to use a pen or pencil to write. It was so severe that his mother had taken him out of school and had been home-schooling him for years. He dictated all of his schoolwork to her. The arrangement worked well initially, but it was becoming more onerous with each school year. The boy's workload increased, and his mother had other children who needed her attention.

The student began Therapeutic Eurythmy to address the dysgraphia. One day, his mother was taking dictation for an essay when she was interrupted by a household emergency. She came back a few minutes later to find her son busily writing the rest of the essay himself. He looked up and said, "I couldn't wait for you any longer." Dysgraphia resolved, he was able to return to the classroom.¹⁵

If a student is still struggling despite the teacher's work with the Remedial Staircase, there are several Waldorf remedial therapies/processes that a class teacher can refer students to. They include: 1) Extra Lesson; 2) Therapeutic Eurythmy; and 3) Child Study.

Extra Lesson

Extra Lesson is a therapeutic approach to address learning difficulties that was developed in the 1940s by Waldorf educator Audrey McAllen. It includes movement exercises, speech exercises, form drawing, bean bag exercises, painting exercises, and more, aiming to address imbalances that can compromise learning. This should only be done with a trained Extra Lesson practitioner.

¹⁴ Langley and Militzer-Kopperl, p. 476.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 556.

Therapeutic Eurythmy

Therapeutic Eurythmy is a therapy to address developmental and learning challenges along with other conditions. It is prescribed by an Anthroposophical doctor and must be done with a trained Therapeutic Eurythmist.

Child Study

Child study is a Waldorf protocol for helping students when the class teacher has exhausted her resources. For more information, consult Christof Wiechert's book, *Solving the Riddle of the Child: The Art of the Child Study*.

Jennifer Militzer-Kopperl is a private remedial specialist and author. She is the co-author of *The Roadmap to Literacy*, author of *Continuing the Journey to Literacy*, author of *The Roadmap to Literacy Renewal of Literacy Edition*, and creator of *Renewal of Literacy* (<https://renewalofliteracy.com/>).

What to Do if All Else Fails

When a student's problems cannot be resolved through other means, it is time to consider a formal diagnosis of a learning disability, so that the student can receive appropriate support. Waldorf teachers are advised to refer the student for an IEP (Individualized Education Program) through the public school system. This process will include diagnostic testing to look for learning disabilities. Students who qualify will then be eligible to receive specialized instruction and/or therapies through the public school.

Conclusion

Steiner's work with the remedial student Otto Specht and information from the remedial chapters in the *Renewal of Literacy* books provide a Remedial Staircase, or a framework teachers can use to work with students with remedial needs. In addition, the environment in which learning takes place could often be a wild card that can undermine an otherwise successful remedial program. Teachers and schools that use the Remedial Staircase protocol and consider environmental challenges will be able to address some common causes of learning challenges and will help many students, just as Steiner helped Otto Specht. As Steiner says, "If you look without prejudice, every child is a riddle waiting to be solved, particularly for educators."¹⁶ This article aimed to help Waldorf educators address the mystery of the struggling student and to provide a framework for other remedial researchers to build upon.

16 Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of Education* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2001), p. 123.

Sparking Curiosity Through Spelling

Virginia Berg and Renee Schwartz¹

How can we inspire more curiosity, in ourselves and in our students? Answering this question is the fundamental task of the Waldorf teacher. Interest, enthusiasm, connection, and an ever-broadening view of the world all stem from inherent curiosity. We measure success by the degree to which a teacher can ignite and stoke curiosity about each subject.

Curiosity about spelling seems rare these days. Students tend to feel good at spelling or bad at it, but precious few are interested enough to perceive, research, and apply patterns and relationships in an ongoing way. Teaching methods, in our lifetime, include a large measure of rote memorization of rules and exceptions – labors antithetical to sincere, spontaneous curiosity. Steiner tells us, “Our task is to find teaching methods that continually engage the whole human being.”² Spelling is an especially rich field of inquiry, and curiosity-based spelling instruction is something we can bring to our students with joy.

Penetrating into English structure, history, and patterns is an obvious step toward maturity in language instruction in English-speaking Waldorf schools; this effort would include putting the original German-based tools for language instruction into perspective. Awareness of the responsibility and confidence to teach local children their own culture, language, and geography is growing within Waldorf schools internationally. Rudolf Steiner, in demonstrating how to engender connection with and understanding of the mother tongue, advocated for local dialects to be used as foundational for language instruction—using samples of students’ speech as the starting point for analysis.³ It is clear that we should free ourselves from unwitting imitation of European educational practices. We have a moral imperative to teach the incarnating child to understand and love the time and place they’ve chosen. A fundamental understanding of English is a student’s due in an English-speaking society. Our English language is a trove of inclusivity and, presented with understanding and respect, it can sustain an ever-broadening, inherently curious mindset.

How does a mindful Waldorf teacher adapt Steiner’s overall indications on language teaching to the child’s actual mother tongue? We understand, after a tour through Roberto Trostli’s organized compilation of Rudolf Steiner’s indications, *Teaching Language Arts in the Waldorf School*, that stakes are high. “Just as the astral body can be investigated through music, the true nature of the I-being can be studied through the word... This can be understood only when you consider language, not as the product of our modern mechanism but as the result of the genius of language, working vitally and spiritually. You can do this when you attempt to understand the way a word is formed.”⁴

Yet, Steiner only gives us a few lines of advice on spelling, about initial and medial consonants and vowel sounds, which in German do not change pronunciation according to their position. He had little to say because German is comparably easy to spell, as the choice of letters invariably corresponds with pronunciation. In teaching children to write and read, the first Waldorf teachers had an easier task than ours, who teach in the English-speaking world.

The German language includes around 135,000 phonetically-spelled words. English, on the other hand, includes around 500,000 distinct words, bearing heritage and spelling patterns from most of the world’s language families.⁵ Every English word has a story and relations. Children born into English-speaking communities learn to write and read later than children born into German ones, because they arguably need to master a substantially bigger task. Despite the fact that we call English a Germanic language, English is not primarily phonetic. The ability to speak English does not assure that a child can read or write English.

For Waldorf teachers, the key to a fundamental understanding of the English language is hidden in plain sight. It lies in the history of Western civilization, from the evolution of the Phoenician alphabet through the inception of the Internet.

1 Since Renee has more early Grades Structured Word Inquiry experience, and Virginia is more experienced with later grades, the “I” pronoun used in this writing refers to either of the co-authors.

2 Rudolf Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2000), pp. 1-7.

3 Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of Education* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2001), pp. 153-55.

4 Rudolf Steiner, *The Roots of Education* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 1997), pp. 23-24.

5 Steven Frank, *The Pen Commandments: A Guide for the Beginning Writer* (New York: Random House, 2003).

A Brief History of the English Language

Here's a quick tour of our spelling system: Early in the first millennium, the demonstrably inviting British Isles were inhabited by Celts. They were driven back into Ireland, Scotland, and Wales by conquering, literate Romans. Surviving Celtic ancestry in modern English is very sparse. Through the 4th and 5th centuries invasions came from the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, who spoke a variety of early Germanic languages. An additional Norse influence was made by the Viking invasions of the 9th and 10th centuries, about the time *Beowulf* was written, establishing Old English. These influences are the reason we call English a Germanic language, and why approximately half of the English words we use today are traced back to this time. However, Latinate influence on English wasn't finished: Normans crossed the Channel into Britain in 1066, the last time the feisty islanders were successfully conquered.

Abruptly, England was ruled in the French language, creating a parallel vocabulary for aristocratic diners (think of the French cognate, "beef") and peasant farmers (think of the German cognate, "cow"). As the Normans stayed and integrated, a hefty layer of French words and spelling patterns was interlarded through this mostly-Germanic tongue. Crusades, conquests, and colonization scattered English around the globe, as it was spoken by the rulers of the British Empire that at a certain point covered a quarter of the planet. From each locality, terms and usage were picked up.

For example:

SHERBET c. 1600, *zerbet*, "drink made from diluted fruit juice and sugar" and cooled with fresh snow when possible, from Turkish *serbet*, from Persian *sharbat*, from Arabic *sharba(t)* "a drink," from *shariba* "he drank."

After tidy German and exclusive French languages were organized into dictionaries by their respective governing bodies, English scholars at Oxford made a resounding decision: unlike other Western languages, the definitive English dictionary would record words used by English writers, and these would comprise the standard English language. English was and will be continually co-created by its users, not managed and pruned by a governing body. This means that English writing has never been edited through the lens of consistency. Other languages have been scoured of foreign influences; English words, on the other hand, tell the story

of European history without edits. Therefore, learning to correctly write this large, nuanced, expressive beast of a language is a very big job.

Here, we see how Steiner's indications for German language instruction are useful in spirit, but as we read them, it is essential that we keep the fundamental differences between English and German in the front of our minds. Has anyone ever tried working on an American car with metric tools?

Teachers in English-speaking schools are faced with contradictory and controversial approaches to teaching spelling. Even sex education can seem straightforward in comparison! Schools may espouse one method or another, or perhaps individual teachers find their own methods. Current

"sound-it-out" teaching methods have generated concern around the growing number of students who are being assessed with learning disorders. Research is currently broaching questions concerning dyslexia as a hereditary condition, while one study explores the effects of the way a writing system is taught. In a Brunel University London news report entitled, "*Why Are Some Bilingual People Dyslexic in English but Not Their Other Language?*"⁶ the author describes how confounding writing and reading can be, based on a comparison of the words "hint," "mint," "lint," and "pint."

"This kind of irregularity doesn't happen in other languages such as Italian, Spanish or Finnish," says Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at Brunel University London, Taeko Wydell, pointing to "so-called 'transparent' languages where combinations of letters are always pronounced the same, with some rare exceptions. As such, studies have shown Italian speakers are only half as likely to show signs of dyslexia than English speakers." In addition, the author reports, levels of dyslexia "can also be far lower in countries with a symbol-based writing system, such as Japanese or Chinese, because of how those writing systems are taught in schools."⁷

In actuality, the very concept of "irregularity" shows itself as problematic, the consequence of long lists of rules and exceptions. The implicit message we send children by using this term is "English is a horrible language to try to spell... sorry for your bad luck." Teachers of English find themselves in this pickle because, for

6 Tim Pilgrim, "Why are some bilingual people dyslexic in English but not their other language?" <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/articles/Why-are-some-bilingual-people-dyslexic-in-English-but-not-their-other-language>.

7 Tim Pilgrim, "Why are some bilingual people dyslexic in English but not their other language?"

more than a generation, we have overused phonics to teach the English writing system, in effect obscuring the actual regularity of the English language. But we must recall that these children have chosen to incarnate into this time and place, so we hardly want to send such a dismissive message. Regularity becomes visible as we explore the story of words, which is also the story of Western history, one of the cornerstones of our Waldorf curriculum. In gaining understanding of English, we practice scientific methodology, seeking evidence and repeatable patterns, a practice that is another educational cornerstone. The English language is vast, and it evolves every new day; approaching it with curiosity, exploration, humility, and orderly questioning is the right way to go.

Structured Word Inquiry at the Portland Waldorf School

One of the two authors of this article—Virginia Berg—was at her second cycle as a class teacher, teaching sixth grade at the Portland Waldorf School when Emily O'Connor was hired by the school as a part-time educational support person, tasked with assessing and addressing the students' diverse learning styles, especially dyslexia. She had worked with the Orton-Gillingham approach for years but then found that Structured Word Inquiry (SWI) was more effective for building understanding of spelling patterns, especially in the long run. SWI is a term coined by educator/researcher Peter Bowers, whose approach was inspired by the work of linguist Michel Rameau. Emily, who had studied with both Bowers and Rameau, led our faculty in-service and taught whole classes weekly while teachers observed. On her advice, we had Gina Cooke—the founder of the Linguist-Educator Exchange platform "LEX"—lead the next faculty in-service, and for me, Virginia, this was a turning point.

In my previous 16 years of teaching English, grades first through ninth, I'd researched and blended many methods. Throughout, I'd developed a mistrust for spelling lists. They didn't seem predictive of how students would spell when doing actual writing, and while some students performed well, others didn't. Even worse, the spelling list ranking seemed to remain static through the years. I knew I was failing some bright students in my care. I quietly abandoned spelling tests during my second cycle as a class teacher, and I fumbled through Germanic, Latin, and Greek "roots." Five years ago, when Emily O'Connor modeled SWI in sixth grade, a floodgate opened for me; for the first time in my life, I began to understand my native language. Emily only taught six or eight lessons, but these lessons gave

me the confidence to model "inquiry" alongside my students.

Here are the basic principles that guided me and which I tried to impart to my class:

1. English is huge and fascinating, and every word has a story. A responsible teacher models enthusiasm, curiosity, imperfection, and how to use tools.
2. Sounding things out only takes you so far. Phonics is part of the process, but sound/symbol correlations in English are unreliable, and other considerations come first.
3. Short words are usually the harder ones to spell.
4. Longer words are usually deliciously predictable, as we only need to learn *three* well-crafted suffixing rules.
5. The concept of a "word family," which ideally begins to be taught in first grade, refers to words that share structure and meaning. This demonstrates the reason for grouping words—the "why" of spelling. Sensibly-grouped spelling lists are a gift to every kind of learner.

My class was in sixth grade already, and plenty of what I'd taught them previously had to be undone, a task that required humility and courage from me. I had to face my students with the news that "I'd found a clearer understanding" and to beg their patience with me. By sixth grade, which teacher hasn't eaten some humble pie? Students were trusting and we forged on.

I don't want to give the impression that we spent much time on spelling. This method was very easy to integrate into the existing Waldorf curriculum. Roman history gave us the opportunity to learn and manipulate modern English words built on Latin bases. Seventh grade explorations brought in the bounty of words that English has imported, intact, from other languages, as we practiced SWI methodology. By the time we've reached the eighth grade research paper, I was seeing results. Not only did I appreciate our success, this process also got me excited about what a class could learn, if taught SWI from the start.

As high school approached, people at our little school became curious about how everyone "measured up" in the big world. Portland Waldorf School spent a little time discussing and learning strategies for standardized testing. As part of this process, we administered the language portion of the Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement, which is standardized by age, respected in the testing world, and easy to administer correctly. There was plenty of coaching around the limitations

of standardized tests, especially on the point that such test scores don't predict academic performance. However, the test does offer a legitimate snapshot of specific skills at a specific moment. In this class of 27 eighth-graders—18 male, 8 female, one gender-fluid, and 33% with assessed learning differences—we were pleased with the scores. The class average suggested competence expected by the middle of tenth grade. More importantly, I was able to see more progress than I had expected over these three years, from every kind of learner. Sparse writers wrote more, prolific writers became choosier, and poetry was a full-out blast—much more fun for students than I expected. I dare say, a general empowered curiosity about language still hovers around these dear young adolescents, as they all make their way through their various high schools. They're punsters, and I'm proud.

For this success, I credit Structured Word Inquiry, especially because it serves as a model for *inquiry*. Curiosity is practiced and rewarded. It offers a flexible route to understanding. It unfolds as an orderly series of questions to ask, rather than as rules to memorize. As Steiner indicates: as teachers, we must always consider "how we can arrange the material we are to present in education so that it acts not against initiative in the will, but strengthens it."⁸ Any word or concept can be a point of entry, so the first question is always, "What do you notice?" Then, the fun begins. For example:

CHECKMATE – mid-14c., in chess, said of a king when it is in check and cannot escape it, from Old French *eschec mat*, which (with Spanish *jaque y mate*, Italian *scacco-matto*) is from Arabic *shah mat* "the king died." Doug Harper, Etymonline.com

Framing an Investigation Around Four Questions

Once we have an interesting word in our sights, we ask the Four Questions: What does the word mean? How is the word built? What are its relatives? How do the letters function in this word?

Spelling is an especially rich field of inquiry, and curiosity-based spelling instruction is something we can bring to our students with joy.

Let's explore these questions more closely:

1. What does the word *mean*?

Spelling carries meaning. Every word carries shades, however distant, of its etymological meaning or denotation. To help native English speakers, who carry big vocabularies in their heads, tease out meanings, we can ask students more questions: Can you put this word into a sentence? Where have you heard it before? Does it remind you of other words you know?

This simple process brings many opportunities for discussion, for example, of homophones. The words "one" and "won" have different meanings, histories, and relatives, all of which are fascinating and lead to vaults of bonus, sensible spelling and vocabulary work!

What's more, this is also an efficient route to "poetic meaning." With students who tend toward inflexibility and literal interpretations, poetry can be confounding, in the way that social nuances are. Overt acknowledgement of and practice with multiple meanings and implication is excellent coaching for some students who struggle socially, handing them the keys to word-play and poetic expression.

Although he worked in German, Rudolf Steiner encouraged this process in 1919, which is actually essential to a fundamental understanding of English. SWI in the classroom provides what Steiner describes: "This linguistic study of meaning is extraordinarily helpful in teaching, but it does not yet exist as a science."⁹

2. How is the word *built*?

Each English word either is a base (think <sheep>) or has a base (think <sheepishly>). In addition to a base, many words have one or more affixes, a term which includes prefixes, suffixes, and connecting

9 Rudolf Steiner, *Practical Advice to Teachers*, p. 22. In the expanded quote, Steiner demonstrates the process of tracing how a word is constructed through its history:

The word *Fuss* in German ("foot") is related to taking a step, making an empty space, a *Furche* ("furrow"). The word for "foot" is related to the word for "furrow." We take the foot and name it for what it does—make an impression. The word for "feet" in the Romance languages [Portuguese], *pés*, is taken from standing firmly, having a standpoint.

This linguistic study of meaning is extraordinarily helpful in teaching, but it does not yet exist as a science. We could ask why these things are as yet not included in science, even though they offer real practical help. The reason is that we are still working out what is necessary for the fifth post-Atlantean age, especially in terms of education.

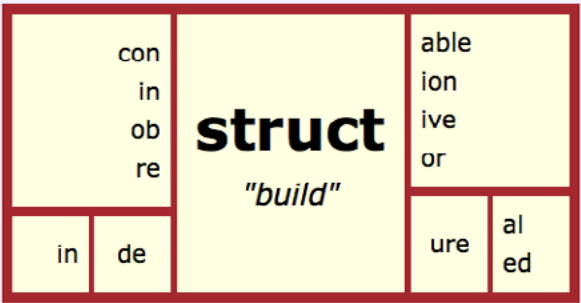
8 Steiner, *Renewal of Education*, pp.10-12.

vowel letters. To repeat: How many suffixing conventions? We only need three!¹⁰

A word sum illuminates this for students. Here’s an example using the base <struct>, which carries a sense of “build.” An instructor helps students build meaning!

- in + struct + ion
- ob + struct
- struct + ure
- con + struct + ion
- in + de + struct + able

Let’s go into another brilliant tool for exploration, the word matrix. After creating a list of word sums like the one above with your class, simply copy and paste them into Neil Ramsden’s mini matrix maker (www.neilramsdens.co.uk/spelling/matrix/) to create a graphic like the one shown below:



<Struct> is considered a “bound base,” because it must have a prefix or a suffix added to it to appear as a word. A “free base” can stand on its own as a word, such as <one>, or it can have an affix, such as in the word <onion>, which is one + ion. See Gina Cooke’s fascinating TED Ed talk, “Making Sense of Spelling,” for more on this.¹¹

Take note: Are ideas popping up about how many words are practiced within this one matrix? How much vocabulary is coming across, as students work in an exploratory, engaging way? These ideas and vocabulary words could constitute a spelling list. In

10 Here they are:

- **Replaceable** <e> In which a vowel suffix replaces the silent <e> at the end of a word, for example in the word “baking.”
- **Doubling** - In which a short vowel sound is maintained by doubling the preceding consonant at the end of a word, for example in the word “toppings.”
- **Toggling** <y> and <i> In which the final <y> toggles to <i> for suffixing, for example in the word “happiness.”

There are delicious non-digressions to go into about the historical development of the letters <y> and <i>. In fact, understanding our alphabet shines light on other patterns...

Certain finite competing contingencies which provide *reasons* that things are sometimes done differently, for example in the word “carrying,” but there aren’t actual exceptions. Reasons why are always worth investigating.

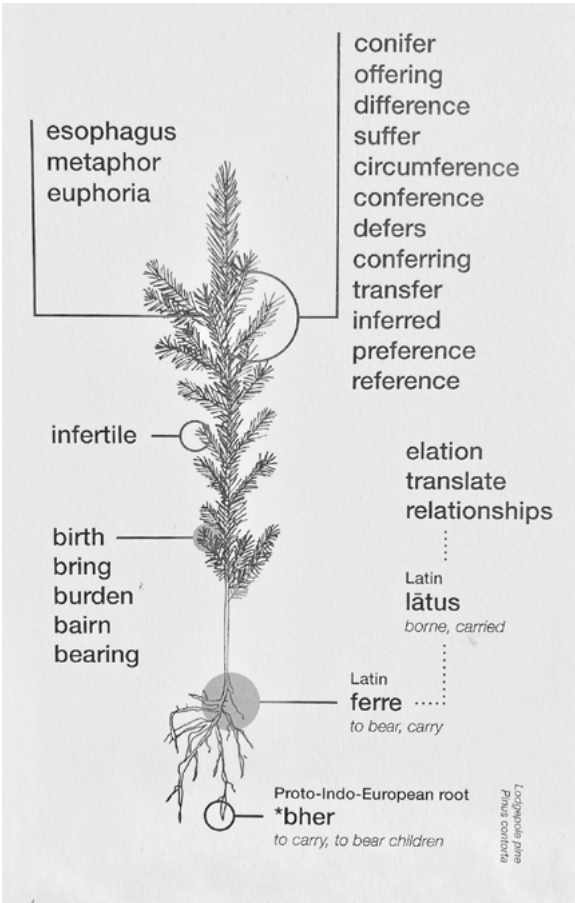
11 <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/making-sense-of-spelling-gina-cooke>

addition, the visual support of the matrix has been found to be especially useful for dyslexic learners, but there are a-ha! moments to be found even for strong spellers.

3. What are the word’s *relatives*?

Here, we practice empirical methodology. Can we find evidence of relationships, using the words we carry around in our vocabularies? As teachers, do we model using others’ reliable research, in trusted reference works, such as etymology dictionaries or Douglas Harper’s excellent *Etymonline.com* dictionary? Emily O’Connor’s gorgeous and thoughtful *Truer Words* cards are a pre-made resource which provide spelling lists grouped over years and a model for teachers to create their own.

It is also important to note here that there are two kinds of relatives. Words can share a base (a modern-day spelling pattern). These are morphological relatives (think <nature> and <nativity>). Words can also share a root, stemming from a long-ago history, such as Greek or Latin roots). These are etymological relatives (think <clock> and <cloak>, or <dentist> and <dandelion>). Morphological relatives share a base; etymological relatives share a root.



1. **offering** noun
a thing offered, especially as a gift, contribution,
or token of devotion

2. 'of + fer + ing → offering
| carry
| in the way of

3.

		con de dif in of pre re suf trans	fer carry, bear	ence ing
cone	i			
circ	um			

4. graphemes

o	f	f	er	i	n	g
---	---	---	----	---	---	---

Truer Words © 2018
AdvantageMathClinic.com

Emily O’Conner, Truer Word. The numbering on the left corresponds to The Four Questions of our inquiry.

4. How do the *letters coherently function* in this word?

There is always a reason why a word is spelled the way that it is. SWI encompasses an understanding of phonics, entirely, within orderly bounds that reveal, rather than obscure English structure. It is not, however, our first consideration in our explorations, for one simple reason: representing sound is not the first consideration that comes up in the spelling of an English word. *Spelling conveys meaning.*

Interestingly, a letter may be a marker that contains information, such as the <e> at the end of <mouse> marking it as a singular noun, called the “plural cancelling e.” Other times, a letter shows an etymological relationship, such as the <w> in “two,” which isn’t pronounced but indicates a relationship with the words “twice,” “twin,” “twelve,” “twenty,” “twilight,” and “between.”

How Does This Look in the Early Grades?

Because Waldorf schools teach reading through writing, SWI is a natural fit from the beginning. Steiner tells us, “before the age of nine the child has an entirely feeling relationship to language. Yet, unless we also introduce the thinking element inherent in language, the child’s self-consciousness cannot develop properly, and this is the reason why it is so important for us to bring to the child the intellectual aspect of language.”¹² We do this over time, in a way that is harmonious with the child’s development.

One simple option in first grade is to present one or two letters twice in the Capital Letters block, where each image represents a second sound. G can be Goose and C can be Cave. But what about also doing G for Ginger (those wonderful knobby roots can contort in all kinds of ways!) and C for Cinnamon (looking at the curl at the end of the cinnamon sticks) and making gingerbread in the classroom to go with the story of Hansel and Gretel? You only have to present a letter once or twice as possibly representing more than one sound to help students avoid a misunderstanding that the English language is built of words that you “sound out” on the basis of a one-to-one sound-symbol correspondence.

This illustrates the principle of “first, do no harm.” We avoid teaching ideas that will result in confusion and that will require un-teaching later. For example, in explaining the function of letters, we can use the word “represents” instead of “says”: in the word “bear,” the letter *represents* /b/, but in the word “doubt,” the letter is not voiced.

Rebecca Loveless also suggests saying, “in THIS word,” when we talk about spelling, so as to leave room for deeper understandings to develop later on. For example, “In THIS word, <sh> represents /sh/.” This is a simple change to make and it is accurate. It also leaves room for the child to later learn that the sound /sh/ is spelled with a <t> in lotion, with a <c> in ocean, with a <ch> in machine, and with an <s> in sugar.

In second grade, word families are not made of rhyming words but of words that share a base. This can be expanded into a fun game about “who is in the family and who is not.” Rebecca Loveless and Fiona Hamilton provide examples of introductory SWI activities for young students that aren’t too analytical or intellectual. For example, they layout activities that do not cross the line into a too-intellectual analysis. Here is one:

12 Rudolf Steiner, *Soul Economy: Body, Soul, and Spirit in Waldorf Education* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2003), p. 214.

Lay a hula hoop down on the floor; write each of the words you want to introduce on an index card and put them in a little bag. Pull the cards out one at a time. If the word is built on the same base as the others, it is in the family and goes inside the hula hoop; if not, it does not. If a child is not sure about the base, he or she can balance the card on the edge of the hula hoop. Include in the bag some words that have a related meaning but not a related spelling, and some that have a related spelling but not a related meaning.

For example, in a Fables lesson on “The Fox and the Stork,” your choice of word cards could include: trick, tricked, tricky, trickster, unkind, trim, trickle, fox. Trickle is such an interesting word to include: it does have a spelling connection to “trick” but no meaning connection, hence, it is not in the family!

Although we would not work with the Four Questions in first and second grade, we ought to be aware of them. We are laying the foundation for word sums and matrices that will be introduced to the students later. These second grade explorations also lead us naturally into a discovery of the three suffixing conventions. The idea that every word either *is* a base or *has* a base, and that words are grouped in families based on shared meaning and structure, is sufficient for this age.

Once we present the Four Questions in third grade, the potentials are endless thereafter. Words for investigation can come from the class’s Wonder Wall (<knit> ends up there right away) and/or from the subject being studied. Every main lesson block topic is rich with possibilities. In introducing currency, for example, the history of many food words demonstrates ancient trade routes.

PEPPER, “dried berries of the pepper plant,” Middle English *peper*, from Old English *pipor*, from an early West Germanic borrowing of Latin *piper* (“pepper”), from Greek *piperi*, probably (via Persian) from Middle Indic *pippari*, from Sanskrit *pippali* (“long pepper”).

I can’t begin to enumerate the ways this process deepens Waldorf curriculum. The efficiency is delightful. Grammar comes as part and parcel of our exploration, and students are granted their own epiphanies via the lens of relationship between grammatical functions and spelling patterns. Waldorf teachers have the blessings of relationship and time, so that we can appropriately introduce and practice all that our students need. Language Arts, as a subject, nestles within our study of

history, as do all our other subjects—arithmetic, mathematics, sciences, and arts. Every act of speech, writing and reading is a recapitulation of human development, and, finally, here is a lens through which we can all see it clearly. Rather than tossing our students into an opaque world of spelling rules full of exceptions, we are handing them the key to clarity, and modeling enthusiasm through the joy we, as teachers, earn through a growing understanding of our own language.

The Present Moment and Looking Ahead

Here it is essential to address our current moment in the Covid 19 pandemic, in which so many Waldorf teachers and students are connecting and learning remotely. Teachers are unable to be physically near their students, to read their levels of understanding and engagement, and we struggle to provide multisensory experiences in learning. We mourn the diminution of our best pedagogical tool, warmth. We know that students are developmentally unequipped to work without the ego presence of their teacher. Through teaching on-line, many schools have discovered that our next-best option is exploratory and project-based learning. The spark of discovery is a type of warmth that a student senses from within. These basic tools: The Four

Questions, the process of synthesizing a word matrix, and analysis of words into word sums empower students to successfully explore their language. Spelling becomes discovery-based and exploratory. This vigor is exciting for teachers currently working with Structured Word Inquiry, as the demands of education during a pandemic burden children prematurely with responsibility for too large a share of their own motivation.

Hopefully, this writing has aroused your curiosity about what is possible within Waldorf language arts instruction. Clearing aside our own educational experience, which so often places phonetic considerations first, can be daunting. Fortunately, we have an excellent and growing band of scholars to help us. As with every subject, there is no Waldorf workbook—we teachers are tasked with learning our subject, knowing our students, and providing them with guidance and practice. Waldorf teachers are obliged to keep learning, which is both the blessing and the burden of our vocation. I promise you that wherever you begin, this process is manageable, fun, and vastly efficient. Here, in relation to the bewildering English language, is reliable,

Awareness of the responsibility and confidence to teach local children their own culture, language, and geography is growing within Waldorf schools internationally.

structured scaffolding for the most valuable human trait of all: curiosity.

P.S. Take your curiosity, and do something fun with it! Sometimes there are surprises! < Artichoke > is a base, but < history > is not (its word sum is histor + y).

Use the Online Etymology Dictionary (etymonline.com) to investigate these questions.

1. True or False: The word < shine > is related to the word < cheetah > ?
2. True or False: The word < grotto > is related to the word < grotesque > ?

Which one word in each set does NOT belong?

- rose, rosebud, rosary, melrose, rosemary, julep
- hut, hose, cuticle, curtain, sky, scum
- garden, girdle, choir, curtsy, bow, Asgard / Midgard
- island, land, aquatic, aquamarine, sewer, gouache

Some Resources:

We have consulted with the following individuals in assembling materials for this article:

Brett Iimura, SWI tutor: globaltutoring16@gmail.com

Paola Tayvah, learning specialist:
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Emily O'Connor, author of the "Truer Words" card decks: emily@advantagemathclinic.com

See also <https://linguisteducatorexchange.com/product/truer-words-volume-1-by-emily-oconnor/>

Internet Resources

"Making sense of spelling"
www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mbuwZK0lr8

"Why is there a 'b' in doubt?"
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvABHCJm3aA

LEX™ Linguist-Educator Exchange
www.linguisteducatorexchange.com

Mini Matrix-Maker
www.neilramsdn.co.uk/spelling/matrix/

Online Etymology Dictionary
www.etymonline.com

RealSpelling™ Toolbox
www.tbox2.online

Wordtorque
www.wordtorque.com

WordWorks Literacy Centre

wordworkskingston.com/WordWorks/Home.html

www.wordworkskingston.com/WordWorks/Investigation_of__condensation_.html

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Renee Schwartz received a B.S. in Philosophy from Smith College and a M.S. in Curriculum & Instruction from McDaniel College, with additional training in Reggio Emilia, Montessori, and Waldorf methods. She is currently completing her Waldorf Handwork Teacher Training through the Applied Arts Program in Chestnut Ridge NY. Renee is an experienced homeschooler and curriculum consultant, as well as the co-founder and lead teacher of a progressive micro-school in Southern Illinois. She writes about her experiences in the classroom at waldorfcriculum.com.

Music and Art Therapy, Therapeutic Eurythmy, and Spacial Dynamics®

Juliane Weeks, Karine Munk Finser,
Barbara Sim, Jane Swain¹

Music Therapy

By Juliane Weeks

"Music is food from heaven for the soul. Children blossom forth in their whole being when their souls are warmed and strengthened by music."

H.W. Holzapfel, MD

A growing number of children today show characteristics of heightened sensitivity, which manifest as anxiety, restlessness, inability to concentrate, and increasing challenges in the social realm. Music therapy can be of invaluable help when imbalances of the soul, behavioral symptoms referred to as ADHD, and developmental challenges are to be met.

The foundation for the work with music as a healing art is the view that each human being is a being of body, soul, and spirit. The elements melody, rhythm, and harmony are musical expressions of our microcosmic nature. In the therapeutic setting, these elements are used to support the growing child on his unique journey and help him reconnect with the healing sources deep within his own being. Working with the rhythmic element enlivens the will and calls up the ego to be present and direct its impulses with stronger determination and purpose. Working in the realm of melody supports the healthy integration of thoughts, ideas, and imagination, by opening pathways to express musically what lives in soul and mind. Specific keys, intervals, and modes may be applied depending on the need and developmental stage of the child.

The realm of harmony addresses the realm of breathing. Contraction and expansion exercises on string instruments, such as the lyre, serve to find a greater balance between these two gestures that define our relationship to the world around us. Our voice is the most precious instrument we have. Working with the voice is an important part of the therapeutic work as it expresses in an essential way who and how we are.

Thus, each of these elements, applied and combined according to the individual needs of the child, can offer support on the deepest level. Through a musical "fine-tuning", which actively involves the child, a greater

sense of harmony can be achieved. By cultivating a deeper capacity to listen, the child can regain access to the sources within him-/herself, which, given the stimulating environment children are exposed to today, can easily get lost.

Music therapy is offered in concentrated sessions over a course of several weeks or months. Each music therapy block has a unique design. For the child, it may resemble a journey into a magic land where instruments of all kinds, many of them unfamiliar, awaken his or her curiosity. The child is gently led to encounter and make friends with the music of the stars, which they know deep within their soul, or to find themselves in playful tone conversation and other musical interactions without the use of words. They may engage in creative accompaniments to a story or image that can offer guidance at this time in their lives. New ways of listening, of singing together and of movement can enliven the sense of self by supporting a healthy sensory-motor integration.

Each music session begins with a moment of quiet listening to the clear, warming tones of the lyre. For a restless child, involving movement and gestures at the beginning of a session may facilitate the transition into a quiet mode where the child can experience an inner peacefulness and feel a readiness to engage musically. An opening song, little verse and rhythmic games can help an anxious child to feel more at ease in body and soul. Simple streaming movements on the kinder-lyre, maybe as part of a story or song, will be calming and harmonizing for one child, while working with rhythms and movement may be the focus when working with an older child who shows symptoms of ADHD. The therapeutic plan and process is different for each child. Many teachers as well as parents have noted positive changes in their children's behavior following the music sessions. It is this sense of wholeness that music gives to us.

1 This article appeared in Elisabeth Auer, ed., *Helping Children on Their Way: Educational Support for the Classroom* (Chatham, NY: Waldorf Publications, 2017). The *Research Bulletin* is grateful to the authors' permission to reprint their work.

Art Therapy

By Karine Munk Finser

"Color is soul. It is the soul of the entire universe and you participate in this soul when you experience color."

Rudolf Steiner

There once lived a sun-colored butterfly that fluttered among the spring flowers. It had been a long journey for her to finally enjoy these flowers!

For the longest time she had lived in a quiet place, but she was different then - now she had filled herself with all the beauty of heaven on earth - and she had spread her wings and leapt off the tallest plants with great joy. Everything seemed to go her way, and there were so many other butterflies to share the gardens with.

And so her life was quite wonderful for a long time.

One day a terrible thing happened: A dark cloud covered the sun and a strong wind blew wildly for many days. Without sun, the flowers began to wither. Then the rains came pouring down and all the pretty colors faded. The butterflies scattered and this butterfly fled to a cave where it found the darkest corner as far away from the doorway as possible.

This first part of a story could offer a good sense of what the inner landscape of a child who has suffered some degree of trauma may look like. It could manifest as sadness, stomachache, anxiety, grief, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, or other outer expression, all sharing in common an inner inflexibility, or a chronic situation that needs immediate attention. A class teacher may feel that a child is hard to reach, that he or she is enigmatic, unhappy, and that the curriculum becomes ineffective in meeting his or her needs. The child is not present and available for learning and class participation: the teacher can't see the child fully and needs support. The child may need one-on-one time with a trained painting therapist who may help the child and support the class teacher. Parents also need to be involved and sometimes an anthroposophical doctor is necessary to help a child come through a difficult period in his or her life.

The painting therapist is trained in the laws of light, darkness, and color and in the corresponding

lawfulness in the soul landscape, in the individual color gestures. Just as a homeopath knows his or her herbs, the painting therapist lives in the color landscape of the child, and through initial paintings the painting therapist objectively reads the color gestures. A color journey is decided upon that will help the child strengthen and build resilience while addressing the child's innate capacities for self-healing. In a period of seven to twelve weeks, this non-verbal therapy accompanies the child on a weekly basis.

It is the full attentive approach together with knowledge of the developmental unfolding of the child and the color gestures of the soul that can help the child regain her sense of wholeness. The painting therapist is devoted to finding that unscathed place where the child is still completely well, and "make it larger," bring it to full artistic expression, while helping the child trust her strength anew. I have found that if I let the child paint her story, while the colors are given just as a homeopath hands out her medicines, the child may discover her own beauty anew. Every child's journey is individual, yet the lawfulness of colors that support the telling of the story help first embrace the child where she is perhaps struggling, then move stuck places into more health-giving movement to overcome a hindrance and finally into discovering a healing motif: the process will support the child's wellbeing and healing.

Process

Preparation comes before any work; when the child enters the room, the painting therapist is ready. I like to invite the child to look at some beautiful colorful postcards, and a special card is chosen for the session, placed before us on some pretty silk next to a vase with flowers. Some children want the same card throughout all the sessions, and others like to choose different ones. This little ritual helps us enter the painting session together.

In the example of the blue gestured child mentioned above, who was stuck in "a cave, far away from the light," the child's first diagnostic paintings will reveal its soul-state directly. The painting therapist offers the child a beautiful array of twelve colors in this first session and may also look at the child's drawings,

other paintings, and writing, to help in objectively reading the child's soul gesture or the inner soul landscape the child is living in.

The first painting may be accompanied by a question posed to the child: Can you paint a sunrise? It is always

Our voice is the most precious instrument we have. Working with the voice is an important part of the therapeutic work as it expresses in an essential way who and how we are.

a discovery to see which of the twelve colors the child will choose, where the child sets the first paint on the clear moistened paper, and how the story of pigment, water, and paper flow together into a tender new beginning and welcomes the child to breathe out her story. In this painted story, where all is possible, the child is safely guided by the painting therapist so that consciously chosen colors or color combinations become the helpers on the way to resolving the challenges that undoubtedly will become visible in gestures and in the story the child will express. These stories children tell are profoundly moving, and whether the painting therapist is working with a child who has stomach aches, or a child who has recently lost a parent, or a child who has developed anxieties after a divorce or major changes in the family, or someone who is beginning to have compulsive thoughts that could be accompanied by sudden ticks, it is always an honor to be allowed into these story color worlds.

The journey begins with the sunrise, and then the gentle embracing stage in the second session. You can't suddenly give the withdrawn child a lot of red: it would be scalding! This may mean that if the child is sad or grieved, stuck on the blue side, the darker blues will be offered in the second session, after the free sunrise painting. The child will "breathe out" the dark blues, but before the session is over she will be offered lighter blues. Magenta may enter and bless the painting, offering comforting lilacs. The painting therapist can begin with one or two colors, listen and observe, and as the sessions progress, add what seems right so that light and warmth are gently invited into the paintings. It is important that the child always leaves the painting session with a lighter heart, or with some new inner movement introduced in the session. The child will first paint, then tell the story of the painting, and the painting therapist keeps all the words in her little book. It is a good habit to read the whole story and then invite the new part, after painting.

There once was a sunrise. It was hiding behind the clouds. A great mountain was hugging a lake, and there was a forest right next to the water. A lion lived there all by himself. He was a lion but he had no roar and so he had decided to go look for his roar. He was a lonely lion but he had hope.

The above is a story told by a nine-years-old after painting his first painting of a sunrise behind clouds, a large mountain that reaches into the sky, and trees by the water. Somewhere behind the trees, a still invisible lion is hiding, shy and hopeful. The colors are beautiful: the

Just as a homeopath knows his or her herbs, the painting therapist lives in the color landscape of the child.

child is excited to have so many colors. He is trying all the pink and magenta colors and then covers them all up with the mountain. The trees are all in a line and look alike, and there is a clear, blue lake in front, in the lower part of the painting.

Over the next few weeks, the child comes to these painting sessions with a smile on his face, eager to tell, eager to paint. He paints with more energy now, accepting the more limited palette that is being offered. I give the child the colors of blue and green and magenta soon after the first session. These colors plus the gold for the lion will be our helpers for a while. Soon, we have both blue and red. It is important

that we reach a comfortable relationship with the reds, since the child was "so blue" to begin with. It is important, in this case, to approach the reds with some caution before fully embracing it.

In the fourth or fifth session there is nearly always a crisis in the story.

The lion could not find his way in the forest, and there was no friend around. He sat down close to a cave in the rocks and was very sad. He was afraid that he would never find his way. It was dark and the night was very long. He was alone.

It is important never to leave the child with such grim feelings without giving him some comfort and so here I added:

A star above his head shone down upon him, and little by little the lion knew he was not alone. His heart began to remember all that he loved, all that he longed for, and he could hear a song he had forgotten.

Together we open up the dark sky and the child places a golden star above the lion's head. I remove a little color around the lion, and the child paints in the gold. Since this particular child is very musical, it's important that there's a song the lion remembers. Both story, color, and eventual healing motif need to help the child first feel embraced, then moved slightly, then moved a bit more, until the colors that are the most helpful are approached, the story culminates, and a final image in the last session, is arrived at:

The Lion arrived at the end of the cave. A warm light was everywhere and there lay the ruby, shining and ready for him to pick up by its strong rope. He put it around his neck and ran back outside into the sunshine. He climbed up on the green hill and

was surrounded by all the friends he had found on the journey. They were waiting for him. He opened his mouth, the red ruby on his chest, and he roared. He roared so loudly that all the animals cheered! He was happy and he was home. The End.

It is worthwhile to note that the cave has become a green hill; this is one of the ways the painting therapist can guide the story even though it is the child's own story. After all, a hill is a cave turned inside out! Healing elements are thus offered, and the child feels completely safe and trusts the painting therapist. The child has been given complete attention and her feelings have been fully expressed while she is safely held in the therapist's consciousness. The challenge in the story is overcome, feelings have been felt, but never while alone.

Aims and Wishes

One of the goals of these special supportive sessions is to help make the child more present and happy. The "blue" child is turned towards the past and can't enjoy all that's happening readily. It is the hope that such sessions will have strengthened the child to a point where it again will feel much more able to participate in the regular classes with its class teachers and other teachers.

Other Considerations

I have shared an example of a blue-gestured child but could just as well have shared a child who was a bit lost in the chaotic reds. Then the journey would be quite different and it would be a wish that the child's will-forces be given guidance and more direction towards more form, towards some of the more reflective and tenderly shaping blues.

It is also true that some children bounce back and forth between the blues and the reds, since the soul will seek wholeness; if the pendulum swings too far out, it will undoubtedly swing too far *in*, as well. Finally, there are children who struggle more in "the middle." The painting therapist has to have insight into all these soul gestures and into all the nuances of the colors. Most important of all, the painting therapist has to be fully devoted to the wellbeing and thriving of the children that come into her care and actively "live" within the colors as if they were her best friends, so that she can call upon them at any time to bring new life, new hope, and health-giving beauty.

Therapeutic Eurythmy

By Barbara Sim

Rudolf Steiner tells us that all healing is based on the principle of bringing into harmony what is not harmonious within the human being, be it physical, emotional or spiritual. Eurythmy means "harmonious rhythm" and the gestures are the revelation of the divine spiritual movements within the human being, gestures that Rudolf Steiner developed out of his spiritual scientific insights. Thus, through Eurythmy, the individual is united with the forces out of which he or she is developing.

When the human organism tends in the direction of imbalance and leads to illness, Eurythmy used therapeutically awakens the will to heal and can affect a profound change. Because Therapeutic Eurythmy is an active therapy, it allows one to take part

consciously (will) in the process of becoming more balanced and achieve true healing, not merely a cessation of systems. To look at imbalance or illness more positively is a unique possibility for transformation within the individual. The challenge is to restore the balance by tackling the root causes, not just the symptoms. The result is that we grow and develop as individuals as we go through the healing process.

In addition to those exercises, which originate out of sound and gesture, Therapeutic Eurythmy encompasses coordination and concentration exercises, rhythmical exercises, spatial orientation exercises, as well as exercises with copper rods and balls and work with the elements of tone. Eurythmy is truly alchemical in the sense that it is able to bring about transformative forces within the human being.

Practical Implications

Some of the applications of Therapeutic Eurythmy as an adjunct or independent therapy include the treatment of: nervous disorders, stress, headaches, mental and emotional disorders, sensory integration, developmental disorders, learning disabilities, digestive disorders, structural growth problems, allergies, weight control, thyroid imbalances, asthma and respiratory problems, eczema and skin problems, insomnia, high blood pressure, anorexia, Lyme disease, scoliosis, and cancer.

The process of Therapeutic Eurythmy normally takes place on a one-to-one basis and a very important aspect of the therapy is the relationship developed between the therapist and recipient. Depending on availability and funds in a school, Therapeutic Eurythmy can be

requested for a student by the teachers, the parents, or the Care Group. The request is discussed with the members of the Care Group and the class teacher, and, depending on the nature of the request, possibly the child's physician. A consent form is then sent to the parents of the student for permission for the Therapeutic Eurythmist to work with their child, ideally twice a week for a half-hour session, in a cycle lasting six to seven weeks. For children in the younger grades of K-4, it is preferable to arrange these sessions first thing in the morning during the taking of attendance and the rhythmical section of the main lesson. For the upper grades, the time of the session would be discussed with the class and subject teachers. After some time, the request for Therapeutic Eurythmy can be repeated and a second cycle of sessions can take place.

The process of Therapeutic Eurythmy is movement, and movement is a joy to children. The sessions are filled with exercises that allow the child or adult to take part consciously, with their will, in the process of becoming balanced and achieve true healing.

THERAPEUTIC ASPECTS OF SPACIAL DYNAMICS®

By Jane Swain

We aren't normally conscious of space, but it's always there – between us, within us, and around us. Largely unrecognized, and unexplored, it truly is one of the world's untapped natural resources. Jaimen McMillan has dedicated his life to unlocking the mysteries of space for his fellow human beings. In 1985, McMillan founded Spacial Dynamics®, an important application in the therapeutic domain. Here it offers tremendous insights and help for physical, social, emotional, and cognitive issues to people of all ages.

Our bodies are spaces, and beyond our bodies are also spaces. We each live in these spaces in our own unique ways, as a kind of spatial signature that impacts our thinking, our feeling and our doing. Just as it is possible to change our handwriting, it is also possible to change our spatial signature; this can profoundly affect our lives.

What actually happens is that the space moves first, then the body follows. The spatial gesture essentially blazes the trail and carves out a pathway into which the body is drawn. The body has no choice but to follow. The therapist works with archetypal spatial configurations

and streams that are most conducive to health and freedom of body and soul. Children are invited by the therapist to move into these spatial streams and to gradually make them their own. This happens through hands-on practices by the therapist through imitation and through exercises, activities, and games. Therapists must have fine-tuned their own spatial gestures in order to offer models worthy of imitation. The younger the child, the more important is the spatial configuration of the adult.

Therapists must also understand the spatial developmental sequence in order to meet the child. Spatially, newborns are actually more *around* themselves than *in* themselves. Gradually, through the working of predetermined and universal spatial patterns that surround the physical bodies of infants, they come *more into their own*, i.e., they come *inside* the spaces of their physical bodies. Over time, the predetermined and more primitive spatial patterns are transformed into spatial streams that allow them to come *back out* through their bodies in order to meet what's in the spaces of the world in more fluid, coordinated, and sophisticated ways. Essentially, this is the spatial description of the long and glorious process of integration of the primitive reflexes.

Just as the early printing of grade-school children looks alike and then progresses to cursive writing that can become markedly individualized, so do the stereotypical reflexive movements transform into unique movement expressions of individualities. Unfortunately, in today's world this transformative process often goes

awry. Spacial Dynamics offers a unique means of remedying this situation because it recognizes and addresses the underlying spatial contributions to reflexive movements and behaviors.

There are spatial configurations to basic human conditions, and understanding these can provide the therapist with a pathway to progress. For example, children with impulsivity usually have an imbalance in the front/back plane of space, i.e., they are too far ahead of themselves. Typically, when running through the jump rope, these children will run through faster than is necessary and will have difficulty stopping. Some will run through

before the rope is even turned.

Learning to change an aspect of oneself (one's tempo) in relationship to something outside of oneself (the rope and the other jumpers) can have crossover effects

Our bodies are spaces, and beyond our bodies are also spaces. We each live in these spaces in our own unique ways, as a kind of spatial signature that impacts our thinking, our feeling and our doing.

in other arenas where it is beneficial to hold back, such as keeping an open mind without jumping to conclusions, and holding one's tongue in a challenging social encounter.

There are many other conditions where Spacial Dynamics offers insight and help, including tactile and auditory sensitivities, clumsiness, disturbances in the sense of life, poor balance, midline orientation and crossing midline issues, autism, asthma, OCD, aggression, social clumsiness, nonverbal learning disorders, attention issues and hyperactivity. Slow-motion Spacial Dynamics exercises and hands on techniques help to weave that which is “at loose ends” towards an integrated whole.

Therapists must hone their movements and moment-to-moment spatial observation skills. This provides an objective means of evaluating how the child is responding to your intervention and whether you need to change what you are doing. The intervention is not a predetermined recipe to be imposed upon the child, but rather an invitational interaction between therapist and child.

Therapists must also understand the physical, soul, and spiritual requirements of movement activities and games in order to select developmentally appropriate ones. For example, hand clapping, string games, and beanbag games can meet the younger grade-schooler for midline orientation and crossing midline, whereas the older student would be more attuned to Tinikling (a dance with bamboo poles), ball games, and circus activities, such as juggling, balancing, and acrobatics. A spatial approach to these activities assures that the child is learning more than that skill; what is learned is a new spatial relationship that will carry over to other aspects of a child's life.

The therapeutic activities and practices of Spacial Dynamics described in this article offer a means by which children can take the next step in their spatial development and thereby enable other aspects of their lives to positively unfold.

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Incarnational Disrhythmia

Hyper Motoric and Inattentive Challenges, Cumulative Stress Reaction,
Sensory Overwhelm Issues, Non-Verbal Disorder, Oppositional Defiance ¹

Kim Payne and Bonnie River

Getting "behind the label" of commonly diagnosed child and teen social, emotional, and behavioral challenges is taking on more and more importance for both the classroom teacher and the care professional. Of course, every child is whole and what you see laid out in this chapter is designed to better equip us to be helpers in removing obstacles to a child's full soul/spirit potential. The children that often need our extra support and are "coming in" to themselves are doing so in a way that is not typical and can be out of step with usual developmental milestones. That is why we use the term "Incarnational Disrhythmia." Given the help they need, these students will be fine, but their incarnation has its own ebb and flow. Our task is to do what we can to open up the stream through which their sense of place in the world and within themselves can better flow.

What we have laid out in these sections can help organize our thoughts and help us develop doable and depth-full approaches rather than feeling like we are being hit by an unrealistic tsunami of well-meaning but formulaic strategies.

How to use the guides

Most importantly, keep it simple and doable. Henry David Thoreau, inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson's call to simplicity, wrote an impassioned response. In a letter to Emerson he wrote of the need to "Simplify! Simplify!!" Emerson wrote back, "One 'Simplify' would have sufficed." So, when you read through these pages a particular child will likely come to mind. Look for which of the descriptions in the "What Do I See?" of the four layers (Physical, Life Forces, Relational, Self) seems to stand out. Now consider each of the "What Can I Do?" suggestions. Choose just one or two, and select the one that seems like it would be the most achievable and sustainable by you. There may be other ideas that seem like they would help more, but if they feel like it would be over-reaching, give them a pass and perhaps circle back to them in a couple of weeks. From a quiet feeling of success, over time, you can increase what you

are bringing to the child in a way that feels natural. Let the parents of the child or teen and your colleagues know your plan. Its simplicity can inspire others. In this way they gain good clarity of your support process and may even join you in their own way. It is so good to hear the question, "Great, what can I do to help?" and to feel a circle gathering around the child.

In this way you are helping the child in need, but you are avoiding that troubling dynamic of diverting too much focus away from the rest of the children in the class. After all, keeping the four layers of the whole class healthy and moving along is probably what the individual child you are thinking about needs as much as anything. No matter how good an idea sounds in the following pages, the children or teens need you to use strategies that seem natural to you, so they hear your voice and intent. In this way they can move safely and easily into the small but increasingly beautiful learning space you open up each day.

The Hyper Motoric Child

Physical Body

What do I see?

- Has problems remaining seated
- Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
- Displays compulsive movements such as tics, clearing throat, etc.
- Appears "on the go" and "driven by a motor"
- Displays overshooting, impulsive movements

What can I do?

- Increase physical prompting of student (e.g., hand on shoulder or back).
- The student could be given permission, by signaling, to get up and leave the classroom for an "aerobic break".
- Consider shortening main lesson rhythmic time and building in a movement time halfway through the lesson.
- If appropriate, give the child physical compression such as with a gentle firmness squeeze, or rub her arms and shoulders. This can be turned into a game. If this is not possible, consider a very heavy woolen blanket wrapped around the child during which they can have a quiet reading time.

¹ Editor Note: This is a practical manual for dealing with various and sometimes overlapping behaviors, at times with overlapping and even identical strategies. If the reader notes some repeated passages in this long, detailed manual, it is because some suggested strategies are used for different situations. This chapter has been excerpted and slightly edited from Elisabeth Auer, ed., *Helping Children on Their Way: Educational Support for the Classroom* (Chatham, NY: Waldorf Publications, 2017). The *Research Bulletin* is grateful to the authors for their kind permission to reprint their work.

Life, Habit / Etheric Body

What do I see?

- Has organization difficulties and loses things
- Has problems in transitions
- Displays odd habits or compulsive behaviors

What can I do?

- Set timers or other visual reminders for transitions and seat work.
- Post all schedules and refer to them with the class. With younger students, use a pictorial schedule depicting the daily routine.
- Require the use of a 3-ring binder or notebook and subject dividers (starting in fourth or fifth grade at the latest).
- Assist with the prioritization of activities and workload.
- Reduce the clutter and unnecessary visual overload in the classroom (brooms in corners, open shelving and student cubby holes, counter clutter). Pay special attention to the chalk board/front of the classroom.

Senses, Relationship / Astral Body

What do I see?

- Argues or fights with peers or adults
- Has difficulty awaiting turn
- Uses inappropriate language or gestures in non-combative situations
- Cannot sustain planned rhythmic movements, as in circle activities

What can I do?

- Use private signals and cues that have been pre-arranged with the student to help focus attention.
- Design instruction for frequent opportunities to interact with peers.
- Assign special responsibilities to the student in the presence of the peer group so others observe the student in a positive light.
- Hold regular class meetings with carefully set up and monitored, age-appropriate communication skills.
- Play games that involve fast movement together with coming to a complete stand-still. For example, any one of the games that involve running and then having to stand as still as a statue. There are any number of good stalking games that involve moments of stillness (tension) and running (release) in a controlled and conscious way.

- Play listening games. For example, "...listen to a noise far, far away, now a little closer, now in the room, now as close to you as possible." For older children: "Now keeping hold of the very close noise, can you hear the far away sound at the same time?"
- The soliloquy strategy: Many children who have attention issues also can be overly defiant when directly confronted. Try this: Quietly, within the child's hearing range, talk out loud to yourself about your reactions consequences you are considering if it continues. Remember you are not talking to them but about the situation. This gives both the teacher and the student a valuable pause before a potentially negative conflict.

Learning, Organizing / Ego

What do I see?

- Interrupts during instructions (asks for clarification or distracts while teacher is speaking)
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Needs significantly more supervision than other children
- Impulsive in interactions, does not self-monitor
- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in his/her work
- Self-directs or soothes through speech (e.g., speaks to herself out loud or in a mumble what it is she is doing or wants to do. Sometimes it can also take the form of incessant humming, an unconscious singing)

What can I do?

- Break down longer assignments into smaller, manageable increments, providing a lot of structure, monitoring, and follow through.
- Teach students how to self-monitor on-task behavior, so that they are using class time effectively for getting work done.
- Frame the area of the board you want the children to pay attention to by having a curtain, veil, or shutter to cover unwanted board work.
- Teach internalizing speech and actions. For example, move from singing a well-known song to reducing the volume further and further until humming quieter and quieter until the song is being hummed "inside" without any noise at all. This can be helped by keeping a beat. If you reduce the volume of the beat to none at all – this can become a funny game

when they try to join in at a signal from you and see whether and where you are synchronized.

- A similar process can be achieved in movement by reducing a consciously carried out gesture, making it more and more subtle until the child is motionless doing it “inside”.
- The Calling Out Scale. If a child is a “serial blurter” tell them about the 3-2-1 system:
Three: Wrong comment – wrong time
Two: Right comment – wrong time
One: Right comment – Right time
Each time the child makes a comment, ask them, without any fuss, which of the three categories they thought their comment belonged to. Also give them your assessment. You can do this for an individual student or for the whole class.
- Together with the student, design a simple self-monitoring card using a key goal such as “I spoke out at the right moment in the right way today.” The child is reminded in the morning of his Key Goal. At the end of the day a one-minute review takes place where firstly he gives himself a score from 1 (always) to 5 (very seldom), followed by the teacher giving him a score. The child aims to accrue no more than 10-12 points in a week.

The Inattentive Type

Physical Body

What do I see?

- Is sluggish or drowsy
- Uses odd or inappropriate seating posture
- Appears to be “pulled down by gravity” when seated or standing

What can I do?

- Recommend high protein, low carbohydrate diet with Omega-3 Fatty Acid supplemented.
- Consider shortening main lesson rhythmic time and building in a movement time halfway through the lesson.
- Touch or physically cue certain students for their focus prior to giving directions.
- If appropriate, give the child physical compression such as with a gentle firmness squeeze, or rub her arms and shoulders. This can be turned into a game. If this is not possible, consider a very heavy woolen blanket wrapped around the child during which they can have a quiet reading time.

Life, Habit / Etheric Body

What do I see?

- Drops or loses materials
- Appears tired or complains of being tired
- Forgetful in daily activities

What can I do?

- Post all schedules and refer to them with the class. Use a pictorial schedule depicting the daily routine.
- Require the use of a 3-ring binder or notebook and subject dividers (starting in fourth or fifth grade at the latest).
- Provide assistance (another student or adult) to help them regularly sort through desks, backpacks, and notebooks.
- Provide preferential seating up front, within cueing distance of the teacher, and away from doors, windows, and high-traffic areas of the room, keeping visual and auditory stimulation to a minimum.
- Allow for natural consequences of not having materials (do not replace lost items with new ones).

Senses, Relationship / Astral Body

What do I see?

- Avoids direct eye contact
- Doesn't listen when spoken to directly
- Easily distracted

What can I do?

- Establish a cozy or concentration corner where a desk is veiled off from the rest of the class or an alternative desk or chair in the room (two-seat method). This is *not* a punishment area.
- Assign special responsibilities to the student in the presence of the peer group so others observe the student in a positive light.
- Hold regular class meetings with carefully set up and monitored, age-appropriate communication skills. Ask the student to be the “keeper of the speaking rule.” Her job is to notice when anyone transgresses the pre-agreed guidelines for the meeting.
- Play games that involve fast movement together with coming to a complete standstill. For example, any one of the games that involve running and then having to stand as still as a statue. There are any number of good stalking games that involve moments of stillness (tension) and running (release) in a controlled and conscious way.

- Play listening games. For example, “...listen to a noise far, far away, now a little closer, now in the room, now as close to you as possible.” For older children: “Now keeping hold of the very close noise can you hear the far away sound at the same time?”
- The soliloquy strategy: Many children who have attention issues also can be overly defiant when directly confronted. Try this: Quietly, within the child’s hearing range, talk out loud to yourself about your reactions consequences you are considering if it continues. Remember you are not talking to them but about the situation. This gives both the teacher and the student a valuable pause before a potentially negative conflict.
- Play various noticing games. For example, the children form two concentric circles. The group on the inside turns to face partners on the outside. They have to look very carefully at every detail of their partner’s appearance. They then close their eyes while the partners on the outside change something in their appearance, let’s say they put a ring on a different finger. The inside circle members now all open their eyes and have to find what it was their partners have changed.

Learning, Organizing / Ego

What do I see?

- Seems spacey or disoriented
- Uses distracting techniques to avoid being on task
- Doesn't follow through on instructions and fails to finish work
- Resists work requiring sustained will
- Avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in work that requires sustained mental effort

What can I do?

- Break down longer assignments into smaller, manageable increments, providing a lot of structure, monitoring, and follow-through.
- Teach students to self-monitor on-task behavior/ work completion and to set individual short-term goals to self-monitor.
- Frame the area of the board you want the children to pay attention to by having a curtain, veil, or shutter to cover unwanted board work.
- Teach externalized speech and actions. For example, ask the child to sing a song well known to her “inside her head.” Next ask her to hum it quietly, gaining in volume until she is singing out loud.
- A similar process can be achieved in movement by increasing a consciously carried-out gesture making

it more and more visible until the child is making the motion in a large demonstrative way.

- Together with the student, design a simple self-monitoring card using a key goal such as “I paid good attention today.” The child is reminded in the morning of her Key Goal. The teacher meets for one minute at the end of every day and the student gives herself a mark from 1 through 5. The teacher then gives a score in response to the written question. 1 = Always, 2 = Almost Always, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Not Often, 5 = Hardly Ever. The student sets her cumulative weekly target score of say 8 points, as this would mean really good behavior. An unacceptable score of say 12 is also set and a consequence for such negative behavior is agreed upon. After a set number of weeks, a new goal is chosen and the system repeats itself.

Cumulative Stress Reaction

Physical Body

What do I see?

Pictures of polarities

- Student often appears disheveled or very neat.
- Student is awkward and hesitant in movements or very adept.
- Student stands tall and balanced or is slumped over and lax in form.
- Poor patterns of sleep reported. Restlessness and sleep deprived or oversleeping and very difficult to wake up.
- Hypo/under aware of other children’s space and hyper/over aware of his own space
- Little awareness of proprioception. “...Where are my limbs in space and what are they doing?”

What can I do?

- Note, with a symbol, on a calendar, the days in which behavior is really bad, see if there is a pattern. (This often shows up on transition days of a split household lifestyle.) Bring this to the attention of other teachers or caregivers.
- Keep hygiene items in pouch for child and encourage their use for self-care and grooming.
- Use a lot of friendly, forewarned touch and movement to encourage relaxation. Avoid approaching student from behind or in a way that startles.
- Bach flower remedies could be considered. Vervain for being highly strung and fixed or beech for being stressed and critical. (Consult with a doctor first.)

- Recommend warming foods such as oatmeal, also high protein.
- Recommend warm clothing that tuck in and if possible woolen undergarments, as well as shoes that can be securely laced up.
- Avoid situations of adrenalin arousal, increasing calming activities particularly at known points in the day of high complexity and stress.
- Teach student to notice his or her body tensions before it gets too tight.
- Teach 10 deep cleansing breaths when student notices body tension.

Life, Habit / Vitality

What do I see?

- Listlessness, spaciness, or hyper vigilance as seen in alertness to danger
- Large appetite or small appetite (picky, then indiscriminate)
- Need to use bathroom or drink too often or not often enough
- Fixed routines, reacts habitually and/or chaotic habit life
- Startled at novelty and only attends to emotionally charged information

What can I do?

- Use gestures, close to the body and metaphoric, to focus student. For example, frame instructions by saying, "I am going to tell you to do three things. Number one (accompanied by gesture)..." Use the words "please look at me," or "time to focus here."
- Allow student to use self-soothing actions (i.e., sitting on a cushion, holding a stone or crystal or stuffed animal...).
- Develop signals for drink and bathroom and anticipate student's needs (be one step ahead, and subtle).
- Give previews of new situations. Foster and model delight in novelty.
- Predictability, predictability, predictability.

Senses, Relationship Body

What do I see?

- He is vigilant but misses parts of the work, seems forgetful or sloppy
- There seems to be a disconnect between the senses; seems to see but not hear
- Student is hyper-sensitive to touch but twists his own arm in a painful manner.

- Student seems to crave something, like an attachment object, and without it, will display strange and out of proportion reactions to situations.
- Emotionally 'hair triggered'; very low tolerance for frustration
- Out of proportion explosion or implosion of anger/sullenness
- Low tolerance for others whom student sees as different or "weird"
- Spreading the effects of negative events; does not bracket/contain problems but lets them color everything even if many positive things have happened that day
- Student avoids spontaneous play and does not appreciate good humor. Student scans others laughter for possible threat.
- *High Social, Sensory Complexity + Low Form & Predictability = Stress Response.* Formula: $SSC + FP = ?$

Therefore, do everything you can to create...*Low Social Sensory Complexity + High Form and Predictability = Safe Response*

What can I do?

- Develop a "system" with the student whereby you let the student know that he/she is "out the window," this alone helps them "come back" and focus on the task at hand.
- Forewarn the student that you are approaching, that something is going to happen, and use an even and soothing voice (the epitome of phlegma!).
- Keep visual and auditory input as much on "an even keel" as possible, forewarn and identify moments of chaos, tell student to watch you as these moments are not scary to you. (ha!)
- Invite student to try and see the world through different eyes, via stories, plays and creative projects.
- Appeal to student's feeling life and introduce nuances of thought, feelings, and ethics.
- Listen to the student with an open heart, calmly and patiently, without judgment.
- Tell stories and biographies of empathy and compassion.
- In socially complex situations, like spending time on the playground, increase form, even rehearse and later review, *good, better, best* response to usual trigger situations.

“I” / Learning and Organizing Body

What do I see?

- Confusion, frightened or blank expressions
- Withdrawal from the social milieu
- Rejects praise and consistently sees success as failure, an accident or not good enough
- Panics at deadlines, competition
- Low tolerance for new learning
- Cannot scan read, multi-track and maintain creative connection with material being learnt
- Inability to make decisions and/or judgments, or inappropriate judgments
- Perseverance upon an action, or category of actions or content of thinking, as in scary or violent scenes

What can I do?

- When appropriate, identify the perseverant thoughts or behaviors and use direct and “quiet aside” language as in “forget the scene” similar to Steiner’s approach with obsessive-compulsive disordered children.
- Bring the child into the social situation by assuring your presence.
- Work with healing–pedagogical stories.
- Increase structured cooperative learning strategies.
- Reduce any perceived competitive activities or give student a set role in the activity.

Sensory Overwhelm Issues

Physical Body

What do I see?

- Student appears tight, rigid and hyper-vigilant in moments of high social input, particularly in the shoulders and abdomen.
- Disturbances in activity level, floppy muscle tone, and lack of motor coordination.
- Random, goofy movements
- Very sensitive to being touched
- Very sensitive to “scratchy” clothing
- Banging into objects and other people
- Falling on the floor at seemingly random moments. However, looking closer, this usually occurs in moments of high sensory stimulation.
- Student appears to go through exaggerated tension and release patterns where she is tight and tense followed by being floppy and loose.
- The life sense of well-being is affected so the child feels she has to push back hard against a world

that she feels is overwhelming her. This leads her to ‘puff’ herself up and generally harden her face, trunk, and limbs or the opposite: getting floppy.

What do I do?

- Use a lot of friendly, forewarned *firm* touch and movement to encourage relaxation.
- Notice when she is tensing up or about to get floppy and give her a small movement task to do that relieves the tension without the usual explosion of movement or behavior.
- Excuse the student, every hour or two, and let her go to the swings and swing for a few minutes. When she returns do some deep touch. For example, you may “polish her up” by rubbing her briskly or wrap her in a blanket, pretending she is a burrito and roll her on the floor for a few moments or play “car wash”: the child crawls between your feet while you are standing pretending you are the mechanism of a car wash.
- If things are improving, teach her to notice in her body which muscles tense up or get floppy when she is becoming frustrated. Develop a secret signal that she can give you to ask for permission to get up and move or signals that she needs your help to work through a problem before it gets out of hand.
- Have the student sit on either a one-legged stool or a vestibular (wobble) cushion.
- Make a large lap-sized beanbag. If possible, warm it up in a low heated oven and place it on her lap when you see early warning signs.
- Allow a child time to gather her thoughts. She will usually need more than typical processing time.
- Avoid chain-linked requests. Break your requests down into single directions.
- Bach flower remedies could be considered. Vervain for being highly strung and fixed or beech for being stressed and critical (consult a doctor first).
- Consider allowing her to chew gum but only when she is feeling overwhelmed.
- Understand that her falling on the floor and bumping into things is an attempt to secure herself in space
- A Sensory Integration evaluation is very important.

Life, Habit

What do I see?

- Student fails to learn from experience.
- Becomes easily upset when patterns or rules change

- The Adult as a Part of the Self-Stimulating Loop: The high stimulation input, low sensory absorption can be seen as the beginning of an addictive cycle. During stress arousal situations, hormones such as adrenaline, cortisol, and prolactin are released. These “hormone hits” can become a sought-after effect, whereby children will unconsciously provoke strong responses in order to achieve what has become a *normal* sensation that the survival instinct triggers. As adults, we can become unwitting suppliers to this negative social/behavioral habit.
- Recovery from an outburst can take a much-longer-than-typical time.

What can I do?

- Transparency: Children who have SI issues are often oppositional. They can go through times when they are nervous, stressed, and anxious. They are in a state of moderate or hyper arousal for long periods of time. This leads them to choose between fight, flight, or freeze, with fight being most often used but the others applying as well. Predictability, rhythm, and transparency of process are vital if the child is to relax, trust, and feel safe enough to begin to allow other points of view into her life. Examine the aspects of life that could be simplified, made to be more rhythmical and predictable.
- He is often drawn to new people out of his well-developed intellectual curiosity; although this is fine, it can quickly lead him to over stimulation. Therefore it is important to balance this by drawing him back to more predictable patterns and rhythms.
- Spend time outdoors and connecting with nature every day.
- During transitions keep him close, give him a directed well-liked task (e.g., be the keeper of the jump rope), or draw him aside into a neutral sensory place and bring him back in, once the other children have settled down.
- Avoid using the same area for different functions, for example eating in the play area or playing in the bedroom.

Senses, Relationship

What do I see?

- He may be over- or under-sensitive to sensory input.
- He will often be prone to unpredictable emotional reactivity, “hair triggers.”
- He may show speech and language problems.
- Seeks revenge when angered

- He can easily be targeted by peers and seen as annoying.
- He can often seek to emulate the behaviors of his least successful peers.
- Has logic that revolves around denial of responsibility
- He does not transition well, becomes confused, can have quick flares of moods
- He sees himself as often being singled out or picked on. It is not that he doesn’t pick up social cues, for he may pick up way too much of these, leading to sensory overload. The paradox of this tendency is that he actually *processes* very little of the information. Think of it as a funnel with a very large opening but a tiny tube or spout, where a lot comes in at the top but very little actually gets through. Because of this, the child is lead to high stimulation and high-risk situations.
- He will escalate arguments seemingly unaware that he may be in a public place.

What can I do?

- Preview ‘hot spot’ social situations that are likely to result in the child/teen feeling overwhelmed and defiant. Rehearse ‘good’, ‘better’, and ‘best’ responses.
- Bracketing: Make a one-minute list at the end of every day of good and bad things. Help the child/teen see that the day did not only consist of bad and threatening things.
- Isolate him to avoid peer reinforcement and embarrassment: It is important not to speak to a child in a potentially escalating situation in front of others. This will only increase the sensory overwhelm, resulting fight or flight reaction. If the child or adolescent will not come with you to another room, then ask the other children to leave.
- Speak to his peers and coach them in how to best accommodate and deescalate.
- Allow him to stay close to you. The loving presence of a trusted, reliable adult helps provide him with a “north star” by which he can navigate confusing sensory and social situations.
- Offer responsibility for animal care on a regular, rhythmical basis.
- Make a simple, cozy corner tent out of heavy blankets and put a bean bag chair in it. This is good to use when he is showing early warning signs, but it is of particular use when he is very defensive or in a tantrum.

- Avoid talking, raising voice, or reasoning when he is in a tantrum. This may prolong it. A soft, soothing voice or even singing quietly will help.
- As soon as he gets over his tantrum help him into a well-liked practical task.
- Defer evaluating with him until the next day when the strategies will feel less threatening.
- Make sure he has a safe, low sensory impact environment at break times. This will prevent a lot of problems from arising during less structured times.
- Recognize that a loud voice, unfocused play, decreased eye contact, falling are warning signs.

Learning, Organizing

What do I see?

- Student will often have a very well-developed sense of intellectual curiosity.
- Poor self-regulation
- She attempts to answer most questions with “I don’t know.”
- She will argue recklessly almost every point as if it is a life/death situation.

What can I do?

- Project work that provides opportunities for her highly developed research capacities help create safety and challenge. It also helps her peers see her strengths.
- Stories that rehearse potentially stressful situations are helpful.
- Don’t interrupt play that is going well but stay close, so that if the situation becomes confusing you can help. However, avoid ‘saving him’; better help him problem-solve.
- You cannot win against a child who has SMI/ oppositional tendencies in an argument: Simply put, a child that is oppositional can become reckless, even outrageous, while you will have to be the responsible parent or teacher. If you abandon this role in the name of “showing her that you too can be powerful or insulting” then you abdicate your authority. Either way you lose.
- Processing/Sequencing: Seeing the sequence of events as they are objectively played out is not at all easy for a defiant child who is so often in a stress reaction pattern. Because she will tend to miss some key aspects in the build-up that leads to a difficult situation, she can feel unjustly blamed. Look for the points that escalated the situation. Where could have the people involved “gotten off the

escalator?”, “What could have been some different choices?” and something that is often enjoyed “What could you have done that would have made it *even worse*?” As the parent/teacher and child become more practiced at this, the child can often begin to see the sequence of events more clearly.

- Play the “thinking out loud” game: This is particularly useful for younger children where you (the adult) speak your thoughts out loud *within earshot but not directly to the child* about your concerns and voicing 3-4 other ways the child could act.
- Self-Monitoring: For the over-nine-year-old... If she is receiving SI treatment and improvements are happening meet with the child (and parents if possible) and identify one target improvement in behavior, such as “I will do what the teacher asks the first time I am asked...”. This target is written down on a card and kept by the teacher. The teacher meets with the student for one minute at the end of every day, and the student gives herself a mark from 1 through 5. The teacher then gives his score in response to the written question. 1=Always, 2 = Almost Always, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Not Often, 5 = Hardly Ever. The student sets her cumulative weekly target score of say 8 points as this would mean really good behavior. An unacceptable score of say 12 is also set, and a consequence for such negative behavior is agreed upon. After a set number of weeks, a new goal is chosen and the system repeats itself.

Non-Verbal Learning Disorder

Physical / Bodily

What do I see?

- Often low flaccid muscle tone and spastic-like movements
- Muscles of the face often lack definition of expression leading to a flat affect, except times when the student is acting a part, as in a play, then, expressions appear to be gifted and sharply discerned
- The senses of balance and self-in-movement (vestibular and proprioceptive) are immature leading to clumsy, awkward, and disorganized movements.

What can I do?

- Touch the student on the shoulder as a signal to attend to the following two interventions:
- Use identifying words for feelings or nuance as you are making the gesture. It’s like “read my lips” as you smile, you point to your lips and say “this means I feel happy or content”

- Use large signals as in American Sign Language to signify such nuances as “this is a joke or a twist on words,” “this is serious,” etc.
- Provide many small, repeated, predictable activities to stretch; lower the head below the waist and practice movements that involve listening for the number of movements, as in tapping hands against the floor in a rhythm.

Life, Habit / Vitality

What do I see?

- Student appears pale, flushes quickly and seems to become breathless or dizzy at moments of high social input.
- Student does not transition well, becomes confused can have quick flares of moods.
- Student does not seem to have a “sense for time,” words like “in a flash” or “quick as a wink” are not signifiers of a length of time.

What can I do?

- Direct the student to get up and get a drink of water etc., as in directing them to “assume stage left,” just before the class breaks into a transition.
- Help student develop coping skills, such as stepping back, sitting down and listening to the words being spoken while diffusing the sight. “Look out a window and listen to the words,” etc.
- Provide a verbal list of the schedule; have the student put stars or some symbol where the schedule is changed, or they need to use a coping skill to make the transition (icons do not always work). Keep the schedule visible for the student. (E.g., a sideboard or a photocopied schedule which the student alters using color indicators for change or transition. Use a line to indicate length of time as a visual picture.)

Senses, Relationship Body

What do I see?

- The eye and the hand seem disconnected and the student is “sloppy” in grapho-motor skills.
- Student does not appear to empathize or understand nuance of social cues or is literal and not figurative in concept building.
- Student seems very attentive, watching, but does not follow what is being directed: she will describe a game but not enter it, or will enter and stand, her description revealing confusion.

What can I do?

- Provide a liner page, workbook formats, form drawings the student may trace.

- Point-out concrete objects which portray figurative speech to create a bridge to metaphor or analogies: “Look at the columns on the front of this building, they stand straight and tall, now you stand like the columns. See, numbers like to stand up like this too, and they make columns...” It is a though you need to look for a straight line curved over and over again to verbally describe movements in the world.
- Write out rules of a game. Move figures about on a page or board as you talk the rules. Use the words “stop,” “turn to the left,” do not assume that a gesture is read appropriately.

“I” / Learning and Organizing Body

What do I see?

- Student can read but doesn’t have certain skills like story predicting or judgment of right-or-wrong actions taken by characters. Operational reading skills linked to pictures (like, how to follow picture-based furniture assembly instructions) is better than narrative reading.
- Skills taught as lessons of “moral laws” or metaphors for human interactions; for example, the interaction of personified characters depicting the relationship of the number processes or the actions of the parts of speech are often not processed and retained. The information was not concrete and the student, consequently, missed the point.
- Use of temporal language indicators is often misinterpreted. Causative phrases, such as “If you do this, then you will need to do that,” can become confusing.

What can I do?

- Discuss the nature of the reading ahead of time. Make the predicting statements more concrete. Ask the student, What words tell you that something may or is going to happen? With younger students, use homophones such as in the *Amelia Bedelia* books and make the choice of what they are saying concrete.
- Try to take the NLD students aside and tell them the link behind the metaphor and the law say; for example, “When I say fractions are for sharing, I mean this...”; ask them to give you half of something then say, “How you feel now is because you enjoyed the sharing as it was fair” or vice versa.
- Make causative phrases concrete; say, “These signs are telling us laws. If I run through a stop sign, there will be a consequence or a price to pay; I did not obey a law and did something that is wrong; numbers need to obey laws, too, or they will do something wrong.”

Opposition & Defiance

Identification & Strategies

All children and teenagers challenge boundaries. It is a healthy way in which they further define their individuality and their place in the world by meeting loving, conscious boundaries and resistance.

A key question is what is “normal” and what is not. In general, the line is crossed when a child seems driven to defeat the adult at all costs. He or she will be relentless in attempting to prove adults wrong and try to defeat any attempt to exercise authority over them by greatly exaggerating any perceived weakness in the adult.

Identifying oppositional children or teens

Here are some typical behaviors or attitudes of a child or teen that are oppositional.

Oppositional children or teenagers...

1. Live in a fantasy land in which they are able to defeat all adults
2. Look at every situation as a win-lose proposition which they *always* win
3. Fail to learn from experience
4. Feel you must be fair to me regardless of how I treat you
5. Seek revenge when angered
6. Need to feel tough and hide their vulnerabilities
7. Believe that if they ignore you long enough, you'll run out of moves
8. Believe themselves to be the equal of their parents and teachers
9. Can often seek to emulate the behaviors of their least successful peers
10. Attempt to answer most questions with “I don't know”
11. Have logic that revolves around denial of responsibility

In more extreme circumstances, this problem is known as Opposition Defiance Disorder (ODD) and is described as a pattern of negativistic, hostile, and defiant behavior during which four or more of the following are often present. The time-frames given below are approximate.

The child or teen ...

(Behaviors that occurred at all during the last three months)

1. Is spiteful and vindictive.

2. Blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior.

(Behaviors that occur at least twice a week)

1. Is touchy or easily annoyed by others
2. Loses temper
3. Argues with adults
4. Actively defies or refuses to comply with adults' requests or rules

(Behaviors that occur at least four times per week)

1. Is angry and resentful
2. Deliberately annoys people

THINGS TO KNOW

Structure & Discipline

Consider flexible structure and discipline that subtly expands when things are going well and contract when things are not. This is particularly effective in working with oppositional tendencies. In terms of consistency, if the child comments “...but last week I was allowed to...”, then the meaningful response is, “Yes, but last week we were enjoying ourselves and you were behaving very well, now you are not.” The book *The Soul of Discipline*² details three distinct gestures as the *Governor* (close holding), *Gardener* (moderate holding), and the *Guide* (close holding).

Transparency

Children who are oppositional are often nervous, stressed, and anxious. They are in a state of moderate or hyper arousal for long periods of time. This leads them to choose between fight, flight, or freeze, with fight being most often used, but the others applying as well. Predictability, rhythm, and transparency of process are vital, if the child is to relax, trust, and feel safe enough to begin to allow other points of view into her life. Examine the aspects of life that could be simplified, made to be more rhythmical and predictable.

Hyper Vigilance

Children who are very oppositional amplify many aspects of life, therefore seeing them as threatening. They see themselves as often being singled out or picked on. It is not that they don't pick up social cues, for many pick up way too many of these, leading to sensory overload. The paradox of this tendency is that they actually *process* very little of the information. Think of it as a funnel with a very large opening but a tiny tube or spout, where a lot comes in at the top, but very little

² Kim John Payne, *The Soul of Discipline: The Simplicity Parenting Approach to Warm, Firm, and Calm Guidance – From Toddlers to Teens* (NY: Ballantine Books, 2015).

gets through. Because of this, the child is lead to high stimulation and high-risk situations in order to obtain what in reality is a small amount of integrated information. Another way to look at this is to think of someone eating fast/processed food. They need to eat quite a lot of it in order to obtain even the small amount of the nutrients that the body needs.

Parents & Teachers Cannot be Held Hostage

Often children who are defiant will threaten to do harm to property or to themselves if they do not get their way. In these situations, it is important to take their threat seriously. Tell them you will call the appropriate authority or trained professional to help them if they go forward with their threat. This helps break the hostage syndrome while ensuring the safety and accountability of the child. In essence it is a reality check.

Anger as Familiar Ground

Children and teenagers who are habitually defiant will often provoke adults into anger. They do this because other emotional responses are unfamiliar, even scary for them. One of the simplest yet most effective strategies employed is to answer every increasingly frustrated question with “I don’t know.” Two strategies are helpful: firstly, humor that has no trace of anger; if that fails deferment such as “We are not going to talk about this right now because it will not get us anywhere other than a bad place where you will end up even more frustrated,” or, “We are not going to talk about this now as we will end up appearing weak or silly rather than responsible and strong,” and even, “I am going to assume that if you say I don’t know you mean *maybe*.”

Allowing the Child to be Miserable

Breaking the cycle of provocation usually involves you as a parent or teacher giving yourself permission to allow the child to be miserable. For a teacher, it usually involves open conversations with one’s colleagues or administration but in particular with the parents. For example, if a child is habitually provocative and defiant, let her know that sadly you will withdraw every single privilege she has that is *within your control*, such as car or bus rides to places she wants to go, playdates, trips, new clothes, pocket money, or recess privileges. If the child says that she will do more bad things, then be grateful to her for giving you the practice you need to do these things that you don’t really want to do.

Insulate Them to Avoid Peer

Our task is to do what we can to open up the stream through which these students’ sense of place in the world and within themselves can better flow.

Reinforcement and Embarrassment

It is important not to speak to a child in a potentially escalating situation in front of others. If the child or adolescent will not come with you to another room, ask the other children to please leave. Children and teens that are oppositional often have strong leadership capacities and a sense of pride that easily leads to embarrassment and defiance if publicly challenged.

Give Clear Messages About Negative Behaviors and Their Costs

From a simple reinforcement perspective, it is good for negative behaviors to cost more than they are worth. These costs are best explained in advance when possible.

You Cannot Beat an Oppositional Child/Teen in an Argument

Simply put, a teen that is oppositional can become reckless, even outrageous, while you have to be the responsible parent or teacher. If you abandon this role in the name of “showing her that you too can be powerful or insulting,” then you abdicate your authority. Either way you lose.

Defer and Deflect

Don’t try to “have it out” with a teen in an oppositional outburst. Let him know that the matter will be taken further but at a time of your choosing.

What Impact is This Behavior Having on His Life?

Unless a child or teen can see that his behavior is negatively affecting his life, why should he change? Although he may not admit as much, he may well listen as you run through some of the negative results of his behavior.

Offer Replacement Behaviors and Thoughts

As a step along the way, encourage the child or teen to be behaviorally “bilingual.” They can be more open with their opinions when with their friends, but when they are with adults they will significantly benefit from being restrained.

“I understand, but that’s not one of your choices.” Children struggling with defiance need help to know what is within their range of choices and what is not.

Admire Their Attempts to be Strong

Oppositional children or teens view themselves as fighting for their rights. The main mistake they make is

to see boundaries as contravening their rights. By looking beyond their words and appreciating the fact that they can stand up for themselves, they see that you are someone who may understand.

Processing/Sequencing

Seeing the sequence of events as they are objectively played out is not at all easy for a defiant child who is so often in a stress-reaction pattern. Because they tend to miss some key aspects in the build-up that leads to a difficult situation, they can feel unjustly blamed. A few things to consider:

1. Listen carefully to their perception and have them sketch out a cartoon-like sequence of well-spaced boxes as they describe the situation. If they do not want to draw, then do it yourself. Even simple stick figures will do.
2. In the spaces between the boxes, add your own pictures using a different color. If the child disputes your view, agree to disagree if necessary. If she seems open to going further, you might try the following:
3. Look for the points that escalated the situation. Where could have the people involved “gotten off the escalator?”, “What could have been some different choices?” And an imagining that is often enjoyed: “What could you have done that would have made it even worse?”

As the parent, teacher, and child become more practiced at this, the child can often begin to see the sequence of events more clearly.

Set Clear and Firm Non-Conflicting Goals.

Ensure that the goals are understood.

If asked, give a straightforward and brief explanations not justifications for what you are asking.

A Good Explanation Usually Contains...

- The effect this behavior will have on others
- The consequences if directions are not followed
- One or two replacement behaviors or other choices that will help the child be more successful

Play the “Thinking Out Loud” Game

This is particularly useful for younger children where you (the adult) speak out your thoughts enumerating 3-4 other ways of thinking or acting while the child tries to pick the best and worst ones.

In trying to talk to a child who is regularly defiant, here are 10 key points to communicate:

1. It’s not really possible to defeat all adults.

2. It’s good to be optimistic, but use your optimism to plan how to win a game or do your work, not how to prove people are wrong.
3. If you fail to learn from experience, you’ll go on getting into trouble.
4. Don’t expect others to treat you fairly unless *you* treat *them* fairly. You are not the sole judge of fairness. Everybody has an opinion.
5. Revenge is not always the best option. Lots of people believe this, but visit a prison and ask the prisoners if they feel this had worked for them.
6. It’s a mistake to believe nice people are weak. Ask a martial arts teacher.
7. When you use the tiniest flaw in what someone is saying to prove they are wrong, you only leave the impression that you are unwilling to consider others’ opinions.
8. Few people believe children and adults are equal. They share the rights not to be harmed, but otherwise children need to get more experience in order to run their own lives and have it work out.
9. People who remain ignorant of their impact on others are doomed to live in a world in which they feel picked on.
10. If you believe parents and teachers will run out of moves, and if you ignore their attempts to use logic and reason, you are wrong. By ignoring them, you invite them to use more drastic solutions.

When Talking Fails

Some of the suggestions that are about to be made may seem “behaviorist” in their emphasis. However, this style of consequences for actions is simple and direct. It allows a child or teen to not get caught in complexity and to get fairly instant feedback for their behavior. These children tend to disassociate from their actions. By instituting systems like these, the child or teen is led back to seeing what actions are acceptable or not. These are not the only approaches, but they are very helpful as early steps in a situation that needs changing.

Warning Systems

One-Two-Three System

An age-old way of warning:

One = Please stop, that was unacceptable.

Two = You are continuing to be out of line.

Three = Now there will be a consequence.

Red-Yellow-Green Light

Take a piece of paper. Fold it in three and tape the ends forming a three-dimensional triangle. Color the sides red, yellow, and green. Place the paper triangle somewhere discreet yet clearly visible.

Green = Well done, appropriate.

Yellow = Not good, inappropriate, proceed with caution.

Red = Unacceptable, you have gone too far and will now have a consequence.

When Warnings Fail

Action Oriented Interventions

Remember that most oppositional children or teens feel that if they ignore you for long enough, you will run out of moves and give up. So finding yourself having to engage interventions is not at all uncommon.

*Goals and Achievement**Developing Perspective-Taking and Self-Monitoring*

Children or teens who regularly are involved in behavioral difficulties often lack the ability to see things from different points of view. These children also need help to be able to see their own actions objectively without feeling that the adults are picking on them. A *Goals and Achievements* agreement is a simple daily way to develop these skills.

Who is it for?

These agreements have primarily been used for children who tease and bully. It is to help them know when they have “crossed the line” and when they have done well. However, they can also be effective for children who are targeted and/or “bystanders” who either support the bullying child or perhaps support the child being picked on.

How does it work?

There are three steps:

One: The teacher, and, if possible, the counselor meet with the parents to outline the process. It’s important that the parents see that the actions taken are not meant for blaming their child but designed to “catch the child being good” and to help the child reflect when he or she have not done well.

Two: The teacher, counselor, and parents meet with the child and listen to the child’s perspective of what the problem may be.

A positive statement is worked out, describing what the child will try to do to improve the situation. For example, if the child is central in a clique that is excluding others in the class, the sentence may be, “My goal is to consider the rest of the class and the teacher and to find the right time to speak up, if I feel that something is not fair.” This statement is written down on the Goals and Achievements card. The card is explained to the child, including guidelines for “How to score,” “Where to write the scores,” and “How to add-up my scores.” It is an extremely simple process that children understand right away.

Three: At the end of each day, the teacher meets with the child; the scores are added up and compared to her target score. A very brief discussion is held about why the score is better or worse than the target. A plan is made to either “keep the good work going” or “how to do better tomorrow.” A mark is made for that day on the graph provided on the back of the card.

Do we do this for every lesson through the day?

This depends on the nature of the problem and the commitment of the faculty. Some teachers feel that they will apply this only during morning lessons, recess, and other times in the day, when they can keep an eye on things. Other teachers will want to extend this to all lessons throughout the day, as they feel they have the support of the subject teachers and because the problem often comes up during these times. What has proven important is to make sure that recess and after school times are included in the monitored periods, as these are sometimes the most socially challenging.

Children and teenagers who are habitually defiant will often provoke adults into anger. They do this because other emotional responses are unfamiliar, even scary for them.

How does the Goals and Achievements card move from lesson to lesson?

The easiest way is for the child to carry it with him. It’s best kept in a plastic sleeve. At the end of the lesson, the child marks in his score and then gives it to the teacher. In order to not draw attention to this process, it is better if the child is last to leave the class. If the child starts to lose focus and ‘forgets’ to give the card to the teacher, then the child has 24 hours to find the teacher and get the card filled in. If this is not done within this time period, the box is marked with a score of 4. If all this proves to be too much for the child, simplify the

system so that the card is only used in the class teacher lessons. After the child gets into the habit of handing the card to the teacher at the end of the lesson, the system can be extended out to include the whole day.

How long should we use this system?

At least for one month. After the initial period, you might have a break in which you assess if the situation has improved sufficiently that another round of using the Goals and Achievements card is not needed. A common outcome is that the behavior may improve in most areas, and yet certain periods of the day remain problematic. The card can be reinstated targeting such periods. If another round of using the card is needed, it is good—if possible—to shift the focus of the goal. For example, Samantha is now doing better, but she still struggles to accept other people's point of view. So her new goal might be, "I will do my best to try and listen when people say things I don't agree with and understand that they see it differently than me."

What age of children and teens is this appropriate for?

Self-monitoring is woven into the fabric of a child knowing who he is, who he is not, and therefore who someone else is. It is the foundation of empathy and moral development. This slowly emerging quality of 'I am' can be seen from the earliest years, but it only comes more into focus after the eighth or ninth year. This is the age in which a system such as this can be implemented. Prior to this age, the 'gesture' of goal-setting and measurement can still be done, but it relies more heavily on the adult setting simple goals and sensitively reviewing it. With younger children, the review is best done in the moment, for example: "I see that Jonathan shared those blocks so nicely with Sam."

Doesn't this "wake the child up" too early?

A child who doesn't know where her space ends and another child's begins already is often overly awake, nervous, and anxious. This has the effect of taking the child into "fight or flight" and sometimes "flock" in that she may create cliques to gain protection. Because the gesture of social and behavioral inclusion—including Goals and Achievements agreements—is practiced in the spirit of "no blame," a safe container is created that allows for the possibility of a child participating in changing their actions rather than fighting or retreating from suggestions made by adults and classmates.

Remember that most oppositional children or teens feel that if they ignore you for long enough, you will run out of moves and give up.

Isn't this behavior modification?

The system of affecting a child's behavior using reward and punishment has limited effectiveness as it relies on extrinsic judgments of adults. Rather than strengthening a child's ability to self-monitor, it can weaken it. Goals and Achievements still has the "reality check" of the adult's observation but it firstly calls on the child to reflect on his behavior therefore exercising the "muscle" of perspective-taking and empathy.

Why might this not work?

- Introducing too much too soon. Start small. You might be able to handle this for recess and the classes you personally teach.
- Lack of supervision and observation. Stay close. Make sure your judgments are based on real observations, otherwise the child senses a lack of authenticity and feels unfairly judged.
- Lack of conviction. Commitment is essential in this process. Initially, this needs to come from the teacher and, hopefully, the parents. Once committed, *insist* that the agreements are kept. For example, the card *must* be checked at the end of each day. It's the child's "ticket" to getting out of the classroom.
- Too busy, too many calls on your time. Isn't it so often the case that when one is drowning, the life buoy floating nearby seems like another obstacle? After a set-up meeting of about 30 minutes, this system will only take about 2–3 minutes a day *and* it's usually pleasant! Yet, if we really look at how much time we spend in semi-urgent disciplinary mode with the child, we would realize that we are often already spending much more time than that.

Individual Transition and Playground Plan

Supporting a student during the times of the day and subject areas that are problematic is very important for the children involved in the oppositional tension but *also* for the rest of the class. This support is based on the principle of reducing Sensory and Social Complexity (SSC) and increasing Form and Predictability (FP).

Negative Outcome:

SSC + ↑ FP = ↓ STRESS REACTION

Positive Outcome:

SSC + ↓ FP = ↑ SAFE REACTION

These are two ways to anticipate and reduce the possibility of a stress reaction.

Transition Support

This is a simple to implement plan that involves:

1. Meet with the student you know has a tough time transitioning and explore the times of the day that are hard for him or her. Common problematic times include going to lockers or cubbies, bathroom or drink breaks, moving from class to class. Involving the student in this way gives her or him a feeling of warmth and inclusion.
2. Ask the student for his or her ideas about how the transition could be made easier, less busy, and less likely to lead to problems.
3. Add your own ideas and then give an overview of the plan. Be as grounded and specific as possible. Work out when to start and practically how the plan will work for you and the student. Make it simple to remember and make it doable.

A good plan usually involves one or more of the following strategies:

- **Keeping Close:** The teacher staying within 2-5 feet of the student during the transition.
- **Alternative Task:** An alternative quiet and focused task given to the student during the transition, something that is enjoyable and helpful.
- **Altering the Timing:** The student either making the transition before or after the larger group.
- **Transition Buddy:** This involves one or two students who cope very well with transitions being asked to be “transition buddies.” They can provide a kind of “cloak” to a student in need of support. This has an advantage of being subtle, still fun, and yet models what is needed to navigate a transition. This works well for bathroom visits, which can be a real trouble spot.
- **Preview:** Most importantly, the key to a transition plan is briefly previewing the transition and the student’s plan before any movement takes place. This need not be a long, drawn-out chat, just a few words or even a pre-arranged signal.
- **Celebrate:** Be sure to catch the student at being good when things go well and compliment.

Self-monitoring is woven into the fabric of a child knowing who he is, who he is not, and therefore who someone else is. It is the foundation of empathy and moral development.

This plan is based on giving the right amount of space and autonomy to a student so that he can be supported and coached to navigate recess and feel successful rather than “always get into trouble.” While it limits the area a child has to play, it also increases the support.

Why is Playground Support Needed?

Fringe Dwellers

Traditionally, students who tend to need the most support during recess are just the ones that move around the periphery of the playground or other recess spaces and receive the least support and interaction with the playground supervisors.

Getting Out Their Energy

Letting children run freely at recess is a great thing... if they can cope with it. Sometimes, in the name “getting their energy out,” what happens to a student who has problems with self-monitoring gets more and more out of control and wild.

The Badlands

Many children who might be less assertive or concerned about their safety during recess tend to avoid going out into “the badlands, where there be dragons.” They tend to cluster around the areas most frequented by the supervisors or close to the school building and doorways. The problem with feeling that the playground is a place to survive rather than enjoy is that the student’s understandable concerns can become escalated into daily anxieties. Also, the whole idea of the playground being a place to run around may only be true for a minority of the fringe dwelling, the socially less able kids.

The Control–Rejection Cycle

Most experienced teachers would tell us that children who struggle with social issues on the playground are drawn to games that they feel they can control. These are often situations involving children who play in more of a low key or cooperative way that does not seem to have one dominant player. The child can see this as a leaderless game and moves into a role that the other players do not like or want. Controversy ensues and the game either dissolves or the child is rejected. This pattern

repeats itself over and over as the child drifts from one game or play-situation to another and can result in the child feeling intense and a broad-base rejection.

The Outside–In Playground

Playground Support

The solution to this dynamic is simple: bring the kids on the edges of the playground into the center where they can get informal coaching and support to play in a healthy way. This opens-up the playground for the majority of children to now repopulate the playground, because now it is safe to do so. By doing this, a subtle but highly significant shift takes place in the playground culture.

Final Note

Children and teens who are oppositional are often bright, creative, and inventive, and this is to be admired and valued. Although you might not agree with many things he does, let the child know that there are many things about him that you would never wish to change. Because such children present themselves in such a negative manner, often these attributes are submerged or extreme. They fight the world with such vigor because they feel they will be overwhelmed if they do not. Therefore, it is essential to let them know that they are valued and what they say and do, if expressed in an appropriate way, will be listened to. Above all, they need to feel they can affect their environment in more ways than simply saying "no." Working towards achieving this, the child or teen comes to experience a broader range of response and a feeling of trust in the school and family in which they live. This overview of oppositional children and teenagers is designed as a beginning point, in that it focuses on boundary setting and interventions. Does this not intensify the feeling that they have to fight a crushing adult world? No; if these guidelines are followed in a consistent, transparent, and fair way, they lead to a feeling of being met and of security that these children and adolescents do not have to fight for survival in an out-of-control world.

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Hennig Köhler: Companion to the Companions

Nancy Blanning, Laurie Clark,
Stephanie Hoelscher, Holly Koteen-Soulé

The world of Waldorf education recently marked the passing into the spiritual world of “the warm philosopher of childhood,” Henning Köhler. Köhler was born in Germany, in 1951, and first encountered the ideas of Rudolf Steiner when he was in his early 20s and following a one-year curative education internship at Haus Sonne (Saarland). He ultimately became a clinical therapeutic educator and counselor. Henning Köhler’s views were both radical and transformative.

The ability to devote ourselves to children in ‘knowing understanding’ (in particular to those who put us most severely to the test) presupposes a fundamental transformation of our attitude. That is easy to say and... possible to do, albeit only through considerable effort.

Hennig Köhler, *Difficult Children*, p. 31

Two of Henning Köhler’s books have been translated into English. The first one, *Working with Anxious, Nervous and Depressed Children*,¹ fondly referred to as the Pink Book, is a key to understanding the impact of the foundational senses on physical, social, and moral development of the child. In this book, we also begin to understand the profound influence of the quality of our attention when we are observing the child and how to work with the child’s angel.

In his second book, *Difficult Children – There Is No Such Thing*,² Köhler asks us to recognize that understanding another human being is a creative, artistic process, and further to consider the idea of parenting and education as an initiatory experience. He introduces and describes in detail the four central concepts of this process: *protecting, accompanying, comforting, and healing*. Köhler awakens anew the awe we feel in the presence of children who are bringing us fresh messages from the spiritual world and

are trusting us to help them solve the riddles of this earthly life.

The following short tributes come from four early childhood educators, all of whom feel deeply indebted to Henning Köhler and his work.

Loving Companionship

We must stand at the child’s side with a waiting attitude, simply be there, patient.

Köhler, *Difficult Children*, p. 128

When I think about the work of Henning Köhler, the word that immediately comes to mind is “companionship.” To me companionship means understanding and affirming that each child, each human being, has come into physical life with the intention to experience, grow, and learn for our own development and to serve the growth of goodness, beauty, and truth in our society. In our times, we see many children who have chosen to come, even if it means facing challenges and difficulties. They have also chosen us as their loving companions who will accompany them on this life’s journey.

Each child comes to tell us something important. It has been said that everything a child does, all behavior, is communication. Actions, moods, celebrations, and frustrations are also their means of speech. Our children come to us, trusting that we will accept and understand what they are wishing to tell us about their experience of being on this earth. This communication can come to us as signs of distress, often

described as “challenging behavior.” If we are baffled and frustrated in these difficult times, our response may be to become firm, authoritarian, even harsh. Typically, everyone ends up unhappy and isolated from one another.

Köhler offers a different path. Instead of seeing “misbehavior,” he urges us to receive the child as a mystery-of-transformation struggling to unfold. All of us—adults as well as children—are in a process of becoming. A beautiful butterfly lies hidden within each

1 Henning Köhler, *Working with Anxious, Nervous, and Depressed Children: A Spiritual Perspective to Guide Parents* (Chatham, NY: Waldorf Publications, 2000).

2 Henning Köhler, *Difficult Children: There Is No Such Thing: An Appeal for the Transformation of Educational Thinking* (Chatham, NY: Waldorf Publications, 2013).

of us. But the caterpillar in the crusty, drab brown chrysalis has to turn into green “goop” before it can emerge as the glorious butterfly. It has to struggle out of its tight imprisonment by bursting the chrysalis open. This process cannot be forced or hurried but must be allowed to proceed according to its own pace and inherent wisdom. These seeming prohibitions can make us feel powerless.

In his therapeutic educator role, Köhler met with parents who came for advice on how to change their child’s difficult behaviors. He gave lectures and guidance in a surprising way. He counseled the parents on *how to change themselves*. We can try to change a child to our will, but the only change we can truly control is within ourselves. We can work to change our perception of what we see and hear and how we respond. How do we do that? By bearing witness, accompanying, comforting through silent caring and patient waiting; these are forms of doing that carry unacknowledged power. Köhler states that what matters is that we allow time for the mystery to unfold. “We must stand at the child’s side with a waiting attitude, simply be there, patient.”

In tense moments we can slow and quiet our breathing and give the child a model to imitate. Wait for the storm to pass—it will! We can offer an inner gesture of warm embrace. In the long term, we can open our hearts to feel and hear, be still. Practice patience. Companion. Accompany. Köhler comforts us to accept the mystery-of-the-other as the starting place. Then the door to understanding—perhaps only with the heart, not with the head—can begin to open, because the other feels accepted and companioned rather than judged.

On a personal note, the ideas shared by Henning Köhler have affected in profound ways my life as a parent and grandparent, educator with children and teachers, and unofficial counselor with families. His warm, compassionate holding of children and their parents stands as a gift. Thank you, “warm philosopher of childhood.” May your words continue to companion us all.

Nancy Blanning

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Educational Support Teacher, The Denver Waldorf School

The Dignity of the Young Child

Before we even receive her as a guest that is looking for the way, the child raises upright her entelechy of hope to a place beyond the reach of our influence, to a space of innocence.

Köhler, Difficult Children, p. 121

Henning Köhler was a remarkable advocate for the dignity of the young child. With genuine compassion he gazed into the spirit of the child working to enter her earthly body and experienced the heart of her situation. His capacity to engage in the depth of childhood development, enriched by clear perceptions and a tender heart, has given teachers and parents a warm understanding into the world of the young child. Inspiration streamed into the creativity of his deep thoughts that relay renewing ways of approaching children.

He encouraged the caretakers of the child to work on their own emotional soul life and find the strength to overcome the irritations and judgement that they inwardly encounter with children that face challenges. Köhler stressed the need to contemplate each situation with the child by selflessly feeling in oneself what the child feels in order to sense what their experience is. By adjusting the atmosphere in our attitude towards our expectations and prejudices of ‘how the child should be’, we open our arms and fully accept the child as they are, knowing that each human being is “an entity of hope”; their essence is in their becoming. Teachers and parents are the guardians, the holders of this treasure for the child, orienting themselves towards the child’s potential.

Henning Köhler was what Martin Luther King, Jr., coined as a ‘non-conformist’. His work came out of knowing that every human being is a citizen of two worlds, “the world of time and the world of eternity” (MLK). He followed the path of a dedicated non-conformist and stuck to his convictions rather than the formulas that narrow the approach to the child that consist of rules and judgements. The independent thought and spiritual practice in his work with children often went against the stream of expediency that sought to change a child’s behaviors and embraced a new creative outlook that calls for patience and loving understanding. Deepening the relationship to the child in this way builds trust. For Köhler, the gift of this approach is that “the child entrusts herself to me and this feeling heals. When the child resolves to entrust herself to

us, she does so in agreement with higher beings and is filled with the impression of her transition through the sphere of pure human love.” The teacher or parent feels honored by this gift of self-entrustment.

Köhler speaks of “places where the educational relationship is cultivated and permeated with artistic spirit: laboratories of the future, nurseries of hope.” He gives us advice that touches on the very source of the pedagogical task: “Healing means to give hope, to give hope means to have hope, and whether or not a person has hope is a question of thinking. A person’s hopeful thinking about another person is loving thinking, that is, thinking inspired by the essence of childhood.”

Laurie Clark

Lead Kindergarten Teacher, The Denver Waldorf School

Relationship as Key

You either dignify or debase. You either take up a relationship or break it off. Vision that takes up relationships heals; the view that breaks them off harms. The latter stockade a child into a version of what it has become, and this version is not its own; the former turns to that future which can only be the child’s own and fetches this future into the here and now by entering to the relational process.

Köhler, Difficult Children, p. 47

Henning Köhler sits with me as I sit cross-legged on what the children in my care call “Ramp Mountain.” Ramps—also called wild onions or leeks—cover the hillside in a blanket of green. In the week of Henning Köhler’s passing, the ramps were calling for harvest, and so, as children scampered about under a canopied cathedral of trees, I sat, dug, and cleaned soil from the bulbs of the ramps one at a time. Slow, methodical, meditative. Children came and went to help as I sat, worked, and peered into the stormy grey eyes of a child sitting at a near distance across from me.

Earlier in the morning, this child had knocked classmates to the ground during circle—the ground, in this case, a flat exposed piece of granite—and then jumped on top of them. Sequentially, individually, as I did my best to corral the child into my teacher body while howls of distress descended into the space of our circle. As masked face met masked face, the child looked up to say, “I am laughing under my mask.”

A typical moment in my accompaniment of this child.

The second requirement of the Watchman is that we have formed a clear and living image of the child, an image that is the result of our actually having taken the time to lovingly and attentively observed the child.

Now the child had asked to sit with me. In his words, “I will sit here and wait.” And so, I have the opportunity to see the furrowed brow, the stormy grey eyes looking out and seeking, and because the words and presence of Henning Köhler are so fresh in me, I see and ask, “Where have you gone? What brings such weight to you?”

“Faithfulness,” Henning Köhler reminds me. In the shadow moments of our human encounters,

we have the choice to look to the light. Or not.

Henning Köhler urges me to stay steadfast in my accompaniment of the children, all children, and that I must see the task of accompaniment as it comes in the moment with the child—this child—in front of me. And if not “this” child, then another. The children, our children, each and every, one by one.

This voice that cuts to the essence of our work tells me to dig deep within myself to understand. To observe with a thinking heart. To put aside the external stuff in order that I might devote myself to the essential task: The relationship. Deepening the relationship.

As I prepare for sleep after a day, a different day in an ongoing journey of destiny and freedom, in which this child came from behind to scratch at the eyes and face of a passively unengaged other, Henning Köhler tells me that tomorrow is another day. I make a plan. I will try again to understand. I will try again to hold the faithfulness that I need to have in order to be whatever this child needs me to be so that he may find himself, a social self, a self in relation to others.

Stephanie Hoelscher

Director and Teacher, Child’s Garden Early Childhood Program, Orchard Valley Waldorf School

“Who are you and who am I and what do we have to do with each other?”

To whom do we owe the privilege and/or the ability to do nothing less than continue the work of the gods? The child. The idea of childhood has no foundation without the insight that it is not possible to influence the educational process unless

the child empowers us to do so. The child is the divine messenger. Not the educator. The educator is given back a piece of his or her lost closeness to heaven by being given the chance to prove him or herself worthy of this gift. The same holds true for the social organism as a whole.

Köhler, Difficult Children, p. 122

In his first book, *Working with Anxious, Nervous and Depressed Children – A Spiritual Perspective for Parents*, Köhler gives us a very potent image with which to work. He speaks about the Watchman at the Bridge, whom we can meet on our way into sleep. He tells us that in order to earn the right to connect with a child's angel, we need to bring to the Watchman a clearly thought-out question that concerns us for the child's sake and not for our own. The second requirement of the Watchman is that we have formed a clear and living image of the child, an image that is the result of our actually having taken the time to lovingly and attentively observed the child. This is a practice that I used daily in my life as an early childhood teacher and was an invaluable support to me, to the children in my care, and sometimes to their parents as well.

In Köhler's view, the children who are coming to earth now may, in fact, be extraordinarily light-filled and courageous souls. Our task is not to rid them and ourselves from the challenges they bring, but to recognize what they are telling us about the ill-fitting world that we are creating. Their gift to us, their parents and teachers, is that in truly seeking to understand what a specific child in our care is asking for, we uncover a hidden piece of ourselves. We become more whole human beings. We are the ones who are being rescued! If we can grasp the spiritual principles that guide our learning to understand another human being, there is hope for us all.

Holly Koteen-Soulé

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Responsibilities of Waldorf Education

A Response to Melanie Reiser

Patrice Maynard

Melanie Reiser's short statement, "The Responsibility of Waldorf Education," appears in volume XXVI-1 of the *Research Bulletin* along with a summary by the editor advancing the question "What is the responsibility of Waldorf education?" The summary of this article, along with the article itself, could be used to articulate what the goal of Waldorf education has been for 100 years. It has led countless university professors, employers, and business leaders in our culture, expressed in surveys, interviews, articles, and casual conversations,¹ to state the fact that, in some ineffable ways, Waldorf graduates tend to be the most desirable, tolerant,² kind, inclusive people to have around. As reported, these Waldorf graduates tend to see beyond ordinary superficialities into the goodness in everyone. They tend to care for their environment, bring life, color, and joy into every classroom, factory, or office in which they end up. A follow-up, and perhaps more acknowledging question would be, "How have Waldorf schools managed to develop in their graduates an unusual level of tolerance and anti-racist attitudes and how can these be deepened and broadened for even more transformative success – greater diversity in Waldorf faculties and student configurations?"

But I would like to address here a related issue that arises as a remark in Reiser's article. Speaking about the Public Waldorf charter movement, Melanie Reiser characterizes Public Waldorf as "welcoming-in a more racially and socially diverse student body" (one can assume that this is in comparison to independent Waldorf schools). Reiser continues, "But AWSNA initially distanced itself from supporting the development of these (public) schools." This statement, in its context, suggests that there was somehow a missed opportunity in this distancing. Finding the implication of this statement misleading, I believe it would be helpful to offer here the fuller story of the relationship between AWSNA and Public Waldorf schools.

Independent Waldorf schools pay a high price for their independence from government control. This is

evidenced in both the low salaries of its teachers as well as in the high cost of the tuition needed to support a school. Independent Waldorf schools have welcomed a diversity of students and yearned, for decades, for a more diverse student and family population; however, the cost of tuition has been a significant deterrent to this goal.

Melanie Reiser mentions the Milwaukee Urban Waldorf School as the beginning of the Public Waldorf School initiative, which was started not by AWSNA, but was led primarily by the Pedagogical Section Council of North America (PSC). It may be, however, that the real and lasting start of Public Waldorf schools was the passing of the law during the Clinton administration (1994) allowing charter schools within the public school system in America. This led to the start of several charter schools wishing to follow the Waldorf curriculum and approach. It also abruptly ended rigorous efforts that had been underway, especially in the Northeastern region, of investigating different models of tuition and

financial support for schools that would protect their independence from government regulation while allowing children of lower income families and of more diverse backgrounds to come to an independent Waldorf school. This last goal came from broad acknowledgement that the tuition-based model of independent education in America was not sustainable, as well as its being

a deterrent to a truly diverse student population in Waldorf schools. Some of the results of these conferences are still to be seen throughout the independent Waldorf movement in sliding scale tuition models, community-supported education models, tiered tuition models and the like.

Leaders in the American Waldorf movement in 1995 were not only enthusiastic about the possibility of Waldorf education in the public schools, but some were also insisting at delegates' meetings and in public statements that this was "the future of Waldorf education," and that "at last" we could have Waldorf education "for free." Proclamations were made about "crawling into the belly of the beast" to transform education from the inside out.

I believe it would be helpful to offer here the fuller story of the relationship between AWSNA and Public Waldorf schools.

1 David Mitchell & Douglas Gerwin, *Survey of Waldorf High School Graduates II* (NH: Research Institute for Waldorf Education, 2007).

2 Ilan Safit & Douglas Gerwin, *Into the World: How Waldorf Graduates Fare after High School* (NY: Waldorf Publications, 2020).

Concerns and questions came about “handing Waldorf education over to the government,” about the spiritual aspects of the curriculum being suppressed, but perhaps most importantly were questions about the directives given by Rudolf Steiner earlier than 1919, the year of the founding of the First Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, identifying the release of education from the grip of governments as a primary task of the age of the consciousness soul. In these AWSNA Delegates’ meetings, no answers to these concerns were offered. Very often these questions were deemed “attacks,” sometimes met with tears or outrage.

As Leader for Outreach and Development for AWSNA from 2004 to 2013, I came to realize that as a questioner at delegates meetings, I had been labeled by avid supporters of charters as an “Anti-charter-ite.” On entering this position with AWSNA, I was told more than once that I was bound to fail at the job because I was “against charter schools.” My attempts to explain that I was more *for* releasing *all* education from the growing bonds of the federal government’s control of education, were rejected or, in at least one case, ridiculed. In 2006, I was invited with two other independent school colleagues to a conference for Public Waldorf charter schools in California. In the plenum, I stated honestly my admiration for the idealism I experienced repeatedly in the conference and lamented the many compromises necessary to accommodate government mandates.

Before I could continue, a young woman leapt to her feet and shouted, “How *dare* you call anything we do a compromise?! What we are doing is so noble, the word compromise has no place in our vocabulary!” I apologized and explained that the freedom of the teacher is paramount in Waldorf education, that a teacher’s freedom is curtailed when told what to do or when s/he must risk being docked or punished if not following top-down rules. I offered that if anyone would ever tell the government agency the reason *why* it was impossible to fulfill their demands, that these demands would be *hurtful to children* (for example, testing, pushing intellectual content to earlier and earlier ages), I would be right next to them in a heartbeat, working to explain these issues.

My colleague, Frances Kane, as Leader of Administration in AWSNA, agreed that it would be a helpful approach to create a “safe” arena for discussion between the two proponents of independent and public schools. Holders of the legal service mark (trademark) for

Waldorf in Germany had transferred control of this mark to AWSNA for management on this continent. Primary responsibility for managing this mark was in Frances Kane’s purview. Permission to use the protected term “Waldorf” was granted automatically to all independent schools recognized by AWSNA. How to apply permission for the term beyond this for charter schools and businesses became problematic simply because no quality controls were available. As the legal authority for managing the mark was given, emphasis was placed on the fact that the term “Waldorf” has meaning, and that this meaning needed to be protected. This was taken (by some, at least) as a deep affront to charter school supporters. AWSNA was called a “fundamentalist” organization. Frances Kane fielded complaints about how such a tragic thing as giving the power of service mark control could have been granted to such an organization as AWSNA.

AWSNA continued to create a safe space for conversation and agreement. Gathering leadership from the new charter school movement, we set up one or two meetings a year from 2006 to 2013. Frances Kane, Michael Soule, and I, as the leaders in AWSNA at the time, inaugurated these meetings and spent thousands of dollars and uncountable hours planning and holding the meetings (all held in California to avoid inconveniencing the charter school group), feeding the group, hiring facilitators, chronicling the meetings, and drawing up

the final agreement. These meetings led at long last to this agreement, finally signed in 2016 with new AWSNA leadership (including the author or the article cited, Melanie Reiser) though developed and promised in the spring of 2013, with, from the AWSNA group, Frances Kane, Patrice Maynard, Elan Leibner for the PSC and Eric Emmanuel, lawyer to AWSNA. This, eventually, identified the acceptable naming of the charter schools as “Public Waldorf” schools under the terms of the service mark. This acceptance and licensing strengthen the fact that there is a service mark and that the term has meaning and is worth protecting.

During the timespan of these meetings, the charter schools formed their own association, *The Association of Public WaldorfSM Education* (APWE). APWE has worked diligently to build accreditation standards for Public WaldorfSM schools and has increased its ability to hold the authority to do so precisely because there is a service mark. Their work underscores that the mark has meaning. This agreement had been the goal from

My attempts to explain that I was more *for* releasing *all* education from the growing bonds of the federal government’s control of education were rejected.

the beginning and this goal was held in marvelous focus for all those years by Frances Kane, for AWSNA, and for Waldorf education. A perceived affront in the eyes of charter school participants of having to “bend to the request of AWSNA,” who had “refused to accept them into the fold,” stalled the goal of the tool of the service mark, which is to protect the meaning of the terms “Waldorf education” and “Steiner education.” Meanwhile, bending to demands of the federal government and public-school districts appeared to remain a necessity not to be challenged.

Does the term “Waldorf education” have meaning? You bet it does! At one point a charter school representative asked, “Don’t you trust us? If a public-school drifts too far from really being a Waldorf school, we will close it.” And, with insight, Michael Soule, Leader at AWSNA, at that time pointed out, “No. you likely *won’t be able* to close a school. Parents will say, ‘We know what Waldorf education is, and we love our school. You are wrong. We *are* a Waldorf school.’”

Much rich content filled those years of meetings. The charter school leaders lamented that the government was very open when the charter laws were new but had become increasingly restrictive over the years. (What else do we think governments *do*? I wondered.) However, the predominant mood remained that no restrictions mattered because there was no tuition charged by public schools. That, by itself, was justification. There was steady insistence that the two kinds of schools were the same and no distinctions were necessary. At one meeting we had two flip charts. On the first we listed the similarities between the two kinds of schools and filled a page. We listed on the second flip chart all the differences and filled three pages. Of course, we were told that the differences (testing, having a principal and a top-down organizational structure, incorporating elements of curricula from the Common Core, to name a few) were “insignificant.”

Charter schools working to follow the Waldorf curriculum as closely as possible are an invaluable asset. Often, I wished I could simply state this. At one point we asked if the Public Waldorf schools could stop advertising their schools as “The same curriculum, only for free!” but instead state it clearly as stated here, “Charter schools working to follow the Waldorf curriculum.” Silence followed that particular request. I was privately reprimanded later by the facilitator, an anthroposophist, for making this request. It isn’t possible to count the number of times people said to

me, “Charter schools are not going away, you know.” This was a puzzle as this was never a goal or an assumption in my mind. There was only a wish to be clear and a need to answer the question of how to release all education from the control of the government.

At AWSNA, requests for help came frequently from California independent schools. Decreasing enrollment in independent Waldorf schools could be attributed by the charter school representatives to the “mess we all know independent Waldorf schools are.” Any attempts to identify the fact, that Public Waldorf schools owe their ability to exist from decades of sacrifice on the parts of Waldorf teachers to sustain the independent development of the Waldorf approach,

were rejected as denial of the two types of schools being identical in heritage and development. Any attempts to point out that public education is never “for free,” but is funded through tax dollars, was named “inappropriate.” Any attempts to point out that charter schools were supported by Awnsa’s member schools

through resources provided through its existing strong reputation, by *Renewal* magazine (offered to charter schools at a discount), by AWSNA Publications, by teacher education institutes who train Waldorf teachers, by the protection of the service mark, all supplemented by the independent schools, were inadequate proof of attempts to help.

Meanwhile, in 2011, a California survey revealed that 40% of the students in Public Waldorf schools had started in independent Waldorf schools, indicating that the enrollment and recruitment of this 40% had been accomplished by independent schools. Concerns of AWSNA schools asking for help included: independent Waldorf teachers were being aggressively recruited away by charter schools; at hiring fairs for teachers employees at Public Waldorf schools were openly denigrating independent Waldorf schools; reports of manipulated lottery programs to acquire the wealthiest families from independent schools; and fundraising for Public Waldorf schools was directly interfering with that of independent Waldorf schools. One California independent school faced extinction twice at different times when a Public Waldorf school nearby opened new kindergartens or grades without warning to the independent school down the road. Ironically, this independent school had a very diverse student body.

Parents in Public Waldorf schools complained to AWSNA that their charter school was advertised as a Waldorf school but their practices were otherwise;

This, eventually, identified the acceptable naming of the charter schools as “Public Waldorf” schools under the terms of the service mark.

that one teacher or another in Public Waldorf schools ought to be fired and AWSNA should take care of this. In one particularly alarming case, it took fourteen email exchanges, four or five participants, and two-and-a-half weeks to determine that the school in question was not an AWSNA school but a Public Waldorf school. For this, at that time, there was nowhere to turn for help.

All stories have multiple sides. This is an offering of one side, another side, of Reiser's summary statement that "AWSNA distanced itself" from the charter school movement. It's still a question in my own considerations about which side did the distancing, or whether distancing is even an accurate description of what occurred. The remarkable intensity of these meetings makes such a descriptor at least misleading. "This side of the story" of those many efforts is not well-known to more than those who lived through them. And to relinquish judgement to a single story is false in its way, as described by the brilliant author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.³

That the agreement was achieved at all represented a significant miracle and stood as testimony to many gnarly knots, loosened and untied over a long period of time – many hearts and minds willing, beyond preformed judgements, to listen to and agree with each other. The government of the USA helped by ever demonstrating its relentless, increasing authority over education – a bi-partisan effort. That it took two to three years for the document of agreement to be signed by the Public Waldorf leaders might stand as testament to the differences in urgency about getting it completed. The entire, lengthy, time-consuming, expensive, difficult process was a worthy one, in my estimation. It brought clarity and definition, and, most importantly to me all through the process, protection of the term Waldorf, applied to education, as a meaningful term, not to be used indiscriminately or to apply to things or businesses.

The United States is the last country on the planet that has an imagination of a genuinely independent education. In other countries around the world, many have a hard time thinking about education that is not controlled and funded by a government. A great hope I hold is that with the agreement in place, increasing courage to explain to education departments that, even with fine teachers present in all schools, the current

educational system is not meant to support a healthy development of children, but meant instead to enrich corporations (pharmaceutical companies, the technology industry, textbook and curriculum companies, the food industry, to name a few), and to further political goals. The rising numbers of suicides among the young (for youngsters between the ages of 10 and 14, the number of suicides has doubled between the years of 2000, the year before the No Child Left Behind Act, and 2017⁴) is one clear symptom of the culture of despair and depression being created for the young (and also for teachers)⁵. The last year-and-a-half of the pandemic has furthered the decline in student morale and mental health and has increased the number of teen suicides.⁶

This would be a chance to explain to government leaders that their control of the education system might be the very thing crippling American education today.

More than once in AWSNA meetings with the charter school representatives, I attempted to explain that I wished with all my heart to thank them for their dedicated work. In any educational model, daily artistic work deepens understanding and builds resilience in human souls. However, so long as the catch phrase remains "the same thing only for free," and the resistance from public schoolers to comparisons with research behind

them into the results of both kinds of Waldorf schools, public and independent, I hesitate. Most importantly, so long as Public Waldorf teachers, do not stand against harmful practices, taking care to explain to authorities all the reasons why they stand against these practices, it seems wise to hesitate.

Once I was honored to be invited to participate in a faculty meeting at a Public Waldorf school in 2012, I listened to a 40-minute discussion held by the faculty; they were working to find ways to "fool the government" into believing that their Kindergarten program was applying the Common Core literacy curriculum. During a pause in this discussion, another guest said, "Patrice asked me last night if you ever say, 'No'." There was then a long silence. I asked, "What do you have to lose?" to which the administrator quickly replied, "\$180,000." I quipped without thinking, "Oh well, \$180,000 vs. a child's consciousness? Go for the money!" Lucky for me, everyone laughed. But my conviction and invitation still stands, that if we would

4 <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db352-h.pdf>

5 <https://www.edutopia.org/article/high-school-kids-are-not-all-right> – 2016

6 "Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Suicide Attempts Among Persons Aged 12–25 Years Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic – United States, January 2019–May 2021", *CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, June 18, 2021 / 70(24); 888–894, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7024e1.htm>

3 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The danger of a single story," TED Global, July 2009, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

create informative moments with leaders in education to explain why Waldorf teachers would decline to do things that hurt children, change might just follow. This would be a chance to explain to government leaders that their control of the education system might be the very thing crippling American education today. This is a road not yet taken but that could and should be pursued.

From all this challenging work, I personally learned an enormous amount from public and independent Waldorf schools and cherish several hard-won friendships (the best kind!). Moods, attitudes, points of view, hearts, and minds changed. In these times of ours, this is a rare experience. The original question, articulated in the AWSNA delegates' circle — "What about independence in education and releasing all education from the grip of the government?" — remains unanswered and has poignant urgency considering the current situation in our culture, and for the young in this culture.

Patrice Maynard, M.Ed., served as a Waldorf class teacher at Hawthorne Valley School for many years and led the Outreach and Development section of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America. She is the Director of Publications and Development at the Research Institute for Waldorf Education.

Book Review

Understanding Heydebrand's Curriculum

Stephen Sagarin

The Curriculum of the First Waldorf School

by Caroline von Heydebrand, PhD.

Daniel Hindes, Ed. and Trans. Aelzina Books, 2021.

(97 pages)

Education, implicitly or explicitly, relies on three things—principle, method, and curriculum. Principles are perhaps the deepest and first, and they demonstrate a philosophy of education. What does it mean to learn or to teach? How are teaching and learning best accomplished? Ultimately, who is the human being who is being educated? As John Dewey is purported to have said, *all philosophy is the philosophy of education*.

Rudolf Steiner's educational principles of education are several. Some are explicit, as in *Balance in Teaching*: Teachers should offer and embody protection for the present; reverence for the past; and enthusiasm for the future. Other principles, regarding insight into karma, for instance, are harder to synopsise.

While education requires principle, method, and curriculum, I would argue for the primacy of principle. Method and curriculum, the how and the what of principle as it finds its way from teachers to students, follow from principle. Let's look at it this way:

Would you rather have a teacher who radiates creativity and enthusiasm but is required to deliver a packaged, programmed curriculum? Or a curriculum of beautiful images and stories delivered by a teacher who lacks insight and artistry? Although neither circumstance is preferable, I would rather have my child in the classroom of the first, and trust that the human qualities of the teacher would help to transcend the potted curriculum. No curriculum on its own can transcend a teacher who lacks principle.

And, situated between principle and curriculum, we hope to find flexible, individualized, accommodating, creative methods. Some of Steiner's methods are simple: Begin teaching arithmetic, for instance, by dividing a whole pile of mulberries (or other common objects) among your students. Others are more complex, as in

While education requires principle, method, and curriculum, I would argue for the primacy of principle.

a description of method in *Education for Adolescents*¹: Call on the whole being of the student; recapitulate immediately in imagination; let the student sleep; develop discernment or come to judgment or conclusion through conversation on the following day.

In this light, curriculum, discovered in the relationship between growing students and principled teachers, is more malleable or changeable than are principles or methods. Curriculum varies as the requirements of time and place vary, as a student grows and develops. The further our students are in space and in time from German speakers in the early 20th century, the less our curriculum will mirror that of the first Waldorf school, even as our principles remain steadfast and our methods relatively similar. If in Waldorf schools we accept a curriculum too rigidly, then we may fail to imbue it with principle, and, therefore, undermine our endeavors at the outset.

On the other hand, to discard or disregard what we know of the curriculum as given by Steiner and expanded by generations of thoughtful teachers all over the world would be to cut off one of the roots that nourishes our work.

To understand Steiner's intentions for the curriculum of the first Waldorf School, teachers have a few key resources. The first of these is Steiner's work—*Practical Advice to Teachers*, *Discussions with Teachers*, *Faculty Meetings*, and others. Working through these texts, contemporary Waldorf teachers will find that some of Steiner's original suggestions are well cemented into the aggregate curriculum of Waldorf schools worldwide—writing (through drawing or painting)

before reading. Others—mandatory religion lessons—may have fallen away for good reason. And yet others—"race" studies—transformed to meet the requirements of different times and places. Steiner himself was not so rigid with regard to curriculum and other matters as he is sometimes presented to have been. Botany first or geology first? Depends which source you read. And

¹ Note that the eight lectures in *Education for Adolescents* were originally called, in English, *The Supplementary Course*, and were intended for teachers of all grades at the first Waldorf School.

his indications are often minimal sketches, meant to be filled out by... well, by each of us currently teaching.

The second source for understanding curriculum are Stockmeyer's *Curriculum*, currently in print as *Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for Steiner-Waldorf Schools: An Attempt to Summarise His Indications*. And, on par with Stockmeyer, Dr. Caroline von Heydebrand's *The Curriculum of the First Waldorf School*. These were written and compiled by two of the first teachers at the first Waldorf School. Stockmeyer goes fairly thoroughly through Steiner's educational lectures to collate paragraphs and passages relevant to topics or subjects in the curriculum. Heydebrand outlines the actual curriculum of the first school in its early years.

Both of these resources are indispensable. Every journey has a starting point, and Stockmeyer and Heydebrand tell us where to line up.

Given the centrality of these texts, I am pleased to recommend Daniel Hinde's new translation of Heydebrand's curriculum. His introduction situates the book in the context of a curriculum as something that is alive and changing and in the necessary context of the history of the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart.

Hinde is a Waldorf teacher and administrator, attended Waldorf schools in the United States and Germany, speaks several languages, and has written many articles and blog posts on Waldorf education and anthroposophy. He is the author of *Viral Illness and Epidemics in the Work of Rudolf Steiner*, which examines Steiner's remarks on viruses, vaccinations, and related illnesses. To the point of this review, his translations are scrupulous, insightful, and contemporary.

The book itself is divided into chapters, each devoted to one grade or school year (called a "class" in much of the rest of the world). Each chapter presents a paragraph or a few paragraphs on each school subject—including, for example, reading, writing, and speaking in first grade, or geography, physics, and religion in eighth grade.

This book is an outline, and that is all it is intended to be. The work of bringing it to life for any teacher and student requires that it be fleshed out to embody Rudolf Steiner's educational principles and that it be tailored to the world in which the students live and will live.

The book ends with a brief biography of Heydebrand, including her sterling academic background and her work in the first Waldorf School from 1919 to 1935. We learn that she had the largest class in the first school—47 fifth graders!—teaching all morning

lessons and world languages. Steiner called her "a born teacher." Heydebrand left Germany in 1935, as the Nazis came to power, to work with Waldorf schools in Holland and England, and returned to Germany only for end-of-life care in 1938.

A particular value of Hinde's translation are the annotations, which assist us in approaching Heydebrand's curriculum with greater understanding. Some of what Steiner said about conversation with students had to do with the need to learn *Hochdeutsch*, "high German," for instance, moving them beyond their dialects. This is generally not a concern for English language teachers. Another German concern for language arts teachers had to do with learning to read *Fraktur*, a formal German printing that has no analog in English. On the other hand, English spelling is a seemingly irrational hodge-podge of historical influences,

while German spelling is clear and logical. In addition, German schools in the early 20th century were required to teach religion, which schools in the United States are not. These classes were most often taught by visiting priests and pastors, and not out of Steiner's impulse or insight. (An exception is the lessons that Steiner created in "free" or independent religion for the children of anthroposophists. However, these were created to meet the requirements of the state, not because they were essential to Steiner's principles or curriculum. I'll stop here, but these annotations make for thought-provoking, eye-opening reading, and make this translation worthwhile even if you already own a previous version of this book.

Hinde's translation brings a valuable resource back into print and assists us in reading Heydebrand intelligently and flexibly, as we continue to take a German curriculum from the 1920s and make it our own in the United States in the 2020s. Just as Steiner intended we should.

Given the centrality of these texts, I am pleased to recommend Daniel Hinde's new translation of Heydebrand's curriculum.

Report from the Online Waldorf Library

Marianne Alsop

OWL Site Administrator

The Online Waldorf Library is here to help facilitate research and answer questions on a wide variety of topics. We continue to answer specific questions about the Waldorf curriculum from Waldorf teacher education students from around the world as well as teachers in Waldorf Schools and homeschooling parents.

From January 1 through the end of September 2021, the OWL had over 178,000 site visitors. Over one-third are from the USA. Other English-speaking countries include Australia, the UK, and Canada. India, Mexico, Spain, China, Argentina, and Chile round out the top ten site visitor countries.

The OWL is pleased to offer the Waldorf100 Project, an introduction and comments by Christof Wiechert on the faculty meetings from 1919 to 1925 between Rudolf Steiner and the teachers at the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart. A link to this new feature can be found on the home page: www.waldorflibrary.org.

We continue to offer an ever-expanding number of eBooks, available in pdf format, which can be accessed by downloading free software from Adobe Reader.

eBooks added in English since the Spring of 2021

From WECAN Publications

Supporting the Sense of Life Education

– *Health for Life Young Children's Drawings*

From Waldorf Publications:

- *Emil and Berta: The Origins of the Waldorf School Movement*
- *Exploring Shapes Creatively Through Pure Form Modeling*
- *Into the World: How Waldorf Graduates Fare After High School*
- *Kicking Away the Ladder: The Philosophical Roots of Waldorf Education*
- *Tending the Spark: Lighting the Future for Middle School Students*
- *Truth, Beauty and Goodness: The Future of Education, Healing Arts and Health Care*

- *Growing Up Healthy in a Digital World: See the Child, Love the Child, Know Yourself; Now Teach*
- *The History of Waldorf Education Worldwide 1919-1945*
- *A Brief History of Chemistry*

New eBooks in Spanish include:

- *Año Por Año*, from WECAN Publications *El Halconero* from Waldorf Publications

New eBooks from Waldorf Publications translated into Mandarin Chinese include:

- *Finding Yourself*
- *At the Source*
- *One, Two, Three*

New articles in Spanish and English are posted every month and can be accessed from the home page and clicking on *Artículos en Español* and *Articles*.

As always, back issues of the *Research Bulletin*, *Gateways* (Waldorf Early Childhood Association), *Pedagogical Section/Rundbrief* and a number of other international publications are available online in our *Journals* section. The Online Waldorf Library welcomes your questions, and we are happy to help you find resources for your research projects.

Visit the Online Waldorf Library at
www.waldorflibrary.org

Report from the Research Institute for Waldorf Education and Waldorf Publications

Patrice Maynard

Director of Publications and Development

The transition of summer to autumn here in the Northeast often exhibits a tug-of-war (even an out-and-out war) as light gives way to darker days; briskness pulls away at the warmth of summertime; fear tugs hard at calm enjoyment of nature with Hallowe'en and El Día de los Muertos; and life gives way to death, as nature relinquishes almost everything living and flourishing. The last roses in the garden, the final outbursts of blooms and vegetation look hopeful for a moment as warm days seem to promise a continuing. Frost will come, though, as surely as autumn follows summer.

Study of anthroposophy reveals that our inner composure has an effect in the world, in nature. As Titania states to Oberon in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, "human beings fight because we quarrel," but so do our quarrels affect the world. Our seemingly small meditative efforts toward equilibrium, even as tugs-of-war crop up around us, contribute to peace on earth. Everyone holds the power to accept and to inwardly transform all challenges into the glories and opportunities of living, so that "good may become" of our struggles and conflicts—our own tugs-of-war.

Recent experience in Waldorf schools has revealed that things are continuing akimbo from the pandemic, restrictions, mandates, vaccination rules, and disruptions following these. Enrollment in many schools had gone over the top as families fled the cities to the countryside. New York City is at the root of this phenomenon in the Waldorf schools up and down the Hudson Valley, at a reported pace four times the exodus from the Big Apple after 9/11. This new enrollment has replaced existing enrollment as families who would prefer not to vaccinate their children—or at least not at the rate prescribed by the CDC (look up the "Slow Vaccination" movement online for reference)—retreat from their Waldorf schools to homeschooling "pods" or other alternatives to formal schooling. The replacement enrollment in Waldorf schools can often come in the form of families lacking any knowledge of Waldorf education but admiring the dedicated effort in many Waldorf schools to continue meeting in person with the more kindly, less test-driven approach used in Waldorf education. Newcomers often struggle with the absence of screens and the unusual approach to schooling. Teachers and schools struggle with pressure from new parents wishing for the schools to meet

common expectations like those engendered by the Common Core Standards.

The disintegration of the entire imagination of "school" that the lockdown and restrictions have wrought offers both hurdles to leap over and opportunities to re-think what it is Waldorf education has to offer in building a new imagination of "school." After a flurry of attempts to "follow the rules," using Zoom as an agent for this effort to stay connected and continue the work in the spring of 2020, when the panic of the lockdown was new, many teachers challenged the assumption that technology was a "necessity" and used this means only lightly—or not at all—and found myriad, creative ways to sustain heart connections to and among their students.

Teacher education institutes worked in a variety of different ways to continue their important work—some with full-on technology as the means; others refusing technology completely, jumping through the many regulatory hoops required to meet in person with safe distancing, masking, temperature taking, and reporting. Criticisms could be found—and can still be found—from all directions about all that schools and institutes have attempted, altered, and discovered in the dedicated insistence on continuing "Waldorf100" into the coming new century.

Administrations and boards of schools and institutes, with their remarkable legal and moral responsibility to keep organizations alive and moving forward, have in some cases appeared "authoritarian" in their enforcement of governmental rules of distancing and managing threats to good health. There are pockets of teachers who have felt curtailed, bossed, and unfree in their attempts to meet the needs of the children entrusted to their care. This enhanced struggle—tug-of-war—between regulation and freedom has been intensified by a heightened national debate about diversity, equity, and inclusion, which also has appeared at times to seem authoritarian, with statements about what should and should not be included in a Waldorf curriculum.

What a chance this all presents to overcome the illusion of a tug-of-war, to remember our common goal on behalf of the young, the future, to further a new imagination of what education can accomplish for

them through Waldorf education! As work continues on every front to transform polarities into active listening and conversation—the “better than gold” of Goethe’s celebrated “Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily”—RIWE and WP work to offer carefully vetted resources, sound research, and accessible materials to support the work at hand for Waldorf teachers, Waldorf schools, and Waldorf education. New books, research into parent responses to their journey through Waldorf education, translations into Spanish and Chinese, all available for free on the Online Waldorf Library (OWL), new enrollment materials, and gathering funders who share the vision of the potential in Waldorf education, constitute our work on behalf of all who work toward the world we know is possible, a world worthy of human beings. Enormous gratitude is due to all who share this work and make it possible. Thank you!



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Your many contributions lighten our hearts and make our ongoing work possible. Special gratitude is due to all of you who give monthly — these steady reminders of your confidence in us give us courage, to the *Rudolf*

Steiner Charitable Trust whose support has made our annual matching program a success, and to those individuals and foundations whose significant generosity has made much research and many books and monographs possible. All Waldorf schools recognized by AWSNA also support our work through our Book Bank program which supports us and enhances distribution for maximum awareness of our offerings. To all of you we extend our warm thanks. If there are any errors you discern, please let us know.

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About the Research Institute for Waldorf Education

The Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE), founded in 1996 in order to deepen and enhance the quality of Waldorf education, engages in sustained dialogue with the wider educational-cultural community and supports research to serve a wide range of educators in their work with children and adolescents.

The Research Institute supports projects dealing with essential contemporary educational issues such as computers and the effects of media on children, alternatives to standardized testing, physical health and psychological well-being of students, science teaching with a phenomenological approach, the role of the arts in education, and the philosophical underpinnings of Waldorf education.

As a sponsor of colloquia and conferences, the Research Institute brings together educators, psychologists, physicians, and social scientists for discussions on current issues related to education. RIWE publishes a *Research Bulletin* twice a year and prepares educational resources, including collections of

eBooks and articles (a growing number of them newly translated into Spanish). Many of these publications are available without charge on the website of the Online Waldorf Library (OWL), a virtual library created and managed by the Research Institute: www.waldorflibrary.org.

In 2013 the Research Institute took over the publications arm of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and re-branded it as Waldorf Publications. It includes resources for teachers and administrators, readers and children's books, collections of plays and poetry, science materials and kits, science and math newsletters, inspirational essays, proceedings of colloquia, and a range of publicity materials about Waldorf education. It also carries books published by the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN) and the Pedagogical Section Council (PSC) of the School for Spiritual Science, as well as AWSNA's twice-yearly magazine *Renewal*.

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Heartsspeak.net website of stories from the classroom

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theresearchbulletin@gmail.com
David Mitchell, Cover design
Alice Brown, Proofreading
Maris Van de Roer,
Layout/Production

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