



winterberry
charter school

Love is...like a spring coming up out of the ground of our own depths. "I am gift." All that I am is something that's given, and given freely. Being doesn't cost anything. There's no price tag, no strings attached.

- Thomas Merton

A WORD FROM MS. MALL

Dear Winterberry Families,

In the following newsletter you will have the opportunity to read an article from *Renewal: A Journal for Waldorf Education* entitled, "What Are They Like?, Where Do they Go?, What Do They Do?: A Survey of Waldorf High School Graduates Gives Some Encouraging Answers." Whew, that was an incredibly long title! The article is five pages long and easy to read. I hope you will find it valuable. I have also included an article from the same journal entitled, "Teaching Children to Write, Read, and Spell." It is six pages long and full of wonderful information.

The close of this week brings the Lantern Walk and the weather seems to be on track to support a lovely time together. If you have not done so, please sign up to help place the luminaries, help with fire tending, and other needed duties. You can also assist by bringing one or two dozen of your favorite baked goods. This event is one that is treasured by both children and parents. It is listed as a highlight of each school year so if you have not been able to attend I would encourage you to make the time this year.

Our annual Solstice Assembly is also coming up. We will gather at Bartlett High School on December 9th at 6pm to enjoy all the children have to share. Please put this wonderful event on your calendar if you have not done so already!

Lastly, Mr. Edwin our amazing BPO (Building Plant Operator), became a naturalized citizen of The United States of America in September of this year. Please take the time to congratulate him. He has been, and continues to be, such an amazing asset to Winterberry's students and staff!

Blessings, Shanna



Tuesdays with Ms. Mall in the
Front Lobby 8:45am - 9:30am &
2:30pm - 3:15pm.

December

- 12.1.11 WPG Meeting, 6pm @ Winterberry
- 12.2.11 Early Release for Lantern Walk
- 12.2.11 7th Annual Lantern Walk 6pm @ Goose Lake
- 12.9.11 ALL SCHOOL ASSEMBLY, 6pm at Bartlett High School
- 12.13.11 NEW DATE, WCC Meeting, 6pm at Winterberry Charter School
- 12.16.11 NO SCHOOL, Teacher In-Service
- 12.17.11 - 1.2.12 NO SCHOOL, Winter Break

January

- 1.5.12 WPG Meeting, 6pm @ Winterberry
- 1.13-15.12 Alliance for Public Waldorf Education: Charter School Conference, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, California
- 1.16.12 NO SCHOOL, Martin Luther King, Jr Day!
- 1.19.12 WCC Meeting, 6pm at Winterberry Charter School

What Are They Like? Where Do They Go? What Do They Do?

A Survey of Waldorf High School Graduates Gives Some Encouraging Answers

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH



The high school graduating class of 2005, Sacramento Waldorf School

Late in 2005 David Mitchell and Douglas Gerwin, codirectors of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education, working with Arthur Pittis, a high school teacher at the Austin Waldorf School, distributed questionnaires by e-mail to almost 900 graduates of the twenty-six Waldorf high schools in North America that had twelfth grades at that time. (There are a total of thirty-seven Waldorf high schools on the continent. In 2005 the other eleven still-developing Waldorf high schools had not yet graduated any students.) Of the graduates approached, 556 filled out and returned the survey.

The survey asked questions concerning higher education, profession and employment, lifestyle,

values, and attitudes toward Waldorf Education. The data were quantified and analyzed, and in March 2007 a 171-page report, called *Survey of Waldorf Graduates, Phase II*, was published. This supplements *Phase I*, which focused on the colleges and universities attended by Waldorf graduates. These two publications constitute the first comprehensive survey of Waldorf graduates in North America.

Some of the respondents had graduated as far back as 1943 with the first graduating class of the High Mowing School in Wilton, New Hampshire. Others were members of the Class of 2005. A majority attended the fifteen or so "mature" Waldorf high schools, and the "young" schools, all of which have

been founded in the past decade, were consequently less well represented. Over half of the respondents had attended Waldorf school from kindergarten through high school. About 57 percent were women and 43 percent men, these figures reflecting typical enrollment in the Waldorf high schools.

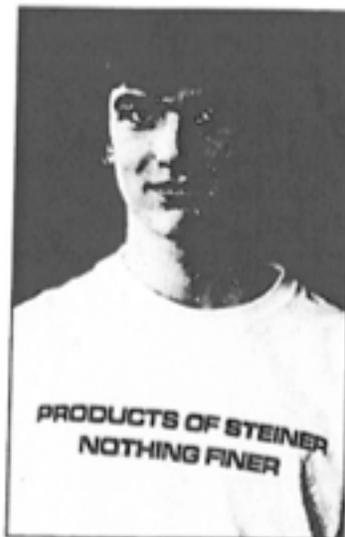
The queries were arranged in twelve sections. Section one identified the respondents in terms of school, date of graduation, and other basic categories. The other sections dealt with:

- higher education
- relationship to career path
- cultural and social interests
- graduates' attention to local, national, and international news
- human relationships
- assessment of life and life skills
- reflections on Waldorf Education
- influence and importance of Waldorf Education in their lives
- aspects of Waldorf Education initially rejected but now viewed differently, and
- physical and mental health

A separate set of questions concerned the graduates' relationship to Anthroposophy. The questionnaire also included five open-ended questions that invited respondents to write about their greatest gifts, joys, and challenges.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents have been to or are currently in college, and the list of institutions with the most Waldorf students includes Oberlin, Hampshire, UC Santa Cruz, and other well-respected schools. This corroborates data from Phase I of the survey, which indicated that Waldorf students in North America apply to, get accepted by, attend, and excel at many prestigious and well-regarded colleges and universities not only in the United States and Canada, but also around the world.

The Phase II survey indicates that a quarter of the graduates take a year off after high school to work,



*Jarrad Cole graduated from the Sacramento Waldorf School in June 2007. Shortly thereafter, Jarrad was killed in a tragic accident.**

study, or travel. Over half have done or intend to do postgraduate work. The Waldorf alumni favor the arts and humanities as majors, but among recent graduates almost as many are going into the behavioral and life sciences and also into physics and math. The former Waldorf students are less likely than their non-Waldorf contemporaries to study business or engineering.

The researchers also sent questionnaires to professors and employers identified by the respondents. The professors rated the Waldorf graduates very high in terms of problem-solving ability, communication skills, initiative, ethical standards, and caring for others. Interestingly, they also gave the former Waldorf students high marks in leadership, a quality to which the graduates themselves

attach relatively little importance.

The graduates have entered a wide range of professions, the most popular being education, fine arts and architecture, performing arts, and health and medicine. There are some significant differences between older and younger graduates. The former are more likely to have entered the educational field and the latter more likely to pursue careers in science and technology. A large majority are satisfied with their vocation. Those aspects most valued in the work environment include good atmosphere, the chance to help others, opportunities for creativity, ethical principles, and the opportunity to work with others. High income and job security are at the bottom of the list.

The leisure activities most preferred by the graduates include socializing with friends and family, reading good books, being active in art and handcrafts, and going to museums and theatres. Watching television, driving a fast car, and attending athletic events are at the bottom of the list. For the most part, these preferences are reflected in actual behavior. The graduates express a high interest in the news, particularly in world and national news.

* Editor's note: When members of the design team chose to run this photo, we did not know it was of Jarrad Cole. We agreed, though, that there was something particularly pure and sweet-natured about this young man that bespeaks the essence of what Waldorf Education seeks to cultivate.



Katarina Mitchell graduated from the High Mowing School in Wilton, New Hampshire (a Waldorf boarding high school), and is currently studying for a Masters in Social Work. Her two children attend the Hartsbrook (Waldorf) School in Hadley, Massachusetts. Nathaniel Mitchell is a graduate of the Shining Mountain Waldorf School in Boulder, Colorado. He attended Dartmouth College and played on the varsity football team there. Nathaniel currently works in California as a venture capitalist involved in renewable resources at the firm of Draper, Fisher, Jurvetson.

The graduates place great value on their intimate personal relationships and friendships, and the majority are satisfied with them. Most are married or in long-term, committed relationships and are content in them.

When asked if they would send a child for whom they were responsible to a Waldorf school, 90 percent of those who answered simply either "yes" or "no" said "yes." Most of the others gave a qualified yes, citing the distance from a Waldorf school and tuition costs as discouraging factors. About 30 individuals expressed concern about the qualifications of class teachers. Some 20 graduates said they would send the child to Waldorf lower school but not to the middle and high school, and mentioned weakness in the science program and college preparation as areas of concern. The researchers noted that these are the only overtly negative comments in the whole survey and merit serious consideration by Waldorf educators. Eighty-six percent of the graduates with children said that their Waldorf schooling had influenced the way they had raised their children.

The answers to the questions regarding "greatest gift and source of joy" reveal a clear pattern. Human relationships with family and friends, education, artistic activity, helping others, and experience in

nature hold pride of place.

The life skills that the graduates most value are communication, truthfulness, problem solving, and ethical values. Reputation, wealth, and control come out on the bottom of the list. A very interesting chart on page 69 of the study relates the capacities held important by the graduates to the perceived influence that Waldorf Education had upon that capacity. The chart reveals that the graduates recognize the role their Waldorf schooling played in developing their self-confidence, ability to express themselves, creativity, love of learning, ability to work on their own, and their ability to resolve conflicts.

Virtually all of the respondents have an appreciation of and warm affection for their schooling. Many expressed unsolicited gratitude to their teachers, schools, and others who had made their education possible. Even those who voiced a critical opinion were grateful for the whole experience.

A very interesting question asked the graduates if there were aspects of Waldorf Education that they once perceived as negative but that they now appreciate. The answers include the following:

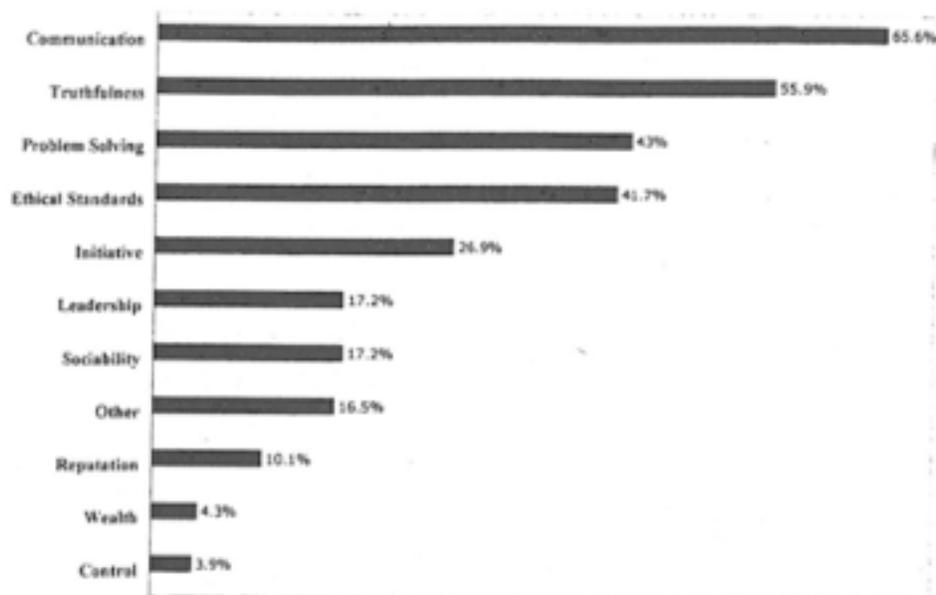
- eurythmy, now seen as promoting grace and coordination and social awareness;
- discipline and form, now seen as having been a protection and as providing a model on how to set boundaries;

FIELDS OF STUDY LISTED BY RESPONDENTS

Sorted from most to least frequent with number in each category

English, Literature & Creative Writing	53
Psychology	36
Biology and Environmental Studies	34
Fine Arts (Visual, Sculptural, Metal & Fashion)	25
Modern Languages: Fr, Sp, Ger, Rus, It	25
Music	25
History	23
Anthropology	21
Education	21
Theater (Design, Performance, Tech)	18
Business	15
Political Science	15
Sociology	14
Medicine	12
Liberal Arts (Humanities)	12
Philosophy	11
Religion	10
Economics	9
Engineering	9
International Studies (Relations, Politics, Development)	9
Film (Video, Animation)	7
Nursing	7
Chemistry	6
Computer Science	6
Government	6
Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science	5

Waldorf Graduates Value Communication and a Strong Moral Foundation as Important Life Skills



- the multifaceted curriculum, now seen as providing a comprehensive view of the world, as well as varied artistic and craft skills, possessed by few of their contemporaries;
- restrictions on the media, now seen as having given the opportunity to develop their own ideas and values without external pressures and biases; and
- the spiritual aspect, now seen as having been a stimulus to think about the larger questions of life and to formulate their own views and values.

Anthroposophy is the worldview of Rudolf Steiner, and, while providing the foundation for Waldorf Education, it is not taught in the schools. Some schools offer an introduction to Anthroposophy on a voluntary basis to adult members of the school community. Forty percent of the graduates said they had a positive or engaged relationship with Anthroposophy; 36 percent were neutral. A number of the graduates said they didn't know what Anthroposophy is.

This survey is not without its admitted limitations. Its conclusions are based on data from those Waldorf graduates who took the time and trouble to fill out the questionnaire. Over 300 graduates who were invited to take part in the survey chose not to



Heidi Boucher, a graduate of the Sacramento Waldorf School, has had a varied and successful career in film, television, and theatre for over twenty years in Oregon and California. She has been active in virtually all aspects of production—acting, directing, set design, set decorating, lighting design, wardrobe, props, and location. Heidi also has had a successful retail business specializing in recycled children's clothing. Further, having trained with natural death-care advocate Nancy Paer, for twenty years she has cared for many people who have wanted a natural passing at home without the after-interventions of a funeral home.

Profile of a Typical Waldorf Graduate

- After graduating from a Waldorf high school, attends college (94%)
- Majors in arts/humanities (47%) or sciences/math (42%) as an undergraduate
- Graduates or is about to graduate from college (88%)
- Practices and values lifelong learning (91%)
- Is self-reliant and highly values self-confidence (94%)
- Highly values verbal expression (93%) and critical thinking (92%)
- Expresses a high level of consciousness in making relationships work—both at home and on the job
- Is highly satisfied in choice of occupation (89%)
- Highly values interpersonal relationships (96%)
- Highly values tolerance of other viewpoints (90%)
- At work, cares most about ethical principles (82%) and values helping others (82%)

fill out the online questionnaire. One must ask how the answers of these graduates, who are perhaps less kindly disposed to their education and/or less satisfied with their lives, would have changed the results. (Some of these nonrespondents expressed to the researchers that it was the rigid form and format of the survey that kept them from filling it out. These graduates said that they are positive about their Waldorf schooling but wanted to be able to express themselves more freely.) The fact that a large percentage of the respondents came from mature schools, and that two or three of these schools were very heavily represented, also may have skewed the results.

Nevertheless, what the survey indicates is compelling enough to give Waldorf educators and supporters heart. Combined with the anecdotal evidence that one can derive from observing and speaking with graduates whom one knows, the survey tells us that Waldorf Education seems to be doing what it seeks to do. In fact, Waldorf Education is helping young people to develop

- independent thinking
- love of learning
- self-confidence
- a commitment to human relationships and the ability to make them work
- an interest in and concern for other human beings and for the natural environment
- a desire to make the world a better place



Patrick Judson Blatchford, 1987 graduate of Sacramento Waldorf High School, was awarded a PhD in Analytic Health Sciences on May 25, 2007, by the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. The title of his dissertation is Monitoring Bivariate Endpoints in Group Sequential Clinical Trials. He is now guiding the statistical aspect of clinical trials performed by two research units of the University of Colorado.

- an appreciation of beauty and artistic activity
- the ability to create a healthy and satisfying personal and work life, and
- a strong inner moral sense that guides their personal and professional behavior

The designing of this survey, carrying it out, collecting and analyzing the data, and publishing it in an attractive and accessible form was a huge task. The lead researchers and all those who helped them merit our deep gratitude. Thanks are due also to those Waldorf graduates who filled out the questionnaire. The time and effort they spent may result in other children enjoying the same educational opportunity that they had, perhaps even with improvements. ◊

Resources

The survey can be downloaded either from www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org or www.waldorflibrary.org, the two Web sites of the Research Institute. A bound hardcopy may be purchased from AWSNA Publications by phoning 518-634-2222 or by e-mailing publications@awsna.org

Teaching Children to Write, Read, and Spell

BY SUSAN R. JOHNSON, MD, FAAP

Learning and Proprioception

There is a widely held belief that if we start teaching children to write, read, and spell in preschool, they will become good writers, readers, and spellers by the time they reach the first and second grades. This is, however, not true. The truth is that children should be taught to write, read, and spell only when their neurological pathways for writing, reading, and spelling have fully formed. Many neuropsychologists, developmental specialists, occupational therapists, and teachers are concerned that the current trend of pushing "academics" in preschool and kindergarten will result in even greater increases in the number of children, particularly boys, diagnosed with attention problems and with learning disabilities related to visual processing.

In order for children to be able to sit still, pay attention, and remember abstract shapes, like letters and numbers, they first need to have developed their proprioceptive system. This system gives them the ability to experience where their bodies are in space. In my clinical practice, I see children who are being asked to sit still at a desk who can't yet "feel" where their bodies are in fact located. They have to keep their muscles and body moving all the time or sit on their feet or wrap their feet around the legs of their chair for their mind to locate the position of their body.

These children also have difficulty balancing on one

foot while their eyes are closed. Their drawings of a human being are more like that of a younger child—sticklike in form and lacking hands and feet. Because they are fidgety, have difficulty paying attention, and have poorly developed fine motor skills, these children often are labeled as having Attention Deficit Disorder.

These same children have difficulty recalling letters, numbers, and shapes that are shown to them, and they cannot recognize letters, numbers, and shapes that are traced on their back by a teacher or doctor using a finger with gentle pressure. They have difficulty remembering the orientation and direction of letters and numbers when writing, reading, or spelling. They often will confuse the letter **b** with the letter **d** and may write the number **2** or number **3** backwards and not even notice. For these reasons they are often labeled as having learning disabilities in visual processing—for example, dyslexia or other types of nonverbal learning disabilities.

The proprioceptive system is strengthened by physical movements, like sweeping with a broom, pushing a wheelbarrow, carrying groceries, emptying the trash, pulling weeds, or hanging from monkey bars. When a child does such activities, he stimulates nerve endings within his muscles, tendons, and joints that are sensitive to pressure, thereby allowing his brain to make a map of these various pressure



The physical movements involved in everyday tasks help children develop a sense of where their bodies are in space, a capacity related to learning to read.

receptors within the body. In this way, the brain becomes connected to the various parts of the physical body. The child now develops a sense of where his body is in space—proprioception—and even if he closes his eyes, he will be able to feel or sense the location of muscles, joints, and tendons within torso, arms, legs, fingers, and toes. In addition, as the child moves his arms, legs, hands, and feet forward, backward, up, down, left, and right, he will start to gain a sense of the spaces around himself.

When a child with a developed proprioceptive system looks at the shapes of letters and numbers, his eyes will follow and track the lines and curves. The memory of these movements can now imprint upon his brain. He has the capacity to make mental pictures or images of these numbers and letters and to be able to easily remember the correct orientation of numbers like **2** and **3** when he is writing. There is no more confusion between the letter **b** and the letter **d**. The correct orientation of the letter or number is seen within the mind before it is written.

The child's proprioceptive system affects more than the ability to sit still and to visually remember abstract forms. It also affects the child's ability to fall asleep by herself at night and to stay asleep through the night. When the proprioceptive system is not fully developed, a child will have difficulty falling asleep alone in her bed. Then she will frequently wake up during the night and need physical contact with her parents in order to fall back to sleep. Since her proprioceptive system is not yet developed, lying next to a parent is necessary to activate her pressure receptors and enable her to feel her body, relax, and fall back to sleep.

When such a child closes her eyes at night, to her perception, her body literally "disappears." Her brain has no connection to the pressure receptors within her muscles, tendons, and joints. This is why many children want a light on at night when they go to bed, since they cannot "feel" their body when in darkness. They need to see their body and the spaces around them.

Reading, Spelling, and Writing

Our current mainstream educational system is teaching children to read in a way that doesn't make sense developmentally. Children in preschool and kindergarten are expected to memorize letters and words before their brains have developed the necessary pathways to identify letters, easily read words,

and comprehend what they are reading. We are asking these young children to read, when the only part of their brain that is developed and available for reading words is the right hemisphere.



A page from a first grader's main lesson book. Waldorf students first experience the letters not as abstract concepts but as shapes from the world around them.

The reading center in the right hemisphere of the brain develops between four and seven years of age. It then allows children to recognize words by sight. It enables children to focus on the first and last letters in a word and on the overall length and shape of the word. The right hemisphere reading center allows children to guess at words without paying much attention to spelling or matching sounds to letters—phonics.

In contrast, the reading center in the left hemisphere of the brain and the connecting bridgelike pathway between the left and the right brain don't start developing until seven to nine years of age. Girls may develop these pathways a little earlier, while some boys won't develop these pathways until ten or eleven years of age. This reading center enables children to match sounds to letters, to sound out words phonetically, and to remember how words are spelled.

Because the reading center in the right brain sees abstract forms like letters and numbers as pictures, it makes sense to first teach children to read by relating the shapes of letters to actual pictures that children experience and also draw themselves. This is what is done in Waldorf schools. For example, the letter **M** can be represented by two mountain peaks with a valley in between. As the teacher draws the picture on the blackboard, she tells the children



Rhythmic, harmonious, noncompetitive activities such as playing circle games, as in this first-grade class, help prepare young minds for writing and reading.

that the sound **M** is the first sound one hears when saying the word **MOUNTAINS**. Other examples include drawing a king out of the letter **K**, a bunny or a butterfly out of the letter **B**, and waves out of a **W**.

What doesn't make developmental sense is expecting children to just memorize the abstract shape of the letter **F** or memorize phrases like "F as in the word **FOX**," "B as in the word **BOY**," and "C as in the word **CROCODILE**." These words do not make any visual sense to the reading center in the right brain. The letter **F** doesn't look like a fox, the letter **B** doesn't look like a boy, and the letter **C** doesn't look like a crocodile.

When we push young children to read and they only have access to their right hemisphere for reading, we create learning problems for them in the future. Children using the reading center of the right hemisphere look at the first and last letters of a word, the length of that word, and then make a guess. Hence, they will look at a word like **STAMP** and may guess that the word is **STOP** or **STUMP**. If you show them the word **TGOEHTER** they may read it as **TOGETHER** but will not realize that the word is misspelled. Words like **FRIEND**, **FIND**, and **FOUND**, as well as **FILLED**, **FILED**, and **FLOOD**, will all seem the same to them.

It takes a great deal of mental effort to read words using only sight memory. Sight memory was meant to be used for only small words. Children who are reading using only their right hemisphere often are exhausted after reading just a few paragraphs, and they can only parrot back words or sentences by memory. In addition, their minds are busy deciphering each word and therefore are not free to create the internal pictures and actual scenes associated

with the words they are reading. This limits their overall comprehension. These are the children who, when doing a report, are likely to plagiarize or copy a text word for word. This is because they can only recall the exact words they read and therefore can't summarize, condense, or comprehend ideas very easily.

For all of these reasons, reading should be taught in school only after children have developed both their right and left reading centers. This will enable children to use sight memory for small words and the more efficient method of phonics for larger words. In addition, children need to have developed the "bridge" pathway that connects the two reading centers together. When children have developed this connection between the right and left cerebral hemispheres (bilateral integration), they can access both the right and left reading centers of their brain at the same time. Therefore they can decide at each moment whether to read a word by sight, if the word is short (a right hemisphere activity), or sound out the word phonetically if the word is long (a left hemisphere activity).

A physical sign that children have developed bilateral integration and can now read both by sight memory and phonics is their ability to do the cross-lateral skip—swinging the opposing leg and arm forward at the same time—without thinking or concentrating. This is because movements on the right side of the body are connected to the left hemisphere of the brain, while movements on the left side of the body are connected to the right side of the brain. If children can move their opposite arm and leg at the same time, then the right and left hemispheres of the brain are "talking to" or connected to each other. If children can only skip using their feet or only skip extending the same arm with the same leg—the

homolateral skip—they are not ready to read, since they can't access both sides of the brain simultaneously.

Children who can simultaneously access the reading centers in the right and left hemispheres of their brain will read easily and will create visual images and pictures in their mind related to the content of what they are reading. They will be able to discuss or write about what they have read using their own words, because they can replay the scenes in their mind and don't have to think so much about the specific words used in each sentence. Therefore, they will have an easier time understanding the meaning behind the stories and books they are reading. Learning to spell will be easier, too.

Another common practice in mainstream education today, besides pushing children to read and spell before their brains are adequately developed, is to have children hold a pencil and write before they are ready. I see very young children being asked to write with one hand while they still have overflow movements occurring in the fingers of the opposite hand. Before the age of six or seven, the vertical midline of the child is not fully integrated. Movements made by the fingers of one hand are simultaneously mirrored by the fingers in the other hand. In other words, when a child moves the fingers of one hand in writing, the fingers on the other hand will also move, often without the child's conscious awareness. Children should not be forced to write until this vertical midline is integrated. If we force children to hold a pencil or pen and write before they have integrated this vertical midline, they will develop a tense pencil grip, a cramped writing style, and spatially compromised and jerky penmanship.

The sequence in which we teach children to write the different scripts is also important. Children should first learn to draw the capital letters as they are related to specific pictures. Next, the child can practice forms by repeating the small letters of the alphabet in cursive. Writing like this in cursive involves the right and left hemispheres working together. Printing the lowercase letters is a more



Cross-lateral movements such as skipping strengthen the bilateral integration of the brain and body, which promotes reading skills.

abstract and advanced developmental task that requires the advanced development of the left hemisphere, and this hemisphere often isn't developed enough for this task until seven to nine years of age. Girls may be ready to do this task by age six, while boys often can't do this task until after nine years of age.

I am seeing more and more fourth-, fifth-, sixth-, and even seventh-grade students from public and private schools who can't spell easily and are still reading primarily by sight memory. They can use their left brain to sound out words, but they approach every word they read first by using the reading center in the right brain, i.e., identifying by sight. For example, when I give such a child a sentence to read like "Six byos wnet on a vaccaiton tohgeter and tehy wnet fsihing in a bule baot," she often does not notice any of the misspelled words. Furthermore, when I have this same child read another paragraph where every word is spelled correctly, she often will tell me that both paragraphs are exactly the same or will

only note one or two words where the spelling is different.

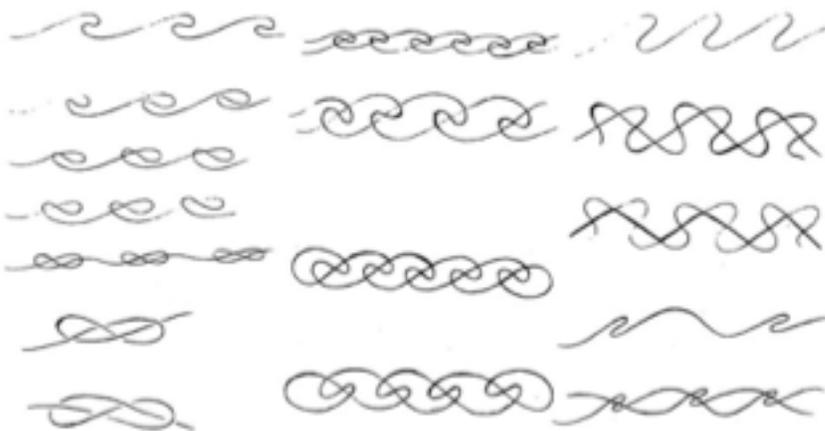
My worry is that these children were pushed to read too early, when only their right brain was developed enough for reading. They have compensated by learning to read everything using only sight memory. When the reading center in their left hemisphere finally developed, the habit of reading by using the reading center of the right hemisphere was already established. Therefore, these children first look at the words in a sentence using sight memory, and if the words don't make any sense, then they access the left reading center to sound out the words. The problem is they are not using the reading centers in the right and left brains simultaneously. Many of these children still lack bilateral integration in their physical movements as well as in their reading.

For some of the children, reading is slow and takes a tremendous amount of effort. For other children, their sight memory is so strong that they could read quickly, but their comprehension and spelling are still poor. Neither group of children can easily picture

the scenes from the words they read or remember how individual words were spelled.

Many of these children need cranial therapy because of a history of a C-section birth, prolonged labor, induced labor, or use of suction forceps at delivery. In addition, these children need lots of cross-lateral types of movements (in which the right arm and left leg move at the same time, and vice versa) to strengthen bilateral integration. Activities like walking or hiking with the arms swinging, swimming using the various strokes, rock climbing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and playing tennis all strengthen bilateral integration. Also, specific movement therapies such as therapeutic eurythmy, the Extra Lesson, Parelli horseback riding, Spacial Dynamics, Bal-A-Vis-X, Brain Gym, HANDLE, and sensory integration therapy will foster the development of these neurological pathways.

These activities and movements need to be experienced in a noncompetitive situation. Therapists and others working with the child need to avoid overstimulating the child or activating his fight-or-flight "stress" response. Neurological pathways do not form well when the child is stressed. Once these pathways and connections are formed, many of these children will need tutoring to relearn the rules of spelling and phonics and to start using their left brains for reading. Even if these children



Simple form-drawing exercises help children learn how to write cursively.

were taught phonics in the first or second grade, they need to review and relearn these reading skills because they didn't have access yet to the reading center in their left brain.

Prevention of Learning Disabilities

A number of other factors, including diet, sleep, and exposure to electronic media can affect a child's development. Parents and schools can support a child's healthy development and learning by serving healthful foods rich in protein, good quality fats (especially omega-3 fatty acids), fresh fruits, and vegetables, while eliminating partially hydrogenated oils and trans fats, which are formed when cooking or frying foods in corn oil. Removing sodas from the diet and limiting sugar and simple carbohydrates in general will keep B vitamins and zinc from being depleted from the body and reduce insulin and cortisol (stress hormone) secretions. Most soft drinks contain phosphoric acid, which pulls out calcium from the bones and contributes to osteoporosis in children and adults.

Adequate sleep increases the percentage of rapid eye movement or REM sleep, the type of sleep that promotes consolidation of the previous day's learning. A regular and early bedtime preceded by quiet time, a bedtime story, and perhaps an end-of-day verse can help the child get a good night's sleep.

Television, videos, and computer games stress the brain and nervous system with violent images and rapid sequences of pictures that the child cannot fully process. They also deprive the child of the

opportunity to create his own inner pictures and imaginations. Eliminating or strictly limiting screen time, certainly on school nights, is essential, especially for younger children. Establishing and keeping to regular rhythms and routines in eating, sleeping, and other daily activities also will promote a more relaxed nervous system for learning.

Stress is certainly a critical factor. In children, especially young children, proper neurological development and learning ability both are negatively affected by stress.

Forcing children to write, read, and to spell, and giving them standardized tests before they are developmentally ready, stresses their nervous systems. They may come to dislike reading and not want to go to school. If we insist on pushing

writing, reading, and spelling before the children's minds are ready, we will continue to create an epidemic of behavioral and learning difficulties, especially in our boys.

Thus, first grade is the time to introduce form drawing (the freehand drawing of patterns of curved and straight lines), the capital letters (as pictures that children can draw), and cursive writing. As the majority of children in the classroom strengthen their proprioceptive skills and integrate their right and left cerebral hemispheres, then the class can be more formally taught to read and to learn how to print the lowercase letters. The children's readiness for this will be indicated by their ability to stand on one foot with their eyes closed, identify the shapes that are traced by the teacher's finger on their backs, jump rope forward and backward by themselves, and easily do the cross-lateral skip.

It is time to remove the desks from kindergartens and preschools. Our preschools and kindergartens need to fill their curriculums with play involving lots of sensory integration activities. These play activities will strengthen fine motor movements, visual motor abilities, balance, muscle tone, and proprioception; as well as promote social and emotional development. Activities like imaginary play, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, walking the balance beam, playing circle games, singing, playing catch, doing meaningful chores, painting, coloring, playing hand-clapping games, doing string games, and finger-knitting will strengthen their minds for learning. Children need these healthy, harmonious, rhythmic, and noncompetitive movements to develop their brains. It is these movements of the body that create the neural pathways crucial for reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, and creative thinking. ◊



These third-grade Waldorf students are able to enjoy their library sessions, as they have been well prepared for reading through a variety of active, integrated learning experiences.



SUSAN R. JOHNSON, MD, FAAP, is a behavioral and developmental pediatrician. After completing a three-year pediatric residency and a three-year fellowship in behavioral and developmental pediatrics, Susan worked for seven years as the physician director for the School Health Center in San Francisco. After the birth of her son, she was introduced to Waldorf Education and became a certified Waldorf teacher. Susan spent an additional year of training in the Extra Lesson/sensory integration at Rudolf Steiner College with Ingun Schneider. She also attended a special training course in anthroposophically extended medicine at the Lukas Clinic in Arlesheim, Switzerland. Dr. Johnson makes visits to Waldorf schools in the Sacramento area and has a private practice in Colfax, California.

For further information and to obtain for free the numerous articles she has written, visit Dr. Johnson's Web site: www.youandyourchildshealth.org

NOVEMBER in the Alpenglow Garden

Our Current Story:

It's that time of year when all things seem to be sleeping under a blanket of snow... unless you are an elf or gnome, of course!

November begins our journey's with Rufty and Tufty, two little elves who live in a hollow spruce tree. This fun and adventurous duo are symbolic for the characteristics of young children, and learn valuable lessons on their journeys.

Ongoing Activities:

Painting: Guess who? It's BLUE! We will be entering the realm of the cool tones and in turn will discover how blue can be much like a gentle cloak on a cold winter's eve.

Craft: Ongoing finger crocheting and lantern making!

Wednesday Walk: Yes, it is snowy, possibly windy, and potentially both at the same time, BUT we still need our hearty (or fake it!) Alaskan parents to support the health and happiness that being in the outdoors truly does bring to our class. Maybe you'll surprise yourself by making a snow angel or scooting on all fours down the hill! Oh, an keep those children SUPER layered...better to shed gear than to be uncomfortably cold.

*Do you know the Muffin (Wo)man?! If so, we'd LOVE to have a dedicated parent or two to volunteer for an entire month of millet muffin duty. After our last Wednesday in November, pass on the volunteer opportunity to someone new when their month concludes. We have the basic recipe printed off - feel free to spruce it up a bit! Santi's mom, Paulina, has offered to be our baker for the month of November - Thank you, Paulina!

Bakers and Chefs: Tired of seeing pumpkins? Not in the kindergarten! We are making pumpkin & potato soup this week, so please visit our current list of ingredients needed. We are trying to have samples ready at pick up time for parents to try - last week's was too tasty to keep to ourselves:) Two things to keep in mind:

1. Are you willing to be "Head Chef"? The head chef would be essential in the planning, organizing, and some preparation for our season soup. Please inquire via email to Ms. Lindsay:)
2. Bread Rolls & The Soup Kitchen: I will be looking into how our class can bake food for our local community members. If The Soup Kitchen (or another location) welcomes freshly made/baked products, I will send out more info!

Drawing: Now that we have experienced each color, we will practice working with intention on one picture a day. This will require channeling our "will" forces in ways that may be a little challenging and inspiring!

Thank You To:

-Elizabeth (Kimberly's mom) for signing up on every Wednesday Walk, regardless of the weather!

-Kevin (Miles' dad) for the weekly bread dough & for the Wednesday Walk Kaladi Bros. coffee!

-Missy (Elise's mom) for swiftly whipping up cozy neck warmers for the class!

-ALL: Your courtesy with late arrivals during morning circle has been much appreciated. And of course, always commute safely to school:) Note: Kindly turn down your headlights when dropping your child off to school. We love for our cozy candle light and the occasional stars to brighten up our morning arrival.

*Please continue to hold Everest and his family in your hearts and thoughts. We are organizing ways in which to best support their family. Thank you for your ongoing interest and concern.

Grade One

Throughout our Writing Block, first graders thoroughly enjoyed the rich images of fairytales, seasonal nature stories, and the adventures of Cornelius and Lulu, the little gnomes who are saving and counting their gold pieces for their great adventure (their adventure of writing at book on numbers). The archetypal images of fairy tales (and various other stories), engaged the first grader with the excited desire to learn academic tasks (writing, reading, and arithmetic) of this block. Our first graders have bright eyes and enthusiasm for learning. The pictorial images of 12 fairy tales introduced 12 upper case consonants to help the first grader develop a pictorial relationship with the letter. Many of the following stories, of which were rewritten in order to bring diversity in terms of culture, content, and character development. Introduction to the 12 capital letters, M, B, P, D, T, L, N, F, H, G, S, and R were born out of the following stories (in the order they were presented):

The Adventures of Cornelius and Lulu, written by Alicia Besh

M *Nananna Mountain*, written by Alicia Besh

B *Snow White and Rose Red*, Grimms's Fairy Tales

P The Princess and the Golden Ball, Grimms's Fairy Tales

D The Prince and The Dragon, Grimms's Fairy Tales

T The Twelve Brothers, Grimms's Fairy Tales

L Little Red Cap, Grimms's Fairy Tales

N The Spindle, the Shuttle, and the Needle, Grimms's Fairy Tales

F The Finest Falcon, Grimms's Fairy Tales

H & G Hansel and Gretel, Grimms's Fairy Tales

S The Six Swans, Grimms's Fairy Tales

R Rapunzel, Grimms's Fairy Tales

A multi-sensory approach to writing and reading was used in the Main Lesson; children practiced writing the letters in sand, in water, and with their toes, in addition to writing on their chalkboards and practice paper. They did this all before entering their final draft into their Main Lesson Book portfolios. First graders practiced reading and writing sight words, phonemes, and rhymes; the focus was on the sound of the letter rather than on its name. When it came time for their final draft, the children illustrated the story with their block crayons, wrote the sight word and letter to compliment the story.

In our language arts moments (circle and recall), we practiced listening skills, following verbal and non-verbal directions, retelling the story from memory the following day, copying from the blackboard, character sequencing, acting out parts of the story as well as predicting what might happen next. In addition, we have memorized poems, speech exercises, hand clapping games, and verses. Wow, we have accomplished so much. I hope you enjoyed our All School Assembly.

During our current block, we are working with the qualities of the numbers Arabic numerals 1-12 for the duration of four weeks. In addition, Roman numeral will also be introduced. Through movement and rhyme, the class will continue working with the times tables forwards and backwards; the two's, the three's, the four's, and five's will be introduced. The class will continue to solve simple word problems using math manipulatives, as well as begin developing estimation skills while solving mental math problems.

Thank you for such a strong beginning to our First Grade year! Thank you again for those of you who attended our first and second Parent Meeting and I look forward to full attendance for our next Parent Meeting on Wednesday, January 18th from 6-7:30! Happy Winter! Our first grade class is an amazing cohesive healthy group of children and I am so happy to be their teacher.

- Ms. Alicia Besh

Grade Two

The Story of Martin and the Poor Man

Long ago, there lived a good young man named Martin. Even as a boy, he knew that one day he would be expected to serve in the military. His father was an important military officer. And, though he desired a peaceful life outside of the military, he knew that it would be his duty to follow the life of his father. So, Martin joined the military, became an officer, and was eventually assigned to garrison duty in the town of

Amiens

One bitterly cold winter evening, the young Martin rode through the gates of

Amiens

on his fine proud horse. He was dressed in the regalia of his military unit: gleaming armor, a bright helmet, and a beautiful white cloak, lined with lambs wool. It was nearly freezing outside, but his thick cloak kept him warm. He was hardly aware of the cold.

But then, as he approached the gates of the town, he saw a poor man, a beggar, dressed with clothes so ragged that he was practically bare. The man was shaking and blue with cold, but no one reached out to help him. People would pass through the gates, looking straight ahead, so their eyes would not meet with those of the poor, desperate man.

Martin, seeing this, was overcome with compassion. He rode straight to the poor man and took off his white cloak. And with one stroke of his sword he tore the lovely mantle in two. He wrapped half of the cloak around the freezing man and the other half around his own shoulders.

The people nearby watched in amazement. To see a fine military officer do such a lowly thing was a ridiculous sight to many, but others were touched by the goodness that Martin showed.

That night, as Martin slept, he had a dream. A man appeared to him who looked so familiar, and he was wearing the half of the cloak Martin had given to the poor beggar. And then, Martin saw in the eyes of this man, and the light of the Divine which we carry within us.

From that day on, Martin's life was changed forever. He knew that he could no longer be part of the military, for his true desire was to live a life of goodness.

The Lantern

There was once a boy called George who had been outside in the garden all through the Summer running after the butterflies, jumping like a grasshopper, singing like a bird, and trying to catch the sunlight. One day when he was lying on his back in the meadow gazing up into the sun-filled sky, he said, "Dear Brother Sun, soon the Autumn winds will blow and wail, and Jack Frost will come and make us all freeze, and the nights will be long and cold."

Brother Sun pushed the clouds aside and said, "Yes, it will be dark and cold. In the deep midwinter, warmth and light live deep within, hidden from sight. In the time of dark and cold, you will tend the Light Within."

"But," said George, "How will I tend this Light when it's dark everywhere around me?"

"I will give you a spark of my last Autumn rays once you have made a little house for it, for this spark must be guarded well. It will light the way for you to tend the Light Within throughout the time of dark and cold."

And then Brother Sun once hid again behind a cloud.

George went home and wondered how best he could make a little house for the spark of the sun. He took a thick piece of paper and painted a beautiful blue and yellow watercolor upon it. When it was dry, he cut windows into his painting. Then he placed colored tissue paper on the back of his watercolor - and - he formed it into a lantern. He took a candle and put it into the middle of his lantern. And, as it was growing dark, he went outside with it.

George held the lantern up above him and said, "Brother Sun, I have made a little home for one of your golden sparks. Please may I have one? I will guard it well."

Then Brother Sun looked out from behind a cloud and said, "You have made a beautiful home. I shall give you one of my golden sparks."

And suddenly, George saw how the windows of his lantern were lit up, and as he looked into the lantern, he saw a spark happily dancing on top of the candle. Oh, how happy the light was in his lovely lantern! It shone and shone so brightly.

"Thank you, Brother Sun," George called out, "Thank you." And he took his lantern and carried it carefully home singing:

The sunlight fast is dwindling,

My little lamp needs kindling.

Its beam shines far in darkest night,
Dear Lantern, guard me with your light

~ from Autumn, Wynstones Press, originally by M Meyerkort and revised by L Sutter.

- Ms. Susanne Drinen

Grade Four

Lantern Walk News

December 2, 2010 Goose Lake 6:00 PM

There is great excitement around school as plans for lantern creations come alive!

The faculty, in conjunction with the WCC, has created a bit of a new plan for this year's Lantern Walk. The hope is to deepen the experience for the classes, while maintaining the beauty for the greater community. If you have joined Winterberry in the past for this lovely festival you are aware that is very difficult for the long, long lines of children and families to sing in unison as classes walk the luminary path. It is also very difficult for those who do not know the songs to refrain from talking! The intent of this festival is that, as we enter the darkness of our winter, we create a reverent space for the children to face the darkness with the warmth and beauty of the sparks they carry in their lanterns. The songs and the following story speak to this.

This year, classes will be walking with their teachers and only enough adults to create a safe adventure through the forest. Please be looking for news from your class teacher about how many adult singers, if any, will be needed to help with the walk through the forest. Don't worry, though, we need voices for the choirs that will welcome the classes to the path and sing them out again. The campfires will also be surrounded in song! And, as in years past, families are welcome to walk the Lantern Walk as a family, once the class processions are complete.

Kindergarten through Grade 5 will be walking the Lantern Walk this year. This year Grade 5,4,3,2,1 and then K will take their turns. Classes will meet their class teacher in the large area around the fire pits. Parents and invited older students who would like to join the choirs will be along the edge of the depression where the luminary path is ready. We picture this being 3 groups, each group singing the song(s) designated for each grade. We picture the class teacher leading the class. As each class descends that little slippery down hill to the luminaries, the song of the children will take over. Most class teachers expect to have a singing adult in the 'caboose' location. Our youngest children may need a few extra hands. As was stated before, your own class teacher will give you specific directions, as appropriate for the age of the children.

6th, 7th and 8th Grade ~ Class teachers are planning to ensure that those who join this lovely event do so in the spirit of helping to create the beauty for the younger classes. Mr. Crawford and Ms. Besh are creating plans about who is really interested in the singing, the setting up, the clean-up and such. The middle school students are expected to treat this in a way that might be similar to attending a piano recital in the great outdoors. We expect a safe and calm event this year.

Warm cider will be provided following the walk and of course, pot-luck baked goods are the crowning touch. There are many ways to help as a volunteer. Please notice there is a sign-up for volunteers in the lobby! We are looking for several portable fire pits this year so that more can enjoy the warmth and so that the littlest can see the fires!

We are currently producing the song packets. Next week we hope to have at least one class out at our pick-up location at around 3:15. Come a bit early if you would like to practice the songs! Thanks to all. And in advance, a huge thanks to Sarah Robicheaux for keeping the flame alive all of these years!

Respectfully, Meg Eggleston, Faculty Chair

Grade Four

Lantern Walk News

December 2, 2010 Goose Lake 6:00 PM

There is great excitement around school as plans for lantern creations come alive!

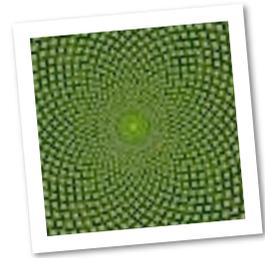
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Russian

I want to thank everyone who has been sending in their egg cartons—keep them coming! I hope to start using them in the next week or two. In the grades, First grade is starting to talk about a new area of study, the parts of the classroom. Second grade is finishing up their work on families and will be starting to learn how to talk about clothing in Russian. Third grade will be finishing up their work on professions and starting to talk about the home and its parts. Fourth grade continues to work on the Russian alphabet, but will begin to work on a block on animals as well. In fifth grade we are working with the alphabet, the construction “I have” and will be starting our first grammar block very soon, using stories we generate in class to give us illustrative examples. Sixth grade is combining its study of the accusative case with talking about means of transportation. As in fifth grade, we are using stories we make together to practice this content. The seventh grade is also working on grammar (the genitive and prepositional cases) using stories, but will also begin to learn about famous Russian explorers as well. Lastly, in eighth grade we are working on the dative and instrumental cases, again through stories, as well as spending time discussing life in modern Russia.

For more information about Russian at Winterberry, please visit the websites below. I am endeavoring to start updating them regularly with class news, requests and resources to help your child develop their language skills.

<http://winterberryrussian.blogspot.com/>
or http://www.asdk12.org/staff/harmon_arthur/



Winterberry Dress Request

In order to reduce classroom distractions, continue our commitment to upholding Steiner's views on materialism, and respect the needs of all students, families, and staff, we respectfully ask that student attire be comprised of:

- * solid colors,
- * stripes,
- * polka dots,
- * or patterns.

We also ask that all outerwear and accessories (including indoor shoes and lunch boxes) also follow these guidelines. Please choose plain shoes that do not include electronic lights, sounds, wheels, or commercially produced pictures.

When students come to school with items that do not meet these guidelines, school staff may ask them to alter the clothing so it is not distracting (turn a shirt inside-out, for example), give the student an alternative item to wear instead and/or work together with families to find an alternative within a reasonable period.

Our goal is that we can come together on this issue out of respect for all community members knowing that while such items may not distract one, they do distract another. Thank you for your commitment to creating and maintaining the highest quality environment for our children.

As always, thank you for your willingness to grow and work together to create a culture of caring and respect at Winterberry!

Winterberry Charter Council (WCC)

Melissa Janigo, Chair
Tara Smith, Vice Chair
Erin Fleischer, Secretary
Della Swartz, Treasurer
Arthur Harmon, Staff
Franny Hall, Community Member
Todd Robicheaux, Parent
Bob Steinmann, Parent
Lynne Jablonski, WPG Rep
Meg Eggleston, Faculty Chair
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Monthly Meetings: 3rd Thursday of each month, 6pm, second floor of
Winterberry Charter School unless otherwise stated & advertised.

Winterberry Parent Guild (WPG)

Craig Lyon, President
Eric Judge, Vice President
Christina Eubanks, Secretary
Sarah Rygh, Treasurer
Lynne Jablonski, Fundraising Chair & WCC Rep
Mike Rehberg, Volunteer Coordinator
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VACANT, Grade Three Rep
Haras Cullers, Grade Two Rep
Tara Petter, Grade One Rep
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