

A TEACHER TRAINING PROJECT IN LIBERIA

We strongly believe that the Steiner Waldorf pedagogy can be useful in the least developed countries of the world. By setting up the charity Consult-Educ, we aim to offer consultancy and professional training in Steiner Waldorf pedagogy to as many teachers as possible so that as many children as possible can benefit from it. This is why we want to work with governments, with a focus on Africa.

Our team of three are Jean Briussel, Adeline Lapis and Morgane Briussel-Dickson. Three people for a project with such huge perspectives are, indeed, ambitious! However, we are three generations in two countries (France and England) and we believe we have the enthusiasm to carry this project through.

Being keen readers of the WOW day newsletter, we noticed in the September 2008 issue that in the Sierra Leone article, the wife of the Vice President of Liberia was reported to have called the Goderich School to learn more about Waldorf pedagogy. Jean's son, Johan, who lives in Liberia, obtained her details and a few e-mails and phone calls later, he was officially invited to go to Liberia to prepare the setting-up of a child-centred teacher training program based on the Steiner Waldorf pedagogy.

We attended the Easter Conference in Kings Langley and presented our project, which was warmly welcomed: we met potential trainers and made many contacts in the UK schools.

Jean is now about to fly to Liberia on the 20th May and will be back on the 10th June. In Monrovia, he will observe teachers and pupils in their classrooms; he will meet the current and the former Ministers of Education, and also craftsmen, artists, farmers, etc.

The teacher training course should start with an introductory workshop in August 2009.

Please visit our website: www.consult-educ.org

It will be updated and will show the progress of the project in the summer.

For more information, contact us at: info@consult-educ.org

Your support is precious to us!

ADELINE, MORGANE & JEAN - CONSULT-EDUC

BALAMITRA SCHOOL, INDIA

The Balamitra Model School in Sagar Nagar is a Waldorf-inspired school that acts as a model for 40 other schools that lie scattered around the province of Visakhapatnam, in Andhra Pradesh. These schools are offering an education for the children which takes into account their cultural origins. As most of their parents are farmers, their contact to nature is close.

Two Waldorf Education student teachers, Anna from Plymouth University and Freya from Bristol, visited for six weeks of voluntary work with the children and the teachers, as

part of their teaching practice. Together with a qualified teacher, Anna Stellmacher from Germany, the idea arose to perform a play out of the Mythology which the children had been studying. Children and teachers chose "Pandora's Box" which was performed in November.

Further information about the school can be found at www.balamitra.org

BHANU KALLURI - BALAMITRA SCHOOL, INDIA



The School in Sagar Nagar is Balamitra's model school.



The whole school.



The children live, eat, work, sleep and play in this building. Here they are in the morning, singing traditional tribal songs together.



Class 4 and 5 in the play of 'Pandora's Box'.



Two of the class five girls entering into the role of Athena through speech and gesture.

The education project also runs 40 other much smaller schools scattered throughout the hills of Andra Pradesh in far flung tribal villages. Waldorf education, with its practical and imaginative approach and fundamental respect for nature seems to suit the children whose roots lie in a tribal way of life.

Newsletter

SUMMER 2009



CHILD'S PLAY; how we risk giving our children everything except the freedom to play.



Play is children's way of perceiving the world they have been called upon to change

It was with the words of Maxim Gorki that Christopher Clouder opened the first Alliance for Childhood event in Scotland, at the Scottish Parliament on 23rd April.

After music and singing from the pupils of Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner school, Christopher went on to tell the audience of politicians, policy-makers, academics, teachers and play-workers how vital play is for fostering imagination and creativity as well as the ability to relate to ourselves, others and the world around us.

Sue Palmer, tireless campaigner and author of 'Toxic Childhood' shocked us with facts on screen saturation and the power that commercial forces and marketing have gained over children and childhood and the lightning changes that the digital age are bringing. In 2008, the average screen time for children in the UK was five hours 20 minutes each day. This year that has increased to six hours.

We heard from Marguerite Hunter Blair, chief executive of Play Scotland, about their work to ensure that play is firmly embedded in the

national Early Years Framework as well as in the wider policy areas governing things such as planning and health. Green MSP Robin Harper, convenor of the Scottish Parliament cross party group on children and young people supported the event by placing a motion in Parliament congratulating the Alliance for Childhood on its first event in Scotland and calling for a review of planning policy in Scotland to ensure that play is fully taken into account.

Organised by the Scottish Association for Steiner Waldorf Education, the Child's Play event also happened to coincide with the launch of the Scottish Government's year-long, nation-wide debate on play and risk, which will further explore how we risk giving our children everything except the freedom to play.

LIZ MURRAY - EDINBURGH RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL

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RAPHAEL STEINER SCHOOL

Just before Easter, we had the sad news that one member of our family of schools, Raphael Steiner School, would have to close. Raphael was a sponsored school, founded in 2002 on the border between Suffolk and Norfolk at Thornham Magna (the country estate of the Henke family), a rural location near the village of Eye, between Norwich and Ipswich. The remote position of the school (no large

population centre within easy reach), along with costs involved in buying land and providing classroom spaces contributed to becoming no longer viable.

When a school ceases its activity there is regret and disappointment; it is a form of bereavement. However, this is not the full story. Just over a year ago Raphael was evaluated to be a "good" school by Ofsted and

involved excellent teachers and dedicated parents and Trustees. A number of families have found their way to other member schools, in particular to Norwich and Cambridge Steiner Schools. Education is an active statement of faith in the future. The work of Raphael, like that of the Wroxham School, which closed over a year ago with the part-retirement of its founders, goes on in other forms.

KEVIN AVISON - SWSF

STEINER WALDORF SCHOOLS FELLOWSHIP (The Association of Steiner Waldorf Schools in the UK and Ireland)

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CURATIVE EDUCATION – Clementina Group

My eldest daughter followed her brother in to Steiner Education through toddler group into Kindergarten and on to Class 1 and 2. We had always known that her education at the school would not be able to progress much further as she had special needs. She was so happy at school and learnt so much. As I had made a commitment to my whole family that they would receive a Steiner education, I realized I had to set up a new project working with children with special needs.

Although I have hardly any experience of the Waldorf System I had an amazing offer of help from anthroposophical doctor, Saskia Renkema, who has had experience in the Camphill Communities. We advertised and were fortunate to employ a very experienced Curative Educator Cecile Remy from Aberdeen. After much hard work, 'Clementina Group' was formed and opened in September 2008 with two pupils, in association with Canterbury Steiner School. As well as the full time educator we have had a Curative Eurythmist visit us for two months from Aberdeen, a speech therapist who visits from Sussex, a massage therapist, a therapist who works with Art weekly and recently we have been joined by an occupational therapist.

Curative education evolved out of the anthroposophical movement created by Steiner. Curative schools aim to provide individuals with special needs a therapeutic environment in which they can unfold their strengths and potentials, learn and be helped with their difficulties.

Children with special needs have difficulties which can make learning more of a struggle. This in turn can make them feel less confident. Before a child can sit down and learn effectively, they may first need help with the problems that hinder them. These may range from speech and language difficulties, the integration of different sense perceptions and with movement and reflexes, to emotional well-being.

Central to the task is teamwork between the teacher, the parents, the doctor and therapists. In curative or therapeutic education there are three different areas of work: education; therapeutic support and family care.

The project is new and is therefore flexible! We want to build a school that will give children with special

needs a really positive start in life. We are now ready to expand the project and would welcome applications from like-minded families with children aged 6 to 10 who require additional support.

Do not hesitate to contact us:

Tel : 079 856 853 19 or

email: srenkema@nhs.net

**JUDITH HAWARDEN -
CLEMENTINA GROUP**



ASSOCIATE ADVISERS

The Steiner Waldorf Advisory Service welcomes its first three Associate Advisers: Andy Phipps, Gabriel Kaye and Jonathan Wolf-Phillips. Associate Advisers offer non-pedagogical support in areas such as administration, regulation and governance. Arrangements for Associate Advisers would normally be negotiated individually between the school and the Associate, as for classroom assessment, and schools would normally meet the costs involved from their own budgets. However, under certain circumstances, and with prior agreement of the SWAS co-ordinator and SWSF finance team, it may be

possible to cover part or all of the costs.

There are many anthroposophically orientated and other types of consultancy offering support to schools and settings. Staff and Trustees may make their choice as to those with whom they wish to work. Associate Advisers, however, have signed up to the SWAS Code* and by working closely with our pedagogical advisers will be able to offer services that are tailored and integrated to the needs of our complex organisations. More detailed information is available from the SWAS co-ordinator, but in broad terms Associate Advisers offer the following:

ANDY PHIPPS - Ofsted advice and advice on matters of behaviour management and safeguarding.

GABRIEL KAYE - All areas of school administration and marketing.

JONATHAN WOLF-PHILLIPS - Governance, Associative Leadership (including student associations) and individual time-management skills training.

KEVIN AVISON - SWSF

*See www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk

WE SHARE A LETTER FROM HEREFORD SIXTH FORM COLLEGE...

I felt that I should just write and say what an absolute pleasure it was for the three of us to meet your students last Friday during their progression interviews for Hereford Sixth Form College.

All the applicants, without fail, were articulate, thoughtful, inquisitive - and clearly eager to make the most of their individual time with us. As I said to you in passing as I rushed off at the end of the afternoon - I don't quite know what you do to them... but the output is certainly pretty amazing! You must be very proud of these young people.

The other most impressive feature was the reference which Carol and Karin had written for each student. Year on year, your references are some of the most insightful we receive. Your staff clearly know their students very well and the "pen portraits" which the references give us are invaluable as we help your students settle into their new life at College. Please pass on our thanks to your colleagues.

Once again, thank you for your warm welcome and for a most enjoyable afternoon. We now look forward to enrolling your students at College in the autumn - and to welcoming the next cohort down to our "taster morning" in July. Warmest wishes,

DR RUTH BRINTON -
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL (STAFF AND STUDENTS)
HEREFORD SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

UK PARENT NETWORK MEETING, Michael Hall School – A parent's perspective

I attended the inaugural UK Parent Network meeting on Saturday, 14th of March at Michael Hall school in Forest Row.

I do wish other parents from our school had been able to attend. It was a lovely day and an ideal opportunity to speak freely about whatever was on your mind... and maybe come home with some answers. Of course, I also had my own private thoughts to take along, some of which I will share here.

There were around 21 attendees in all and Christopher Clouder from the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship joined us. Canterbury, Cambridge, Greenwich, North Yorkshire, North London, St Paul's, Bristol, Kings Langley and Michael Hall all had representatives from their parent body attend. Representatives introduced themselves and spoke briefly about their school. The themes of the 'small, struggling' schools became apparent and the shared issues of lack of money, too little parental involvement, lack of communication between the schools/teachers and their parent groups were strong discussion points, with examples of the contrary giving us great encouragement.

One view presented was "Parents often get more involved (too involved?) because the 'school' is not clear enough. Parents can seek change because the picture that is presented isn't clear enough. So they seek to clarify and initiate change where it 'may' not even be needed, simply because the original vision and purpose of the school had not been better communicated at the beginning of the parent's relationship with it." I have had a personal experience of this where overhearing parents complaining about a curriculum issue has led me to doubt our teaching methods' efficacy... then upon attending one of our Education Workshops I have found my doubts to be unfounded and actually the concerning point has been clearly explained and presented. To me, this has just reinforced my need to make a personal relationship with our teachers and to study our pedagogy wherever possible. I would however, enjoy an opportunity to discuss issues on a wider basis, maybe a Q & A evening, or maybe this is the remit of the regular Parent's Evenings. However, if I have a question on a wider school issue or a question on the 'middle school' years an opportunity to enter into respectful and lively discussion on these and other matters would certainly be welcomed by me.

Christopher Clouder gave a wonderfully inspiring talk on the 'nature' of a school. Liking it to a river, with its main constituents remaining with it for its

lifetime while other streams (and at times debris!) join it for moments as it meanders for a while, before rushing ahead through rocky gorges. On the whole, most rivers travel until they reach the sea and then start the precipitation process and rejoin the 'source' of the river again. However, it is possible for a river to die, for its pace to be slowed and halted, creating a pond... with no movement, no new interactions, nothing new joining, nothing old leaving the still waters. He suggested that a river doesn't stand-alone. Its environment 'enters' it... local stones, minerals, rain, plants and animals all add to its identity. And like a river, a school is constantly being created by those involved in it, even by those who don't 'appear' to participate at all.

Therefore, with this metaphorical river we were able to start a very open discussion of the nature of our current environment, i.e. the 21st century and how many factors from our age are now penetrating the walls of our schools. Some welcome and others not so. We discussed 'the source' of our pedagogy and whether there was room to initiate other valuable interactions and debates about education and the 21st century child. Could we look outside and further on from Steiner's wisdom and engage other beneficial streams into our schools to help our movement flourish and benefit others? The Steiner Academy Hereford was discussed and where it seems the government will, in the future, require more adherence to National Curriculum initiatives it was felt that a good relationship was being formed within leading educational think tanks. There will be a time when Waldorf Education will help influence, for the sake of all children, the educational systems that they are exposed to. Leading educationalists who influence policy through their publications (OECD - Innovating to Learn - Learning to Innovate) are already extolling the virtues of Waldorf education as a pioneering alternative to the mainstream, the value of which is clearly visible).

So we're part of a larger movement, working to improve the educational experience of all children. "Many of the corrosive aspects of life have their genesis in the quality of childhood we experience... bringing about the need to change the ecology of childhood". Is our school part of this? Do we want to be?

It was acknowledged that parenting today is very different to that of 20 years ago and we face huge difficulties often in being able to maintain our children in these schools. Pioneering or not, this can often put a very great strain on individual parents and their



Picture: Uk Parent Network meeting - Michael Hall

wider families. We need to work together 'with' our teachers to create new avenues of learning and even in some cases a few schools are pioneering new curriculum initiatives to reflect their modern surroundings.

In working with and supporting our teachers we can allow more movement and more appropriate, organic change, through trust and hope-filled activities. By teachers supporting and working to understand the doubts held by parents we can meet in the middle and find solutions, moving from conflict to creativity.

As Jeremy Smith from Kings Langley said during his talk on being a "Waldorf parent". "Congratulations. It takes courage and a strong sense of will to be a Waldorf parent. To help create free individuals, unhindered by governmental interference, to create a new society of free young adults." It also takes a strong sense of purpose and big heart to become a Waldorf teacher, so lets look after one another.

Where do we stand in the world? How do we serve the children being born into the 21st century? Do 'I' want to be part of this? I was left with these questions to ponder.

I recommend most highly that others try and attend the next meeting (September details TBC). With our dynamic school teetering on the brink of great change we have a (potentially) once in a lifetime opportunity to create the blueprint of a truly exceptional educational environment. Yes, this poses us great questions and will require fortitude and endurance and yes, just getting the Summer Fair on is a feat in itself, but this is our chance nonetheless.

I still have very many questions and I look forward to finding the answers, hopefully here at the Waldorf School of South West London.

MARY JOY JOHNSON -
PARENT, WALDORF SCHOOL OF SOUTH WEST LONDON