

Gateways

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From the Editor

Stephen Spitalny

For this issue of *Gateways* we had the good fortune of receiving more articles than we could include. Thank you to all who have submitted articles, and our apologies to all those whose work we were not able to include this time.

There are two themes that I would like you, the potential writers, to consider as something to offer to our readers in future issues. This issue of *Gateways* has an excerpt from a book on the older child in the kindergarten, written by Tim Bennett from Seattle. It can be the first in an ongoing series of articles about different rhythms-of-the-day in our early childhood programs. This will give a sense of the various approaches people take, and why they made their particular choices. And it will give the readers new ideas that they might choose to incorporate into their work. So start thinking about why your day is arranged the way it is, and then write up your thoughts and send them to me.

The second theme I would like to see addressed in upcoming issues of *Gateways* is nutrition. We know how important the early years are as a foundation for the rest of life in various ways, including the physical body. Nutrition could be thought of as the substances the body has available for body-building, the substances the etheric formative forces are provided to work with. Recently I attended a talk by Dr. Steve Blake on vitamins and minerals in food and was so interested by what I heard that I bought his book, *Vitamins and Minerals Demystified*. His presentation and his book both look at what substances the human body needs for healthy functioning, and what foods are sources for those important ingredients. How can we understand essential nutrition for the young child, and help to educate the parents as well? I offer the following snippet as an enticement towards future articles because the world of nutrition deserves deepening in our movement.

Dr. Blake's thoughts about calcium, a key ingredient for building bones and teeth, and keeping them strong, are well worth consideration. Calcium level is kept to a tight range in the blood, and when there is not enough intake of usable

calcium, the body takes it from its own bones through the action of the parathyroid gland. There are two ingested food items that particularly impact calcium levels in the body, sodium (in salt) and proteins. Sodium flushes calcium out of the body through the kidneys, so sodium intake needs to be balanced with sufficient dietary calcium to prevent bone loss. Calcium is also used to neutralize the acids in our blood that result from burning protein. The more protein that goes in, the more calcium is then needed to keep the blood pH balanced. The gist is, eat salt or proteins, and make sure there is enough calcium coming in to prevent the body taking it from the bones. When we think about children it is even more significant because they are in a phase of building up bones that they will have their whole life. So give the children plenty of greens, whole sesame seeds, and many nuts, seeds and legumes, all healthy sources of calcium.

We have many wonderful articles included in this issue of *Gateways*. I am especially excited to present observations and experiences from colleagues visiting several programs around the globe and some photos as well. We are also fortunate to be able to include several articles that articulate the research of some of our colleagues that can help us deepen our own thinking about the children. I received four separate articles, all well written and informative, authored by Renate Long-Breipohl of Australia. We have only included one of hers, and it was very hard to choose. Perhaps future issues will contain more of her work.

Please send us your comments. I received several positive responses to my article about the Sistine Madonna, and we may revisit her in upcoming issues. It is so good to know that people actually read our newsletter. Send your questions for colleagues to consider, your wishes for specific topics to be covered in future issues – and, of course, your articles articulating your thinking and experiences, your circle time activities and stories we may not all have heard. Take out your pen and paper, or your laptop, and get the words down on the pages. Writing is a great practice to more fully articulate one's own ideas.

Finally, I want to share a recent heart-warming experience. Some key qualities that I try to embody as an early childhood educator are persistence and

patience. Our main tool is imitation. It is hard work to develop patience and be consistent, and every once in a while there is a validation of those efforts. Jimmy turned six in January in kindergarten this year. He began the year with a strong dislike of spiders, and would try and step on them or squash them in various other creative ways. While helping a spider outside, each time I would say; "We leave the spiders in peace. Spiders help us. They eat other bugs." I said it many times for many months to this boy, over and over and over. Last week, another child was about to step on a spider, and Jimmy said; "Don't squish it. Spiders help us. They eat other bugs."

I will close with an excerpt from Rudolf Steiner:

The supersensible world impresses parts of our body differently. The ether body penetrates/impresses our breast and upper leg more than it does our hands. Straight from our fingers go mighty beams of the ether body. Because this is what happens in our hands, we can see that our hands develop a wonderful, intimate relationship to the outer life. People who wash their hands often are in a finer relationship to their environment, they are more open to their environment . . . The human being is organized in such a way that he can have this intimate relationship to the outer world through the hands. (St. Gallen, February 26, 1911)



Working and Living with So-Called Difficult Children

2008 East Coast Waldorf Early Childhood Conference

Nancy Blanning

The following highlights come from three keynote addresses given by Dr. Gerald Karnow at the February 2008 East Coast Waldorf Early Childhood Conference in Spring Valley, NY. Topics from the book, Difficult Children: There is No Such Thing by Henning Köhler, gave the conference its theme. Dr. Karnow is an anthroposophic physician in the Fellowship Community and also school doctor to the Rudolf Steiner School in NYC and Green Meadow Waldorf School.

A second article arising out of the conference, on the topic of coming to understand the child through observation of the threefold organism, is in process. Look for it in a future issue of Gateways.

The theme of this conference acknowledges that there are growing numbers of children who challenge us. Dr. Karnow asked what methods we employ to understand the “difficult child”? What are our criteria for what is normal? If we provide age-appropriate content, then the children should, within a certain spectrum, be able to accommodate what the teacher brings. This assumes that we are bringing age-appropriate, Waldorf-inspired content, which permits the maturation of the child’s individuality through the lower senses (touch, life, self-movement, and balance). This builds a physicality that will provide the framework for a healthy development of the higher senses (hearing, word, thought, and ego). The careful working to build health in lower sense activity will provide the right foundation for later, more subtle, soul-spiritual development. The early childhood educator helps prepare the child in his body for grade school and the experience of the middle senses (smell, taste, sight, and warmth), and for the high school where the area of experience is the upper senses. The early childhood domain is the lower senses, the body, the will.

As we begin to consider “difficult” children, Dr. Karnow emphasized that it is essential to understand that all experiences we bring to the child through education affect physical development.

This was illustrated by the example of Otto Specht, Rudolf Steiner’s first student, which can serve as an archetype for our work as educators. Otto Specht was a hydrocephalic boy whose case was considered hopeless. To educate him was thought impossible. Nonetheless, the mother of this boy had trust in Rudolf Steiner and asked him to take on the boy’s education. Steiner required that he alone would decide everything done with the boy, to which the mother agreed. He very closely structured the curriculum given to Otto and guided the movement of his limbs in very specific ways. Through these activities, the size of Otto’s head shrank. He not only improved physically but completed his education and became a medical doctor. In this situation, Steiner was a young man educating a difficult child. This child could not learn and was essentially deformed. But through the education Steiner developed, the child not only improved his intellectual capacities and completed his education, but his physical body changed as well. Each child wants to incarnate into the physical world and bring “the latest news from the spiritual world.” The question for us is, does today’s education create a body that the spiritual being of the child can inhabit? “Difficult” children are confronting a struggle in finding home in an earthly body.

Dr. Karnow described that in the first period of life, the child is all body, and all experiences affect body development. Everything we do affects the totality of the whole being, even through chemical and morphological changes that occur in the body. Not only the soul life — emotional, intellectual, and psychological — is affected. In other words, everything we do with the young child affects his physicality, his physical body. Pedagogical activities work upon the physical, while the medical activities work on the etheric. What we present in the pedagogy is received through the senses and works deeply into the body. Regarding the “difficult” child, the physical body can be the bridge through which we can foster healthy development through the educational experiences we bring.

The physical body can also be the vehicle through which we can come to understand the “difficult” child. The ability to observe is key in approaching perplexing children. Dr. Karnow remarked that when he goes to a school as physician, he does so with anxiety. He is asked to observe, and he follows Rudolf Steiner’s guidelines as to what to do – just look. One has to empty oneself of anxiety, having trust that some insight will come. Something catches our attention toward that child, perhaps a heavy ear lobe that does not tell anything by itself. It has to connect to something else, a movement, perhaps. Dr. Karnow quoted from the first chapter of *Fundamentals of Therapy*: “It is of the utmost importance to know that the human being’s ordinary forces of thinking are refined form and growth forces. A spiritual element reveals itself in the forming and growing of the human organism. And this spiritual element then appears during the course of later life as the spiritual power of thought.” When we observe soul behavior, such as speech, movement, movement of thoughts, forgetting, and so on, we will only find the answer to why the behavior is occurring by looking back at the body itself. This is where the physician is a helpful colleague to the educator. The teacher looks at the soul and describes the soul manifested in the child’s behavior. The doctor lives in relation to the body. The doctor is asked to give a reason for why the child is unable to behave differently. Up to about age twenty-one, we see organically driven behavior and we want to understand its cause. Early childhood teachers are dealing with organ-driven behavior, determined by the child’s physicality.

There needs to be a dialogue between doctor and teacher. How can we understand behaviors that stir our interest, or that annoy? We understand behavior is organically driven. So what are we to do about it? Otto Specht’s behavior was organically determined. His physical condition did not allow him to participate in a normal school. So Rudolf Steiner saw he had to evoke a change in the organism. If we want to evoke a change in behavior, we have to evoke a change in the organism. We usually come up with things in the child’s environment to account for difficult behaviors – media, diet, family life – but the true answer lies in the physical body of the child.

Yet how can we come to truly observe the child

so that we can gain a sense for what to do to evoke a beneficial change? Dr. Karnow spoke of times past when human beings had active converse with the gods in mystery centers, the sources of spiritually revealed knowledge in ancient times. Rudolf Steiner states in Volume Six of *Karmic Relationships* that whatever originates in medicine today is fundamentally an aftermath from insights shared by the ancient Mercury gods. But things have run dry in our times. Humanity must rediscover how to have new conversation with divine beings. To help us do that is the mission of Anthroposophy. If we think of our work as a process of entering the spiritual world and being guided by the beings who live in it, this gives meaning to our work that transcends the moment and deepens our task. Every Waldorf school is a mystery center, but only if we realize it and act accordingly. This we can do through the gifts given by Rudolf Steiner through Anthroposophy.

In his *Difficult Children* book, Henning Köhler speaks of our coming into relationship with the “difficult” child as a path of initiation, a conscious entry into relation to the spiritual world. How can one undergo this initiation? One needs to create a posture of creative “not-knowing.” We want to go into a situation not knowing anything and thereby create an organ of “not-knowing” receptivity. This needs intense participation. The observer enters into a situation where the being of the contemplated child actually melts into oneself; observer and the one observed become one. This is an act of emptying out and becoming selfless, of not being burdened by ideas, preconceptions, or expectations, but of being open. The nose or ear or hands or feet or movement or tone of voice could capture our attention. To become one with another, the observer has to become empty, still, quiet, and warm. If one does that, the inspiration of what needs to happen will come. Steiner calls this a “thinking-feeling” into the other. Then the observer will be “thought” by the being of the child as act of creative identification. I become one with you. This is a turning around of the activity of an educator or observer from what is customary. It is a nonlabeling approach. It is totally open, and one does not know what is going to happen. True communication, true dialogue can happen when this emptying has occurred.

To achieve this emptying requires enormous inner work on the part of the educator. Labeling a child as “difficult” points to something in ourselves rather than the child. We admit we cannot handle this child in the context of the other children. This child explodes the bubble in which we want our children to be contained. We want the children to do just what we want. Dr. Karnow referred to Köhler’s observation that one of the biggest impediments to our moving forward is our addiction to contentment. In our classrooms, we want everything to be harmonious and nice. When we are led by this desire to be comfortable, we are not open to hearing the true child speak.

The point stands out from Köhler’s book that we need a new artistic mode of educational thinking and observing. When we look at something artistically, the form we perceive becomes an expression of what created that form. Through the form, we can begin to see the invisible aspects of the human being. To do this, we have to learn to grow wings. The visible is a kind of darkness, an abyss. This is what we see when we just look at the outer physicality. We need to develop wings to penetrate through the darkness and see the light and spark and be able to bring it to birth, to save it.

Throughout the lectures, Dr. Karnow made repeated reference to his pedagogical “bibles” — *The Study of Man/Foundations of Human Experience*) and *Education for Special Needs*. These two are courses in “wing development.” The answers to all our questions lie in these two books. He urged teachers to commit dedicated study to these volumes. We can grow wings by taking up spiritual ideas about the nature of the human being. To appreciate the threefold nature of humanity, which these lectures describe, gives us eyes to see with and wings to fly over the chasm that separates us from an understanding of the child. Especially when we meet together in a circle, sharing our different perspectives, we can perceive and become participants in creative forces that give us tools for understanding and tools for working.

Dr. Karnow reminded us that life is structured in time. Human development is a process in time. Our society is one that expects quick answers and solutions, so this process puts us at odds with modern expectations. As educators, we have to understand that what is done with a child now will

have its results in the future, in later life. As helping companions to the child, we must also have patience that the dialogue with the true spiritual being of the child will not happen instantly. The processes of emptying, looking, listening, and sensing require time and patience. We must be able to withstand the discomfort we feel in not being able to come up with an answer right away. We have to wait to permit the world to imprint itself into us so we can realize the meaning of what we see. This requires patience and tolerance to live with the frustration of not having a quick answer.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Karnow shared a verse given by Rudolf Steiner to Dr. Ita Wegman on December 21, 1921, which pictures the theme through the three days of lectures:

*The human being is a bridge
Between the past and future existence.
The present is a moment; moment as bridge.
Spirit grown to soul in matter’s husk
Comes from the past.
Soul growing to spirit as seed encased
Journeys toward the future.
Grasp future things through past ones
Hope for evolving things through what has evolved.
So grasp existence in evolving growth;
So grasp what will be in what exists.*

This verse is spoken at the faculty meetings of the Otto Specht School, a new therapeutic endeavor in the Fellowship Community. It was begun to offer another program to carry “difficult” children whom the regular classroom cannot embrace. The program’s existence points squarely to questions we teachers carry: Is Waldorf education here for all children? Can this education meet every child’s needs? Dr. Karnow answered this. Yes, we are here for all children, but there may be circumstances where we cannot meet all the children’s needs. If a child is asked to leave, we must be honest and clear as to why. Is it because we are addicted to contentment, or because it is truly impossible? There are situations where a child is carried despite difficulties and where, through time, a transformation has occurred. We must keep in mind the time element.

We can also remind ourselves that Waldorf education is confined not only to a nice classroom.

The world is a classroom, as it is a mystery temple. Waldorf education can happen everywhere, and some children require this wider vista. Every situation of daily life can become curriculum for Waldorf education. An attempt to realize this is being made at the Otto Specht School, which has the benefit of being situated in a community for the elderly. It is surrounded by woods and streams, large gardens, greenhouses, an orchard, and a dairy farm with sheep and chickens, all permitting creative educational efforts.

To conclude, Dr. Karnow returned to Henning Köhler's statement that difficult children do not exist. Children with difficult behaviors do. We need to develop a knowing-understanding through an "emptying-out" attitude, where we do not label, we do not react. The children need us to say "yes" to them, which will be our virtue development because they require us to be on a path of inner development. We can picture ourselves as musicians

who "lift" our musicianship to a soul capacity where we can bring about social harmony and create music in social situations. The children who experience this lifting into selfless, social skills will be affected in their bodies. We affect the children's bodies by who we are and what we do. This fundamental transformation of attitude – saying "yes" to the child – is what is required.

The final keynote address ended with these words: Yes, Waldorf education is for every child. No, we cannot always meet the needs of every child. Yes, life is difficult. Life is beautiful.

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The Stars Are Brighter in Your Peripheral Vision

Working Towards a Constitutional View of the Epileptic/Hysteric Polarity

Adam Blanning, MD

Bringing anthroposophic insights into the classroom is challenging, because we have to find practical methods for bridging Rudolf Steiner's descriptions of spiritual physiology with the realities of daily life in the classroom. How do we find a link between Steiner's descriptions and their manifestations? We know that the curriculum and its content supports and guides the evolving development (spiritual into physical) of the small child, but finding specific tools to meet the challenges of an individual child's behaviors can be daunting. Steiner gives us a foundation for beginning this work through his descriptions of the constitutional polarities, but the names given to the developmental polarities may seem too medical, too antiquated, or too abstract. At times it may feel presumptuous to even speak about a child's "spiritual physiology" unless we ourselves have developed skills of clear clairvoyance. But the beauty and reassuring brilliance of these polarities is that when they are present, they are *absolutely consistent* and manifest in forms both simple and

profound. They can indeed help to explain the most puzzling behaviors. But not if you just concentrate on the behavior alone; then the child may elude explanation. This is because in many ways troubling behaviors are like the stars in the heavens – they are a little bit brighter, actually easier to see, when we gaze not directly at them but at the "constellation" of daily rhythms and patterns that surround them.

This more peripheral, holistic field of vision is important because a single behavior can actually arise out of polar processes. The exact same behavior (as we perceive it from the outside) may be rooted in very different constitutions. Take a very concrete example: circle time. Children's challenging behaviors often come out during circle time. As the whole class is striving towards a collective mood and activity, those individuals who fall out of the activity are particularly noticeable. They are disruptive and distracting, or annoying to the teachers and to the rest of the children. It can be hard not to get fixated on the particular behavior in that moment, because

we really just want them to stop. Admittedly, that is probably not the moment for trying to gain a constitutional view. Instead, do what is necessary, and then let that moment go and begin to watch the child during the moments when he or she is not demanding our attention.

A first and essential truth to grasp is that any frustrating or disruptive behavior really should be viewed as an expression of, or a compensation for, some developmental imbalance. Children outwardly express through their actions what they inwardly experience in their physiology. And a second essential truth is that the key to really understanding a behavior may not necessarily lie in what is happening during the behavior, but in what occurred just before it. The disruptive behavior in circle time is usually the child's way of orienting him- or herself, or breaking out of an imbalance. Since we cannot go backwards in time to see what they were doing just before they demanded the group's attention, we have to look for clues elsewhere. This is part of the process of using "peripheral vision" to gain more understanding of the child's relationship to his or her own body and the environment that surrounds it.

Let's get back to concrete examples, which arise out of actual observation of kindergarten circle times. Two different boys – they could equally well be girls, so please do not think this is should only but applied to boys, but boys do sometimes tend to express their constitution more physically – are both frequently disruptive in circle time. The disruptive behavior (for either boy) is generally a poking or pushing of the child next to him, or the making of loud, intrusive noises. Both boys are better behaved as soon as they are engaged one-on-one with an adult (such as the teacher calling out names or physically gesturing to them), and neither seems to be intentionally naughty or mean-spirited. If we wanted to use a label commonly used today, we could speculate that they have "attention deficit," which in the moment of the disruption is probably true; but it does not help explain why they lose their attention or what will help them to be more engaged in the activity.

When we begin to look at the specifics of each boy's physical body and behaviors, it becomes clear that although they exhibit similarly disruptive behaviors, they are expressions of very different

processes. One fits the process of the "epileptic" polarity; the other of the "hysteric" polarity. How can we arrive at that conclusion? By looking at the "peripheral" elements of the form and structure of the child's body, how each boy plays, how he eats, how he sleeps. Let's start to look at the specifics of each boy.

The first boy is larger than many of the other boys his age, with a solid and powerful body. He is not fat, but it seems like there is a density to his muscles. In spite of his large size, his features are less sculpted and maybe appear a little younger than many of the other children his age. When he interrupts the circle, it is usually with a loud, silly noise, or a push to the boy next to him. While generally participating well in the circle, he has moments where his consciousness loses contact with his environment – in other words, from across the classroom you can see that he stopped listening and hearing any of the activity around him for several seconds. This behavior is repeated outside of the circle during times that he is not actively moving his body. When he finishes one of these brief episodes, he seems a little disoriented but quickly enters back into strong movement and the physical activity around him.

The second boy is more slight in his build, and quick. In observing his body, one is more aware of form or movement, as opposed to physical solidity. He is profoundly aware of his environment and fully engaged. He immediately picks up on the song and the hand gestures of the circle time, but he is, in fact, so aware of his environment that he also notices the laces of his new shoes, and the ticking of the teacher's watch, and is drawn to touch the fabric of the girl's skirt next to him, wondering what it would feel like. There are so many things to notice and be aware of, that it becomes very difficult to pay attention to what the teacher is doing, particularly when there are so many other interesting temptations much closer to him. Eventually he touches the girl's skirt next to him, or decides to take off his shoes and adjust the laces, and falls out of the circle activity that surrounds him. But this does not happen because he has become momentarily *unconscious* of his surroundings. It is ultimately because he is *too conscious* of his immediate environment and flows out into it.

In epilepsy, the medical term used for a person

who has repeated seizures, there is a clouding or loss of consciousness, which may or may not be accompanied by jerking, cramping movements of the body. The physical body is temporarily unable to act as a vehicle for spiritual activity and consciousness, so that on a certain level the body briefly becomes an unpenetrated part of the surrounding environment. This process happens just before the jerking movement of a seizure, with actual movement a breaking through, a compensation for working through this density. In *Education for Special Needs*, a series of lectures given in 1924, Rudolf Steiner expanded the term *epileptic* to indicate a developmental polarity in which the soul and spirit find it difficult to enter into a physical and etheric body that are too dense (which in the extreme will result in seizures, but is actually a much broader situation which happens with variable frequency in about half of us). In Lecture Three, Steiner describes it in this way:

The human being wakes up, but remains unconscious. You see, we have come in this way to an exact description, drawn from within, of the condition of the epileptic. . . . The epileptic is able to enter with his ego organization and astral body into the physical body. That he can do, but he does not come forth into the physical world; he is held fast within . . . astral body and ego organization will be, so to speak, dammed up, congested beneath the surface of an organ. This condition then manifests outwardly as a fit. This is what fits really are. (Steiner, 60-61)

The boy described does not suffer from epilepsy, and as far as I know he has never experienced a seizure, but his moments of being withdrawn, or perhaps we could now say “inwardly congested,” are epileptic kinds of behavior. His body, his physical and etheric body, offers a resistance to the astral body and ego organization such that he has moments during the day (more commonly in the morning) when this inner congestion happens and he loses conscious contact with his environment. When he does break through this congestion, he often goes into strong movement or makes a loud sound. This has two advantages for him: first, through movement he reclaims his body as he moves it and feels it in relation to gravity (this is actually one of the therapies for a child with an epileptic

constitution); and second, when he disrupts things, the flow of the activity around him is momentarily disrupted and the consciousness directed towards him allows him to reorient himself in the group activity. His behavior is annoying and disruptive for the group, but for him it is both an expression of and a compensation for what he is experiencing in his spiritual physiology every day. He needs outward direction (the teacher directing him) or physical experience of gravity in movement (shoving the kid next to him) to again find his proper relation to his body and to the external world.

If we need to look for other confirmation that this is an “epileptic” constitutional process, we can make our view even more peripheral. The occurrence of a seizure at some point in the child’s life is of course a clear indication, but the epileptic constitutional process is far more common than the experience of actual physical seizures. We can find additional clues if we look at the way the child sleeps and eats – because if the astral body and ego organization are having difficulty penetrating into a dense physical and etheric body, that interaction should be mirrored on other levels as well. The astral body and the ego organization must enter into the physical and etheric each morning, and then release every night. We would then expect that a child on the epileptic pole would be slow to wake in the morning, groggy, and not really ready to interact with his or her environment until later in the morning, or perhaps not even until the afternoon or evening. Eating is another, internalized process of working with, or in this case literally digesting our environment. An “epileptic” child is not ready to do this early in the morning, and may have no real appetite until this waking process has finished. The child may feel best in the evening and get his or her best work and interaction done late in the day, though when it is time to go to bed, the astral body and ego organization are inclined to quickly withdraw from the too dense physical and etheric bodies. The child quickly falls into a fast, deep sleep. When we look at the way a child sleeps, at the way a child eats, we can see the same process happening over and over: engaging the body and then the environment is a slow process because it requires penetrating so much resistance in the physical and etheric bodies. Releasing from them is easy. If the epileptic polarity is true, it will manifest consistently

on the levels of classroom behavior, waking and sleeping rhythms, and appetite and digestion.

The second boy, with the “hysteric” constitution, is of course also expressing and compensating for what he experiences on a daily basis. But his behavior arises out of the opposite process: instead of being held back by his body from entering into the environment, he overflows. Instead of a dense border, he has no borders at all. Steiner describes it this way:

Let us see what it is we really have before us in a young child who is said to be suffering from hysteria. He has trouble making contact with the external world . . . but instead of grasping all these things too weakly, as is the case with the epileptic, the child takes hold too strongly, he puts his astral body and ego into his whole environment. . . . What is the result? You have only to remind yourself how it is with you when you have grazed your skin at some spot. Suppose you then grasp hold of some object with the sore surface, where the skin has been rubbed away. You know it hurts! The reason for your being so sensitive is that there you come up against the external world too vigorously with your inner astral body . . . the child who from the first brings his astral body right out – such a child will in a subtle way touch and take hold of things, just as though he had been wounded. Nor shall we be surprised to find in him this hypersensitiveness, this hypersensitive response to the world around him. A human being in this condition is bound to feel his environment much more keenly, much more intensely; and he will moreover have within him a much more powerful reflection of his environment. (Steiner, 76-77)

Where the epileptic child falls *out of* consciousness, the hysteric child falls into *too much* consciousness. When he is distracted or disruptive, it is because he cannot help noticing and responding to the things that are immediately in his environment (the laces of his new shoes, the ticking of the teacher’s watch, the fabric of the girl’s skirt next to him). He expands his consciousness, his awareness out around him, losing and forgetting the borders of where he ends and the world begins. Another word Steiner gives for the hysteric polarity is “soul sore,” so that it is actually a protective gesture for him to try to meet and respond to what he senses. When he reaches out to another child and makes contact, he is able to

(re)establish his boundaries, because what he astrally feels to be “him” may actually extend well beyond the borders of his physical body. He can reel in his astral body to more appropriately integrate with the etheric and physical boundaries of his body: through outward redirection, or through a “quicker tempo,” (Steiner, 79) increasing the speed of his own activity. When the teacher stops the circle time in order to address him (the teacher’s ego thus giving form to the child’s astral body), or when he himself speeds up the song to a ridiculous speed, then he can pull his astral body back in to its proper proportions. That is his therapy. The first boy described, with the epileptic constitution, needs strong physical movement, sensing himself in gravity to properly orient himself in his body. This second boy, with the overflowing astral body, the hysteric constitution, needs to be pulled back. He is, in a way, acting out in order to help heal his own imbalance, to find ways to reign in and define the sensing of his astral body so that it better matches the space and definitions of his own physical and etheric bodies.

Expanding our view to find other confirmations of the hysteric constitutional process, we are looking not for seizures, but for physical processes that expand beyond the borders of the physical body. In the fourth lecture of *Education for Special Needs*, Steiner discusses nocturnal enuresis, or bedwetting: “whenever you have a case of bed-wetting, you can assume that the astral body is running out, overflowing,” and perspiration: “you will find that you need to observe particularly how the child sweats.” With an even more peripheral view, we again come to sleep and diet. With waking, we enter in with our astral body and ego – in a hysteric child this happens fast and too far. He (or she) wakes and is immediately engaged in the environment. He opens his eyes and seems immediately ready to explode into the day. But going to sleep may be far more difficult, as this hypersensitivity to the environment, this “soreness,” catches and holds the child’s consciousness. It takes a long time to withdraw from the world around him, and sleep when it comes may be fitful and shallow. In terms of his eating and appetite, he is ready (perhaps immediately) to eat in the morning, but as the day fills him with so many sensations and experiences his appetite wanes. By the evening his “soreness” may reach the point where he cannot digest anything more. The food

on the plate may hardly be touched – instead he gives an animated recounting and reenactment of the experiences of the day. In the same way that his astral body overflows into his environment, so too do a torrent of sensory experiences come “flooding” into his consciousness. They are too numerous, and perhaps too painful, to all be processed in the moment, so he needs to revisit and work through them before he can release into sleep. The epileptic child becomes *unconscious* and has difficulty making connection with his environment; the hysteric child loses his boundaries and overflows, becoming *too conscious* of the environment.

Both children stand out in circle time – they are disruptive, and it is because they have each individually become temporarily disoriented. The processes standing behind their actions, however, represent truly opposite extremes: one child gets stuck within the physical and etheric bodies and has to break through; the other expands out too far, overflows, and has to be brought in and protected. But in order to know which process stands behind the behavior, we have to develop a *constitutional* understanding. This is such a valuable tool! Once we can begin to understand children on a constitutional basis, then our insight into their behavior also helps us to begin to understand and imagine what they need to rebalance. We can begin to find ways to help them orient themselves before they are forced to act out and be disruptive. We can do this by carefully observing the patterns of incarnation, of spiritual physiology, through observing:

- *classroom behavior*
- *interaction with the environment*
- *sleep*
- *appetite and digestion.*

Then we have gained a more “peripheral,” more holistic understanding and can redirect our attention to specific behaviors and find their solutions. When we are working not with a specific behavior of the child, but with the whole being of the child, we can better meet and guide each child in his or her pathway of incarnation towards claiming and using the physical body as a proper tool.

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Dr. Blanning is working on a second article which will present specific therapeutic steps using experiences of gravity and changing rhythm, as well as a movement journey from Nancy Blanning specifically exploring their practical application in the classroom.

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In the Light of the Heart

Lisa Gromicko

*In the human heart
there lives a part of man
which contains matter
more spiritual than in any other organ;
also a part of man
of which the spiritual life
is made more manifest in matter
than that of any other organ.*

*Hence in the microcosm that is man
Sun is the heart,
and in his heart is man united
most of all with the deepest fount –
the fount of his true being.
(Steiner, *Verses and Meditations*, 43)*

Take a moment to recall a memory from your childhood. . . . Did you go to kindergarten? What did you do after school? What feelings arise from this period of life?

Many of us have childhood recollections of vast timelessness – coming home for lunch, perhaps a nap, and playing outside forever until being called in for dinner, often from a far-off distance. The echoes of childhood ripple through us, as if on the shore of a great ocean. They whisper in our ear. They warm our heart. Just when we think we have forgotten what “absolutely wonderful” feels like, a memory of childhood can flow over us and we are once again whole.

Life today has brought many challenges for childhood. The world moves ever more quickly, and stress impacts even the youngest. Fatigued families are becoming the norm, creating health and social needs for both children and parents who struggle to have the energy to prepare meals, enforce bedtimes, and care for themselves (Palmer, 79–80). More young children stay all day in institutionalized care than ever before, and this is likely to continue. In many ways, this may present one of the greatest challenges to early childhood education in the modern world. How can young children still acquire the necessary experiences of timelessness, love, and warmth, combined with play and movement,

in order to build healthy physical bodies? How can we breathe into our programs that feeling of easy, slow, simple joyfulness that we remember as children, perhaps over at Grandma’s house? Today, children need this more than ever to balance the physiological effects of our fast-paced world. A more complex world actually increases children’s needs for sufficient sleep and for a long childhood as preparation for life.

Contemplation of the human heart can provide us with much inspiration needed to re-envision the early childhood work of the present and future, in light of our quickening pace of life. How can we learn to weave a slower, more seamless and whole morning-through-aftercare day for the young child? The lack of a rhythmic lifestyle places the greatest demands on the heart as the central organ of rhythm (Husemann and Wolff, 390, 394). On the physical level, the rhythmic system mediates the polarities of overstimulation of the nerve-sense system on the one hand, indigestion and physiological stress responses from the metabolic system, on the other. Physical development and health are compromised when frequent excesses at either pole tax the growing child (and adult), as is so common today.

The heart is a truly amazing, selfless organ that adapts itself to the immediate needs of the moment, adjusting heart rate and blood pressure to mirror the situation. Many children and adults today experience nearly continual states of arousal due to stress responses from overstimulation, lack of sleep, and a lack of rhythm. Because the physical body is still forming in the early years, the child’s rhythmic system (which includes the heart and lungs) is also still forming. Healthy formation of the rhythmic system requires in the early years that rhythm be imprinted from without, that the child actually learns to breathe, to sleep, to rest, with regular pauses and a predictable tempo. As Rudolf Steiner put it, “Roughly stated, we can say that children cannot yet of themselves breathe properly, and that education consists in teaching proper breathing.” (Steiner, *The Foundations of Human Experience*,

40-41.) Being able to simplify what we bring to the children in our care, to slow down and cultivate real rhythm, is more and more a challenge for adults today. Rhythm is the great healer. But, there is so much more to the picture.

In the autumn of 2007, I attended the “Whole Family, Whole Child” conference at Shining Mountain Waldorf School, in Boulder, Colorado. One of the keynote speakers, Tim Burns (author of *The Brain in Motion*), presented compelling information. From research into the heart/brain connection, he shared that in addition to movement as an essential need for the developing child’s brain and physical body, the heart function itself, and particularly our own hearts as teachers and caregivers, are profoundly critical. The heart organ is the most energetically powerful organ in the body, both magnetically and electrically, influencing every cell in the body (McCraty). There is a “torus field” that radiates around the heart that can fill a large room. Torus fields are found and recorded by science as occurring around heavenly bodies in space, as well as every organ and cell in the body. This holographic energy field is shaped like a donut, extending in all directions (Childre and Martin, 33-34). Through this field, the heart also has the power to influence the physiology and emotional states of others.

The heart has been called “the little brain,” due to having an extensive nervous system containing over 40,000 neurons (Atkinson et al., 47). We have come to believe that thinking occurs only in the brain, but in fact, the heart is the primary sensory organ of the body, also serving motor functions (Rohen 178). The heart’s role is to sense and harmonize the all of the body’s organs and cells, and to inform the brain. The strong electromagnetic field assists this, and the heart dictates what part of the brain we are operating in. Hormones are also produced in the heart. In fact, the heart is the central node, harmonizing multiple systems: neural, hormonal, energetic, biological, and behavioral. Brain rhythms are synchronized to the cardiac cycle (Atkinson et al., 42). The brain (as center of the nervous system) is a processor, but it is in the rhythmic system that comprehension occurs. We have all heard the phrases “the heart knows,” “to know something by heart,” and “heartfelt words.” If something is true, we know it in our heart. Dr.

Michaela Glöckler writes:

It is believed that comprehension has something to do with the human nervous system. In reality, it is based on the fact that the rhythmic system receives our observations and mental images and works on them further. But, because the rhythmic system is linked with our comprehension, it comes into close relation with our feeling. Anyone who practices intimate self-observation will notice what connections exist between comprehension and actual feeling. In essence, we must really feel the truth of something we have comprehended if we are to subscribe to it. An encounter occurs within us between the fruits of understanding perception and the soul element of feeling through the rhythmic system. (Glöckler, 186)

Our emotions strongly determine our heart’s rhythm, which in turn influences the brain’s rhythm. Psychophysiology studies the synchrony (or the lack thereof) within the body, as a result of emotions. When positive emotions such as love, appreciation, or care are experienced the heart’s rhythms change from erratic to coherent, regular sine waves within moments.

This in turn brings about physiological coherence or entrainment within the entire body. In the brain, sensory-motor and cognitive functions are dramatically increased when the heart’s rhythm is coherent. In addition, the immune, endocrine, and autonomic nervous systems’ functions are improved and stabilized by coherent heart rhythms. Through tests such as the EEG, the coherent emotion “appreciation” has been found to bring heart rhythms that stimulate the brain’s frontal lobes, encouraging wide vision and proaction. However, “frustration, anxiety, and worry,” as examples of emotions leading to incoherent (erratic) heart and brain wave states, bring heart rhythms that stimulate the hindbrain (lower brain), which encourages narrow vision and “fight or flight” states, as well as increased stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenalin that actually shrink brain tissue and strongly inhibit immune system function. Other results are increased heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration, and lower autonomic nervous system function. Negative emotions also contribute to increased rates of depression and other psychiatric disorders (Childre). Research has additionally shown

that psychophysiological states, detected in the EEG, are transferred from person to person through “the electricity of touch” (McCraty, 9-10).

Dr. Karl König writes of the specific experience of anxiety and its connection to the lower sense of touch, by way of the heart as the organ of perception:

*‘Man would not have this feeling for God if he had not the sense of touch’ [Rudolf Steiner]
... We can begin to understand the underlying principle of all anxieties. They invariably appear when this inward raying, soul-filling feeling for God (which permeates us always) is disturbed for shorter or longer periods. Anxiety originates as a reaction to the loss of this feeling embedded, through the function of the sense of touch. ... The very moment we lose this security, and the feeling for God which shines inwardly becomes shaky, we experience anxiety and we experience it in the central organ of our existence – in the heart. The heart allows us to become anxious when the anchor of the sense of touch and with it the feeling for God raises itself out of the sense sphere of the skin. (König, 171-72)*

The middle sphere of the threefold human being – the rhythmic system – is related to feeling and expressing emotion. Anxiety is a prevalent emotion of children and adults today.

The heart’s electromagnetic field also powerfully affects the physiology of others in our presence, for better or worse. A coherent pattern (positive emotions) can help to harmonize the health and happiness of others. Daniel Goleman speaks of this in his book, *Social Intelligence*, as he describes the physiological synchrony that human beings share together. Through “mirror neurons,” human beings imitate or sense the intentions or emotional states of others, allowing for empathy. Young children possess large numbers of mirror neurons, which are important in the imitative capacity to learn. (Goleman, 40-43)

Goleman states that we are wired for empathy toward others and can’t help but be strongly affected by the emotions of those around us. Genuine positive emotions and smiles are literally contagious to others and bring about an expansion of the world, shrinking our own problems to the periphery. Self-absorption, anxiety, and worry prevent empathy

and actually contract our world. The example of one human being caring for another helps onlookers to awaken from their own self-absorption and isolation. Interest in the other is the true antidote to fear, and the way that human beings can develop the much-needed capacity of “heart thinking.” Cornelius Pietzner writes of the work of serving others:

Interest in the other serves as a builder of knowledge. Over time it can ripen into heart cognition. The thinking heart begins to become active. It imparts, albeit slowly, information. The beat of the blood has an invisible echo which is a silent counterpart. It emits a new kind of sensing, a new kind of knowledge. The human being, the “service provider,” undergoes a subtle, yet fundamental and gentle process of self-transformation. (Pietzner, 80)

It has been said that many children today are coming to us already with a “heart knowing” that requires us to meet them with heart. “Who will see who I am?” the child asks. Claudia McLaren Lainson, a Waldorf educator, describes the cold grid that surrounds our world as being permeated by the “slavemasters”: hurry, impatience, the “lack of time” illusion, rushing, fear, and the mechanical rhythms of technology that literally “suck” life. These are not strangers to the children in our care. Children today have passed through this web to be here. The real question is: *Can we connect them instead to warmth, light, love, joy, calm, slowness, simplicity, breathing, listening, the natural rhythms of nature, play, imagination, goodness, coherence, and beauty (where human beings used to live naturally)? Can we learn to meet them with heart?*

A modern ailment that plagues many people today is called the “catch and hold breath.” It is a stress response that creates shallower breathing and unconscious holding of the breath, as a possible attempt to protect the self from more stress. Both children and adults are affected. In her book, *The Breathing Circle*, Nell Smyth (a therapeutic breath teacher, as well as a Waldorf teacher) writes,

In the busy world of the twenty-first century, what we often see are children and adults who are in fact very over-stimulated, and so are not digesting or resonating sufficiently deeply with what they have just experienced. This shows up very clearly in the breath

rhythm, where we might see a tightness or controlling emphasis on the inhalation. This in turn can affect the full potential of the exhale, which may be cut off and flattened. . . . We live in a time when we can no longer take for granted that sense of connection to the earth, the rhythms of seasons, or the rhythms of the tribe and community. We must build it anew. Many children – and adults too – suffer terribly from the breathless and increasing busyness that entrap us. Do we even have time at the end of the day to resonate with what we have experienced and its meaning for us from day to day? Difficulties with breathing and eating, allergies, sleeping disorders, and integration and attention issues proliferate. (Smyth, 97, 116–17)

Smyth states that relaxing the mind and body does much to heal the breath and its proper rhythm. The healthy pause at the end of the exhale returns. The way that we speak also profoundly affects our breath and that of others. It is essential that we slow down our speech. Speaking and storytelling becomes healing to the listener when we are mindful of its relationship to breathing and the heartbeat, including very important pauses. For improving the breath, the book *The Quiet Heart: Putting Stress in its Place*, by Peter Grūnewald (Floris Books), is very helpful.

What a gift it is to live in a time when science begins to confirm so much! Rudolf Steiner gave us an amazing picture of supersensible etheric forces in the human being constantly passing from the heart in a light-filled column to the brain during waking hours. This is called the etherization of the blood or the transformation of matter into etheric forces. Through this transformation of the blood, enlightened thinking becomes possible, along with our ability to form living concepts and perceptions: “In the heart not only the astral process but the etheric, too, is concentrated. Therefore, the heart is the uniquely important organ which it is for man This intimate correspondence of the astral body with the etheric body is to be found nowhere in the human organism, except in the region of the heart.” (Steiner, *The Human Heart*, 4–8, 11–12) The heart is also the primary organ of the ego, having a relationship to the element of gold and the sun.

We experience in every heart a sun. The sun shines on all people, shines on the fields of the earth, it shines on

other planets. And all the time it is consuming its own energy. The sun dissolves matter and transforms it into radiant energy. Its light can be seen everywhere in our earthly cosmos. The same power that dwells in the sun wills to live in every human being. (Pfeiffer, 10)

Thus, the energy field of the heart, with its powerful influence over the members of the human being, enlightened sensory/cognitive functions, and ability to “shine” soul forces out into the world (and receive them), is an image of the physical and spiritual reality of the human being, intersecting at the heart, as a lemniscate. From the beginning,

The primitive heart, which supports circulation from the periphery (embryonic sheaths) to the center (embryo) and vice versa and undergoes extensive differentiation as early as week eight, becomes the portal through which the individuality incarnates into the body, the threshold that the human spirit must cross on its journey from the “other world” of the protective embryonic membranes into the world of the developing body. (Rohen, 175)

When a child is born, he or she comes with an etheric body – which is like an exquisite sphere, an entire universe, with stars, zodiac, sun, and moon. In the seventh year, this etheric body now begins to ray inward, with the rays coming together at a center within the human being.

So we have this strange phenomenon of the star-ether-body drawing inwards. As etheric body it is, of course, undifferentiated at the periphery of the organism – very little can be distinguished in there. On the other hand, during the time from the change of teeth until puberty, it is intensely radiant, raying from without inwards. Then it gathers itself together, and there, clearly suspended within it, is the physical heart.

The physical form and function of the heart is truly a miracle. Dr. Johannes W. Rohen beautifully describes the heart’s function in his excellent book, *Functional Morphology* (Rohen, 182–84, 199, 402). Here, we learn that the heart achieved its proper function in evolution when the heart became a centralized organ and human beings became upright, “with our heads oriented toward the heavens and the Earth at our feet.” The major

vertical and horizontal vessels leading to the heart form a cross and hold the heart in place.

The apex of the heart however, is not secured. . . . The heart organ as a whole, therefore, is bound to the cross of veins and moves back and forth rhythmically in front of it. Contemplating this remarkable image can fill us with awe and wonder. . . . Blood enters the heart “under the sign of the cross,” i.e., through the crossing veins. Blood from all parts of the body mingles in the atria and then enters the sacred temple of the ventricles, the “holy of holies,” through the atrioventricular valves. This space, with its columnar papillary muscles and arching chordae tendineae, is truly reminiscent of a cathedral.

The heart is the only place in the physical body where all three dimensions of space are turned upside down and inside out through the unique form and dynamics of the heart. This allows “the forces of life and soul that are carried by the blood [to be] released from the confines of space.” Having the reality of space and non-space, the timeless flow of blood in the body then receives the element of time within the heart rhythm, in quantized portions, bringing the important and healing temporal aspect to the human being. The reversal of the body’s orientations to space in the heart allows the “organism to step outside of space. Ultimately, only such a body can receive an “I”-being for whom individual freedom is a reality. This, then is the goal of evolution.” The warmth of the metabolism is circulated by the blood and enters the heart, where

[Warmth is] taken up by the soul and “radiated” into our surroundings in the form of love, empathy, compassion, or devotion. In this case, the blood and circulation serve not only the regulation of (physical) warmth, but also the actual transformation of physical forces into soul-spiritual forces, which is how Rudolf Steiner describes the true task of our earthly existence (An Occult Physiology).

So, now we return to the needs of the child. So much depends upon the adults. We *must* find real joy and gratitude in our lives! Our hearts and those of the children, colleagues, parents, and loved ones in our lives cannot function properly without it. Only then can we truly serve the children in our

care. Love and true interest in the other opens the door and allows wisdom to pour into the work we do, helping us to answer many difficult questions. It is not enough to “hang our cloak” outside the door. We need to fully grapple with our own life’s challenges or fears and seek the gift that waits for us in every single problem (Sleigh, 9). What we have learned is that the simple act of filling our heart with genuine appreciation aligns our physical body (and that of the people around us) and opens our mind and heart, enabling us to receive spiritual insight. Rudolf Steiner provides us with valuable training in his book, *How to Know Higher Worlds*, for working through our human weaknesses, interactions with others, and finding balance. We all have continuous inner work to do. It is the work of the present and future human being to let the radiant sun in our heart begin to shine out into the world for all to be warmed by.

The collective energy generated from the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of the almost six billion people on this planet creates an atmosphere, or “consciousness climate.” Surrounding us like the air we breathe, this consciousness climate affects us most strongly on energetic and emotional levels. An increase in coherent thoughts and feelings creates an uplifting momentum in the consciousness climate. An increase in incoherent thoughts and feelings creates a stress momentum in the consciousness climate. The collective stress that people everywhere are experiencing creates a far-reaching broadcast. (Childre and Martin, 256–57)

It only takes one person to affect many, for the good — one drop in an entire ocean. For the children who come to us from vastly different situations, the warmth of appreciation and unconditional love that we can shine on them will plant seeds of happiness for a lifetime, no matter how complicated or stressful their lives may be (Hallowell, Chapter 2). Sufficient night sleep, rest, and naps are essential for children (and adults) for health, proper physical development, and for digesting the day’s activities. Lack of sleep has become an alarming cultural phenomenon (see Lisa Gromicko, “The Physiological Basis of Sleep”).

Take regular time to be in nature, unrushed. Find a relationship to the precious quiet and cultivate this within yourself. It is only in the

quiet that the spiritual world can speak to us. Slow down. Breathe. Forgive. Sleep. Simplify. To provide greater resiliency (a shield) in childhood, we must as caregivers be mindful of what it is to be resilient. We must first foster resiliency in ourselves, developing the ability to persevere, remain positive, and have hope in the future (Burns, 115-118). Our attitudes or expectations may need to be adjusted. We must believe in our own personal ability to make a difference. Often, early childhood teachers and caregivers become burned out and exhausted. It takes extra work to protect our life forces. We can ask ourselves, "What keeps me from living from my heart?" Living from the heart renews our life forces and strengthens our emotional well-being. It is important that we remove condemnation, judgment, resistance, and criticism from our interactions with others. Honor the path of others, whether or not it is our own. Are there virtues that I am living? Should I be working to improve some areas? A recommended book on this topic is *The Power of Soul: Living the Twelve Virtues*, by Robert Sardello.

Through our striving to cultivate peace, calm, gratitude, slowness, and love within ourselves and in our work, we will be able to permeate the future childhood memories, hearts, and breathing of the children in our care with that golden timelessness and joy that so many of us remember from our own, less-hurried childhoods. It *can* exist in the modern experience of childhood, but today much greater consciousness and vigilance is required by adults to bring it about. Let us learn to feel the natural pulse of life flowing in and around us, allowing the inspiration in every moment, to guide our work and secure our footing.

Finally, this verse by Rudolf Steiner (found in *Verses and Meditations*), points us in the right direction toward finding peace within our hearts and the deep well that will nourish the children in our care:

*Quiet I bear within me.
I bear within myself
Forces to make me strong.
Now will I be imbued
With their glowing warmth.*

*Now will I fill myself
With my own will's resolve.
And I will feel the quiet
Pouring through all my being,
When by my steadfast striving
I become strong
To find within myself
The source of strength,
The strength of inner quiet.*

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Movement in Early Childhood Education

Renate Long-Breipohl

More than ten years ago I wrote an article on the morning circle for the *Star Weavings* newsletter. Much has happened since then. We have seen more children with movement disturbances, and we have learned to understand more about hyperactivity and attention deficit. In the area of remedial work, practitioners from different backgrounds have worked with movement programs in order to assist school-aged children with learning difficulties.

In defining the specific task of the early childhood educator in the realm of movement, I would like to start by looking at the spiritual foundation.

Movement Is Will Activity

In his lectures to the teachers of the first Waldorf School, Rudolf Steiner describes the realms of thinking and will as opposites within the human soul (*Foundations of Human Experience*, Lecture 2).

Thinking and the ability of forming concepts link us to the past, to pre-earthly life. It is an activity based on the soul force of antipathy – that is, the ability of stepping back and reflecting. Will activity lives in the soul realm of sympathy, with the inherent gesture of uniting. It is directed towards creating something new, which will bear fruit in the future. Will is closely linked to and relies on sense experience.

Steiner describes will as inner movement, which passes through all four members of the human being, and at last becomes deed. Ideally it originates as intention in the ego, yet often will seems to act “blindly” – the intention is hidden. In the astral body, will takes on the quality of interest, of being moved inwardly. To be interested in things is a feeling-will activity. Intention and interest then work on the etheric body, which acts as the driving force within the physical body. This force then causes the

actual action. In the action itself, will as a process of movement comes to an end and loses its quality of inner activity (*Foundations of Human Experience*, Lecture 4).

Steiner describes further that the movement of the limbs is caused by a “force body,” through which the ego impresses itself on the muscle and bone structure of the physical body (*Foundations of Human Experience*, Lecture 12). In *Being Human*, Karl König likens movement to the image of a musician (the ego) playing on an instrument (muscles and bones). Movement is the music that arises in this process. This picture of the inner soul-spiritual movement and its passing into the physical-etheric body is a key to understanding movement and working with it.

The Development of Movement in the Young Child

Karl König has given three images for the purpose of understanding movement disturbances. They also serve well in describing the essence of the incarnation process of all human beings, and provide a good foundation for understanding the first three years of life. The images relate to the incarnation into the Earth realm, the ability to make judgments related to the earthly environment, and the emerging of ego consciousness.

Movement in the Context of Incarnation into the Earth Realm

Incarnation is the process of finding one’s place in the world, of becoming conscious of and comfortable with one’s position in the three spatial dimensions of the Earth: the vertical or frontal plane, the horizontal plane, and the sagittal plane (which divides right from left). For the young child, the frontal plane arises when the upright, vertical posture of the human being is achieved, in which the standing human being separates the front space from back space. The child experiences the space in front quite comfortably, as the eyes can see what is there. The space in the back is more difficult to become comfortable with. While the front is explored actively through all forms of moving forward, the back space is the unknown and is explored through the sense of hearing. To become comfortable with the back space is crucial for the development of trust. If the child does not achieve this balanced position between front and back, then

insecurity and a fearful attitude towards life may arise.

In kindergarten education, we work more with the front and less with the back space. But there are games that one can play for the exploration of the back space. One can listen into the quiet space after the song is over, one can play the lyre or the cymbals behind the back of a child, or play games that require the closing of one’s eyes and listening.

In exploring the front space, there are of course all the different ways and paces of walking, running, and stopping, which need to be practiced all through early childhood. Varied, lively movement patterns are a constant source of joy for the children. A few steps into the back space may be added to encourage the child in using his senses of balance and hearing.

Incarnation is very much a process of “moving into,” of contracting from the far soul spaces of the cosmos into an earthly body. One can study this in the movement development in the first year of life, even in the movements in the womb. Some of the primary reflexes are wonderful images of the gestures of contraction and expansion. The withdrawal reflex gives the gesture of curling up, the Moro reflex the gesture of expanding into the back space. The tonic labyrinthine reflex expresses contraction in bending forward and expansion in bending backward. The symmetrical tonic neck reflex shows the expansion in the wonderful upward stretch of head and arms and the contraction in the lowering of head and arms below the spine level towards the ground. These reflexes supersede each other in strict sequence within the healthy development of movement, and they are replaced in the course of the first year of life by the postural head righting and equilibrium reflexes as steps towards upright standing (Blythe, *The Well Balanced Child*).

While these unconscious, instinctive gestures are replaced on the physical level with willed, conscious movement, they remain in the form of the archetypal gestures of contraction and expansion within our souls, and they remain within the psychological repertoire of individual reactive patterns. They are deeply human gestures, performed by the young child physically and the older child and adult inwardly. They should not be likened to or practiced as animal gestures, as they

are gestures of the incarnating ego, filled with bodily religious devotion.

But the practice of expansion and contraction in other forms will be a wonderful help for the incarnation of the ego. Eurythmy, in its educational and therapeutic forms, has always understood the harmonizing and balancing quality of these archetypal human movements. All through early childhood they can be practiced, starting with the gentle stroking of the baby's curled-up hand, followed by a variety of finger and hand games of opening and closing, and arriving at the whole body movements of curling up and standing straight or the moving between the center and periphery of the circle. Wilma Ellersiek's hand-touching games are a wonderful example of how we can work with the very young child towards a comfortable moving between these two poles of human existence.

Movement in the Realm of Feeling: Recognizing the World Around Us, Identifying, and Making Judgments

Karl König relates these abilities to the movement of the arms and hands. In gaining uprightness, arms and hands are freed from carrying the body and have the potential to explore the world. The image is that of the arms moving like wings on both sides of the body, above and below the horizontal plane, perceiving the different qualities of the space above and below, of the region of the limbs and of the head region. Hands make sense of the world in touching objects, in identifying/judging what is there and responding inwardly to this experience with sympathy or antipathy. This discriminating faculty develops strongly from the second year of life onwards, in conjunction with the development of speech. It is interesting to see in diagrams of the brain that the hand actually takes a large space in the part of the cortex that is responsible for the control of movement. The speech centers are located close by. Speech therapy has long discovered the connection between movement and speech development and the special role that the hand plays in the process of the differentiation of speech.

On a physical level, speech development is dependent on the successful integration of movement with the visual and auditory senses. On a soul-spiritual level, the acquisition of speech needs the model of the speaking human being, the tone

of voice, the color of a particular language, and the rhythm of speech. There is a link between speech and music, which has been acknowledged recently by Sally Goddard Blythe, Director of the Institute of Neuro-Physiological Psychology in the UK. In her book *The Well-Balanced Child*, she indicates that music can play a decisive role in overcoming problems with both speech and subsequent learning. In Waldorf early childhood education, it has always been good practice to model moving in conjunction with speech or in conjunction with singing. Waldorf kindergarten teachers practice this with the children on a daily basis in the morning circle.

The work of Wilma Ellersiek needs to be mentioned in this context as well, as her rhythmical musical hand gesture games provide an excellent educational and therapeutic tool for the development of speech and movement based on the involvement of the child's rhythmical system and life of feeling.

Right-Left Discrimination and the Awakening of Ego Consciousness

The third step in the development of movement is related to movement on both sides of the axis of symmetry of the body or midline, and to gaining awareness of right and left. König names three steps in the first year of life, which are a preparation for this achievement:

The first step occurs when the eyes of the child begin to look at an object (frontal plane) and the gaze then becomes focused (sagittal plane).

The second step is achieved when both hands of the child grasp an object and the hands thus move from the horizontal plane into the sagittal plane.

The third step occurs in walking, in the alternation of the left and right leg where the frontal and the sagittal planes are explored. This is a parallel movement of the legs on both sides of the body without a crossing over. Both feet and legs perform the same movements, yet with a time difference caused by the requirements of keeping balance in walking.

All three planes are used in varied combinations and manifold ways before a full integration is achieved.

König's observations can serve as an indicator towards the right approach to the learning of the right-left discrimination. All through early

childhood, the child continues practicing to move both hands in a parallel manner. The individualization and independence of the hands as a prerequisite for the crossing over from one side to the other develops only gradually.

Dominance – in right-handed children usually defined as preference for the upper, right, front option within the three planes – is the last aspect to develop and is finally achieved only around the ninth year. This step coincides with the major step of gaining consciousness of one’s individuality. At the age of nine, the child has reached the adult proportion of the equal length of the body height and the outstretched arms. It has been observed in eurythmy lessons with children around age nine that they now for the first time perform comfortably the exact cross-position, the gesture of the ego. It is interesting that musically the child progresses from the pentatonic to the diatonic inner musical experience at the same time.

In early childhood, the right-left discrimination should only be gently prepared. The consciousness of the child should not be focused on working out which hand or leg should be used. Most of the guided movements in the morning circles should be based on parallel movements of both arms and hands. In some parts of the circle the hands can take on different roles such as nest and bird, pot and stirring spoon, cat and dog, little Miss Muffet and the spider, and so on. If verses such as “The moon on the one hand, the sun on the other . . . the moon on the left, the sun on the right” are used, they should be practiced without correcting children, if they do not show signs of left-right discrimination as yet.

Movement Programs in Early Childhood

Movement and the Child Under Three

The development of movement, speech, and thinking in the first three years of life is guided and protected by spiritual beings. They work through the environment, and the human being is seen as a model for such faculties as uprightness and walking. Without the model of human beings, the child does not achieve uprightness, but without the deep yet unconscious intention of wanting to be upright and walk – and this is the spiritual side – the model would be of no avail. Both have to come

together. In the early years, the child seems to be guided from inside, and seems to intuitively “know” what he or she needs to do: an endless practice of the most varied movement combinations. Rudolf Steiner advises us to leave the child undisturbed and uninstructed at this early stage of development. The child self-educates with the help of spiritual beings. The undisturbed exploration of movement “from inside out” is the precondition for the development of a sense of freedom in the child. This situation changes around the age of three. Now Rudolf Steiner recommends eurythmy as being of great benefit for children. Obviously the child has reached a level of development where the child not only unconsciously absorbs what lives in the environment, but is approachable to being guided into certain movement patterns and imitates them.

Imitation and Guided Movement with Children from Age Three to Seven

The child at the age of three lives in a natural desire to participate – filled with sympathy for the surroundings and with more ability to experience the self in relationship to other human beings. This participatory consciousness still mirrors the wonderful harmony and interweaving spiritual activity of the pre-earthly existence and of the early stages of human development. The child imitates out of a natural attitude of devotion and trust in the goodness of the world. As kindergarten teachers, we imprint our way of doing things into the still-malleable physical organs of the child. Hence, the great importance of the quality of our gestures. These gestures are imitated by the children and enter into the physical body of the child more deeply than the spoken word or the singing. We can observe various stages in the process of imitating movements: from the purely inward moving that may show itself only in the facial expression, to the small occasional hand movement, to the movement of the whole body.

The impulse to move lives much stronger in children than in adults. It is a natural expression of the strength of their will forces and their healthy etheric forces. Steiner points out that children in the fourth year naturally want to dance. He adds that if eurythmy could be introduced at this age, the children would be strengthened in their ego forces for developing responsibility regarding their tasks

in life in their twenties. He did not give reasons for this, but one can ponder oneself on the specific situation of the child at this stage of development.

On the one hand, the child is most active in the will, the consciousness is still dreamy, and the element of sympathy pervades the child's movements. In this the mood of sympathy, children naturally love to participate in the morning circle and to connect deeply with the teacher who is guiding them in movement.

On the other hand, there appear the first signs of the emerging ego consciousness. The child self-identifies as "I" and thus begins to separate in consciousness from other human beings. This is expressed by the child saying "no," "I don't want to," "I don't like it," "you are not my friend," and so on. This new ability can easily turn into the first expression of self-centered individualism. Steiner speaks about this double-edged nature of the ego, its egotistical and its non-egotistical side, and he points out that the future development of humanity will depend on the overcoming of the egotistical element.

The three- to four-year-old child naturally still has the potential for movement, which is not yet self-expression and which is therefore non-egotistical. Through guided movement, the element of devotion and sympathy can be strengthened in the children and can counteract the tendency towards an early-awakened self-consciousness, which weakens the natural vitality and the will forces of the child.

Eurythmy as well as the circle work based on imitation lead the child away from self-feeling towards an interest in and a feeling connection with what lives in the surroundings. This includes working with the feeling quality of language, of vowels and consonants, and with the rhythm and the musical quality of words and sentences, as expressed through the delicate movement patterns of the larynx. This is a whole new area of working with children in the realm of speech, following on the working with movement as described here. Stephen Spitalny has presented some initial thoughts on this. In therapeutic eurythmy and in chirophonetics, the connection of vowel and consonant sounds with movement is used; but in early childhood movement education, the conscious use of the sounds and rhythms of language has not been developed as yet. Wilma Ellersiek has done

pioneering work in this field.

Archetypal Gestures in Working with the Morning Circle

As indicated in the section on the development of movement, there are movement patterns that express in image form the process of incarnation. They may be called "archetypal," meaning the representation of the essence or primal quality of an object, process, or being within the soul. In relation to the incarnation process, moving between expansion and contraction, in and out, above and below, up and down, front and back, and right and left have this archetypal quality. These movements follow the direction of the etheric forces in the child working from the head downward, and the direction of the soul-spiritual forces in the human being working upward through the limb system and the rhythmic system into the nerve-sense system. Within the physical body the expansion-contraction polarity is present in the breathing process, in the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out, which is the physical foundation of the life of feeling.

Within the morning circle, this breathing rhythm and the polarity of contraction-expansion are overall guiding principles. There are manifold images that lend themselves to express this polarity: opening-closing (performed with hands or as a group in a circle), going out-coming in (flying birds), lifting-pressing (the different walking of fairies or giants), jumping down (connecting with the earth), sleeping-waking, growing-withering (plant realm), hiding-reappearing. While they appear as will-filled movement, they must be brought to the child in such a way that the soul of the child is touched.

Working with the seasons of the year can help to express the feeling quality of moving between expansion and contraction as well. The mood of expansion belongs to spring and summer, the mood of contraction relates to autumn and winter. The expanding movement of spring can be performed as upward movement with the arms, the mood of summer as a kind of hovering or swaying movement in the region above the head. The contracting quality of autumn is expressed through the will-filled forward movement and the inwardness of winter by bringing movement to rest.

In studying the nature of the plant world or animal world in a specific area, one will discover

hidden links to the seasons. Birds, butterflies, and bees have a spring-summer quality, whereas some of the domestic animals such as cows and sheep fit in well with a more wintry mood. Plant cycles relate to the seasonal changes as well.

One can try to discover archetypal gestures in all realms of nature. In the realm of the human being, one can work with the gestures of care and love for other human beings, plants, and animals.

It is one of the great benefits of guided movement that one can bring the rhythmical element back into movement. Children of today do not find their way easily into rhythmical movement by themselves. Life has become too arrhythmic and children are surrounded by mechanically or electrically produced movement. They are drawn into imitating mechanical movement and quite easily fall into repetitive, lifeless movement patterns themselves. Through guided movement and images that speak to the child's feelings, it is possible to bring back the natural liveliness into the movements of children.

Observations and Suggestions for Working with Behavioral Difficulties in Movement Programs

Quite often, movement with children and especially the morning circle is not the joyful, harmoniously flowing experience it is meant to be. Instead it may be dominated by the teacher or caregiver struggling with all sorts of disturbances.

The cause may lie in flaws of the circle itself, in the inappropriateness of the images and gestures presented to the child. It may also lie in the adult not being fully in charge of the group or not inwardly fully connected with what he or she is doing. The possible reasons for difficulties need to be explored, but they are not the theme of this article. Instead, we will turn to analyzing some responses of children to guided movement that are disruptive to the morning circle.

The Developing Child

Many of the challenges in movement programs result from the developmental stage the children are passing through. There is a time for growing into the ability of participating in the morning circle, there is a "peak" time of enjoyment, and there is the time

of growing out of the morning circle. Refusing to participate or rejecting certain movement sequences may just be a sign that the child is "not yet there" or "not there anymore." The way in which children pass through these three stages varies greatly. It is influenced by factors such as temperament, strength of will, development of the lower senses, and the individual way that the child approaches the world. The child may be shy or courageous, quiet or forthcoming, cautious or daring, gentle or forceful.

The criteria for healthy development would be the following:

- An awareness of body boundaries of self and others
- Uprightness and comfort with forward movement
- Showing joy in life and signs of well-being
- Awareness of what is going on in the surroundings
- The ability to imitate.

The following examples assume that the child in question matches these criteria to some degree.

The child who is "not yet there"

A child may say after two minutes in the morning circle: "My legs are tired, I want to sit down."

Another child complains about tummy aches or headaches and wants to sit down when the preparations for the morning circle are on the way.

This may be an indication for the child not being comfortable as yet in moving with the group. Such a child should be allowed to sit down and watch until such time that he or she is eager and ready to join.

It may also be an indication of weakened life forces when children show signs of not being comfortable with an extended period of standing in an upright position. The childhood forces of levity do not counterbalance the physical weight sufficiently, and legs can become very tired and heavy then. This phenomenon of weakened life forces appears not only in the movement program, but all through the day. Waldorf early childhood education – with its strong rhythmical features, extended creative play, and the emphasis on the nurturing quality of the domestic arts – is a wonderful help in strengthening these children in order to participate fully in the movement program at a later stage.

The child who is “not there anymore”

A child makes faces and bizarre movements, thus seeking and attracting the attention of other children. This child is very aware that he or she is counteracting the purposes of the morning circle, and observes what reaction this will provoke in the teacher.

Such a child is often very awake in the senses, advanced in verbal expression, and, even though not necessarily one of the older children, may have left the stage of the young child's dreaming, participatory consciousness. Such a child is weakened in her ability to imitate, as the individualization and separation process has taken place too early. It is not always possible to reverse this process, and participation in the circle may not be beneficial for that child but only bring disturbance to the rest of the group. The child may enjoy instead an extra time with the helper in the group and benefit from a one-on-one situation.

There are the six-year-olds who move along energetically, change direction, speak the verse twice as fast as the rest of the group, and thus live out their newly gained mastery of limbs and speech.

These are the children who are growing out of the kindergarten at a regular pace. Usually these older children can be addressed verbally and they accept the authority of an adult calling them back into line. At some times during the day, one has to give them space to live out their abundance of energy and their joy in life.

The child who turns away

There are children who “drop out” when a downward movement is performed. These children let themselves fall down with a bang and land flat on their tummies, face down. Once they are there, they usually stay and need a hand to stand up again. They do not seem capable of performing a slow downward or upward movement.

While this phenomenon could be interpreted as caused by a lack of will, there also seems to be an element of regression into earlier stages of development, away from uprightness and away from the challenges of the world. One should think of those children with compassion, as they express in their language that being human and being upright is something they cannot fully cope

with as yet. Given the fact that ego consciousness appears in children ever earlier today, this reaction of not coping is of no surprise. These children need patience and encouragement with a smile and a helpful gesture, but sometimes they just have to stay where they are and experience the group weaving the circle around them.

The child who seeks contact

There are children who use every chance to bump into each other, pull, push, tumble, or just roll on the floor. Any strong movement performed in the circle, such as the blowing of the wind or the galloping of a horse, is wildly exaggerated and this will usually find some followers among the children.

Whenever I observed this phenomenon, I felt that it had to do with incarnating into modern civilization and with the destiny of the sense of touch and the experience of resistance. Modern life, with its tendency towards comfort and passivity, may not give sufficient stimulation to the sense of touch and not enough experience of boundaries. In bumping into each other, a meeting takes place in which children can work out their body borders and sense of self in a very physical way. This is of great importance for later social skills. It is an important question, how to incorporate experiences for the sense of touch in movement education, as well as in other parts of the kindergarten day.

Stagnation in Development

So far we have been looking at children who progress in their development, even though there are some apparent difficulties. These are temporary or limited to one area and usually would not adversely influence activities such as play, participation in artistic and domestic work, or following routines. Yet there are children whose entire being seems to be affected by some kind of hindrance, which can be described as a lack of ability to move freely. This has consequences for the entire life and being of this child at a given time. It is a stagnation in the physical, emotional, and social development caused by a complex mix of hindrances that have built up in the physical body and soul of the child.

It is common practice today to approach movement disturbances by trying to improve the bodily condition through appropriate exercises, which then hopefully have an impact on the

improvement of the soul condition as well.

Steiner describes the body and the soul of the young child as not yet separated. What is done to the one is done to the other. However, he saw the educator's task in the healing of the soul. Accordingly we may attempt to reach the developmental goal of the first seven years of life, the development of a healthy body, by working from the soul aspect. That means that any movement activity, any preparation of the environment, any artistic activity would then be done in such a way that it speaks to the soul of the child. The soul forces in the child's body cause the movement of the etheric forces in and around the bodily organs. If it were only the physical forces in the body that mattered, and not the soul-spiritual forces, why would we bother having a beautiful environment for the children, or beautiful images in our stories, or beautiful gestures in our morning circle? How would the sense impressions of beauty get to influence the child's physical organs, if within the physical body there was not a soul-spiritual being to perceive them and react with inner movement?

I would like to encourage early childhood educators to plan movement programs in such a way that they reach and move the child's inner being. This is crucial for the normally developing child, but even more so for those children in whom development has become stagnant. In my experience, these children cannot relate to the morning circle work and do not benefit from it without additional support. I would like to contend that the key to the effectiveness of this support lies in reaching these children's inner being. There are two aspects to the inner being that need to be considered. These are the soul aspect, which has to do with consciousness of movement and the *will to move*, and the spirit aspect, which has to do with destiny as expressed in *ways of moving* and in the specific path of movement development. Here the teacher has to work closely together with practitioners of anthroposophical therapies.

In the following paragraphs, I will give a brief description of three groups of children with more general developmental problems that are related to or expressed in the realm of movement.

The withdrawn child

Henning Köhler (author of *Working with Anxious,*

Nervous, and Depressed Children) has convincingly described how disturbances in the four lower senses can influence early development in all its aspects. In the withdrawn child, the sense of self-movement has not developed in the right way during the crucial time of the second and third year of life. Moving and exploring has either not been experienced enough or has not conveyed to the child the sense of freedom and confidence in mastering the body. On the contrary, the child's consciousness registers movement as potentially dangerous and reacts with fear and withdrawal. Verbal encouragement as well as working with imitation and example in movement will not have much effect. Once the critical second and third year have passed, the achievement of confidence in movement will rely on the building up of trust and confidence on the soul level. This can be achieved by providing a close and warm human relationship with such a child and by observing with empathy the subtle behavioral cues that may help to unlock the door to helpful intervention and further development. These cues are likely to be found in the area of play as well as in the area of movement. A health professional may give advice on further assisting measures in the realm of caring for the specific bodily needs and in balancing bodily processes.

The irritable child

These children have been in the focus of attention for the last ten years. They are the ones who cause disruption in the life of the kindergarten and in home life. Some of the disruptive behavior described earlier in this article will apply to these children as well. They would be able and may be very willing to participate in the morning circle, but they get overstimulated and agitated so easily that it is impossible to hold them within the activity.

Henning Köhler has interpreted the developmental stagnation in these children as caused by a body boundary problem together with an improperly developed sense of touch. They are either "thick skinned" or "thin skinned." In the first instance, to the children feel too enclosed in their bodies and will react with irritation and agitated behavior as a way to get out of the "prison." In the second instance, the child does not have enough of a protective layer towards the environment, and any sense impression or touching is experienced as

too much, even as painful. The child reacts with agitation in an attempt to override the sensation of discomfort or pain. The disturbance in the soul-body relationship of such a child relates back to the first year of life.

Therapy for these children needs to be based on a combination of medical treatment and an appropriate educational approach, which primarily takes away from these children any form of pressure and any form of overstimulation. Waldorf early childhood education has to offer much for these children. By working with rhythms modeled on the balance between breathing in and breathing out, one can reduce pressure and enable the child to move from a contracted soul condition into a more open space of experience. The relationship with such a child needs to be loving and undemanding, but less close than with the withdrawn child.

The defiant child

There are children who resist both the morning circle and other aspects of a Waldorf early childhood environment. At the age of four or five, they have around them already an attitude of mistrust and defiance, which one would rather expect from children approaching the age of puberty. These children may ridicule what is done in the circle or in storytelling, or they may show no interest in the toys or usual play activities of other children. They do not seem to have any specific problems with their general physical development or their senses; they are neither agitated nor withdrawn. Their stagnation lies in the soul realm, in not being able to move freely between sympathy and antipathy. They are living too strongly in isolation and the experience of being different than others.

Whether these children are a new phenomenon or have always been there can be disputed. Perhaps we just meet more of them now or have become more conscious of them.

Köhler describes his work with these children in his book *Difficult Children: There is No Such Thing*, especially in the chapter on the girl Mariella, whom he depicted with much empathy in a poem.

Why would a child psychologist use the art form of poetry rather than produce a professional case study to picture such a child? In meeting these children, we are experiencing the limits of a pedagogical or therapeutic relationship. All that is

left is the meeting of two human beings. There is no benefit in following a set of guidelines or just applying methods of behavior modification. The work with these children is built on trusting that the genuine interest of the therapist in the soul-spiritual being of the child may lead to the dissolving of blockages and towards a new beginning.

These children challenge us kindergarten teachers to think about our rhythms, routines, and activities in the Waldorf early childhood work, to think about what is important and what not, to experiment with new rules or less rules. Steiner speaks about the ego consciousness appearing as early as at eighteen months of age and the ego becoming stronger as human evolution continues. These children with their strong ego presence provide us with the task of penetrating with our soul faculties more deeply into the secrets of the human being. This will enable us to develop an education that provides the early-individualized child with the right environment and the right relationships for the development of their inherent strength in a positive way.

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Sailing Our Ship in Calm or Stormy Weather

Tim Bennett

The following is an excerpt from the recently published *You're Not the Boss of Me! — Understanding the Six/Seven-Year-Old Transformation* (see Stephen Spitalny's review on page 37).

As the teacher of the Rosemary Kindergarten in Seattle, I am the captain of my ship, as well as the navigator of its daily journeys into charted and uncharted waters. Inwardly the captain's heart holds two questions: Who are these children? What are their needs? Because of my responsibility for these children from the moment they pass through the gate until the moment when they return into their parents' arms, there are a few important rules I follow when on board this ship: keep things simple, slow down, be present for each family and child, and don't forget to have fun and smile.

The parents are asked to drop off their children between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. I use this time of arrival to tidy up outside, do garden tasks, talk to parents and so on. It is the transition time from home to school and an opportunity to play outside in our schoolyard. We have swings, a slide, balance boards, stilts (for the six-year-olds), and shovels in our sandbox ready to dig for pleasure or for treasure. I also have parents turning a jump rope. And of course there are the chickens: Honey, Ruby and Blackie. We check for eggs and say good morning to our beloved chickens. Sometimes our chickens also have unusual adventures — like the day when one of the older children took Ruby from the chicken house and held her while skipping rope.

Ahoy maties! At 9:00 a.m., I gather the families together and we begin to form a circle. As a community of people, we greet each other and greet the day. I always have a little song or verse for the season. If it's raining, as is sometimes the case in our fair city, I sing:

*John has a great big pair of waterproof boots on.
Splish splash, splish splash, splish splash splish!*

*And John has a great big waterproof mackintosh
and John has a great big waterproof hat!
And that says John is that, and that says John is that!*

Then we become a bit more reverent for a moment and we say our morning verse:

*Our hearts open wide, light streams deep inside.
Stars, moon and sun shine down on everyone.
On earth now we stand, giving all our hands.
Good morning, dear friends.*

Then I sing what will happen today: "Ring a ring a Rosemary day, welcome, welcome, nature walk day and painting day." After this opening to the day, I begin to feel that we are a group and that we have built up some substance through our interest in each other and our movement together as we have our daily greeting.

It is time for our ship to set sail! We head for the school gate, where we find walking partners and say goodbye to the parents and little brothers and sisters. The captain is at the helm, the crew is ready and we set out to seek an adventure in the great wide world, waving to the parents as we go. As the captain, I carry a sturdy backpack, filled with a long rope, snacks, water, a first aid kit and a cell phone. My faithful first mate (also known as the kindergarten assistant) has a red flag that we take with us to help us get across the five-way intersection on our way to the park. My rule for crossing the street is that the red flag must be in the middle of the street before any child takes a step off the curb. My intrepid assistant goes out onto the road, makes sure the coast is clear, and then we can all safely cross the street. Upon reaching the other side, the children know that they are free to run, skip, and cavort. Our nature walk has truly begun.

We have set sail and are now out on the open seas, surveying the landscape far and wide! Nature adventures are rich and nourishing for the children in so many ways. The most obvious healing aspect is simply being in nature, in the outdoors in all kinds of weather during the four seasons of the year. In

the Pacific Northwest, this is possible because of the mild temperatures in both winter and summer. The children really have a daily dose of what it means to be on the earth, surrounded by nature and the ever-changing weather. We always “dress” for the weather. For most of the fall and winter, we wear raingear and a warm hat. Being in nature also brings the possibility for a strong connection with the fairy world and the materials of the earth: sticks, stones, leaves, moss and so on. The senses are enlivened when out in nature and the children more easily fall into play in a lively and healthy manner. Dirt, mud, dust, rivulets of water, autumn leaves, bugs, squirrels, spring blossoms, still air, and whipping winds all build their feeling for beauty, goodness and truth. These experiences provide a foundation in the child’s will and feeling life to support the science lessons that will have deeper impact in future years. Experiencing the gifts of the earth in these early years will plant the seed for caring about the future of our planet in later years.

I started the daily nature walks because more children were coming to me who were weak in their physical and etheric bodies. There were also other children who were overly physical in their limbs and could not find any rest or peace. Both of these kinds of children found a healing in the movement possibilities of the nature walks. The weaker children found strength and eventually a great joy in movement. The overly physical ones could freely move and gradually come into a rhythm through the regularity of our walks. Being among the trees and under the great sky gives the children a picture and a feeling that they are a part of the kingdoms of nature. In sharing the space with the elements of the earth and the kingdoms of nature, they can find their place in the world. Of course, this happens for them in an unconscious and powerful way.

As the navigator of the journey, I chose to go to different parks during the week; we have three parks within walking distance. We go to a large woody park twice a week. This place is full of maple, fir and cedar trees. There are lots of hills and valleys to explore. Here the children can really get a taste for adventure, sliding down muddy hills, climbing up a fallen tree, jumping off small rocks and cliffs, and building fairy houses or shelters in the woods for those cold winter days. Sometimes I throw a rope over a tree branch and make a rope

swing for the children. The older children love this. Usually we walk for a while and then stop to play in whatever secret garden we have found. This is when some of their deepest play happens. They build houses out of sticks and branches, play knights in the forest, build fairy houses or gather treasures: a bottle cap, a special key, a magic stick or stone. The children often name these beloved spots on our walk. We play at the “Rolling Hills,” where there are many dirt bike hills just perfect for running up and down. Then there is “Bunny Hill,” a place where a huge pile of rocks provides a home to ongoing generations of wild rabbits and former “pet” bunnies. Naming a spot makes it our own and places it on the children’s growing map of their expanding world.

At this point, the crew often becomes a bit tired and hungry, so we take a short rest and serve up some grub: salt fish, biscuits and rum. Well, we’ve run out of fish, biscuits and rum, so it will have to be trail mix, rice crackers and water for the captain and crew today. After snack, we start back to school. On our way back, I usually play a short game to re-enliven and focus the children, helping them come along home together as a group. I like to play “Sheep and Wolves.” Half the children are sheep or shepherds (the shy ones who only want to watch the game) and the other half are the wolves. I say, “Run, sheep run!” and the sheep run out from their house (a tree where they have previously gathered). Then I say, “Run wolves run!” and the wolves run and try to catch the sheep before they can get back “home.” If a sheep is caught, it can become a wolf if the child wants to. I keep the game fun with a lot of running about and I always play with them. I am usually a sheep and the children love to catch me. Other games we play are seasonal games that work well outside: “What Time Is It, Mr. Fox?” or a simple version of “Red Light, Green Light.” I play any simple game that has to do with running, chasing, and stopping.

I also take a jump rope along with us. We can tie one end to a tree and do all sorts of jump rope games. The games can help to build up different rhythmic movements, as well as build self-confidence in one’s growing physical abilities. After games, we continue on our way back to school, stopping at different points along the way to wait for the slower ones and slow down the faster ones.

During the entire walk, I watch the children form their social connections for the day. There is something about the nature walks that helps the children breathe out into the world of the “other,” not just into the world of nature. I always get the sense that the children come from all over the city and need to shed the morning car ride and whatever dramas might have been going on at home. Our adventures help the children to come into social harmony. The walks allow them to shed the past, live in the present, and move, literally, into their future. This is the magic of the act of walking into nature. The children are drawn to the world around them and then are drawn to the friends who share this world. Again and again I see the forest being the mediator in helping these friendships to blossom. For example, children who like to go “hunting” for imaginary raccoons or coyotes join together in close camaraderie. Other children who like to collect treasures gather together in search of special leaves, sticks or rocks.

Our ship glides into port at the schoolyard gate between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m. We all disembark for circle or story time. We have circle on Monday and Tuesday. We have story time on Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday, we have circle games. I also like to incorporate folk songs, simple folk dances, and some basic circus skills. All the children love to stand on my shoulders and become a giant! At story time, I usually tell the story. After the class knows the story, we can act it out. The six-year-olds always lead the acting out, showing the little ones what they know. I also do puppet shows in a similar fashion, first doing it myself and later having the six-year-olds move the puppets that have a minor role in the show. This is a place where the six-year-olds can really let their new capacities shine out for the whole class to see.

Next, we move on to our snack time, seated at three small tables. I strive to make this a time to be nourished by the food while we are in the presence of each other. I use snack time as a breathing in during the flow of the day. So we have a quiet snack with “no talking.” I find that if I say, “No talking,” this is clear for the six-year-olds, and the little ones will follow along. The children take this time to rest and enjoy the quiet and peace around us. Also, at snack time, I always choose two six-year-olds to be the “waiters,” pouring tea and water for the others.

The younger children love to be served by their older friends.

Next is our free play time. In fall and winter, we play indoors, but in spring we play outside when the weather allows. Besides the free play, in the winter we have opportunities for the six-year-olds to be involved with some projects. They make felted hats and mittens that can keep both their heads and hands cozy. I have also found that the six-year-olds like to build elaborate structures, so I make sure that there are a lot of ropes, pulleys, large pieces of driftwood and sawn wood, metal clips, and wooden clips. These materials encourage the older ones to use their growing physical strength and newly acquired ability to carry out plans to their hearts’ content. It is during this free play time that we also do our artistic activities: painting, coloring, beeswax modeling, baking and cleaning.

At 12:20 p.m. we have cleanup time. First everyone leaves the room to wash their hands and get their lunches from their cubbies. When they come back into the room, they put their lunches at their places at the table and then begin to tidy away. There always seems to be a bit of magic at tidy-away time, as we set our house in order and anticipate eating our good food.

At 12:40 p.m. we have lunch. Again we begin lunch with our quiet voices, and, once everybody is settled down and eating, I tell a story from my life or stories that have been passed down to me by some colorful characters. The children love these stories and sometimes share them at their dinner tables at home! They then get ready to leave school. I often put up a balance beam on two chairs and have the children “walk over the bridge” to say goodbye to me after they have packed up their lunches. Having sailed over waters both calm and stormy, the children then find their parents, who are waiting outside on the porch to sweep them up and take them home. The old captain and his faithful first mate swab the decks, secure the rigging and make everything ship-shape for the next day’s journey.

Tim Bennett has been teaching kindergarten since 1990. His interest in young children and movement led him to meet Helle Heckmann and visit her school in Copenhagen. His own kindergarten incorporated a love of nature and joy in movement.

Stories for the Journey

Nancy Mellon

Hanan is a sturdy Israeli lawyer and a devoted father who experiences the great joy of storytelling almost every day with his young children. He insists that he would have missed this pleasure were it were not for his wife, Tsipori, who has been practicing storytelling as a healing art for several years in the Jerusalem area. Recently I had the privilege of traveling along with Hanan, Tsipori and their children for an exhilarating dip in the Dead Sea. I asked Hanan for permission to share some of the ongoing story he has been telling his children.

Hanan's saga began four years ago as he was driving his daughter to school for the first time. She sat beside him in a car seat, both of them feeling the anxious, hesitant excitement that often accompanies this special event. Just as they were pulling out of the driveway in the early morning for the half-hour journey to school, Hanan decided to rise to the occasion and attempt to tell his first story for her. His daughter quickly became completely happy. Since then she has looked forward to each departure for school because of the special story they share. Hanan has continued what he began that day every weekday morning for the past four years. His young son, who heard every detail of the story from his sister, eventually joined them en route to school for his first day of kindergarten. Both children continue to remind their father of details he has forgotten.

That day as we drove together, Hanan and the children retold the story for me. I was fascinated and impressed by how Hanan reflected even the most subtle emotional challenges of his children in his story. It has been a vehicle for them all to grow emotionally very close together. Even after four years, Hanan is still amazed as the story unfolds that springs from his desire to manifest fatherly wisdom for his children. As we sped along the highway that day, Tsipori listened with joy for the lovingly intuitive imaginations that her husband continues to discover despite his many rational concerns. I scribbled notes as he and his children, now eight and five years old, reviewed their beloved going-to-school saga.

It began: Once upon a time a beautiful little Princess lived with the king and queen in a golden

palace. The Princess had a special friend who was a dwarf. Three other close friends always stayed near her, Squirrel, Rabbit, and Mole. She fed them and they played hide-and-seek and many other games in the nearby palace garden and woods. At night the animals slept with her in her room. One day the Princess and her parents noticed that Dwarf was sad. He confessed that he was sad because he had been away from Dwarf-land now for years and missed his parents and friends. He wanted very much to see them again, but to get to Dwarf-land required a very challenging journey across a huge forest, a valley, and a rushing river, and through very high mountains beyond the river.

The Princess suggested that her three loyal friends accompany him, and they agreed to this plan because they loved the Princess, and they understood that Dwarf could not go alone. Many anxious and excited preparations were made (these took several days for Hanan to describe). A long departure feast at the palace followed, and at last all was ready and the travelers said their farewells and started into the woods.

By the time Hanan had reached this part of the story, many weeks of school had been successfully navigated. Communing with his daughter through the story process, he had found within himself a deep well of patient inspiration and intuition he had never dreamt of finding. Even today he says that his storyteller's voice often sounds strange and fascinating to him as he listens to the story with as much deep amazement as his children do.

Now, four years later, the dwarf and his many friends are still, in exquisite and leisurely detail, wending their way toward Dwarf-land. As the episodes evolve, each day finds them traveling farther from the palace into more courageous and complex adventures. At first, as they trod less familiar ground, their greatest challenge was just to keep going. As each evening drew near, again and again they learned how to choose safe places to make camp and to decide together which of their supplies to eat for supper, and who was to sit guard as the others slept. Each of the travelers offered different contributions: Dwarf, his skill with wood

and humor; Rabbit, courage and swift legs; Squirrel, helpful suggestions and cleverness at solving problems; and Mole, honest timidity and insecurity. Each one helped and ate and curled up in its own way to rest and dream.

As the trees grew thicker and taller, unfamiliar sounds often alarmed the friends. Sometimes they wanted to turn back. Three little foxes who were afraid slept secretly by their fire at night and gradually became less skittish friends. One day a strange wailing filled their ears, and they discovered a wounded tiger with a thorn in his leg who told them he knew about their Princess and thought her very nice. When the tiger was feeling better, he offered to travel with them to lend his strength and courage. If one of the travelers grew sick, they called for Brown Bear, well known among all the animals as the best healer in that part of the wood. Bear would come to offer additional medicine of herbs and healing mud and water.

During the long days and in the evenings the creatures often longed to see the Princess again. At night they dreamt of her. Sometimes her beloved owl messenger would bring them news and cookies in a little bag. In return Dwarf and the creatures would draw pictures and send them back to her in its beak. The Princess always remembers, and is deeply interested in each one's birthday. Though it can be difficult for her to find their whereabouts, by riding on Eagle she manages to attend each birthday, bearing gifts and poems. It can take days for Hanan to describe the birthday celebrations in the deep woods, for in addition to the excitement of the Princess's visitation, each creature takes time to find or make a special gift. Old and new friends from the surrounding woodlands receive special invitations. Birthday food is gathered and prepared from dew and streams, roots and berries, bark and leaves.

As Hanan's confidence in his own intuition and imagination grew apace, episode after episode reflected the interests of the children and also their needs and fears. They met many strangers whose habits gradually became more familiar. One day the path narrowed to an impasse. Dwarf and his friends again thought they should give up their journey, until Squirrel went to ask big animals for help. He found a kind hippo and some high-spirited elephants that agreed to walk in front of them. They

thanked these generous creatures and asked them to keep the way open for their return. For a while bad witches bothered them, until many friends gathered and worked together to build a house for them. When the witches received what they needed, they became good and helpful in return.

The travelers always receive help somehow with their challenges. In one episode they were given a box from a magical friend. When they shook this cube of gold and spoke the right words, they would find things inside it to help them solve even the darkest problem. One day they discovered that the forest colors had been stolen by monsters who were painting the forest and all its inhabitants black. With the help of forest fairies and the golden box, the animals gathered enough courage to sleuth out the monsters' den and restore the light by forcing them to restore all the colors again. Other adventures portrayed dark creatures lurking behind walls and dangerous giants.

Now and then the travelers happen into another story that the children know. In one adventure, they met the Prince when he was preparing to enter the thorny thicket surrounding Sleeping Beauty. The creatures and the Dwarf encouraged him, and when the Prince emerged intact, the travelers were invited to his wedding. The newly awakened bride loved meeting the Dwarf, his fellow travelers, and all their retinue. It took Hanan several weeks to describe the details of the spectacular wedding celebration. With fatherly care, he has learned to sustain a leisurely narrative pace. Hanan's ongoing story, encouraged by his wife, has created a mood of peaceful confidence and warmly weaving, ever-renewing adventure that pervades their life together.

What might have been a chilly and confusing morning drive to school for father and children has instead been an opportunity to knit an astonishingly intimate fabric of heart and imagination.

Nancy Mellon is the author of Storytelling and the Art of the Imagination and Storytelling with Children. Her newest book is about the vital links between human physiology, personal development, and storytelling imagination.

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From the Garden to the Table

Creating Kindergarten Festivals for Kenya

Susan Perrow

If you ask any Kenyan what their most meaningful childhood experience was, they would agree that it was linked to the shamba or garden where they would help to dig, plant, and harvest the vegetables for the table.

And so, when pondering ideas for celebrating the end of our kindergarten year at the Nairobi Waldorf School, one of our Kenyan teachers naturally pointed out that the many carrots that we had planted in our shamba would soon be ready for harvesting . . . so why not work with this theme for our end-of-year festival?

In East Africa, there are two significant times of year: the “long rains” and the “short rains.” Our children had planted the carrots during the long rains in May, and now in early July there were hundreds of wavy green carrot tops, along with a few different herbs and other vegetables, calling out, “Come and pick me and eat me!”

Our end-of-year festival was therefore planned along the theme, “Kutoka Shambani, Hadi Mezani” (From the Garden to the Table). Parents were also invited to bring food from their own shambas to add to the menu, and so we ended up with a large variety of fruits for a fruit salad, fresh salad veggies for a delicious green salad, and extra veggies to add taste and spice to our delicious, nutritious carrot soup.

We also planned a small concert for all the parents to attend before lunch, with the kindergarten children singing several gardening/shamba songs followed by a play with the theme of “The Enormous Turnip.”

I once heard it explained by a leading anthroposophist at an international Waldorf education conference that the meaning of a festival was “a sacred event where divine and human forces interact for the benefit of mankind.” In so many ways and on so many levels, this Shambani Festival embodied this. There was such a connection by the children to the divine nature forces through the ploughing, planting, watering, and then harvesting of the vegetables. Not to mention the delight they experienced in scrubbing and chopping

one hundred carrots, baking many loaves of bread, and setting places at the table for all the parents. Their ultimate joy was being able to serve the adults, wearing chef hats that they had made from painting paper and carrot rubbings!

There was also a reminiscence and appreciation by the adults who saw their children so involved in such a simple theme. Not once was there a sense of “what’s in it for me” or “will I get a present” – the difficulty associated with our more commercial festivals.

Our Kutoka Shambani, Hadi Mezani Festival was all about experiencing and appreciating the abundance of nature, and then sharing this with others. It was one of the most exciting festivals that the teachers, parents, and children have experienced in my three years at work in this country. We are already looking forward to a repetition of this event next July. We believe it has found an important place on our yearly East African kindergarten calendar.

Susan Perrow is a teacher trainer, mentor and parent educator, specializing in storytelling and creative discipline. She travels internationally giving workshops and training seminars. She was a founder of the Waldorf school in Byron Bay in eastern Australia, where she taught kindergarten for thirteen years. Currently Susan lives on the East Coast of Australia.



Waldorf Education in México

Louise deForest

Waldorf Education first came to México largely through the work of Hans Berlin and the first Waldorf school, La Escuela Nueva, in México City, started in 1957. That school eventually closed, but a seed was planted – there are now fourteen schools striving to become Waldorf schools and several more that have incorporated many attributes of a Waldorf education into their more traditional curriculum. Throughout Mexico, there is an ever-growing interest in Waldorf education, partly in response to the inadequate education provided by the public school system and partly in recognition that the future is calling for something new – it seems that every month a new initiative is born somewhere in México. Most of the Waldorf schools go through sixth grade, but there is one that goes up to eighth grade and several others who are exploring the feasibility of starting a high school in the future. In some schools, the parents have started an eighth or ninth grade for their children (many of whom have been in Waldorf schools since nursery), trying to continue to provide the youngsters with a Waldorf curriculum.

Waldorf schools in México are faced with many of the same challenges that confront Waldorf schools around the globe. Except for the very wealthy families in the larger cities, México continues to be an economically poor country, and sending a child to a private school would be prohibitive were it not for the sacrifices of the faculty who, in order to ensure full enrollment, accept long hours of work, very low salaries (around \$400 a month) and no benefits. As in so many other countries, the state also obstructs the growth of Waldorf education; it is now a law that all children three and older attend school, and the curriculum set by the Secretary of Education (SEP) is highly academic. In my travels through México, I have seen several Waldorf schools where even the nursery children spend part of every day sitting at their desks working in their workbooks. A further complication is that if a child has not been matriculated in the state school system by three, they are considered to have not been educated (homeschooling is illegal), and entering into the system later means taking

many placement tests and waiting for a space to open in the class.

To support the living impulse of Waldorf education in México, the Centro Antroposófico opened its doors in 2000 to offer teacher training for adults wishing to become early childhood or class teachers, and the vast majority of teachers in Waldorf schools in México have trained there. Located in Cuernavaca, the Centro offers a five-year, part-time training for three weeks each summer. Master teachers from Switzerland, Argentina, the United States, and México make up the faculty and students come from all parts of México, Latin and South America, and even a few from the United States. Each year about eighty students are enrolled and one can only applaud their dedication as, year after year, they give up their summer vacation (typically, Mexican teachers have four weeks off in the summer) and time with their families to attend classes.

To give you an idea of some of the happenings with Waldorf education in México, let me tell you about a few of the schools there. These are schools that would not normally be considered Waldorf schools, either because they are too young or their teachers are not trained or their methods are a bit unconventional, yet their interest in Waldorf education is very strong. Colegio San Miguel, located in Monterrey, is a very small program started by one of the Centro's students, Carmen María, when she first started her training three years ago. Carmen María is a middle-aged, simple woman, deeply and naturally reverential, who comes from a very poor, uncultured family and received very little education. It has been a struggle for her to grasp Steiner's thoughts, yet each year she spends her evenings studying and discussing Anthroposophy in preparation for her next class. The faculty of the Centro have marveled to watch the unfolding of new capacities and a deepening of commitment on her part; she takes little credit for her hard work and gives it all to the spiritual world who, she feels, guided her to Anthroposophy and supports her in her work. Carmen María is constantly challenged with making ends meet in her program and every

month she wonders whether she will be able to continue, yet somehow the children themselves give her courage to keep trying. Many of the children that have been drawn to her small program are autistic and Carmen María, with no remedial training, has been very successful in guiding them into the world. When asked how she does it, she answers that she prays a lot and loves them with all her heart.

Colegio Ser, still struggling to define its pedagogical direction, is doing some very interesting work with abused and abandoned children. Located in Queretaro, it has, last I knew, about eighty children, half of whom were removed from their homes because of abuse or were found on the street. These children live in two group foster homes that send all their children to this school. The owners of the homes, when I was there several years ago, were very interested in Waldorf education, attended several lectures, and, after discussions with myself and the directors of the school and the Centro, removed televisions from the house with the youngest children, eliminated computer time for the little ones, and expressed their support in any way they could. Because these children have attachment disorders and are naturally unable to trust adults, the school has established a small farm in the adjacent property where children ride horses and burros and take care of the animals, in the process forming relationships based on trust and kindness. Interestingly enough, many of the children whose birthdays are unknown are given Michaelmas as a birth date, in recognition of the courage they have in their present incarnation.

In every country it is a challenge to adapt



Waldorf education to the culture of the land, and Ak'Lu'um, a very new school in Quintana Roo, is taking up the challenge. Just two years old but with a solid financial base, this international school has a special focus on renewing the culture and the language of its indigenous population. Classes are taught in English and Spanish, but time is regularly given to singing and telling stories and poems in Nahuatl (the Mayan language) from traditional Mayan sources, and they are working to adapt the Waldorf curriculum to reflect the local and indigenous history. David Barham, from the Pine Hill Waldorf School, helped them start several years ago during his sabbatical year and offers ongoing mentoring support to the teachers. With several other Waldorf-inspired programs in the area, Ak'Lu'um is becoming a center where these often-isolated teachers can meet and support one another.

These are just a few pictures of the many devoted teachers and schools/programs in México. WECAN, as a North American association, is also the national association for Canada and México and is always looking for ways to support our neighbors. There is a commitment on the part of WECAN and AWSNA to translate literature into Spanish, to provide mentoring and evaluating support whenever possible and to offer scholarships to a few Mexican students each year. For the last few years, a few Mexican Waldorf early childhood teachers have been making the effort to attend the East Coast February Conference, and WECAN does everything possible to reduce their expenses while here. Yet our neighbors are in great need of support as they find their way into creating Mexican Waldorf education. Perhaps your school or program

could sponsor a child to attend a Waldorf school or a teacher to train at the Centro, thus entering into a more personal relationship with an individual over time. A pen-pal program could start with children in the early grades of your school with a similar class in México, or perhaps the older classes in a school could take a class trip to México to help with a building project or to work on a farm. Many US early childhood

programs are now fundraising for travel funds for teachers to come to the IASWECE Conference in August, and parents in some schools are donating money to Mexican schools in need. One teacher at the Rudolf Steiner School in Manhattan asked her parents to forego giving her a Christmas present and instead to collect money to assist Mexican teachers to attend conferences, and the parents raised \$900! There are many ways we can extend our consciousness outwards, share our resources, and enter into more collegial relationships with our neighbors to the south. And in the process we

open ourselves and the families in our schools and programs to the riches of the Mexican culture.

Louise deForest has been a Waldorf kindergarten teacher for many years and is now the Pedagogical Director of the Early Childhood program at the Rudolf Steiner Waldorf School in Manhattan. She is also a WECAN board member, a regional representative of WECAN in Mexico, one of the representatives from North America to IASWECE and leader of the Waldorf early childhood teacher training in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

TRANSITIONS

In Memoriam: Wilma Ellersiek

by Kundry Willwerth

A letter from Wilma Ellersiek – what a surprise! And not only a letter – a whole packet of gesture games! This was my reward for forwarding the English translations of six verses of Wilma Ellersiek’s gesture game poems. What had started only as an enrichment for my kindergarten, Wilma Ellersiek turned into a gift for the English-speaking children in the West. And so she consciously expressed it.

Already past her seventieth birthday, she took on the guidance of a German immigrant to the US who was trying to form simple German children’s verses into simple English children’s verses. In her detailed responses to our poetic efforts, she laid open the principles of her hand gesture work. (By then, my husband, Lyn, a native English speaker, had joined my translation attempts to ensure a smooth transition into English.)

Wilma was already ill when I first met her. This spread a shadow over our short visits, as she did not have the strength for conversation over more than an hour’s time. She received us several times at her home in Stuttgart and later at Oeschelbrunn. She would open the door – a slight, straight woman in a long skirt and with silver hair – to receive us. Through the glass door we could see her garden, where the sunflower grew, the “Flower in My Garden,” of which she sent us a photo.

Very soon she would share with us her concerns about the children; about the need to develop inwardly for and with her hand gesture games; and lastly, to produce translations she could “authorize.” She had words for us she had prepared ahead of our meeting, messages she wanted us to hear, directions she wanted to give. Often I left our meeting with my list of questions in my pocket unasked. When she spoke of her games, she could become very lively (though not able to hop around) in her descriptions. At my last visit, when she was already confined to her bed and had difficulty speaking, she immediately livened up when I talked about her games and how beloved they were by the children.

She emanated an atmosphere of awe and expectation. From the little I know through her letters, I saw in her someone who had lived through deep suffering caused partly by an unstable physical condition that caused recurrent illness. But the fruits of this suffering were precious works of art in the form of poetic and musical children’s games. Through us, she sent them to the West with her loving thoughts – no wonder that the children receive them with so much joy!

Wilma Ellersiek expressed her concerns in her “Call to Deeds,” a poem she hoped would strengthen the work to give their childhood back to our children. Lyn translated it on Easter Monday, 1994, after her urgently expressed plea to share these thoughts with all kindergarten teachers.

You're Not the Boss of Me! Baking Bread with Children The Apple Pie that Papa Baked

by Stephen Spitalny

When I began as a Waldorf kindergarten teacher, there were not many books available to support my work. I remember being at the bookstore at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland in 1991 and seeing the wealth of books about early childhood all written in German. I was sorely tempted to buy some and hope to find someone who would translate them for me. Of course there were many Steiner lectures in English, but not much specifically for the early childhood educator from a Steiner approach. My main fountain of practical and philosophical support was the Waldorf Early Childhood Newsletter (now called *Gateways*). Well the times have sure changed. There is a veritable cornucopia of books available for English-speaking early childhood educators!

WECAN, for one, has been publishing up a storm in recent years. Many of these titles would have been lifesavers for a drowning beginner teacher. One of the newest titles from WECAN, ***You're Not the Boss of Me! — Understanding the Six/Seven-Year-Old Transformation*** (Ruth Ker, editor), is excerpted in this issue. It offers a wealth of practical activity and developmental background for working with older children in the kindergarten. So many aspects of this work are addressed, and the best part is that various perspectives are presented. Different authors, most of them experienced kindergarten teachers and doctors, have written about the same themes out of their own research, experiences, and thinking. This allows readers to digest the content and come to their own expanded perspectives. Subjects include: the role of the teacher, developmental changes in the child, social working in the kindergarten, working together with parents, and stories and circle times. There is even a section of useful handouts for the parents. This is an excellent resource for both rookies and experienced kindergarten teachers. Thanks to all the contributors for sharing their experiences and thoughts with us. And a big thanks

to Ruth Ker for pulling this all together. It is of great benefit for our movement!

Another publisher dishing out delicacies for the Waldorf early childhood teachers is Hawthorn Press. Of their many recent titles, one in particular jumped out at me: ***Baking Bread with Children***, by Warren Lee Cohen. His book is filled with recipes, songs, poems, and ideas about baking and baking-related activities. Mr. Cohen also looks into the deeper aspects of nutrition in relation to child development as well as in historical context. Organic and biodynamic food receives attention, as well as certain types of wheat sensitivity. This is a book you will cover with dough fingerprints and dog-ear the pages so you can bring some of these wonderful songs and stories to the children.

The Apple Pie that Papa Baked by Lauren Thompson, illustrated by Jonathan Bean (Simon and Schuster Books, 2007), is simply a wonderful picture book. It will be a welcome addition to a kindergarten or home with young children. The illustrations remind me of those of Wanda Gag, but with some color added. The story is cumulative, bringing in all the elements that participate in the creating of an apple, from the clouds and sun above to the earth below. It is a warm and imaginative picturing of the living processes that lead to apples, and then the making of a pie. Aside from the wonderful presentation of the story in this illustrated book, this story itself is ripe for making into a puppet show, or even for simply telling in the kindergartens and nurseries in our movement. Give it a look at your local bookstore!

*This is the tree, crooked and strong,
that grew the apples, juicy and red,
that went in the pie, warm and sweet,
that Papa baked.*

News from WECAN Publications

By now you can hardly be unaware of the existence of ***You're Not the Boss of Me!*** — ***Understanding the Six/Seven-Year-Old Transformation***, which is excerpted and reviewed in this issue. This comprehensive resource (not just for kindergarten teachers!) was born over the course of seven years through the work of the WECAN Working Group on the Older Child in the Kindergarten, and made possible through the devoted efforts of editor Ruth Ker. It gives us great joy to offer this wonderful book on an important and fascinating topic.

Our newest publication, ***Easter***, was published just in time for the (very early) Easter season this year. This volume in the Little Series, composed of extracts from the work of Rudolf Steiner and others, is a companion for meditation and contemplation of the Easter season. It includes verses, poems, and passages from the Gospel for each day of Holy Week.

Next off the presses — possibly by the time this reaches you — will be Helle Heckmann's ***Childhood's Garden***, a unique book-and-DVD set that gives you a glimpse at a day in Helle's program for children from one to seven in Copenhagen, Denmark. The images of a large group of children of many ages happily engaged in outdoor and indoor activity are striking and memorable. The accompanying booklet is not a transcript of the film, but is Helle's distillation of the topics she is most

often asked to speak about around the world: sleep, nutrition, movement, warmth, clothing, and care. It is beautifully illustrated throughout with full-color photographs and film stills.

Creating a Home for Body, Soul, and Spirit will be published this summer. Bernadette Raichle, founder of Awhina Day Nursery and Kindergarten in New Zealand, writes out of her experience as a pioneer in the field of anthroposophically-oriented out-of-home care for young children. She first describes how one can create healthy physical, etheric, astral and ego sheaths in the home and day nursery, and goes on to give detailed examples of principles and practices at Awhina. A Foreword by Cynthia Aldinger and an Afterword by an Awhina parent are also included.

Also scheduled for completion before the August international conference (see below) is a book on the child from birth to three, arising out of the work of the RIE/Pikler working group.

In the fall, we expect to offer the next book in the Wilma Ellersiek series of gesture games, translated by Kundry Willwerth (see page 36), ***Dancing Hand, Trotting Pony***. Also in the works is a book on First Grade Readiness, a companion volume to *You're Not the Boss of Me!*

For a book catalog, contact WECAN at 845-352-1690 or mlyons@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

Meeting the Needs of the Child Today

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER CONFERENCE, AUGUST 2 - 6, 2008

WECAN and IASWECE are pleased to invite you to a world gathering of Waldorf early childhood educators on the campus of the Pine Hill and High Mowing Schools in Wilton, New Hampshire from August 2 - 6. Keynote speakers will include Dr. Michaela Gloeckler from Dornach, Dr. Johanna Steegmans from Seattle/Alaska, and Dr. Renate Long-Breipohl from Australia. Workshops will be given in English, German, and/or Spanish, and we expect educators from as many as forty countries to attend.

Information and registration are available online at http://www.whywaldorfworks.org/03_NewsEvents/calendar.asp. The conference is a bit difficult to find; scroll way down on the "calendar" page (it is chronologically arranged) to "A World Conference for Early Childhood Educators." Click on the "Summer Conference Brochure" links for a PDF of the brochure, or on "online registration" to register. For a paper copy of the brochure and registration form, contact the WECAN office, 845-352-1690.

Calendar of Events

Conferences, Workshops and Short Courses

Therapeutic and Practical Insights for Early Childhood Educators, June 16 – 20 at Sunbridge College, Spring Valley, NY. With Nancy Blanning and Laurie Clark. This one-week professional development course for the experienced early childhood educator will focus on deepening child observation and responding to the needs the children bring to our attention. Topics include a special child study format for the young child; the profound importance of the senses of self-movement and balance; the importance of nutrition; and working and speaking with parents. This course is a companion to the week offered last summer but is open to all interested teachers. Prerequisite: a familiarity with the twelve senses as described by Rudolf Steiner. Contact Susan Wallendorf, swallendorf@sunbridge.edu, 845-425-0055 ext.11.

Awakening the Teacher's Senses: Child Observation, June 20 – July 4 at Denver Waldorf School. With Dr. Adam Blanning, Laurie Clark, and Nancy Blanning. Dr. Blanning (an anthroposophic physician and school doctor) will describe the way in which careful observation through devotion to detail, and inner meditative work as described in *Education for Special Needs*, strengthen us to meet the needs of the small child. This will be expanded through continued demonstration and experience of movement journeys and circle times, classroom activities and color exploration. Conference brochure and registration form available at <http://www.dcatherapies.org/resources.html>, or contact wblanning@comcast.net / 303-777-0531x164.

Summer Eurythmy Week: Look at the Stars! June 22 – 27 at Eurythmy Spring Valley in Spring Valley, NY. Six-day eurythmy course exploring the theme of the stars. Gerard Manley Hopkins writes: *Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies! / O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!* We can feel that the stars are both near to and far from us. Do the stars speak to me? Do I speak to the stars? We will explore this conversation through the creative arts of speech and eurythmy, as well as the color-filled dynamic crafts of spinning and dyeing. Contact: 845-352-5020, ext. 13 or info@eurythmy.org. Registration Deadline: June 1st, 2008.

Infant and Toddler Caregiver Courses, June 30 – July 11 sponsored by the West Coast Institute for Studies in Anthroposophy and held at the Sunrise Waldorf

School, Duncan, BC. With Bernadette Raichle, Marjorie Thatcher and others. This is part two of a two-part series. Part Two will include Supporting Infants and Very Young Children, Wilma Ellersiek Hand Gesture Games and Puppetry, Dollmaking, Celebrating Festivals, Use of Weleda Preparations and Self Care in addition to artistic and other courses. Contact Marjorie Thatcher, 604-985-3569 or info@westcoastinstitute.org.

Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training Summer Arts Festival, week-long courses running June 30 – July 18, 2008 at East Bay Waldorf School, El Sobrante, CA. Immerse yourself in an “Arts Intensive” (musical or sculptural emphasis); enter the magical world of the child for a week in the “Waldorf for Grown-Ups” course; or for Waldorf Professionals, “Waldorf Seminar with Christof Wiechert.” Information: www.bacwtt.org, 415.332.2133, info@bacwtt.org Register by June 10th.

Nurturing the Young Child From Birth to Three, July 7 – 11 and July 14 – 18 at Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH. With Susan Weber and Jane Swain. *This is a two-week course. Participants may enroll for the first week alone or for both weeks. With permission of the faculty and based upon prior experience, participants may enroll for the second week only.* What is it that is so distinctive about the child in the first three years of life? This period brings many questions and needs for sensitive care. Designed especially for playgroup leaders, childcare providers, early childhood teachers, parents and expectant parents, this two-week course offers an understanding of the sensitive processes taking place in the beginning of life. Out of these insights, we will build a foundation for caring for infants and young children. Contact Bonnie at 603-357-3755 or info@sophiashearth.org.

Advanced Insights in Working with Young Children: An Experiential Course, July 14 – 18 at Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH. With Ute Strub from the Pikler Institute in Berlin, Germany. This unique course offers an experiential path toward developing deep insights into the sensory, physical, and social development of the young child. Ute's approach enables participants to draw insights into the young child's experience of caregiving, play, and daily life that becomes the raw material for reflection and discussion. A foundation then arises for developing programs that meet the growing child's deepest needs. Ute will use material from the photographic archive of the Pikler Institute to illustrate and explore the child's development. Working with Ute creates a fresh look into the development of young children – and ourselves – in which course participants discover their own insights step

by step. The course will focus upon sensory experiences and training observation. Contact Bonnie at 603-357-3755 or info@sophiashearth.org.

Developing an Early Childhood Program with Children from One to Seven July 21 – 25 at Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH. With Helle Heckmann. The foundation for every early childhood teacher's work is his or her insights into the growing child. The quality of the child's inner life, the way the child engages with the world around him, his openness and oneness with the elements of earth, wind, water, and air are the essence of childhood. This course will begin with hands-on experiences that create a living picture of the child's relationship to life. These insights will then lead participants into the practical questions of building a program for young children. What is the essence of the child's day? What rhythms, what activities build health, retain the child's innate openness, and prepare her in an appropriate way for later life? How does the teacher create a balanced day, a rhythmic year, so that this also serves as a source of renewal for herself? Helle will bring the week's work together to respond to these essential questions. She is a gifted teacher who masterfully makes use of the resources close at hand to work creatively in daily life. Contact Bonnie at 603-357-3755 or info@sophiashearth.org.

Introduction to the Art and Healing of Puppet Theater, July 23 – 26 in Sacramento, CA.

This professional development course will take place near Rudolf Steiner College and is independent of the college. It is designed for those who would like more guidance and depth in puppetry for classroom, home, library, or therapeutic practice. We will explore the heart and soul of bringing puppetry to life in an artistic and meaningful way for early childhood settings. We will work with the art of finger, lap, and table puppets, building skills in how to use them effectively in telling stories. There will be wonderful puppet making, and tips on using our story telling voices. We will focus on what has meaning for the life building of the child. We will also look at the possibilities that live in the silk marionette and the storytelling rod puppet – the best friend to all children. Contact Suzanne Down, suzanne@junipertreepuppets.com or 1-888-688-7333 ; www.junipertreepuppets.com.

Introduction to Waldorf Early Childhood Education, July 27 – August 1 at Sunbridge College, Spring Valley, NY. With Leslie Burchell-Fox, Connie Manson and Patricia Rubano. This week-long immersion in the world of early childhood has become a popular annual tradition, mingling handwork, puppetry, music,

presentations and discussions with the first-hand accounts of three experienced teachers intent on sharing their love and appreciation for working with pre-school children. Contact Susan Wallendorf, 845-425-0055 ext.11, swallendorf@sunbridge.edu.

Courage to Teach/Courage to Lead® Introductory Summer Retreat, August 1 – 3 at Sunbridge College, Spring Valley, NY. With Cat Greenstreet & Kathleen Glaser. Do you need time to reflect about the balance between your personal life and your role as a teacher or administrator? Do you wish to experience time slowed to a human pace? Are you interested in creating a circle of trust, where each member feels deeply respected and safe to speak or to be silent? If so, please join us for this introductory Courage to Teach/Courage to Lead® retreat, where in large-group, small-group, and solitary settings, participants explore the relationship between soul and role by reflecting on personal stories through insights from poets, storytellers, and various wisdom traditions. This retreat will be rooted in the rich metaphors of summer as a way of exploring our vocational and life questions. Contact Susan Wallendorf, 845-425-0055 ext.11, swallendorf@sunbridge.edu.

Nurturing and Nourishing: Home Health Care for Young Children and Ourselves, August 14 – 16, in Fair Oaks, CA. With Wiep DeVries, Anthroposophical Nurse; Jan Schubert, Dollmaking; and Cynthia Aldinger, Domestic and Nurturing Arts. This three-day workshop, part of the ongoing LifeWays training, is open to the public. Learn about inhalations, wraps, poultices, etc., as well as healthful ways to nurture the nurturer. Contact: Rudolf Steiner College, 916-961-8727, info@steinercollege.edu.

Children, Nature, and Us, Waldorf in the Home Conference, October 25 – 26 in Boulder, CO. With Joseph Cornell, Suzanne Down, Sharon Lovejoy, and Craig Holdrege. Contact Rahima Dancy, rahima@informedfamilylife.org.

WECAN Southeast Regional Gathering: Can the Dream-Consciousness of the Child Survive Today's Over-stimulating World? November 7– 8 at Acorn Hill Waldorf Kindergarten and Nursery, Silver Spring, MD. Co-hosted by the Washington, DC, area Waldorf schools: Acorn Hill, Potomac CrescentWaldorf School, and Washington Waldorf School. Contact: Cecelia Karpoff, 301-622-0231, or Nancy Foster, 202-829-2909.

Ongoing Trainings

Sunbridge College Part-Time Early Childhood Training Program, New Cycle begins June 2008 in Spring Valley, NY. This is a non-degree program that is fully recognized by the Waldorf Early Childhood Association (WECAN) and Association of Waldorf Schools (AWSNA). This early childhood teacher training program is offered over the course of two years. It provides an integrated program of study designed to include the philosophical, artistic and practical foundation for Waldorf early childhood teaching. Contact Susan Wallendorf, 845-425-0055 ext.11, swallendorf@sunbridge.edu

The Child in the First Three Years, part-time training course beginning July 7, 2008 at Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH. Co-Directors: Susan Weber and Jane Swain. July 2008 begins a new cycle of our 14-month part-time training course, featuring a holistic, inspiring study of the development of the young child and the experience of creating a family. The program is designed for child care providers working with infants, toddlers and young children; early childhood teachers wishing to deepen their understanding of these early years as a foundation for their work with nursery and kindergarten children; parent-infant and parent-toddler group facilitating teachers, and those who work with expectant parents. Parents will also find this course of great interest. The course is founded upon the joy of learning together with others who share a deep commitment to very young children. Study the development of infants and young children with gifted, devoted faculty, and experience handwork and the arts, reading and journal activity, the

art of observation, and further development of your own relationship to movement. Contact Bonnie at 603-357-3755 or info@sophiashearth.org.

Frontier Eurythmy Independent Training Course, part-time course beginning September 21, 2008 at the School of Eurythmy, Spring Valley, NY. *Explore the artistic life. Breathe in harmony with yourself and the world. Make every step a conversation with the earth.* The Frontier Eurythmy Independent Training Course is for those who live at a distance but are able to attend the School of Eurythmy for six weeks during the year. Between blocks, work on your own at home, with a local eurythmist as your mentor. If you are a self-motivated person and have been wanting to start a eurythmy training while honoring your other commitments, there has never been a better opportunity. For information/application, visit our website at www.eurythmy.org, or contact 845-352-5020, ext. 13 / info@eurythmy.org. *Eurythmy Spring Valley is recognized by the Association of Eurythmy Trainings.*

One-Year Part-Time Training in Biodynamics, Sept 2008 - June 2009 at the Pfeiffer Center, Spring Valley, NY. Eight weekend workshops with Mac Mead and other leading practitioners give a complete introduction to the scientific and spiritual approach of biodynamic agriculture. Contact Carol Rosenberg, 845-352-5020 x20, info@pfeiffercenter.org, www.pfeiffercenter.org.

*Please submit calendar items for November, 2008 through June, 2009 by **September 15** to Lory Widmer, publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.*



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Past issues of *Gateways* are available online with many articles posted at <http://www.waldorflibrary.org/gateways.html>. The most recent issues will not be posted online. Hard copies of current issues and back issues can be ordered from WECAN.

Seeking Your Contributions

- *Articles based on your experiences, observations or research.
- *Practical activities such as stories, circle times and crafts.
- *Reviews of books that support our work.
- *Articles about or interviews with the elders in the Waldorf early childhood movement.
- *Websites that support early childhood work.
- *Your comments and questions about *Gateways* and past contents.

Annual individual membership, which includes subscription, is \$40. Deadlines for articles and advertisements are September 15 and March 15. It is preferable that articles be sent on disk or emailed as an attachment to publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

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