

Elan Leibner

Dear Readers,

My previous editorial (Volume 19, Number 1) elicited an unusual number of comments. The themes of renewing and making Waldorf education more localized seemed to touch a nerve. Thank you to those who responded. These themes are continued in this issue; several articles describe and advocate new approaches, and we are sending out a request for papers that document innovation in schools. At the same time, we continue to publish research that describes the physiological and theoretical foundations of sound practices already familiar to most of our readers. These two directions—the one “deep-ward” that seeks to renew and inspire practicing teachers, the other “out-ward” that provides supporting evidence through contemporary scientific research and language for what Waldorf education is already doing—have been signature gestures of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education (RIWE) since its inception. During an Institute Board retreat in May of this year, Susan Howard described the history of the Institute, and those of us newer to RIWE’s work came to appreciate how presciently the founders saw the need for both of these gestures.

Joan Almon is a founding member of the Alliance for Childhood, an organization whose first great deed was to help restore play as an acceptable component of early childhood education. Now she is setting her sights on another “four-letter word”—risk. In a persuasive (and in places surprising) piece, she details the benefits and debunks the myths concerning risk on the playground. Many years of tracking playgrounds of different kinds have shown that appropriately designed, risk-encouraging settings are as secure as the

so-called “safe” playgrounds and offer many more benefits for the children who use them. If Almon and her colleagues have their way, a new generation of capable and responsible risk-takers will rise from the ranks of today’s toddlers. We can only hope that many adults will read and follow her suggestions.

Thomas Fuchs is a university researcher working in Germany. In a thoughtful and comprehensively researched article, he describes how the entirety of a child’s learning process is based on relationships with others. For human beings, every cognitive development from birth onwards is a social process, and the cognitive epicenter of our physiology, the brain, can develop as the instrument of cognition only through relationships with other people. He concludes with a useful section on what contemporary cognitive research can and cannot offer educators, and shows that what we do know about brain development suggests pedagogical practices that will seem rather familiar to Waldorf educators.

Kristin Agudelo is a humanities teacher at the Merriconeag Waldorf School in Maine. Her contribution makes a persuasive case for the need in Waldorf schools to enhance our awareness of women in the study of history. Drawing from an important lecture by Rudolf Steiner and from contemporary educators’ thinking on the subject, as well as her own historical examples, she gives compelling reasons for introducing transformational figures from the most remote past to more modern times, who can be, but rarely are, included in the curriculum. Agudelo is a new voice in these pages, but judging from the passion and fullness of her inaugural contribution, it seems safe to assume that we will hear from her again.

Another first contribution comes from Paula Sager, an early childhood educator working in Rhode Island. She discusses the role of imagination in developing healthy and insightful cognitive relationships with nature and with children. Readers who followed Frederick Amrine's series on the philosophical roots of Waldorf education will not be surprised by her tribute to Amrine for inspiring her in the writing of this piece. She is well grounded in the work of the European philosophers and poets discussed in that series.

Yet another teacher writing for the first time in our *Bulletin* is Erhard Dahl, a language teacher working in Germany. His article describes some of the subtle but crucially important aspects of language teaching in a Waldorf school, especially the opportunity to develop flexibility of thinking and appreciation of cultural perspectives through discussion of linguistic differences among languages. Dahl reminds us that, like other subjects in the curriculum, foreign language is a tool for cultivating suppleness and liveliness in the minds of our students.

The final contributions to this issue come from members of the Pedagogical Section Council (PSC). A few years ago, in a brief document titled "Core Principles of Waldorf Education," the Council tried to distill the core thoughts that guide the

work of Waldorf pedagogues. The resulting document, which is included as part of this issue, was widely disseminated to Waldorf teachers in independent Waldorf schools and in public charter schools working with Waldorf principles. Several of the recipients asked for additional content to enhance the study of this document. Various PSC members agreed to write short contributions in support of such a study, and the first two (one by Holly Koteen-Soulé and one by me) appear in this issue. Further contributions will appear in future issues of the *Research Bulletin*.

A Call for Papers arises as a direct follow-up to the aforementioned editorial of the last *Bulletin*. In a process that I named "Responsible Innovation," teachers are encouraged to follow a protocol of study, discussion, experimentation, and then review of new possibilities in the curriculum. We hope to publish the reports of their work.

The Online Waldorf Library and Waldorf Publications—two branches of the Research Institute dealing with virtual and actual putting-the-word-out efforts—round out this issue with brief reports on their extensive and fruitful work.

Finally, an index of past issues is included for your convenience.

Happy Readings!

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