

Central Coast Rudolf Steiner School

ABN 69 140 770 526

Catamaran Road, Fountaindale

INFORMATION PACKAGE and APPLICATION FORM

Dear Parents,

Thank you for your enquiry about our school. We are pleased to be the only school on the Central Coast offering the Waldorf system of education as devised by Rudolf Steiner. With a varied and interesting curriculum approved by the NSW Board of Studies, our school continues to grow and prosper.

We offer classes from Kindergarten through to the School Certificate in Year 10.

The Central Coast Rudolf Steiner School is part of a world-wide network of Steiner schools that constitute the largest independent schooling system in the world.

Please find enclosed an information pack. We hold regular Information Evenings (details of the next one are on our website), when two of our teachers talk about Steiner education and are available to answer any questions you may have. If you are unable to attend one of these evenings and would like know more, please contact the school office and we can arrange another time for you to visit us.

If you wish to proceed to an enrolment, please complete the application for enrolment (downloadable on our website) and return it together with the non-refundable application fee. On receipt of this an enrolment package will be posted to you. The enrolment package contains a more detailed form and associated documents. Once we have received these completed documents, we will contact you to arrange an interview time when you and your child will meet the class teacher and together we may determine your child's suitability for this school. All enrolments are subject to a meeting with class teachers.

We look forward to meeting you soon.

The Administration



Central Coast
Rudolf Steiner School

Please return if you wish to join our mailing list

Name: Phone:

Address:

..... Post code:

Central Coast Rudolf Steiner School

2009* FEES AND LEVIES SCHEDULE

Tuition per term

Primary:	Kindergarten – Class 6	\$885.00
Secondary:	Classes 7-9	\$999.00

Materials Levy per term

Kindergarten to Class 6	\$ 90.00
High School	\$140.00

Maintenance Levy per term

\$100 per term per family. (Attendance at School working bees will credit against this on a minimum of 4 hours work per \$100)

Building Levy

\$200 per year per family.

Discounts

Discounts are given on tuition fees for siblings.

2nd child - 20%, 3rd child - 50%, 4th child - 100%

Application Fee

\$110 per child on enrolment, non-refundable.

Refundable Enrolment Deposit

\$400 per family on acceptance of enrolment. To be refunded on request when the last child leaves the school and all outstanding debts have been paid.

Classroom levies

Special levies may be requested from time to time to pay for particular pieces of equipment, desks, musical equipment, etc. which the children will keep after leaving school.

Payment policies

All fees are due in the first week of each term. Payments can be made directly to office staff between 8.30 am and 3.30 pm on any weekday.

Cheques, money orders, cash, EFTPOS and credit cards are accepted methods of payment.

If a child leaves during a term, the fees for the rest of that term are not refundable.

* Fees will be reviewed annually.

Central Coast Rudolf Steiner School

ENROLMENT PROCEDURE

Please read the information contained in this package.

If you have further questions, attend an information evening (usually held once or twice a term) or ring and make an appointment to attend an information session with our Business Manager, Dianne Moore.

Complete and return the attached enrolment application form, together with the non-refundable application fee of \$110. (We accept cash, credit, card, money order or cheque made payable to "Central Coast Steiner School Inc.").

Upon receipt of the above, more detailed enrolment documents will be forwarded to you, together with an article entitled *Supporting the Ethos of our School*, which we ask you to read.

At this stage, you will need to complete and submit the following to the school office -

- A child biography (form will be enclosed with the above documents)
- Copies of the last two school reports (where applicable)*
- Copies of certificates of achievements (if available)*
- Two written personal references, one for the student, one for the family
- A photograph of your child (preferably passport size)
- Photocopies of your child's birth certificate and immunisation history statement.*

**Copies can be made at our office if you don't have access to a copier.*

When all this information has been received, for applications for immediate enrolment you will be telephoned and an interview with the class teacher will be arranged. Wherever possible we ask that both parents attend the interview with their child. If there is not a vacancy in the class you are applying for, a waiting list will be kept on a date of receipt basis.

For applications relating to distant future enrolments these will be acknowledged at the time, then you will be contacted within two or three terms prior to the requested entry date.

Following a successful interview, a letter of confirmation will be sent to you. Included will be a copy of our Parent Handbook and a complimentary book entitled *Waldorf Education A Family Guide*.

To finalise the enrolment, you will be invoiced for, and need to pay, or make arrangements to pay, the school fees for the current term, including both fees for tuition and levies for materials, and a donation to the building fund.

Central Coast Rudolf Steiner School

Steiner Curriculum

Engaging the hand
Awakening the mind
Allowing the heart to flourish

Through the heart, the hands and the mind, Steiner children are invited to explore the rhythms of the earth, the heavens, poetry, music, colours and form, movement, numbers, history, life and the secret spaces within, creating a sense of wonder, gratitude and responsibility.

Steiner learning respects the uniqueness of each child, while working in rhythm with the natural stages all children pass through. The pattern, which unfolds in the individual child, in many ways reflects the pattern, which has unfolded throughout human history.

Since these stages are in harmony with the development of civilization itself, the great stories of all time – from fairy tales and fables to Nordic and Greek myths – become the cornerstone of the curriculum. The young child learns by sparking the imagination through myth and the older child embraces learning through scientific inductive reasoning.

The Steiner school curriculum strives to appreciate the changing abilities of the growing child in a very concrete way by offering subject matter specifically suited to the faculties which the child is developing at a given age.

The main lessons – including language, arts, science, math, history and geography – are taught in blocks of three to five weeks during the morning lesson hours, when the children are freshest for academic work.

Throughout each grade, the children encounter a stimulating depth of experiences in the arts. Drama, drawing, painting, modelling, poetry, song and musical instruments are woven through the main lesson subjects in all of the grades.

As the students reach the higher grades, more advanced artistic skills are introduced in separate lessons of woodwork, perspective drawing, stringed instruments, band instruments, choir and orchestra.

In addition to the main language subjects, Steiner schools offer special subject lessons in foreign languages (French and German), physical education and handwork/crafts for all seven years of Steiner education.

Results of a Steiner Education

A well-rounded education provides a strong foundation for a student's future endeavours. Steiner students are educated so that they may go out into the world ready to meet life's challenges with knowledge, courage, enthusiasm, creativity and a solid sense of how to think and reason. While some effects of a good education are measurable at the time, many of the most important facets are planted as seeds that will continue to grow and bear fruit in later years.

Central Coast Rudolf Steiner School

Distinguishing features of a Waldorf (Steiner) school classroom.

By Scott Dorwart and P J Long

There are more than 600 independent Waldorf (Steiner) schools in more than 32 countries. Though each one is unique, a visitor would observe several common characteristics which distinguish the Waldorf approach to learning. Most notable among these would be how the curriculum directly responds to each phase of child development.

During the elementary years, it is the educator's task to transform all that the child needs to know about the world into the language of the imagination – encouraging wonder, curiosity, reverence, and a love of learning. This principle lies at the heart of the most common features which distinguish Waldorf from other forms of education.

1. All learning proceeds from a wholistic vision of the child.
 - Recognising the whole child in his or her threefold nature: body, mind and spirit
 - Working out an understanding of the child's inner experiences and essential nature
 - Teaching respectful regard for the sanctity of the individual
2. Lessons derive from an arts-based, integrated curriculum
 - Fostering the child's creative imagination as essential to each developmental stage
 - Using the force of imagination inherent in each child to integrate knowledge
 - Integrating 'feeling and heart' along with intellect and will forces
 - Integrating music, painting and handwork with the academic curriculum
 - Replacing textbooks with lesson books of the child's own creation as well as classic literature
3. Expectations for learning are developmentally appropriate
 - Protecting childhood by avoiding premature intellectual demands
 - Fostering the imaginative faculties essential for creative thinking
 - Building comprehension through daily storytelling by teachers and retelling by children
 - Experiencing letters first through imaginative pictures, form drawings and movement
 - Writing before reading, and only when the child is developmentally ready
4. The teacher remains with the class as the children grow
 - Avoiding annual readjustments for the child
 - Inviting resolution of difficulties instead of 'dumping' problems at the end of the year
 - Developing a closeness between the teachers and the child's entire family
 - Allowing teachers to grow with their students, and deeply understand the child
5. No grades are assigned to students' work
 - Evoking the child's natural spirit of emulation as the motivation towards achievement
 - Allowing more complete narrative evaluations to gauge the progress of the whole child
 - Encouraging the child to seek help and counsel
6. Behaviour is managed through creative, positive discipline.
7. The classroom provides a cooperative social environment.

Central Coast Rudolf Steiner School

Frequently asked Questions About Steiner (Waldorf) Education

What is Steiner Education?

Steiner (Waldorf) education is a unique and distinctive approach to educating children that is practised in Steiner/Waldorf schools worldwide. Steiner/Waldorf schools collectively form the largest and, quite possibly, the fastest growing group of independent private schools in the world. There is no centralised administrative structure governing all Steiner/Waldorf schools; each is administratively independent, but there are established associations which provide resources, publish material, sponsor conferences and promote the movement.

What is unique about Steiner Education? How is it different from other alternatives (public schooling, Montessori, etc.)?

The best overall statement on what is unique about Steiner education is to be found in the stated goals of the schooling: 'to produce individuals who are able, in and of themselves, to impart meaning to their lives'.

The aim of Steiner schooling is to educate the whole child, head, heart and hands'. The curriculum is as broad as time will allow, and balances academic subjects with artistic and practical activities.

Steiner teachers are dedicated to creating a genuine love of learning within each child. By freely using arts and activities in the service of teaching academics, an internal motivation to learn is developed in the students, doing away with the need for competitive testing and grading.

Some distinctive features of Steiner education include the following:

- Academics are de-emphasised in the early years of schooling. There is no academic content in the Steiner kindergarten (ie, pre-Class 1) experience (although there is a good deal of cultivation of pre-academic skills), and minimal academics in Class 1. The letters are introduced artistically in Class 2, with the children learning to read from their own writing in Class 2 or 3.
- During the primary school years (Classes 1-8), the students have a class (or 'main lesson') teacher who stays with the same class for (ideally) the first eight years of their schooling.
- Certain activities which are often considered 'frills' at mainstream schools are central at Steiner schools: art, music, gardening and foreign languages (usually two in primary grades), to name a few. In the younger grades, all subjects are introduced through artistic mediums, because the children respond better to this medium than to dry lecturing and rote learning. All children learn to play recorder and to knit.
- There are no 'textbooks' as such in the first through to fifth grades. All children have 'main lesson books', which are their own workbooks which they fill in during the course of the year. They essentially produce their own 'textbooks' which record their experiences and what they've learned. Upper grades use textbooks to supplement their main lesson work.
- Many children learn a stringed instrument from Class 3 onwards. This often includes one-on-one tuition as well as orchestra.
- Learning in a Steiner school is a non-competitive activity. There are no grades given at the primary level; the teacher writes a detailed evaluation of the child at the end of each school year.

The use of electronic media, particularly television, by young children is strongly discouraged in Steiner schools.

What is the curriculum at a Steiner School like?

The Steiner curriculum is designed to be responsive to the various phases of a child's development. The era of human history being studied corresponds in many ways with the stage of development of the child. For example, pre-Class 1 children are presented with fairy stories matching their dreamy state of consciousness, Class 4 study the Vikings and Norse mythology which suit their war-like feelings, Class 5 learn of the Greeks at the time their intellect is awakening and their sense of fair play is becoming obvious, and so on.

The main subjects, such as history, language, arts, science and mathematics are, as mentioned, taught in main lesson blocks of two to three hours per day, with each block lasting from three to five weeks.

The total Steiner curriculum has been linked to an ascending spiral: subjects are revisited several

times, but each new exposure affords greater depth and new insights into the subject at hand.

A typical Lower School curriculum would likely look something like the following:

Primary Grades 1-3

Pictorial information to the alphabet, writing, reading, spelling, poetry and drama.

Folk and fairy tales, fables, legends, Old Testament stories.

Numbers, basic mathematical processes of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.
Nature stories, house building and gardening.

Middle Grades 4-6

Writing, reading, spelling, grammar, poetry and drama.

Norse myths, history and stories of ancient civilisations (e.g. Greek, Indian).

Review of the four mathematical processes, fractions, percentages and geometry.

Local and world geography, comparative zoology, botany and elementary physics.

Upper Grades 7-8

Creative writing, reading, spelling, grammar, poetry and drama.

Medieval history, the Renaissance, world exploration, history and biography.

Geography, physics, basic chemistry, astronomy, geology and physiology.

Special subjects also taught include:

Handwork: knitting, crochet, sewing, cross stitch, basic weaving, toy making and woodworking.

Music: singing, recorder, string instruments, wind brass and percussion instruments.

Foreign Languages (varies by school): Spanish, French, Japanese and German.

Art: wet-on-wet water colour painting, form drawing, beeswax and clay modelling, perspective drawing.

Movement: Eurythmy, gymnastics, group games.

How did Steiner education get started?

In 1919, Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian philosopher, scientist and artist, was invited to give a series of lectures to the workers of the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany. As a result, the factory's owner, Emil Molt, asked Steiner to establish and lead a school for the children of the factory's employees. Steiner agreed to do so on four conditions:

- The school should be open to all children;
- It should be coeducational;
- It should be a unified twelve-year school;
- The teachers, who would be working directly with the children, should take the leading role

in the running of the school, with a minimum of interference from governmental or economic concerns.

Molt agreed to the conditions and, after a training period for the prospective teachers, die Freie Waldorfschule (The Free Waldorf School) was opened on September 7, 1919.

How many Steiner Schools are there?

Currently, there are more than 600 Steiner schools in over 32 countries serving approximately 120,000 students. There are over 30 schools and Kindergartens currently operating in Australia, and about 125 in North America.

What is the philosophy behind Steiner education?

Consistent with his philosophy called Anthroposophy, Steiner designed a curriculum responsive to the developmental phases in childhood and nurturing of children's imagination. He thought that schools should cater to the needs of children rather than the demands of the government or economic forces, so he developed schools that encourage creativity and free-thinking.

Why should I send my child to a Steiner school?

The main reason is that Steiner schools honour and protect the wonder of childhood. Every effort is expended to make Steiner schools safe, secure and nurturing environments for the children, and to protect their childhood from harmful influences from the broader society.

Secondly, Steiner education has a consistent philosophy of child development underlying the curriculum. All subjects are introduced in an age-appropriate fashion.

Finally, Steiner schools produce graduates who are academically advantaged with respect to their public school counterparts, and who consistently gain admission to top universities.

Who was Rudolf Steiner?

Dr. Rudolf Steiner was a highly respected and well-published scientific, literary and philosophical scholar who was particularly known for his work on Goethe's scientific writings. He later came to incorporate his scientific investigations with his interest in spiritual development. He became a forerunner in the field of spiritual-scientific investigation for the modern 20th century individual.

His background in history and civilisations coupled with his observation in life gave the world the gift of Steiner Education. It is a deeply insightful application of learning based on the Study of

Humanity with developing consciousness of self and the surrounding world.

***How is reading taught in a Steiner school?
Why do Steiner students wait until Class 2 to begin to read?***

Steiner education is deeply bound up with the oral tradition, typically beginning with the teacher telling children fairy tales throughout Kindergarten and Class 1. The oral approach is used all through Steiner education: mastery of oral communication is seen as being integral to all learning.

Reading instruction, as such, is deferred. Instead, writing is taught first. During Class 1 the children explore how our alphabet came about, discovering, as the ancients did, how each letter's form evolved out of a pictograph. Writing thus evolves out of the children's art, and their ability to read likewise evolves as a natural and, indeed, comparatively effortless stage of their mastery of language.

Why is so much emphasis put on festivals and ceremonies?

Seasonal festivals serve to connect humanity with the rhythms of nature and of the cosmos. The festivals originated in ancient cultures, yet have been adapted over time. To join the seasonal moods of the year, in a festive way, benefits the inner life of the soul. Celebrating is an art. There is joy in the anticipation, the preparation, the celebration itself, and the memories.

Why do Steiner Schools discourage TV watching?

The reasons for this have as much to do with the physical effects of the medium on the developing child as with the (to say the least) questionable content of much of the programming. Electronic media are believed by Steiner teachers to seriously hamper the development of the child's imagination – a faculty which is believed to be central to the healthy development of the individual. Computer use by young children is also discouraged.

Steiner teachers are not, by the way, alone in this belief. Several books have been written in recent years expressing concern with the effect of television on young children. See, for instance, *Endangered Minds* by Jane Healy, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* by Jerry Mander, or *The Plug-in Drug* by Marie Winn.

What kind of training do Steiner teachers have?

While requirements within individual schools may vary, as a rule class teachers will have both their usual state teaching certification, as well as

training from a recognised Steiner teacher training college or institute. Some Steiner training programs can also grant B.A. degrees in conjunction with Steiner teaching certification. Training includes practice teaching in a Steiner school under the supervision of experienced Steiner teachers.

Rudolf Steiner, speaking in Oxford in 1922, defined 'three golden rules' for teachers: 'to receive the child in gratitude from the world it comes from; to educate the child with love; and to lead the child into the true freedom which belongs to man'.

Why do Steiner students stay with the same teacher for the primary years?

Between the ages of seven and fourteen, children learn best through acceptance and emulation of authority, just as in their earlier years they learned through imitation. In primary school, particularly in the lower grades, the child is just beginning to expand his or her experience beyond home and family. The class becomes a type of 'family' as well, with its own authority figure 'the teacher' in a role analogous to parent.

With this approach, the students and teachers come to know each other very well, and the teacher is able to find over the years the best ways of helping individual children in their schooling.

How are personality conflicts between students and teachers handled?

This is a very common concern among parents when they hear about the 'Class Teacher' method. However, in practice, the situation seems to arise very rarely, especially so when the teacher has been able to establish a relationship with the class right from the first grade. Incompatibility with a child is infrequent, as understanding the child's needs and temperament is central to the teacher's role and training. When problems of this sort do occur, the faculty as a whole works with the teacher and the family to determine and undertake whatever corrective action would be in the best interests of the child and the class.

Are Steiner Schools religious?

In the sense of subscribing to the beliefs of a particular religious denomination or sect, no. Steiner schools, however, tend to be spiritually oriented and are based out of a generally Christian perspective. The historic festivals of Christianity, and of other major religions as well, are observed in the classrooms and in school assemblies. Classes in religious doctrine are not part of the Steiner curriculum, and children of all religious backgrounds attend Steiner schools. Spiritual guidance is aimed at awakening the child's natural reverence for the wonder and beauty of life.

How do Steiner children fare when they transfer to 'regular' schools? Is it true that once you start Steiner schooling it is difficult to 'fit in' to other schools?

Generally, transitions to public schools, when they are anticipated, are not problematical. The most common transition is from a Class 6 or 7 Steiner school to a more traditional high school, and, from all reports, usually takes place without significant difficulties.

Transitions in the lower grades, particularly between the first and fourth grades, can potentially be more of a problem, because of the significant differences in the pacing of the various curriculums. A second grader from a traditional school will be further ahead in reading in comparison with a Steiner-schooled second grader; however, the Steiner-schooled child will be ahead in arithmetic.

What is Anthroposophy?

The term 'Anthroposophy' comes from the Greek 'anthropos-sophia' or 'human wisdom'. Steiner expanded an exacting scientific method by which one could do research for her/himself into the spiritual worlds. The investigation, known also as Spiritual Science is an obvious complement to the Natural Sciences we have come to accept. Through study and practiced observation, one awakens to his/her own inner nature and the spiritual realities of outer nature and the cosmos. The awareness of those relationships brings a greater reverence for all of life.

Steiner and many individuals since, who share his basic views, have applied this knowledge in various practical and cultural ways in communities around the world. Most notably, Steiner schools have made a significant impact on the world. Curative education, for mentally and emotionally handicapped adults and children, has established a deep understanding and work with people who have this difficult destiny. Bio-dynamic farming and gardening greatly expand the range of techniques available to organic agriculture. Anthroposophical medicine and pharmacy, although less widely known in Australia, are subjects of growing interest.

It should be stressed that while Anthroposophy forms the theoretical basis to the teaching methods used in Steiner schools, it is not taught to the students.

'Anthroposophy has its roots in the perceptions, already gained, into the spiritual world. Yet these are no more than the roots. The branches, leaves, blossoms, and fruits of Anthroposophy grow into all the fields of human life and action.' RUDOLF STEINER

How does Steiner deal with kids that are not so strong academically?

Steiner schools hesitate to categorise children, particularly in terms such as 'slow' or 'gifted'. A given child's weaknesses in one area, whether cognitive, emotional or physical, will usually be balanced by strengths in another area. It is the teacher's job to try to bring the child's whole being into balance.

A child having difficulty with the material might be given extra help by the teacher or by parents; tutoring might also be arranged. Correspondingly, a child who picked up the material quickly might be given harder problems of the same sort to work on, or might be asked to help a child who was having trouble.

How well do Steiner graduates do on standard tests? How well do Steiner high School graduates do in tertiary education?

To the best of our knowledge, no controlled studies have been done on these questions, but anecdotal evidence collected from various sources would seem to suggest that Steiner graduates tend to score toward the high end on standardised examinations. As far as higher education goes, Steiner graduates have been accepted as students at, and have graduated from, some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in Australia.

What is Eurythmy?

Most simply put, Eurythmy is a dance-like art form in which music or speech is expressed in bodily movement; specific movements correspond to particular notes or sounds. It has also been called 'visible speech' or 'visible song'. Eurythmy is part of the curriculum of all Steiner schools, and while it often puzzles parents new to Steiner education, children respond to its simple rhythms and exercises which help them strengthen and harmonise their body and their life forces; later, the older students work out elaborate eurythmic representations of poetry, drama and music, thereby gaining a deeper perception of the compositions and writings. Eurythmy enhances coordination and strengthens the ability to listen. When children experience themselves like an orchestra and have to keep a clear relationship in space with each other, a social strengthening also results.

Eurythmy is usually taught by a specialist who has been specifically trained in Eurythmy, typically for at least four years. In addition to pedagogical Eurythmy, there are also therapeutic ('curative') and performance-oriented forms of the art.

Central Coast Rudolf Steiner School

The Results of Waldorf (Steiner) Education

What, really, are the results of Waldorf (Rudolf Steiner) education? One may feel that the brochures make Waldorf look excellent, and that the goal of 'Education Towards Freedom' is very sound. One may be impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of teachers in a Steiner school, and admire both the academic and artistic work of the students. But it is good to hear from people outside the Waldorf movement, who have worked together with – or in some other way have had experience of – Waldorf graduates and who have an objective professional basis for judging whether this form of education really accomplishes its goals.

The following three short articles, coming from California, New York and Europe, respectively, offer just this kind of professional and objective evaluation.

The Waldorf Grade School

James Shipman
History Department, Marin Academy
San Rafael, California

[Explanatory Note: The Marin Waldorf School ends at Eighth Grade. A number of its graduates have gone on to the Marin Academy - not a Waldorf school - for their secondary education.]

What I like about the Waldorf school is, quite simply, its graduates. As a high school teacher at Marin Academy, I have seen a number of students who come from your program, and I can say that in all cases they have been remarkable, bright, energetic and involved.

One of my duties is to teach World Civilizations to incoming 9th graders, so I tend to be one of the first people to encounter a Waldorf graduate. My course is not like the standard History of Western Civilization course, but rather requires the student to investigate the deeper aspects of the world's cultures. For example, we are not so much interested in the chronology of Chinese emperors and the dynasties to which they belonged; instead we want to explore and understand the principles of Taoism and Confucianism and how these underlying philosophies helped to shape the Chinese culture. We aren't so much interested in memorizing names and dates as we are in understanding what motivates people, and why they make the choices they do.

I find the Marin Waldorf School graduates to be entirely willing to undertake this sort of investigation. They are eager to learn. They do not complain when I assign, for example, a passage from the Bhagavad Gita and then ask them what they think. Indeed, that is what I find most

remarkable about Waldorf kids: they have been taught to think; thinking is an 'ok' activity for them to engage in. I think they intrinsically understand the difference between thinking about an issue and merely memorizing 'the right answer' for the test.

Waldorf students are not simply bookworms, however. In fact one could find Waldorf kids completely involved in the theatre, the arts, music and sports here at Marin Academy. What I see here is an integration of faculties - mental, emotional, physical and spiritual - which, when coupled with the overtones of personality, unite to form unique individuals. Marin Waldorf students to me are interesting people. They can converse intelligently on almost any issue, because they have been taught to examine. They can be enormously sympathetic to almost any issue, because they have been taught to tolerate. They can gracefully dance or score a goal because they have been taught to move. They can circulate among various groups on campus and engage in a variety of activities because they have been taught to harmonize.

We use the word 'holistic' or 'whole person' to describe the kind of person I have outlined above. Whatever the term used, it is apparent to me that the Marin Waldorf School consciously turns out calm, centred and confident students. For my part, I deeply appreciate the school's efforts, because based on their work, I get to enjoy those students who come to Marin Academy. It is with humility that I note that Waldorf students allow me and my colleagues to influence them.

It is as if somewhere in their early years of schooling they somehow got the idea that learning is a lifelong enterprise.

The Waldorf Graduate:

A personal reflection

Dr. W. Warren B. Eickelberg
Professor of Biology
Director, Premedical Curriculum
Adelphi University, Garden City, New York

[Explanatory Note: Most, though perhaps not all of the students referred to here as ‘Waldorf graduates’ had their high school years in a Steiner school.]

The 1986-7 academic year will mark my thirty-fourth year of teaching at Adelphi University. When I began, no biologist knew what a gene was and now we manufacture them. When I entered the building, there were but a dozen antibiotics, and now they number in the thousands. Thirty-four years ago many of the biological subdisciplines did not even exist and much of what we taught then would now be incorrect. The minds of men and women have opened for us new vistas to view; the hands of men and women have given us new technology, but the souls of men and women remain the same, always searching for the answers as to who we are, why we are here, and what our destiny is.

As there have been changes in academic content and technology, so the typical undergraduate student has changed. I lived with and experienced the job-oriented World War II veteran. I remember well the recall to active duty of many for the ‘peace action’ in Korea. I sat through the ‘teach-ins’ and the campus strikes of the Vietnam era. I lived through the revealing anatomy of the miniskirt, the drabness of the dark blue jean phase, the demands by the students to develop their own curricula, the reorientation of learning by professors and administrators, the establishment of obviously immoral sex mores, the decline in admissions standards, and the unique and possibly devastating effect that the medium of television has had on young people. Without any doubt, my past three decades have been marked by change, change, and ever more change.

Throughout this dynamism of activity where values were under attack and standards of behaviour were challenged, from time to time there would be a unique stabilizing influence in my classes: a Waldorf School graduate. And they were different from the others. Without exception they were, at the same time, caring people, creative students, individuals of identifiable values, and students who, when they spoke, made a difference.

Let me share with the reader some of these features so that you too might see the difference. Almost without exception, every Waldorf School graduate showed concern for the embalmed animals we use for dissection in Comparative Anatomy. I was always asked if the animal died painlessly, and they further

questioned as to how. The Waldorf School graduates of the fifties, and of today, still show a unique reverence for life, and they regard an experimental animal, whether dead or alive, in a special way ... not just as another reagent or piece of equipment to use in a laboratory exercise. Whereas most students are surprised to see the giant liver of a shark, it is always the Waldorf School graduate who sees this massive organ filled with oils as the result of a unique plan to give the animals buoyancy.

When describing geologic time, I have often told the true story of a man whose calculator could record the number 9.9×10^{99} . He discovered that even the estimated number of atoms in the universe or the volume of our known universe in cubic millimetres could not begin to approach this order of magnitude. It was a Waldorf student who found an article suggesting that the chances of two human beings, other than identical twins, being genetically alike would approach one out of $1 \times 10^{6,270}$, and thus concluded that indeed each person is a unique and specially created individual.

We know that the atoms in every cell of every living being are found in the stars and the intergalactic gases and that we all make up a Community of Matter. As we in science view the universe from its creation to its predicted end, man may seem, astronomically speaking, rather insignificant, but any Waldorf School graduate will remind each of us that Man is still the only astronomer.

Once, when I was discussing the decreasing gene frequencies of Blood Type B from Siberia through western Europe, it was a Waldorf student who related this fact to the invasions by Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. It has been said that historians see civilization as a stream through history, and the stream is often filled with blood, loud shouts, killing and discoveries. It is the Waldorf School graduate who sees the stream, but also focuses on the banks where there are people who love, raise children, build homes, write poetry, worship, and carve statues.

Waldorf School graduates see behind the facts that often must be repeated or explained on examination. They are keenly interested in the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of the cell's ultrastructure, but they know that Chemistry, Biology, and Physics can't tell them much about the nature of love. They see, in embryology, a foetus developing a compound called prostaglandin, enhancing the mother's response to oxytocin so that labour can begin, and they see this as a reflection of a guided universe. I feel certain that all Waldorf School graduates believe in the orderliness of our universe, and they believe the human mind can discern this order and appreciate its beauty.

Research on Waldorf School Graduates

**Excerpts from an article in Der Spiegel,
December 14, 1981
Translation by Renate Field**

[Explanatory Note: Der Spiegel is a German weekly news magazine, somewhat analogous to our Time or Newsweek.]

Waldorf Schools, generally reputed to produce 'beautiful souls' weakened for the tasks of real life, actually do quite the opposite, say results of a study which could even correct the evaluation of Gesamtschulen (twelve-year schools which include both those students preparing for college and others as well).

During the current school year, 32,000 students are being educated outside the state school system in 72 Free Waldorf Schools - according to the pedagogical concepts of the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner. They attend a school which, according to the aims of their founder, aspires to transmit not only knowledge and ability but also content helpful for life and a perspective on life's purposes. Their school day does not follow the 45-minute beat of strict timetables, but runs according to the rhythm of 'blocks' and, during the first eight years, with strong artistic emphasis. Their career is not accompanied, year after year, by reports, marks and promotions, but is free of selection¹ and pressures of grading - a tempting perspective surely, but for many parents hardly a realistic one or an adequate preparation for the battles of life.

The view is now being shaken by a scientific study of 'The Educational Background of Former Waldorf Students'- the first empirical research of the Waldorf movement.

Three independent scientists, paid by the Bonn Department of Education, interviewed 1,460 former Waldorf students born in the years of 1946 and 1947 and came to a prevailing positive result in favour of the Waldorf schools. Their students have achieved, so the examiners have discovered, 'an educational plateau well above average'.

The results appear to be formulated conservatively. For it is just this achievement of the Waldorf schools that holds surprises for the educational policy-makers. Twenty-two percent of the students polled passed the Abitur² at their own Waldorf school - even back in the years 1966 and 1967, almost three times more than in the state schools. Moreover, 40 percent of those polled, who had 'never attended any other school than a Waldorf school' from Grade I through to 13, passed the Abitur. These statistics appear even more significant when the conditions under which the exams were taken are considered-for instance, the fact the 'the Abitur does not lie within the interests of Rudolf

Steiner's pedagogy' as stated by Stefan Leber, Board member of the Association of Waldorf Schools.

Practically speaking, this means that the students are taught according to Waldorf guidelines during their twelve years at school and are not specially prepared for the diploma examination. Only in the voluntary 13th year³ is the curriculum oriented toward the requirements of the state schools and the Abitur. On top of this, the exam itself was 'an altogether unfamiliar Abitur given under strictest conditions: all tests came from outside the school; the exam was monitored by a state team of examiners'. Proponents of the conventional school system must be irritated by such results, because after all, the Waldorf School is a Gesamtschule (see definition in the first paragraph) of the purest type. Nevertheless, it is now proven, says Bernhard Vier, who headed the research team, that 'among the students who were taught for 12 years on a non-selective basis, an even higher percentage are able to pass the Abitur'. All this, says the educator, 'the academicians have never wanted to believe possible'.

The Waldorf students showed a preference for occupations in the educational and social fields (20 percent), in the medical (12 percent), and in the artistic/linguistic field (12 percent); the legal and technical professions were 'underrepresented'⁴. The graduates obviously took their incentives for professional choice from the Waldorf values. Success, prestige, recognition, and career potential, and income played at best a subordinate role. As 'personally especially important' in making their decision, the graduates named above all their own inclinations and abilities, independence and interest, then followed social and altruistic aspects.

- ¹ A term used for the policy of allowing only the fittest to continue and leaving the others behind.
- ² An examination whose equivalent in the United States would allow a student to skip introductory courses and, in effect, start college as a sophomore.
- ³ The U.S. and German school systems are different from one another. American Waldorf schools have no voluntary 13th year; nor, of course, do the students have to take an Abitur examination.
- ⁴ Available American statistics are somewhat different. In 1986 Kimberton Waldorf School made a survey of its own high school alumni. Of those responding, 23% were active on corporate or private business; 22% had entered scientific, technological, or medical professions; and 16% had become educators. The remaining responses showed that 16% were active in the arts, theatre or journalism, and 10% had gone into law.

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