

BRIDGES

A PUBLICATION
OF THE

WALDORF SCHOOL OF
BALTIMORE



"I build a bridge for you."

FALL 2009 — VOLUME 2

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Cover Art: Portrait of Rudolf Steiner — Tenth Grade Class, 2008-2009



Chelsea Connor—Eleventh Grade

Welcome to the Fall 2009 issue of *Bridges*, a journal of the Waldorf School of Baltimore. We write this as construction takes place to build a new home for the Children's Garden classrooms in the Garden Level of the Tamarind Building. With the relocation of the Children's Garden to the same building as the elementary and middle grades, new bridges are being forged. As children grow older they will literally move up, floor by floor, until they are ready to cross the field to the Upper School, which will have its own building and identity in the Yellowwood Building.

Our aim with *Bridges* is to deepen understanding of the Waldorf curriculum and encourage reflection on education in general. As insight and knowledge grow, the bridges between us become stronger. We hope that this issue leads you to personal reflection and to connection with others. Our goal remains to bring us together as individuals concerned about the education of children in today's world.



Seventh Grade Bowls

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Why do we let our students make so much noise?

By Edna Kurtz Emmet

It never fails to amaze me to see children's joy and excitement while making objects out of wood—such simple material, and such an ancient way of making things. Most recently I started to carve with the third grade. These young students became alive with the saws, files, whittling tools, and sticks in their hands. The students' energy filled the room.

The woodworking program is an integral part of the Waldorf curriculum. Although all students make the same projects and are given the same instructions, each object looks very different, as it is an expression of a child's individual creative process. Through the grades, students refine their carving skills and sculptural abilities and are able to carve more and more complex forms and designs. When they complete their projects, students of all ages are touched by the beauty and uniqueness of the objects they created during many hours of using their own strength, with gouges and files, against the hardness of the wood.

Third grade students experience the magic of transforming a wooden stick they find into a toy of their choice, such as a car, airplane, animal, or person. Whatever the children envision in that stick, I help them to realize in their carving. Fourth grade students make a little mouse using whittling knives and files. They learn how to work with the grain of the wood and how to

transform a rectangular form into a rounded one. Once the mouse form is achieved, they decorate it with eyes, whiskers, ears and a tail. Though very different from one another, the mice are full of character.

In fifth grade, students form a lamp base using saws and files. In this project, the students again transform a rectangular piece of wood into a rounded one. They are free to create whatever form they desire, as long as the end product does not resemble the wood they received. As an exercise in balance, symmetry, and harmony, sixth grade students make salad utensils. In seventh grade, the students use gouges to carve a salad bowl, a container with a deep inner part.

Eighth grade students assemble many parts into one object, a stool. Or, they can choose to take on a carving project, an African-style chair. In making the stool, students carve a beautiful seat with gouges and prepare all the parts using saws, files, and a drill. Then they put the stool together with wedges and glue.

We say in the woodworking room that the more wood chips fall on the floor, the better the lesson is. Woodcarving is a deductive process: the wood is taken away to let the form or the design emerge. It is noisy, messy, dusty, and slow-moving. Sometimes there are blisters on the hands, but very rarely a cut on the finger. To some students the process is flawless—a smooth continual removal of wood until the form is harmonious and satisfying. But to others, it is a struggle—the gouge tears rather than cuts, and the noise is unpleasant to the ears. Their final object is a result of the transformation of the mind and mistakes and of overcoming limitations.

The value of the woodworking program in a Waldorf school is in the effort that students exercise while staying on task and experiencing the object as it comes to fruition. The students' inner mental strength is developed, and they gain confidence as they realize that their ideas can become reality.

The process is an intuitive one rather than one of following a pre-determined plan. Students develop a sense for harmony, balance, and beauty as the object emerges out of the wood; they come to their own individual form and design at the end of the process.

As class ends, standing peacefully before cleaning the room, we say a verse to release the effort and to stand in reverence for the wood and the process:

*In a forest a tree did grow, through summer
heat and winter snow.*

*Year by year, ring by ring, the tree grew strong
and big.*

*In life it gave fresh air to breathe, a home for
creatures great and small;*

*In death it gave to me some wood to carve the
very best I could.*

My hands will work, my mind will think,

My heart will grow quite fond I think.

Here are remembrances of their woodworking classes at the Waldorf School of Baltimore from alumni who are now in high school, college, or beyond. As you read their responses, I think you will agree that letting the students make all this noise was worthwhile.

Although I have moved away from my days working with hammer and chisel, I fondly remember my time spent in the arts studio in elementary school. The smoky, sweet smell of sawdust and the repetitive whack of the hammers were soothing to my senses. I always looked forward to woodworking class because it was a time to reflect. When the chisel had just been sharpened, it gleamed in the light and carved through the wood like cutting through butter, causing perfect curls to fall to the ground. It was then that I felt the most content. I was able to create a bowl or a stool with an intricate design and at the same time feel as if I had time to myself, almost like meditation.

Rosemary Liss, Class of 2003, is in her third year at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, where she is a studio art major.

I was a Waldorf student for eleven years, three in kindergarten, and first through eighth grade. While I treasure my Waldorf experience for many reasons, the focus on the arts was the most important. Woodworking was a favorite of mine at the time, especially making wooden stools. As a musician, I believe learning to work with my hands from a young age and being taught to judge aesthetic value have given me the physical tools and the work ethic to become successful in a very competitive field.

Mikko Goodbill, Class of 2000, studies Music Technology at UMBC and performs with the UMBC orchestra. He also has his own house painting business.

The woodworking room was always bright, with big windows to let in the light, which I remember much more than the noise we made. It was a very solitary experience for me. I would come into the room, find my project and tools, clamp my work to the table and just begin to work—which definitely set the seeds for me to be able to work for hours without anything to keep me going, like chatting, listening to music, or other interactions. As I proceed through architecture school, I notice that I am the only one in a class of fifty people who really prefers to work in total quiet, with just the sounds of other people working around me; no other distractions are necessary.

Helen Levin, Class of 2000, is studying architecture at City College of New York in Manhattan.

Woodworking, I believe, is a language. If you have ever watched a fine woodworker work, and listened to the blade swish, woosh, swish, woosh, swish, through the wood, you would agree. The first woodworking I ever did was in middle school. Mrs. Nierenberg's beloved cherry tree was cut down from her farm, and we were each given pieces of it to carve bowls. I remember feeling honored to work with that special wood. It was an opportunity to construct a new life for that tree, a chance to create something beautiful and new from something that might otherwise decay and be forgotten. The pieces of wood cut for us were far from uniform, and the resulting bowls even further. While learning to carve, saw, and sand, we were simultaneously taught about the importance of the process, and not simply the product or functionality. Each bowl was highly individual, produced from a unique interaction between a student's hand and their materials—and not a compromise between the student's hand and some idealized model. The bowls are the result of a negotiation between the function of the object, the tools, the nature of the wood, and the head, heart, and hands.

Ayla Ziemer, Class of 2001, is a graduate of Oberlin College with a BA in Environmental Studies and Studio Art. Now living in Cleveland, Ayla just finished a summer season with the Cleveland Botanical Garden's Green Corps Program, where she supervised sixteen high-school students on a quarter-acre urban farm.

While many people fail to see how making a wooden bowl or stool will help you better succeed in any career path you choose, the values I gained from woodworking class are both innumerable and invaluable. Perhaps the most important of these values is the respect I gained for both my work and myself. I know that everything I do should be done with care, with creativity, and with passion. I understand that a job well done is better than a job finished first. I recognize the beauty and importance in the work that I accomplish, if for no other reason than the appreciation of the human mind, body, and soul. I take pride in the work that I do, which in turn results in better work. The lessons woodworking taught me extend far beyond the art of woodworking itself and are applicable to all areas of my life.

Clare McGlory, Class of 2002, studied physics at Loyola University in Chicago and continues her studies towards a Master's degree in Aerospace Engineering at the University of Maryland.

Working with wood was a challenge I welcomed. The process for me was never about creating the most beautiful bowl or egg, but just being able to experience a block turning into something with delicate lines, soft edges and surfaces. Not being very gifted in the visual arts, I took pride in being able simply to apply technique and understanding of what tools to use when—the process itself. To this day, I am a very methodical person. Understanding the ways and reasons behind one task or another helps in getting things done in the most efficient

manner. Seeing the big picture and understanding how to take slow steps towards achieving a goal is something that woodworking helped me understand beyond art and into real life. But that is so cerebral. There truly is a very sensory experience with working a rough heavy chunk into something smooth, shaped, and beautiful. To this day I wish I had the tools to do a little woodworking on my own. Maybe it's the growing up with Waldorf education, but I find wooden furniture and tools very comforting and welcoming.

Hannah Levin, Class of 1997, works in Los Angeles as a Second AC/Film loader on commercials, television, and movies.

Noisy and peaceful; relaxing and invigorating; warm smells of wood; wood shavings collecting in curly mountains; Ms. Emmet guiding, encouraging, and cajoling. These are some of the things I think of when I reflect back on my time in the light-filled woodworking room.

It was always relaxing and calming to be amongst the noise, bustle, and activity of working with wood. There was a great sense of really working—working on something important and real. It gave me a focus that came from working with my hands, using the sharp tools and the strong mallets. Finishing a project was satisfying but working on it was even better. Being aware of how the wood needed to be carved, what it was telling me about the patterns and designs that were possible. It was a great experience, and I have a skill that not many others have. I know I can carve anything. Ms. Emmet showed me that mistakes can truly become treasures, that I am flexible enough to change and find a new way to do something.

I think everyone should have this experience. My chemistry teacher wrote me a letter of recommendation after he saw photos of some of my work; he said it made me stand out in his mind.

Ben Gallagher, Class of 2006, is a senior at the Friends School in Baltimore.



Close-Up, Seventh Grade Bowl



Emmie Downs-Flickinger—Eleventh Grade

REFLECTIONS OF A SECOND-YEAR WALDORF TEACHER

By Matthew Thurber

Waldorf teaching requires everything a person can give: her mind's thinking, her heart's feeling, and her body's action. A Waldorf teacher must constantly develop and grow in order to face the challenges that arrive daily in the classroom. And even on the most successful days, it is clear there are things she could have done better. But there's no time to brood! The next subject is at hand, full of stories, songs, facts, and concepts she must learn and convey artistically to the children.

Such continuous growth and learning, as wonderful as it is, can feel like a burden at times. But for me, this burden has been lightened considerably by my experience of my colleagues. In most workplaces there are some employees who don't really care about the work that they do. Their individualism sucks energy out of the organization, and their hidden motives prevent a feeling of common purpose from ever arising. But at the Waldorf School of Baltimore, I have found, for the first time in my life, a workplace that is also a community.

This is not to say that faculty members are all friends, or even consistently in agreement. But all of us share an unquestioned assumption: that our working hours and our work together are entirely devoted to the well-being of the children. In any question that arises about a child, an assembly, or a class, the principal

question before us never changes: how can we best serve and nourish the children that have been entrusted to us?

To reach this level of devotion, each member of the Waldorf School faculty has travelled a unique path. Personally, I went through several careers—journalist, editor, language teacher—and lived in such countries as Indonesia, Korea, Holland, and Mexico, before finding this beautiful challenge. Often I struggled to maintain my sense of idealism against the materialistic currents of modern society. Many others in the faculty, I am sure, have traveled other paths of struggle, each utterly different from my own. How inspiring that we have all come together to create, and recreate, this school! And how fortunate are the children guided by such a group!



Chelsea Moss—Eleventh Grade

A MEDITATION ON COMPUTERS

By Carol Steil

I had a delightful opportunity this summer to observe my young nephews, ages five and seven, and their computer skills with games and information gathering. It was an informative experience for me, because I am of the generation that has met the challenge of trusting the computer with a measure of anxiety and trepidation. In my first computer experiences, I lost, irretrievably, any number of documents to cyberspace.

In today's society, just about everyone is catching up with the youth of the world and has made all of the expected steps into cyberspace. It is a stunning communication tool! Information can be transmitted across the globe in milliseconds. One can communicate with friends next door or in the People's Republic of China. When a world issue arises, people from a multitude of countries form cyberlinks and express their concern or support immediately. Information gathering is made quick and easy with electronic access to encyclopedias or websites. School teachers the world over know that they must become knowledgeable about computers as an information resource.

Questions continue to arise in me, however. Is there too much information? Are there too many choices? Now that we are able to find supporting information for both civil and lunatic ideas at the push of a button, does every lunatic idea become reasonable? Are ideas expressed on the internet becoming more credible simply because they are expressed for everyone to see? The answers to these questions will be grappled with well into the future. Behind these questions is another important issue: the amount of time devoted to a motionless position in front of the computer. Some of my retired friends tell me it is four to five hours daily, and it is not work related. They admit computer quests are seductive and take time out of the day.

Mobility—or the lack thereof—was foremost in my mind when I observed my nephews at a computer game. First, I realized that computer activity is attractive to younger and younger children. An adult’s human desire to anchor the mind in concentrated attention to one thing is being considered as a possibility for children. Children, though, are not small adults. They do not yet have fully developed knowledge, scope, or judgment.

My nephews were engaged in a particular game of competing snow boarders slipping down a virtual snow slope at great speeds. The boys’ unblinking, riveted eyes were totally engaged with the screen. The hands of the two competitors were poised, ready to adjust the buttons to their advantage and, as far as I could see, only the thumbs were needed. The children were motionless for the duration of the game. The scores mounted higher and higher until one child reached the required winning score. What impressed me was the way in which their attention was anchored to the computer. Who was in command: the computer or the boys? Had the computer programmed the boys, or had the boys programmed the computer?

After twenty or so minutes of the game, from a distant room came the call of their mother. Parents, attuned to their children, instinctually know that periods of motionlessness in children do not bode well. As their mother sensed the stillness, she came to announce that the computer would be turned off now! A brief struggle ensued as the children reluctantly disengaged themselves from the magic of the moment. Their struggle represented to me the inability of all of us, adult and child alike, to separate from seductive devices.

The boys wandered to the back yard, where the younger of the two quickly engaged himself in his search for spiders and other fauna—his feet, hands, and eyes engaged in another form of consuming attention. The other climbed, ran, and pedaled, engaging every muscle of his body in one complete unit of activity. The beauty and wholeness of the child’s mind and body in harmony was a beautiful sight to behold. Oh, I forgot, the three-year-old child in the family never noticed the missing boys and continued to dig through the costume box for the “ruby slippers!”



Grace McClintock—Tenth Grade

JOURNAL ENTRIES

By Upper School Students

Tenth and eleventh grade students keep daily journals for English class. Entries should be something of their own choosing and original, although the occasional selection of found words of significance is acceptable. One of the guidelines is to make the entries literary, that is, something someone else would enjoy reading and would find meaningful. Entries can be an observation, a description, an imagination, a poem, a simple story, or an examination of a mood or feeling. This is an exercise that began this fall and will continue throughout the year. Donald Bufano, Upper School Chair.

Odilia Martinez-Falero (Spanish Exchange Student)

Greg Mortenson*

Dr. Greg,

He bandages and builds

Bringing about new futures and lives

For those who are so separated and burdened.

Teaching

For tomorrow

For today

For life.

*Greg Mortenson, author of *Three Cups of Tea* and builder of girls' schools in Pakistan

Laura Tognetti (Swiss Visiting Student)

I often think about the difference between destiny and coincidence. For me, everything is destiny and that fascinates me. I find it exciting that seemingly small things really have enormous importance. Where we are at a certain time, in a shop or on a bus, is significant. Who we are with at these times proves that, in some way, we are all involved with each other.



Botany Main Lesson Book—Fifth Grade

Najahla Olumiji

Life

Eternal yet Doomed to Mortality

Ever-changing yet Dynamically still

Beauty

Striking and fearful

Burned into memory but fleeting in images

Infinity

Time never standing still

Incomplete, yet finite.

Chelsea Connor

Heartache

Sadness hits hard with no forewarning;

Destroys every second of happiness within.

*Shock, Denial and reality sink deep
with no remorse.*

Suddenly helpless and halfhearted;

*All weaknesses rise to the surface revealing
vulnerability.*

People read people—there is no hiding.

Luckily sadness never lasts;

eventually it goes away in time...

It is inevitable.



Bulb Journal—Fifth Grade

Tucker Neil

*Red, White and Blue
The red represents violence and war.
The blue, optimism and caring.
And, white, neutral peaceful thoughts.
This country is filled with diverse citizens and
people of all backgrounds and beliefs.*

Sam Gallagher

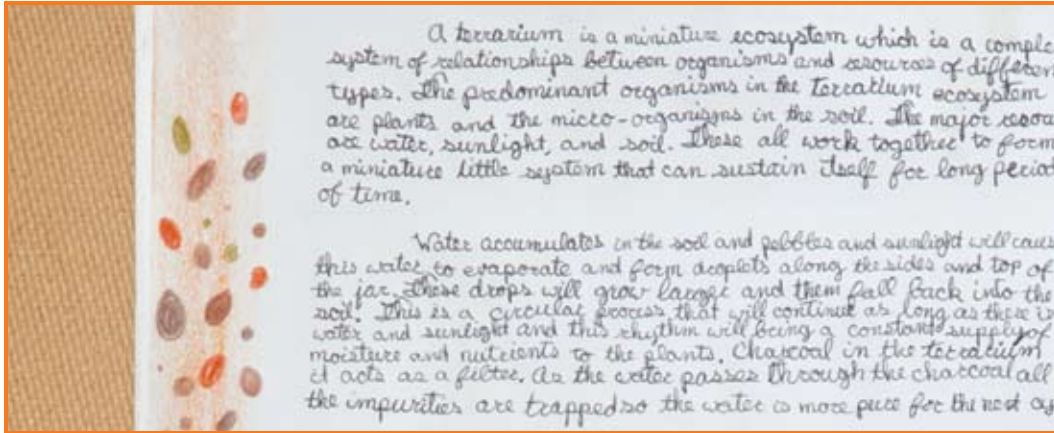
*Super fun and
Cool, but too much
Hard work
Our teachers are the best
Or, am I
Lying?
No, I am not.*

Grace McClintock

*I wish it would rain.
To have the raindrops pounding out
a foreign lullaby
Washing away worries to leave your mind
in a peaceful sleep.*

Nikita Demin (Russian Visiting Student)

*It's Tuesday today.
I really like Tuesdays.
I always had music lessons on Tuesdays:
Choir and harmony or orchestra.
And here I have all these.
It's great!*



Botany Main Lesson Book—Fifth Grade

Lucia (pseudonym)

*As a child put on earth, why is it that
we fight other children of the earth?
Why can't we live in peace and harmony?*

Carlo Marrone (pseudonym)

*Today I felt like I was back in the groove of things.
It finally felt like the end of summer and the
beginning of school. I'm not exactly happy about
this, but I feel good about this year of school.*

Collin Athas

*Mysterious sound, can't find, searching
Walking through house, looking
Where is it coming from?
Can't let it go, can't
Stop Looking!!*

Charlotte Jones

*As I sit here in my room,
And think about the old days,
I can't help but wonder how the time went by so fast.
I wish I was still five, playing outside with my sister.
She's off in college and I'm driving around,
wondering how we grew up so fast.*

Chelsea Moss

*My attitude has changed drastically towards
school this year.
Just a little drive, hope, and belief can take anyone
a long ways.*

Leo Kern

*If what was, was real once.
And what is now is because of what was.
Does what was exist now?*

CYCLES IN EDUCATION

By Andrea Gambardella

These remarks were first given in May 2009 at the spring lecture honoring Janni Kuypers (July 11, 1919–February 18, 1984), beloved Waldorf School of Baltimore early childhood educator.

Waldorf education recognizes that life's activity has many cycles, revolving movements that return and repeat. Rudolf Steiner speaks about seven-year cycles in human development. We in Waldorf education also acknowledge the importance of being attuned to nature's cycle of the year. Yet in both of these examples, the return is not to a place of sameness, but to something familiar that has grown or is building on itself. The Waldorf curriculum is often depicted as an ascending spiral, activity and subjects circling back to themselves and building on what came before.

One cycle used in Waldorf education is remembering and forgetting. The main lesson addresses a subject (A) for a few weeks, comes to a conclusion, and then the class moves on to another topic (B). Later in the year, (A) is continued—the teacher and students engage in recall and build on what was studied before. Together they re-member—*member again into their awareness*—the information, and make new associations from what has been digested. If, in our daily lives, we carried in the front of our minds all that we wished to hold on to and remember, our thinking, feelings, and ability to respond would be immobilized; the sheer number of thoughts would be overwhelming.

So we use this ability to forget, to set aside for a time, and then to recall and re-member into our thinking, our feeling, and our activity.

The journey from birth to age twenty-one is another cycle, the gradual unfolding of the individual and the discovery of the self. There are many questions young people ask repeatedly over these years, sometimes directly, but most often as an internal inquiry when with family or peers, or in school.

The young child spends the first seven years asking two questions that cycle through the childhood years as part of the maturation journey: “How do I get into my body?” and “What is it to be human?” The child's sense

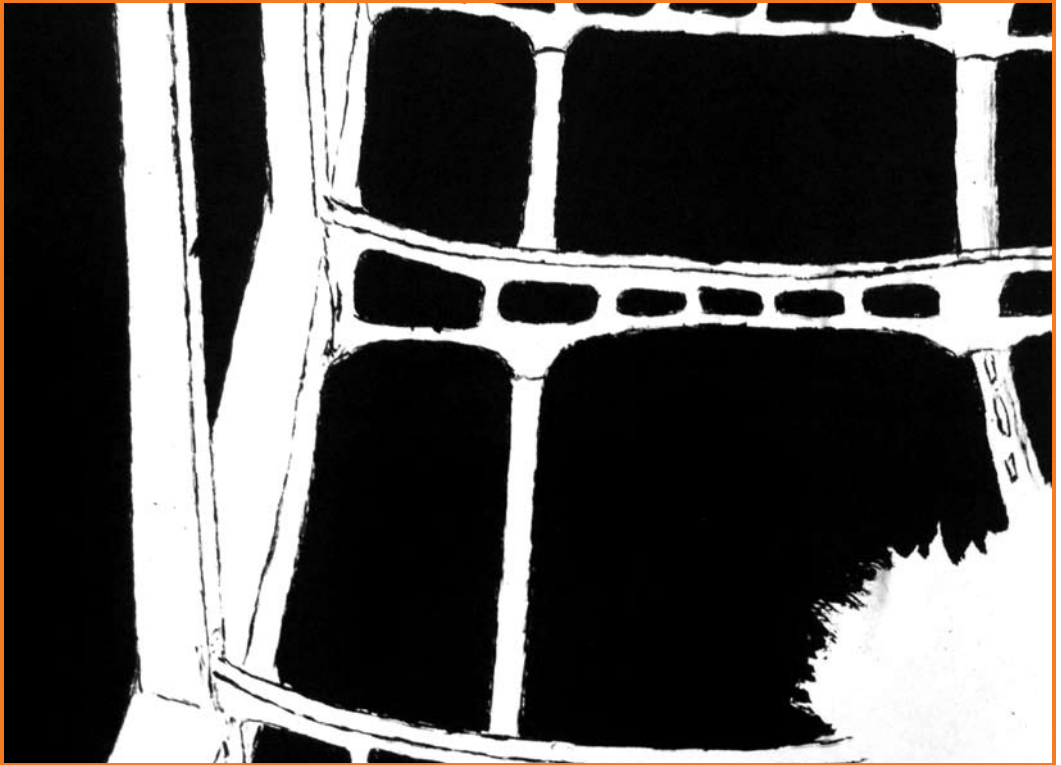


Chaz Brown—Eleventh Grade

impressions help form movement development from birth to age three. This activity is necessary to acquire three essential human abilities: walking, speaking, and thinking. These first developments are standing upright and finding balance, gaining spoken language, and entering the first phase of truly independent thinking through imagination and play. Adults serve as models, inviting children to participate in their activities and inspiring play and industry—the sense of adventure and invention. This practical and playful activity helps young children practice the skills of the body and hands and exercise their cognitive abilities. Adults provide love, safety, a model for body

skills, problem solving, and examples of warmth in relationships.

What are the questions for the seven to fourteen-year-old? These quick and active boys and girls want to know “How can I be THAT body or person?” Their vivid imaginations and their dramatic feelings have them be everyone but themselves—Huck Finn adventurers in outdoor play; chemists with substances (mud, food, make-up, fire, anything from the kitchen or garage); scientists testing physics and mechanics with bikes and ropes; patternmakers crocheting clothing from visions in their imaginations; artists making fantastic gifts and cards from the simplest of materials. Children



Kevin Dunn—Eleventh Grade

of this age display a constant stream of trial and error, cause and effect, success and failure.

What are the questions for the fourteen to nineteen-year-old? In puberty, the changes in their bodies send teens back to early childhood with the same question of how to fit into this new body. Amazed, embarrassed, yet empowered, these young people experience new strength, physical abilities, and sometimes awkwardness as they find themselves in bigger and different bodies. The question expands to “WHAT is this body all about?” Education can inform them with facts about physiology and anatomy; it must also describe the responsibility necessary for this new maturity—a responsibility that

gives new meaning to what it is to be human and to be in relationships with others. Young people’s thoughts are becoming liberated from their physicality. They are on fire with ideas, and the question of “What is it to be human?” takes on individual meaning for their lifetimes. They dive into ideologies and argue points of view. Parents and teachers can engage in objective discussion on every topic, expressing interest in the young person’s perspective, and offering a variety of windows to gaze at the same thought.

In each seven-year stage, the child approaches the world with age-specific modalities for learning. These cycles show us the best way to teach

them. For seven years the child meets new and familiar topics in a particular way. And when he moves into a new stage, these modalities fall away to give rise to new ones. The three-year-old imitates everything. How odd this would be displayed by a ten- or fifteen-year-old. And yet, this modality is not completely lost, but transformed or harnessed in a new way. We retain our ability to imitate, but we determine when to use it.

In early childhood, children are at one with the environment; drawn into activity through their sensory impressions, they give their attention willingly. Freely chosen, intrinsically motivated, self-determined play is primary for their self-education, as they imitate and build on what they witness and experience. This play is enhanced by participation in real life experiences—helping in the kitchen, the home, the garden, or with tools. Recall the many times you have watched young children preparing meals in the sandbox, using sticks for weapons and tools, or hoarding small stones to pay the shopkeeper.

When the first level of physical maturation is finished, there is a readiness for academic learning. This can happen best when the imagination is engaged, the feelings build a relationship to the people and the subject, and the activity connects with the environment. Children willingly build skills and information in math, life sciences, and language arts when the teacher and parents invite their enthusiasm. Opportunities and time must still be given to elementary and middle school-aged children to play out of the formal learning experiences. Their play finds them as scientists, archaeologists, artists, rescue workers, or “lost” in the backyard wilderness. My son spent hours with a few friends coaxing fire from leaves and a magnifying glass on an aluminum pie tin; and then

feeding the fire, finding an old small pot, and finally, popping corn...right outside the kitchen door!

When feelings and imagination have built the foundation (around age fourteen), adolescents are ready to embark on study that assists a more conscious discovery of themselves and their understanding of the world. As young people mature through high school, they grow to form judgments, gradually separating from the passions and polar swings of pubescent years. Teachers and parents demonstrate mastery in occupation and life skills, and can offer objective ideas for young people to wrestle with. Again, play—time to ponder together and test themselves—is critical to building mastery and finding what it means to be in relationships, both essential to what it is to be human. My daughter spent hours in her teen-age years taking the handcraft skills she learned in the grades for re-fitting new design elements to clothing and creating original pocketbooks. Her eye and imagination for design and construction needed time to experiment and explore. She will soon graduate from college as an architect.

The last of many cycles in life I will mention is the cycling of people through parts of our biography. Parents, teachers, school staff, neighbors, other relatives, community members—all play their part for our children through seasons, holidays, or daily events. I ask the reader to recall some of the people in your life before you were twenty-one whom you might consider a teacher, mentor, hero, confidant, friend, or advisor; or perhaps someone you remember with fondness because of the kindness or interest he or she offered you.

In *The Challenge of the Times*, Rudolf Steiner speaks about how a person makes an instant impression at the first meeting. It is our tendency (an antisocial one) to fix a

person in that impression. It takes a conscious effort on our part, Steiner says, to meet and recognize in the other what is constant (perhaps perceived in the first meeting) and still be open to what is evolving in that person. The people who cycle through our lives and make positive contributions are

those who see the growing person in us. This cycle of being with young people in a Waldorf school community offers us a place in their lives: cycling through time while acknowledging what is good and constant, and showing interest in what is evolving and becoming.

Round and round the earth is turning

Turning always round to morning

And from morning round to night.

Song, source unknown



Sam Gallagher—Tenth Grade

IN HONOR OF JANNI KUYPERS

By Andrea Gambardella

In the spring of 1982, the Waldorf School of Baltimore was completing its first full year in the Stone Mansion and was preparing to graduate its first class of a combined fifth/sixth grade with Andrea Halpern (Naft) as the class teacher. I was teaching the three-day nursery, was the part-time administrator/faculty chair, and was newly pregnant with my first child. Janni Kuypers was teaching at the Rudolf Steiner School in Manhattan, finishing seventeen years there and hoping to re-locate to Maryland with her husband and youngest teenage child, Ronald.

In the late 1970s, I had attended a weekend workshop at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City. I went up a day in advance and asked to observe a kindergarten in the school. Janni's class was large in numbers! There was so much teeming life in the children's play, a din of activity. When it was time to tidy up the room

from play, the children were like ants in a hill with jobs to do, and then they all came to circle to sing and dance, led by Janni. I was amazed and delighted at what I saw. At the end of the morning, she told a fairy tale in a warm and even voice that invited the attention of every child in that large group.

When Janni showed interest in coming to our school, the Rudolf Steiner School asked her to start the year there to assist in a transition for the other early childhood faculty and for the parent body, who loved her very much. She joined me in the kindergarten here in November, when we thought we would spend a couple of weeks teaching together. She very quickly became part of the group and urged me to sit at home and rest in preparation for my new baby. I gave her a group of seventeen children, and she ended the year with twenty-six! Children just came to

find her. I remember that spring at the May Day festival with my little baby, Hannah, speaking with parents in Janni's group. They spoke with enthusiasm and gratitude for the support and guidance she gave them regarding their parenting and their children.

Janni's deep roots in education and Anthroposophy and her life wisdom touched parents and faculty. She made a lasting impression and prompted all considerations affecting the growth of the school. We are very grateful for her.



Jason Davis—Eleventh Grade

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