

Redefining Education's "Normal," New and Old

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COVID-19's Lockdown

An *Education Week's* recent opinion piece by Alfie Kohn, "The Accidental Education Benefits of COVID-19,"¹ makes a strong case for adopting practices developed to cope with the lockdown of the past months as permanent improvements to our educational system. Even more, Kohn makes a strong case for permanently abandoning practices that have been suspended during the pandemic response. He cites three particular practices that should remain off the educational slate: *standardized testing* (because it is not a true indicator of success in the arenas where it counts); *college admissions testing* (because it is not a true indicator of academic performance after freshman year); and *grading* (because it encourages shallow thinking in pursuit of good grades instead of depth in reasoning).

Repeated reported imaginings of what is to become the "new normal" make Alfie Kohn's opinion timely and topical. In New York State, for example, Governor Cuomo began imagining a "new normal" for education before lockdown restrictions were eased, teaming up with the likes of the Gates Foundation to decide on what re-opening school might be like (if it ever occurs).² The Governor's pronouncement about this "new normal" was announced to us before any research had been inaugurated on how the enforced home schooling was working for families, students, or for teachers and schools.

The "circle of experts" that the good Governor assembled (reminiscent of a similar circle assembled to create the Common Core State Standards—CCSS—under the Obama Administration) was remarkably lacking in experienced teachers. After enough protesting from the proletariat, a couple of teachers were added to the group assigned to re-imagine for us all. This was only one slice of a larger plan for our "new normal," that would make use of facial recognition to identify those who might have a fever, for example. Once identified, while walking along the street, perhaps, those who

failed the temperature threshold could be plucked off the street and quarantined. Normal? Not really.

The Story of the Old "Normal"

The question that remains largely unexplored as far as education is concerned might be: Was education, since the turn of this new century, ever "normal" in the first place? Continual pressure on students to perform along "performance-based" plans and "outcomes-based" reductionist thinking motivate the imagination behind the current plans. These plans measure, through testing, any number of things. They "prove," for example, that schools are accountable, that teachers are competent, that taxpayers' money isn't being squandered, that students are working up to expectations.

This approach to education is not so easy to trace in history, but it began, possibly, with George H. W. Bush's *Thousand Points of Light*, in the late 1980s, an agenda that included a thousand points for education. Bill Clinton's administration then reworked these points into the 1994 "Goals 2000: Educate America Act."³ This act included an urgent push to get education onto the "information highway" of the internet and followed the forming, in the 1990s, of the Circle of Governors for Education and the Circle of Businesses for Education. Compliance with the act was announced as "voluntary;" however, it became clearer as the years passed that to not "volunteer" to adopt these goals left states with diminished funding, both private and federal, along with general, cultural mis-approbation. These circles were based on the assumption that businesses and government leaders know best what the outcomes of education ought to be for a thriving economy and a civic society, and so they should know best how to dictate what the education ought to be to attain those outcomes. Governors were offered financial prizes for going along with the federal government. Through these two circles, with bribery as the lure, President Clinton usurped authority over education beyond what is allowed in the Constitution, removing it from the voters' approval and declaring it all "voluntary."

The forming of charter schools during this time further moved school choice into the hands of the government, creating an illusion of private school education

1 Education Week, Vol. 40.1, p.20. Print: August 19, 2020. www.EdWeek.org. Alfie Kohn is author of—among many other books—*Punished by Rewards* and *The Case Against Standardized Tests*.

2 *Times Union*, Albany, NY, May 6, 2020, "Cuomo looks to tech billionaires to 're-imagine education'." www.timesunion.com/news/article/Cuomo-wants-to-reimagine-education-with-remote-15248791.php.

3 Public Law HR 1804, www2.ed.gov

"for free." This designation of "free" ignores the fact that billions of dollars of taxpayer money poured every year into public school education and that billions of corporate dollars were earned at the expense of educational freedom and of our children. In the Waldorf school movement, there was great rejoicing at first that, with charter schools, a Waldorf school curriculum could be offered "for free." Public Waldorf school members have explained that, at first, these charters were allowed to operate without restrictions, but that over time they became increasingly restrictive. The outcomes of education had to conform to the government's requirements, and testing was mandatory to demonstrate that students were "performing" and that these requirements were met, whatever approach to getting to the goals was used.

During the tenure of George W. Bush, the 2001 "No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB) was voted into effect.⁴ The Act established standardized testing as requirements for state governments. The authority of each state to minister to its own state-level school policies and educational approaches is granted through the United States Constitution. However, the NCLB was once again called "voluntary" and accompanied by pressure to adopt the common goals to avoid redundancy of states' formulating their own standards for education. When individual states began revising the NCLB provisions, they were instructed that only 15% of the document could be revised at the state level. States that responded by saying that they would reject the NCLB Act to develop their own educational standards faced a lawsuit from the Department of Education, headed at the time by Secretary Margaret Spellings. The law itself was over 900 pages long (Goals 2000 was 200+ pages long) and no one could identify who exactly had written it.⁵ According to its current Wikipedia entry, four authors are responsible for introducing this Act: Representatives John Boehner (R-OH) and George Miller (D-CA), and Senators Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Judd Gregg (R-NH). It was clearly a bipartisan effort.

Until 2007, and since 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) had been the guiding law for education in America. Constitutionally, states have authority over their schools while the federal

government holds no authority thereover. In 1790, when the United States Constitution was ratified, it was understood by many that a school system controlled by a federal government would produce a lack of variety in thinking, an arm of powerful control for a centralized authority over the developing minds of its citizens. Each state was empowered, therefore, to manage its own approach to education. The federal government was strictly excluded from rights in matters of education. In 2007, this ESEA law expired, after being re-enacted again and again over the decades with different changes. There was widespread recognition that the NCLB act was a failure, even a complete disaster. Few were willing to admit this aloud, but no politician had any imagination of what to put in its place. The only member of Congress lobbying for the repealing of NCLB was one of the original authors of the law, George Miller. The year 2007 bordered on an election year, and no one dared to touch this issue. Other issues crowded

in to distract from the questions of education. Standardized testing has become, and remains, the "proof" needed for accountability in this particular "new normal."

The other element inaugurated with standardized testing and with universal, federally developed education standards for grades 1-12, was the full-on invasion of corporate intentions into education. At a conference at the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School

in Ghent, New York, in August 2001, the appointed (i.e., not elected) head of the office of Non-Public Education in New York State at the time, Tom Hogan, addressed a room full of New York State Waldorf school representatives. The conference was called because New York State's Board of Regents had declared that if any student in our state did not pass the Regents' Exam, a test touted by the Regents to be harder than the standardized NCLB test, those individuals would not be granted a high school diploma and would be barred from all employment in state government jobs. When one teacher in the conference asked if the hours and hours of testing required and the test-preparation courses that accompanied them were harmful to children who need to move in order to think, the state official replied, "This is the biggest cash cow to ever come down the pike. No one wants to ask or answer that question."

The increasing pressure on children to perform well in school, which in turn proves that teachers are teaching and that schools are effective, came along with

The unprecedented leap from classroom teaching and learning to remote, often online, screen-based teaching and learning ... is not without consequences, even if the immediate consequences are not clear.

4 Public Law 107-110, www.govinfo.gov

5 For a critique of this act, see: www.tecweb.org/eddevel/telecon/de99.html

the acceleration in the diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Behavior diagnosed as ADHD was addressed by medication aimed to correct it. Ritalin (a brand name for the stimulant Methylphenidate) was approved for administering to children by the FDA in 1962.⁶ Pharmaceutical companies have been criticized for marketing the diagnosis of ADHD as heavily as they have marketed the drug.⁷ A 1996 *New York Times* article reports an increase of 500% in sales of Ritalin between 1991 and 1996.⁸ Sales of Ritalin have increased at least 8% per year since. Though its use in controlling the behavior of children has raised ethical issues, and class action and other types of lawsuits have persisted around the drug, its use continues to increase.⁹

In his 1998 book, *Running on Ritalin: A Physician Reflects on Children, Society, and Performance on a Pill*, Lawrence H. Diller recounts his experiences with insurance companies as well as with distressed families who could not afford additional medical office visits beyond what their insurance companies cover. In effect, Dr. Diller, a behavioral and developmental pediatrician, found himself severely restricted in his possibilities to extend long-term care to children struggling in school. Prescribing Ritalin seemed almost his only choice under the circumstances.¹⁰ "Encouragement" from schools to prescribe Ritalin added to the pressure this pediatrician felt. More recent critiques of the epidemic of ADHD diagnoses can be found in books like *The ADHD Explosion: Myths, Medication, Money and Today's Push for Performance*¹¹ and numerous articles, some stark and urgent, such as the review bearing the same title, "The ADHD Explosion," published on the Association for Psychological Science website,¹² citing the ever increasing use of stimulants like Ritalin for increased performance.

Pharmaceutical companies show a clear example of one industry benefitting from the outcomes-based approach to education, encouraged and legislated by our government. Think further, though, to the

6 www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf/index.cfm?event=overview.process&AppNo=021284

7 See, for example, the PBS "Frontline" report "The Business of ADHD," <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/medicating/experts/business.html>

8 "Boom in Ritalin Sales Raises Ethics Issues," www.nytimes.com/1996/05/15/us/boom-in-ritalin-sales-raises-ethical-issues.html

9 www.theguardian.com/society/2015/aug/15/ritalin-prescriptions-double-decade-adhd-mental-health

10 See Lawrence H. Diller, M.D., *Running on Ritalin: A Physician Reflects on Children, Society, and Performance on a Pill*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1998).

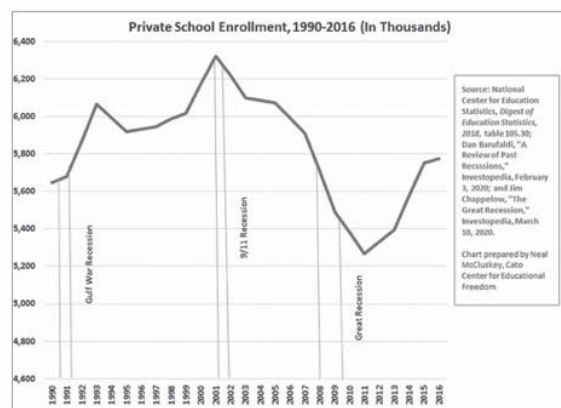
11 Stephen Hinshaw and Richard Scheffler, *The ADHD Explosion: Myths, Medication, Money and Today's Push for Performance* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

12 www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/the-adhd-explosion-2

technology industry, the testing industry, the text book industry, food companies, school supply businesses, software companies, curriculum companies, and the empire of remedial support and consultants in the United States, all touting the claim that they can help schools and teachers meet the standards put out by the government.

The ESEA law was recast as NCLB expired, as stated, in 2007. Barack Obama was elected president, Arnie Duncan became secretary of education, yet no law was enacted to delineate educational guidelines, parameters, or funding. For eight years, the Obama administration dragged its feet on establishing or enacting any law for educational direction or financial support and administered all educational policy out of its own thoughts and pockets, amidst little outcry from the media or the public. During Obama's years in office, thousands of private schools closed, particularly after the 2008 financial collapse.¹³ In addition, and following along the practices of previous administrations, now with no laws to check the activity, the Department of Education lured states into agreeing to "common standards." The lyrics to this particular song went, 'Why set a state's own standards when we all want the same thing for our children? Let us do these standards for everyone!' Once again, the federal government stated, since it has no constitutional authority to interfere in education, that this was only what the states had asked them to do. It was, of course, "voluntary." The federal government's initiative,¹⁴ of course, came with funding attached to cooperation. However, when the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were issued in 2010, again states learned that "voluntary" meant a restriction of changes to the federal government's document not to exceed 5-15%. Protests were silenced with bribes along

13 The Cato Institute, "Private Schools Face an Existential Threat," April 13, 2020, Chart of school closures 1990-2016. Note the plummeting numbers after 2008:



14 www.govinfo.gov, H. Res. 43 (IH) – Expressing the Sense of the House of Representatives in Support of the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

the lines of, 'We'll give you a waiver on strict timelines and financial requirements, so long as you tow this CCSS line.'

The financial opportunities abounded following this with curriculum aids, software, hardware, and many consultants, reaching all the way through to our Waldorf communities, charging high fees to explain to schools how to comply with the CCSS. Fear and anxiety were common responses. There was little protest, refusal, or call for debate. A common sentiment among teachers was shock and disappointment that they were asked to offer so little of their experience in formulating the CCSS. The prevailing and officially unspoken prejudice, encouraged by the media, was that teachers are those who caused the need for such standards. These CCSS would call the teachers to task, it was reported, to make them prove that they are no longer getting away with sloth and incompetence.

It's clear when talking to public servants in Congress, who are involved in these educational matters, that a cynical view of their motives is only partially appropriate. Idealism shines through when it comes to children and their education. Senators and representatives in Congress, presidents and secretaries of education all speak with shining eyes of the wish for a good education for all children in America. And they mean it. *All of us mean well.* Still, an underlying attitude seems to be, 'If we can all make money on it in the bargain, well, what's the harm in that?' The old adage that tells us where we might end up when the road is paved with good intentions seems not to apply to us.

The whole distorted cubist-styled painting of our current education, dismembering the human form and putting it back together so that parts are recognizable but the whole form is a scrambled concoction, provides a wonderful picture of the urgent need for the three-folding of our society.¹⁵ No matter how elevated the motives, no matter how pure the intentions, when the sphere of human rights and politics, laced with economic interests, barges in on such a precious arena as a cultural activity, in this case education, the work tends to go awry and to end in chaos. Since the lockdown in response to the Corona virus pandemic, this has become even more exaggerated.

15 See Rudolf Steiner's *Toward Social Renewal* (London, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2012).

Worldview Makes a Difference

Behind the trend of pushing for testing-validated performance is an imagining of what a human being, or a child, actually is. Reductionist or materialistic science leads to picturing the human being as a machine-like organism made up of material particles. Children, in this imagining, become like empty buckets who need adults (or computers) to fill them up with information. This imagination includes a philosophy of 'the earlier

the better – more years of practice to succeed on tests' that has crammed expectations of intellectual achievement on to younger and younger grades over the last few decades. The Common Core State Standards criteria includes a math curriculum for grades one and two that might have been expected in grade four a decade ago. The testing process empties the bucket for a moment and shows what has been kept in the bucket, then the bucket is set upright once more and the process

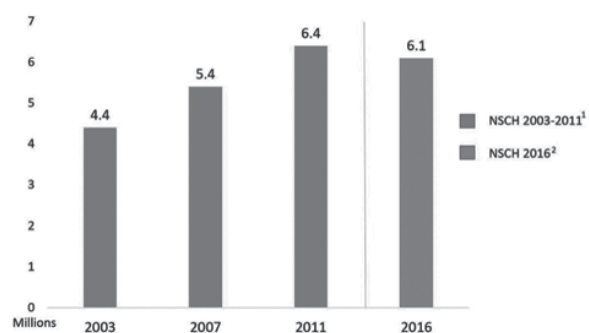
of filling up begins again. The message to the child in this view is that success means sitting still, staring for long stretches of time at a computer, absorbing information, and "proving" what is known in stressful hours of testing on a computer. "Be still and absorb," if difficult for a youngster, can be abetted by drugs, if need be. The CDC states that up to 62% of children in school are helped with these methylphenidate medications.¹⁶

This imagination of the human being and of children excludes the ephemeral and ethereal aspects of the human and runs directly contrary to the understanding of human beings or human development held in Waldorf education. Ineffable qualities that hold endless possibilities for transformation or "miracles" — qualities like love, inspiration, aspirations, trust, idealism,

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16 Figures reported on the Center for Disease Control, Data and Statistics on ADHD, citing the 2018 study, "National Prevalence of ADHD and Treatment: Information on children and adolescents, 2016"

Estimated number of US children who ever had a diagnosis of ADHD



imagination, compassion, inspiration, empathy, dignity, sympathy, forgiveness, gratitude, enthusiasm, antipathy, humility, integrity, kindness, or justice—have little or no place in a mechanistic view of human development. In Waldorf education, these qualities are held as essential to a child’s wholesome development, yet there is no effective test to measure these vital qualities.

Waldorf teachers understand that without enthusiasm for a task, or love of a task, little deep learning can occur. Love is an essential part of a Waldorf teacher’s “job” in teaching. Trusting a child’s destiny and purposefulness in being born allows for limitless possibilities for transformation. The love a teacher practices on behalf of children in Waldorf schools makes envisioning such love on behalf of every child possible and enhances the understanding of development by way of support. The sentimentalized or sexualized popular understanding of love can make some feel that the approach of a teacher’s love is not rigorous or appropriate. This would be a false interpretation. The opposite is true. The strong bond between teacher and student calls the child to be moved in feelings, stimulated in thinking, and called from his or her own wishes to getting the things done that are being asked. Love in its truest sense engages the whole human being, the whole child.

Love makes a child feel recognized in striving; it motivates the child’s will to work in response to the warmth from and for a teacher felt deep inside the child. Idealism coursing through a child’s consciousness builds strong and healthy physical organs; it helps muscle tissue attach to the bone soundly and bolsters a child’s immune system.¹⁷ The child can sense that he or she is considered with dignity and respect for the individuality inherent within one. The child feels seen and appreciated. Hope and optimism blossom in the youngster’s soul and aspiration becomes possible. Miracles become possible. Everyone knows that each human being ripens to skills on different timelines. To hold a child to an artificial timeline for developmental and academic achievements that apply to all, rather than to the individual child, is to doom a large percentage of children to failure at a very early age. To name two classical examples: Robert Frost, United States Poet Laureate 1958-1959, did not read in the measurable sense we use the word now until he was fourteen or fifteen years old, while Albert Einstein, brilliant physicist

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of the twentieth century, reportedly was unable to tie his own shoes in elementary school. Both would have been cast as failures in our current system. Would these geniuses have been able to achieve what they achieved in light of such a branding?

It is easy to see why such an unusual view of child development would arouse suspicion, even derision, in a reductionist paradigm. Terms like “spiritual” push critics to an instant relegation of Waldorf education to the status of religion, and, therefore, dismissible as an actual “method,” whereas the real difference between Waldorf education and the contemporary mainstream is that of worldview, not of belief or dogma. Waldorf teachers the world ‘round, teachers of many faiths, races, and cultures, hold this view of child development and succeed with the children entrusted to them. Waldorf schools enjoy a track record of success now 100 years strong.¹⁸

For at least thirty years, we have had hard data on testing results of American children in the throes of the current educational experiment. Bill and Melinda Gates and Steven Jobs were made wealthy (also) through convincing our culture that all children need computers in order to learn and to succeed in school in the late 20th and the 21st centuries. As a culture, we were beguiled into believing that information is knowledge, or that access to information makes us smart and wise. It might appear that infatuation with the latest “magical device” of computer capacities, scrolling tricks and thrilling speed, drove us all to wish that computers would solve the mystery of education.

The federal government requires schools to ensure minimum levels of technological competence among their students. These “unfunded mandates” from the federal government¹⁹ are draining public schools of needed funding for teachers to sustain essential school programs while driving up sales of technology hardware and software. The corporate world’s hold on public schools and its spill-over into private school education remains vice-grip tight in spite of protests, despair, and supporting statistics. Studies abound on the dangers of

18 Change to “For an encompassing assessment, see Nana Göbel, *The History of Waldorf Education, Worldwide* (Hudson, NY: Waldorf Publications, 2020).

19 See an NPR’s “All Things Considered” report, “New Federal Rules for Distributing School Money: An ‘Unfunded Mandate’?” <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/08/31/492071491/new-federal-rules-for-distributing-school-money-an-unfunded-mandate>, August 31, 2016.

17 Jo Marchant, “How Happiness Boosts the Immune System,” *Scientific American*, November 27, 2013.

online learning: distraction; physical damage to eyes, ears, brain development; behavioral disorders; and the high level of addiction apparent from frequent screen use.²⁰ Nicholas Carr, in research reported in his book, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*,²¹ calls for attention (which is what is eroding) to the changes we are prompting with online living.

Ironically, academic performance in the United States—the result of a government-guided sculpting of education on every level, using the tools of screen technology and drugs—when measured in comparison to other countries, could be called mediocre, at best. In 2020, the United States overall education ranking placed it at number 26 among 36 industrialized countries.²² In 2015, the United Nations annual Human Development report ranked the United States 8th among nations on its Education Index.²³ (According to Investopedia, the USA was rated first, or—depending on the lens used—second only to China in economic dynamism.²⁴ However these measures might be interpreted, our priorities as a nation are fairly clear). When these results are reported each year, the reaction around the political/educational community seems to be consistently, “Dig in harder on what is already not working. Don’t disturb the robust market.” Another instructive irony is here: as federal spending for education increases, “performance” declines.²⁵ This could lead to a rational hypothesis that we are not, after all, really investing in education at all.

A Culture of Despair or a Culture of Enthusiasm?

In the United States, suicide is the second-leading cause of death for older teens and young adults. The suicide rate has been increasing alarmingly in recent years. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that from 2007 through 2017 the rate of suicides in this age group grew from 6.8 deaths per 100,000 people to

10.6.²⁶ Suicide rates in youngsters aged 10 to 14 years have tripled in the same time period.²⁷ The CDC identified suicide as the second leading cause of death in these age groups.²⁸

What could make a child feel the level of despair, helplessness or uselessness to take such a radical action as to end life? Surely there is something urgently important to examine here as we proceed. Waldorf teachers know that our primary task in the elementary and pre-school years is to protect the young entrusted to our care. Understanding child development is a primary tool in building lessons that meet the child’s capacity for comprehension and bearing on the emotional level the darker things in our world. Teachers understand ways to help children in pre-school and elementary years to digest the world in ways that are digestible, in a childlike, story language. This gives young children sound sleep, a sense of well-being, and reasons to rejoice that they were born. Teaching in ways that intellectualize things in early years causes stress to the young. Presenting material that burdens young souls with heavy issues clearly can be deadly.

By the time a student reaches seventh or eighth grade, a healthy youngster will begin articulating issues and causes identified in his or her own soul, signaling readiness to take on issues that emotions have been allowed to grow strong to endure. Teaching in ways that focus on what the child does not know and does not understand undermines the child’s developing soul and developing confidence. Handing children low testing scores, starting at age seven or eight, runs the risk of reinforcing a young person’s feelings of doubt or inadequacy.

The 2010 film, “Race to Nowhere”²⁹ profiles a 13-year-old girl, an “A” student, who took her own life the day she received a “C” grade in one subject. Many already know that as parents and as teachers, our enthusiasm for the child’s existence is a key component in a child’s survival. The chance we have now, of looking closer at the way we teach and the way we assess a child’s

The strong bond between teacher and student calls the child to be moved in feelings, stimulated in thinking, and called from his or her own wishes to getting the things done that are being asked.

20 Victoria Dunckley, *Reset Your Child’s Brain: A Four-Week Plan to End Meltdowns, Raise Grades, and Boost Social Skills by Reversing the Effects of Electronic Screen-Time* (California: New World Library, 2015).

21 Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (NY: W. W. Norton, 2010).

22 See the World Population Review ranking of education at worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/education-rankings-by-country

23 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_Index

24 www.investopedia.com/insights/worlds-top-economies/

25 www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/sep/07/us-education-spending-finland-south-korea

26 www.healthline.com/health-news/teen-suicide-rate-spikes-56-in-9-years

27 www.westernjournal.com/suicide-rates-among-children-10-14-years-old-tripled-experts-blame-social-media/

28 www.prb.org/suicide-replaces-homicide-second-leading-cause-death-among-us-teens/

29 www.amazon.com/Race-Nowhere-Vicki-Abeles/dp/B01DAK0XG8

progress, can contribute to the child's deep sense of belonging and succeeding, or not.

Possibilities for the Future

The pandemic has pushed us all into an alternative reality. Waldorf schools and teacher education institutes have sprung flexibly into new approaches to regular school that deserve commendations. Every approach used, from complete dormancy or closure to online schooling only, and combinations of both, has been employed by all, including our Waldorf communities. Forgiveness and a minimum of harsh judgements are in order in light of the emergency we face. In addition to suspended judgement, however, we can recognize that opportunities are plentiful in this pause. We now have choices to make and research to fulfill as the pandemic enters new phases and, with luck, subsides (as slowly as this may occur). Alfie Kohn identifies one very good idea in his recommendation for suspending testing. This is only one idea of the many possible. As we have found ourselves prohibited from being together, and as we are sent home in waves for protection and caution, screen technology showed itself as a marvelous asset, for those who have it. Yet, this is hardly the entire reality of it.

In the Waldorf community, we entered the virtual reality of the internet delivery of teaching already knowing that a screen class, a virtual class, is no substitute for actual meeting, for heart-to-heart teaching and learning. Most teachers already know that enthusiasm slides away without human contact with warm attention in it. The weeks of online schooling underscored what we in the Waldorf community and in most of the teaching community knew before the pandemic struck. Only about a third of the work assigned to stay-at-home students is, on average, expected to be completed. Classes online are often followed with a feeling of complete exhaustion in adults and overtired hyperactivity in the young. Keen observation and interested analysis are in order to understand on a deeper level why these phenomena happen.

The risks involved in screen technology did not disappear with the ushering in of the pandemic, or with the necessity to use such technology in order to continue teaching on one level or another. What will we do next? As schools cope with outdoor classes and hybrid courses, with fear of illness, with the need to protect students and teachers, and to follow complex procedures and restrictions mandated by local and state

governments, added to unnerving feelings of disintegration and separation, we should engage in research that will inform as to what human beings do in unusual situations, and especially what young human beings do.

Over the past summer, teacher preparation centers worked to imitate on-the-ground training with online classes. Many who previously could not attend in-person classes due to expenses associated with room, board, and travel, in addition to tuition, were now able to take training classes online. Decades of criticism of those who attempted online trainings, and past commitments to using only low percentages of online teacher development, were pushed aside. A rich discussion, after the "coping" time period is over, is in order; such a discussion could examine what exactly is teacher preparation, or at least what it might be ideally, what it takes to engender the necessary transformation to become a teacher, and what is the meaning of "artistic transformation," as we use the term in Waldorf teacher preparation. It's a rare and golden opportunity for revival and discovery.

Binarism or duality is the realm of computer reality. The extraordinary variations on this duality that create our internet world are impressive, but still are born from 0 and 1 only. Two possibilities and remarkably endless combinations of 1 and 0 is all there is in computer land.³⁰ The two-dimensional experience of a picture of a person on a screen is not an entirely human experience. The seventh-grade physics lesson that uses mirrors can explain a lot about this insufficiency. While some elements of self-examination are possible through the mirror image, the same is not true concerning the examination of or interest in the "reflection" of another — at least as compared to the experiences we have in person. Mirrors can generate awareness of the real vs. a reflected reality. Rudolf Steiner continues to teach us through his lectures and books on threefoldness. This threefoldness reflects the authentic archetype of the human being and the experience of human development: thinking, feeling, willing; head, hands, heart; you and I are *we*. In that space between the duality of two, comes the possibility of sharing, the mighty teacher of the heart, the light, the warmth, the glory of transcendence. Duality cannot get us there.

30 For an in-depth examination of the implications of this duality see: Paul Emberson, *From Gandhishapur to Silicon Valley* (volume 1) (Switzerland and Scotland: Etheric Dimensions Press, 2009).

In Waldorf schools we work as teachers to educate and transform our feeling life through artistic work, processing all learning through the arts: drama, speech formation, singing and playing music on instruments, painting, sculpting, woodworking, handwork, Eurythmy, dance, wood and metal work, handwork, reviewing what we have learned. Through this artistic process, real evaluation and deep learning comes. In the peer-reviewed book, *Assessment for Learning in Waldorf Classrooms*,³¹ Helen-Ann Ireland and Sara Ciborski thoroughly describe the steady, careful assessment that comes in this three-folded experience of teacher-student-class. Keen observation, enthusiastic rigor in cultivating clear thinking, and trust in the imponderables abounding in every human heart – these three touch the yearning in the young to be recognized and set free through learning.

As we discover together in genuine review and evaluation, as the pandemic eventually leaves us, those things to cherish and those things that have been helpful about this time of pausing from the frantic pressure we called “normal,” let’s join with Alfie Kohn and go further, as thought-leaders and practitioners in education about authentic and in-depth learning. Taking a stand on the knowledge we have of being human can avoid not only the tool of testing, but can also allow us to imagine an education that genuinely frees us all toward *The More Beautiful World that Our Hearts Know Is Possible*, to borrow the words of Charles Eisenstein.³² All who work to understand the mystery of a growing youngster can insist that we, as a community, stand firm to avoid a rush to do again what was already crushing the high spirits of children and teenagers, of teachers and parents. Let’s insist together that the “new normal” assess on a human scale, not on a two-fold screen with high stakes performance of shallow testing. Let’s proceed with deep, three-dimensional, thinking, human hearts, intelligent hands, and flexible and wise minds. Children who imitate our own hearts, aflame with love and enthusiasm, can light the world and light the future.

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31 Helen-Ann Ireland, Ph.D., and Sara Ciborski, Ph.D., *Assessment for Learning in Waldorf Classrooms* (Washington D.C.: Academica Press, 2015).

32 Charles Eisenstein, *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2007).