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*A classroom at Ocean Charter School, established in 2004, in Los Angeles, CA*

## THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC WALDORF EDUCATION

### Seven Reflections

By **LIZ BEAVEN, Ed.D.**

**D**uring the September meeting of our Alliance Board of Directors, discussion turned to our Core Principles and our goal of having every member school actively exploring their alignment with them. Seven Board members and Advisors were invited to reflect on their relationship to, or interpretation of, one of the Core Principles. The assignment was open-ended, and each author took a unique path in fulfilling it. The results follow in seven short essays that offer individual, often personal, reflections. These essays do not represent an official Alliance statement or definition of the Principles; rather, they are offered in hopes of sparking thought and reflection in individual teachers and in faculty studies and discussions at Alliance schools.

Like many ideas, work started on identifying those principles essential to Waldorf education in several places around the same time, as a number of Waldorf educators sought to address shared goals including: *What is it that makes an education “Waldorf”? What is the essential core of philosophy, beliefs, methodology and other defining characteristics, without which Waldorf education would lose its identity? What distinguishes Waldorf education from other progressive approaches, such as Montessori and Reggio Emilia—and, importantly for our dialogue with other educators—what do we hold in common? What distinguishes the enactment of Waldorf education in this country in its traditional independent school settings and in the growing, diverse, Public Waldorf sphere?*

To offer a little context, the tension between fidelity and compromise sits at the heart of these questions. At the very beginning of Waldorf education in 1919, Rudolf Steiner noted that compromises would be necessary in order to bring this new art of education to life and form. Of interest today, these compromises included questions of assessment and accountability, an ongoing challenge for all Waldorf educators and a particular question for those in the sphere of public education. As we have expanded a Waldorf approach into more diverse settings and grappled with the requirements of public mandates, tension between fidelity and compromise has been our constant companion. How far can one travel from a core of

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# Seven Reflections

## ON THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC WALDORF EDUCATION

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foundational philosophy and practice before the result becomes unrecognizable and should no longer be identified as “Waldorf education”—public or private? These questions led to development of principles by the Pedagogical Section Council of North America, by AWSNA, and by the Alliance.

In the Alliance, these questions drove the development of a Path of Membership, which will engage all schools in essential processes of self-study and peer review, founded on an examination of the Core Principles, and will ultimately allow qualified schools to use the name “Public Waldorf.” It will be helpful and important for each school to demonstrate the practice and incorporation of each Principle. Where has the school encountered obstacles or been forced to make compromises? We know that compromise is inevitable—in fact, it can be argued that there is not and should not be such a thing as a “pure” Waldorf school due, to its self-reflective, adaptive, evolving nature—but are we making compromises with full consciousness of their impact and cause? Of equal importance to the issue of compromise is the need to innovate and adapt to widening circles of schools in different settings and with diverse populations, plus the changes needed to remain relevant in a time of rapid societal change.

We trust that the seven essays will spark conversation, ideas of how to view or approach each Principle, and an examination of what fits and does not fit for a particular school. I found it a fascinating exercise to read each one in succession and, as I read, to clarify or challenge my own responses.

**Charlie Burkam**, Board Treasurer, reflects on **Principle One**, addressing the nature of the human being, which lies at the very heart of Waldorf education. We view each individual as a non-irreducible self comprised of a unique past, present, and future, and with multiple aspects including the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral, spiritual, and practical. As a teacher and school administrator, I found my work was enriched, deepened, and made more significant by this view, as it gave rise to an understanding that my impact for good or ill could be profound.

Board member **Jeff Lough** considers **Principle Two**, addressing child development. Again, this principle is absolutely essential to Waldorf education, however and wherever it is practiced, working with, rather than pushing against, the lawful developmental arc of each child. In our results-driven age of “hurry, hurry,” time for childhood and respect for child development both appear to be endangered. The coherent model of child development that weaves throughout Waldorf education helps us to provide children with an integrated approach that considers where they have come from and where they are headed.

**Daniel Bittleston**, Board Advisor, takes a broad view of **Principle Three**, the high ideal of social change through education. Daniel looks at several ways that Waldorf education supports the development of individual capacities that our students will need in order to be active, engaged members of a diverse and international society. Through the years, and through many conversations with teachers, I believe that this ideal of social change is a major motivator for many of us in our work—through our work with individual children and within a school community, we can shape and influence society and the future for the good.

Despite attempts to reduce or standardize the impact of the individual teacher, education remains a quintessentially human activity, a fact that is reinforced and supported by **Principle Four**, which emphasizes the quality and centrality of human relationships in Waldorf education. Board member and Pedagogical representative **Hellene Brodsky-Blake** addresses the foundational importance of healthy human relationships from the warm perspective of the kindergarten, noting the enduring bonds that are established between students and teachers, and some of the many ways relationships between all groups within a school community are supported and strengthened in multiple areas of our schools.

**Mary Goral**, Board Advisor, takes on **Principle Five**, addressing our aspirations towards greater access and increased diversity in our schools—students, faculty, staff, and parents—and the resulting need for a rigorous examination of our curricular materials, assumptions, language, and school culture. This Principle may well represent the greatest challenge and richest opportunity for learning as we slowly expand the reach of Public Waldorf education into wider circles. There is much to research, discuss, and understand from our experience to date. In this Principle, the tension between fidelity and compromise can be clearly seen. This topic will again be a theme of our January conference. Speaking personally, I know it has presented enormous requirements to self-reflect and, hopefully, to grow over the past few years.

**Rainbow Rosenbloom**, Vice President of the Board, adds his thoughts on **Principle Six**, addressing collaborative leadership. Rainbow has seen many schools in action and chooses to consider aspects of collaborative school leadership, primarily the principal or executive director, and some of the considerations for inclusion, process, self-knowledge, and clear communication that are required for effective leadership.

Our personal reflections are rounded out by Advisor to the Board **Amy Bird**, as she ponders **Principle Seven**, addressing schools as learning communities. Amy notes the many, frequent, and possibly unavoidable opportunities our schools offer for ongoing learning and inner development. This certainly resonates with me; I am daily grateful that I found a career in Waldorf education that, no matter which role I held or hold, demands that I learn, reflect, expand and challenge my thinking, feeling, and doing. As Amy so clearly stated, there can be no assumptions, no getting comfortable in this work.

We trust that you will find these personal interpretations thought provoking. ■



LIZ BEAVEN



*A high school class seen studying Biomimicry, taught by Tiffany Roberts, at Credo High School in Rohnert Park, CA*

## PUBLIC WALDORF EDUCATION IS FOUNDED ON A COHERENT IMAGE OF THE DEVELOPING HUMAN BEING

By CHARLES BURKAM, JD

What is the “coherent image of the developing human being” that this first core principle describes? In Waldorf education, it is commonly understood that there are three aspects to a human being, expressed in various ways—body, mind and soul; body, soul and spirit; head, heart and hands; thinking, feeling, willing. However, the four-fold nature of the human being is an equally important part of the coherent image.

First, there is a physical part, the most visible of the four aspects—a body, made up of chemicals and elements that can be segregated and analyzed in a laboratory.

Second, there is a force that brings those physical components to life. This life force has many names—chi, vital force and, in Waldorf circles, the etheric. Where does that etheric life force come from? It permeates all living things. One can imagine it by looking at an individual plant as it grows. It rises up from the seed out of the earth. A stem with two leaves stands up, the plant grows upward over time. The plant has a “blueprint” for itself within the seed, but it is the etheric forces that activate it to grow and “fill out” that blueprint. The etheric permeates and sustains life.

The third aspect of the human being, the astral, is shared only with animals. It is the ability to connect, to form relationships, with others. This relational realm is where feelings arise and live. This constituent part lives not only within a given individual body, but can extend beyond. In fact, since these forces exist on their own, they create a kind of communication network with the possibility of maintaining connections and enduring relationships, and an ability to sense or communicate feelings without direct contact. Once a relationship is established, one person can often sense a reaction from the other person without having to touch them, without speaking and even without being in the same physical space. It is now well documented that twins on opposite portions of the earth can have shared sensations that only one has directly felt.

Lastly, the fourth constituent of the human being is the ego. This is the individual spark that makes each human unique and brings specific gifts, creative potential, and intentions to this life. The ego is what allows a human being to be independent, make decisions, and be able to determine a unique path through life. It is what raises the human being to a different level than the animal, to be a true, self-directed individual, rather than be merely one of the herd.

The most simple statement about the relationship between these four constituents and the threefold nature of the human being is that the body is primarily composed of the physical and etheric; the soul interacts primarily within the etheric and astral; and the mind/spirit is most closely connected with the astral and ego.

The teachers’ understanding of all four levels—physical, etheric, astral and ego—and of their interactions during child development deepens over the years through observing and interacting with students. This understanding, combined with the structure of the curriculum, allows Public Waldorf education to address the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, cultural, moral, and spiritual needs of the developing child, helping them integrate into a maturing whole. ■



**Charles Burkam, JD**, is on the board of the Alliance, and currently is the Executive Director of Desert Marigold School in Phoenix, AZ. He was instrumental in crafting the Core Principles of the Alliance and is active in the development of the new membership process.

## AN UNDERSTANDING OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT GUIDES ALL ASPECTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE WITHIN ESTABLISHED LEGAL MANDATES

By **JEFF LOUGH, MS**

Child development is rarely considered in our state-mandated teacher training programs and only sparsely in our Common Core Standards, but it is alive and well in our Public Waldorf schools. Understanding child development—as the beginning of human development—is a foundational principle in all that we do as Public Waldorf educators. Waldorf education is attuned to child development at every stage, from play-based kindergarten laying foundations for creative problem solving, to an ongoing developmentally relevant curriculum matching the child’s cognitive abilities, to carefully selected stories that bring connection to the child’s inner emotional development.

Understanding child development means more than just noticing. It also means matching theory to everyday practice—another unique aspect of our Public Waldorf schools. Indeed, this point was referenced in the 2015 study by the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE), which noted that what stands out about the Public Waldorf schools is “the extent to which Rudolf Steiner’s, the founder of Waldorf Schools, theory of child development and goals for nurturing human development inform every aspect of how children experience school including the curriculum, pedagogy, and structure of school.” (Friedlaender, D., Beckham, K., Zheng, X., & Darling-Hammond, L., 2015).

Waldorf educators attend to the approximate seven-year cycles of childhood, which are identified by the “soul” qualities of willing (birth to age seven), feeling (ages seven to fourteen), and, ultimately, thinking (age fourteen to 21 and beyond).

Public Waldorf education supports the age of will with physical movement, play, gentle understanding, and loving boundaries to help children learn to self-regulate—a skill that is far more predictive of positive long-term outcomes than one’s ability to read at an early age. Early in this cycle, we also understand the irrevocable importance of the development of the capacities that Steiner called the four lower senses—the sense of touch, life, balance, and movement. Indeed, current neurodevelopmental wisdom indicates the sad consequences of children not getting enough movement, rhythm, touch, and attention during these formative early years.

Feeling and imagination take the center of the second seven-year stage. Our Public Waldorf grade schools support this phase with imaginative story telling, rich artistic offerings and opportunities for students to effect positive influence on the world around them. Students get their hands dirty building shelters, sewing clothes, and growing food, all the while discovering the predictable and stable laws of nature and numeracy that keep us in balance. Waldorf-informed educators understand that teaching these lessons through worksheets, textbooks, and rote memorization does not meet students in this developmental stage. Instead, we evoke

feeling to engage the students at this age—consider the rich art and story-based instruction in our grade schools. Once again, contemporary neurological understanding supports this practice. In ages seven to fourteen, the brain structure called the amygdala and the limbic system is most active, usurping the as-yet-underdeveloped pre-frontal cortex, or “thinking” part of the brain.



*Third grade class at Live Oak Charter school experiencing sheep shearing.*

When thinking does take the helm, during the fourteen- to 21-year-old cycle, and when prior stages have rooted deeply from intentional guidance, we start to see the fruit of Waldorf education. Teens begin to develop higher intellectual functions—such as spatial reasoning and abstract and analytical thinking. These are accompanied by a new degree of self-awareness and the beginning of the realization of one’s place in the world. The Public Waldorf high school curriculum delivers deeper and more sophisticated content as students’ capacities continue to develop.

In addition to following a consistent developmental theory in our educational practice, understanding child development also means that we recognize the individual soul life of every child within each of these cycles. Public Waldorf educators consider the students’ complex individuality, temperament, unique traits, and constitution as they interact with the new and changing environment.

Our ongoing work as Public Waldorf educators is to continue to cultivate our understanding of child development as the basis for learning and teaching. ■



**Jeff Lough, MS** serves as the chair of the Pedagogical Committee for the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. He is a practicing Nationally Certified School Psychologist, a former special education teacher and former school principal. He founded Mariposa School of Global Education, a Public Waldorf School in Southern California. He currently teaches in the Department of Psychology graduate program at Humboldt State University. Jeff and his wife also run Forest and Farm Childcare, an early childhood education program on their homestead in Humboldt County, CA, where they reside with their three children.



*Adventure learning puts Credo High School students into their local environments and informs responsible citizenship.*

## PUBLIC WALDORF EDUCATION EXISTS TO SERVE BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

By DANIEL BITTLESTON

Public Waldorf education is designed to prepare students to become fully themselves and to familiarize the world as a benevolent place to which they can fully belong. While these may not be taught as overt concepts, the breadth of the curriculum serves up experience after experience that nurture self-awareness, pique curiosity about others across time and space, and, essentially, develop empathy for oneself and others.

Why is music an absolutely essential element in Public Waldorf education? Waldorf educators see the activity of playing flute as a class or taking part in an orchestra or band as the archetype of truly social behavior. As a member of a musical ensemble, one plays one's own part with skill and confidence and at the same time has to be wide awake to what everyone else is playing. By concentrating on making harmony, the student musician is developing a strong self and simultaneously a lively interest in—and commitment to—the whole group. Music class becomes the laboratory for discovering social dynamics.

The Waldorf picture of child development includes the possibility of recapitulation theory—that every child experiences a stage of affinity with each of humanity's earlier cultures; rightly timed, the sense of humanity being one family can be encouraged through dramatic empathy. Further groundwork to combat xenophobia is laid in grades four and five with an exploration of the mythologies of the Norse, of India, China, Persia, Egypt and Greece. If you have acted the part of a Rama or Sita, a Pharaoh or Plato, you are not so likely to think of Indians, Egyptians and Greeks as dangerous foreigners. And there are many other ways in which Waldorf prepares a student to be comfortable with all races and nationalities: in third grade, for example, the curriculum includes an introduction to all kinds of housing, with students making models of every kind of dwelling in every climate.

The manner in which the unfolding curriculum introduces students to time and space gives a solid preparation for social life, connect-

ing students to fellow humans past and present, near and far. Time is introduced to kindergarteners and first graders with "once upon a time" stories that through the grades lead into mythology, and ancient, then medieval, history, until students are brought home to American history in eighth grade. Spatial consciousness is seen to begin with awareness of, to quote the song, "head, shoulders knees and toes, knees and toes," and expands to describing and drawing a plan of one's own desk, classroom, house, town, state, country, the world, and then culminates in astronomy in eighth grade. This approach may account for the exceptional comfort that Waldorf alumni tend to feel in the world and in their own bodies.

In high school, subject teaching aligns with the teenage development. The ancient places studied in fifth grade are revisited, now in a contemporary timeframe; the knowledge of ancient India establishes context and caring when high school history teaches of India's colonization and its quest for independence. With debate, ninth graders practice expressing their often black and white ideas, but by twelfth grade they are able to really comprehend the different worldviews of, say, the Bolsheviks, or the Romantic Poets.

The Public Waldorf curriculum steadfastly builds the ability to understand points of view other than one's own. The intent is that graduates will be socially adept, able and inspired to contribute creatively to society in a way that is in harmony with their own essential character. ■



**Daniel Bittleston** is a threefold Waldorfian: Student for twelve years, class teacher for 21 years, parent of six overachieving children. He is an Alliance Advisory Board member, an active member of the Anthroposophical Society and installs hardwood floors.

“A healthy social life is found only when, in the mirror of each soul, the whole community finds its reflection, and when, in the whole community, the virtue of each is living.”

RUDOLF STEINER



*A kindergarten morning with students, parents and teacher, at the Journey School in Aliso Viejo, CA*

## PUBLIC WALDORF SCHOOLS FOSTER A CULTURE OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

By **HELLENE BRODSKY-BLAKE, MA**

Healthy human relationships are the foundation of Public Waldorf schools. Early childhood programs, including parent-tot, nursery and kindergarten programs, establish a foundation for long-lasting relationships between students, parents and faculty members. Early childhood teachers are often the individuals who first introduce Waldorf education to the parents and students. From the very first intake interview, the early childhood teacher invites, encourages, and supports the family to learn about Public Waldorf education. Parents seek out this education not only for their children but for themselves as well; how often has a parent arrived in your room, only to say, “Can I be your student too?”

Relationships between teachers and students have both depth and longevity. As an early childhood educator, I view myself as a touchstone, a taliswoman, and a “transitional object” for the children moving on to the grades. I offer a spiritual, soul and physical stability and consistency that support the child’s growth and development and sense of self and other. One example occurred when a group of my former kindergarteners formed a Thursday Lunch Bunch and spent their first-to-fifth-grade lunchtimes in my classroom eating, reminiscing and sharing experiences with me.

The sacred bond that is birthed in early childhood between the teacher and student grows and transforms when the child enters the grades. Public Waldorf schools establish looping policies that vary across schools, but nearly all teachers have the opportunity to advance and move with the same group of students through a number of the grades, developing a real depth of meaningful relationship.

The faculty is the heart and core of the school. This radiates into the classroom and beyond into the greater community. Public Waldorf faculty members share morning verse, meditations, child study, artistic expression, biography work, social activities, celebrations and reflections of life and death. There is a kinship, an affinity, and an interconnection woven as individual teachers share a need, a student, a hope, a struggle, an appreciation and more. Public Waldorf faculties model conscious, intentional community.

Healthy human relationships within a school extend to include the parents, the staff and broader community. The rhythms of festival life, parent education, book study, crafting days, school stores, work days,

potlucks, BBQ’s, fundraisers, park or beach days all contribute to growing and strengthening healthy human and fulfilling relationships.

This is further exemplified on our Journey School campus, with our commitment to the Compassionate Campus, Eco-literacy and Cyber Civics programs. These programs are offered to the students and parents to support and instill long-lasting and steadfast ties to each other and the greater world, extending well beyond the K-8 grades. Each fall, Journey alumni return to our school and celebrate the Harvest Festival by running a food booth and sharing experiences as graduates.

A healthy Public Waldorf school community realizes that it is not alone in its mission. Teachers are encouraged to visit other Public Waldorf schools and observe best practices, share resources, explore common challenges and provide mutual support. There is an interdependency that grows within and between Public Waldorf schools that deepens the development of human relationships.

Healthy human relationships take time, work and a great amount of energy. As an Alliance board member, I serve in gratitude to all in the Public Waldorf movement. At a recent parent meeting I asked my class parents what they wished for their child and for themselves. I was not surprised that most parents responded: “I wish for my child to be happy and I want for myself to be more present with my child.” Although this sounds simplistic, it is a daunting and often exhausting task. Public Waldorf schools provide a network of support, resources and a solid foundation for building healthy human relationships that can last a lifetime. ■



**RESOURCES:** *A Second Classroom: Parent-Teacher Relationships in a Waldorf School* by Torin M. Finser; *Creative Discipline, Connected Family* by Lou Harvey-Zahra

**Hellene Brodsky-Blake, MA** has been a Waldorf educator for 22 years, serving in parent-tot, nursery, kindergarten and grades one through three. She is currently a faculty member at Journey School serving Morning Glory Kindergarten children and families. Hellene is a mentor teacher and has taught adult education at Chapman University, Rudolf Steiner College, and provides numerous workshops across California. She is currently a lead Early Childhood Instructor with Gradalis Teacher Training Program.

## PUBLIC WALDORF SCHOOLS WORK TO INCREASE DIVERSITY AND ACCESS TO ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY

By **MARY BARR GORAL, PhD**

For the past 25 years, access to, and diversity of, Waldorf education have driven my teaching, research, and service. It all started when I walked through the doors of the Rudolf Steiner School in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Although I had read about Waldorf education, nothing prepared me for how it “felt.” I arrived there in the fall of 1993 to conduct a qualitative research study on mathematics instruction in a Waldorf school. However, it wasn’t long before two very important realizations came to me. First, I could not solely focus my research on mathematics instruction; because the education I witnessed was so integrated and was indicative of best practices, I changed the study to be part of a growing body of knowledge on school restructuring and reform. Second, I knew to the depths of my being that this education had to be available for all children.

*Public Waldorf schools respond to unique demands and cultures in a wide range of locations in order to provide maximum access to a diverse range of students. Schools work towards ensuring that students do not experience discrimination in admission, retention, or participation.*

Possibly as an answer to this second realization, I found out about the Urban Waldorf School in Milwaukee. A visit was arranged and I was fortunate enough to see firsthand how the healing curriculum and pedagogy of Waldorf education was working in an inner city public school. Students were not only thriving socially, but academically as well. According to a study by Byers, Dillard, Easton, Henry, McDermott, Oberman, and Uhrmacher (1996), students at Urban Waldorf went from having 26% of third grade students reading at or above grade level in 1992 to 63% at or above grade level in 1995. Although Urban Waldorf is now closed, its legacy and dream live on in our Public Waldorf schools and programs across the United States.

Ten years after researching Waldorf education in Ann Arbor, I had the privilege to take over a grant-funded project in Louisville, KY, called the Waldorf-inspired Cadre. The Cadre

consisted of a group of public school teachers implementing Waldorf methods into their inner city classrooms. A second research project commenced, and after spending time in teachers’ classrooms and conducting interviews, I found that Cadre teachers were building exceptionally strong, inclusive classroom communities (Goral, 2009). One Cadre teacher commented that colleagues in her building thought she was given the “well-behaved kids.” This was a testament to the fact that the curriculum and instruction, as well as her understanding of child development were working wonders with her students. Engagement through the arts was another theme that presented itself in the research, and through this enhanced engagement; students were happier and more willing to work hard on all aspects of their schooling (Goral, 2009).

*Public Waldorf schools and teachers have the freedom and responsibility to creatively meet the developmental needs of the students with the most inclusive possible approaches for all learners.*

Throughout the time working with teachers in the Cadre as well as in my current work as a consultant for Public Waldorf schools across the country, another issue dealing with access and diversity has presented itself. Teachers are asking for a curriculum that better meets the needs of the student population in their schools. Although the Waldorf curriculum is well-rounded and culturally enriching, it should be updated to make it more relevant for contemporary times. For one, we need to address the hidden curriculum, which refers to the unwritten, unofficial, and often-unintended lessons, values, transmission of norms and perspectives that students learn in school ([edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum/](http://edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum/)). An example of this might be the predominant use of the masculine pronoun in the telling of fairy tales, myths, and fables. Another example could be the lack of biographies told of women and people of color. These are just a few ways that we pass on unintended values and ideas to our students.

In addition to identifying the above issues, it is critical that we address the Eurocentric nature of the Waldorf curriculum. As we navigate the changes and unrest in our society, we owe it to our teachers and our students



*Students from Woodland Star Charter School in Sonoma, CA, perform at **Waldorf at Weill** at Sonoma State University.*

to more deeply study the problems and concerns facing our diverse country and world. For example, when studying astronomy in the middle school, we should note that a 365-day calendar was actually created by the Chinese astronomer, Guo Shoujing during the Yuan Dynasty, 300 years prior to its European counterpart, the Gregorian calendar.

*The Public Waldorf curriculum may be modified to reflect the student population in the school.*

By increasing access and diversity to all sectors of society, students who attend our Public Waldorf schools have the opportunity, as the tag line on the Waldorf 100 website states, to “learn to change the world.” ■

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For Mary’s Bio, please see page 10.



*Sharon Saunders, director of the Seaside Community Charter School in Atlantic Beach, FL, with teachers and staff at the Alliance Annual National Conference in 2016*

## SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IS CONDUCTED THROUGH SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN ESTABLISHED LEGAL STRUCTURES

By RAINBOW ROSENBLOOM, MEd

Principle Six asks us to examine how our schools are governed. What is the nature of leadership and how do leadership groups work together in a mood of collaboration, ensuring appropriate accountability and transparency? Most schools have defined leadership positions (such as a principal or administrator) who will be responsible for overall direction and many decisions; they are also asked to give teachers as much responsibility as possible for decisions that directly relate to what is taught and how it is taught, based on an understanding of the other Core Principles.

As I reflected upon Principle Six, I was aware of the possibility of interpreting its call for collaborative leadership as simply a charge for canvassing stakeholder groups prior to the “leader” making a decision. Checking in with colleagues, staff, and parents is not enough, though it is of course a good beginning. It is essential to recognize that, although a school will have individuals in official leadership roles, aspects of leadership will appear in every part of the institution, and many will be involved. Certain characteristics will be important for anyone who is involved in the decisions and leadership of a school.

For example, leadership requires self-awareness. This can be strengthened through the type of inner work described by Rudolf Steiner in his seminal book, *Study of Man (Foundations of Human Experience)*, where he discusses the impact of antipathies and sympathies. He brings attention to our tendencies to react to experiences, based on either positive or negative responses. In the realm of leadership, regular inner work will help us to rise up above this tendency and offer the opportunity to become detached. In other words, we may feel a certain antipathy or sympathy, but as leaders we must find a way not to respond from this feeling, rather to continue our role as objective observer, guiding a process and allowing the right decision to unfold.

How do we recognize the “right decision”? This is precisely where the

art of leadership shines. The leader assumes the role of process guide, allowing different individuals to take charge at various stages, pointing out where stakeholder groups stand, as well as providing enough information for the process to proceed intelligently.

A hiring example may help demonstrate the way the leadership process moves between individuals and groups, and the coordinating, directional role of the “recognized” leadership. There is probably an initial paper-screening committee, a small group that gathers applications, reads cover letters, examines letters of interest, and discusses resumes. The principal or executive director may both lead this committee and support its work by checking references and vetting the candidates. She then brings back information that leads to a recommendation for the next step, likely an invitation to visit the school for first interviews.

A second group, perhaps comprised of faculty, staff, and parent representatives with experience in personnel work, may conduct interviews. The interviews are followed by demonstration lessons, and the group convenes to decide which candidates are then invited back for second interviews. Candidates may require further vetting, and may be brought into a more informal social setting for others in the community to meet, further widening the circle of those who are able to be involved.

Collaborative leadership demands that there has been prior agreement by the board and faculty on the process to be followed, and that any individual involved in the process releases attachment to a specific outcome, such as preference for a particular candidate.

How can the principle of collaborative leadership assist a school if a decision-making process goes awry? By studying Principle Six, school leaders may begin to recognize the probability—and value—of differ

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*Administrators and teachers working to define the national picture for organizing the work of becoming certified as Public Waldorf schools, at the Alliance conference 2015*

## PUBLIC WALDORF SCHOOLS CULTIVATE A LOVE OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

By **AMY BIRD**

One of my responsibilities as the Development Director at Desert Marigold School was to meet with every new family. The format was a thirty- to forty-five-minute scheduled conversation with parents that took place ideally within the first couple months after their children enrolled. By this time, parents had already taken the required school tour. Most had also shown up for back-to-school night, and many had attended a curriculum overview hosted by the faculty. More than a few walked into my office wondering what could possibly be left to go over.

I told them that I hoped to share a picture of the life of the community as a whole. I wanted to open a conversation not just about what it meant for them to be parents supporting their children's growth and all that goes on in the classroom, but also what it meant for them to be individuals on their own paths of development who had chosen to be in this place at this time.

Mostly, I asked lots of questions: What do you love doing? What attracted you to the school? What skills do you have that you'd like to share? Of the many activities that go on—teaching, gardening, animal care, landscaping, hospitality, fundraising, event planning, and more—are there any you want to learn more about? What hopes do you have for your family that you think might be connected to being here?

Over and over I found myself saying the same thing: the families who thrive in the school community for many years tend to be the ones with adults who participate and grow and change as much as the children do. Describing the school as a learning community for everyone seemed to help make sense of why the school felt different.

All in all, I think Alliance schools excel at being places where children, teachers, parents, administrators, and board members alike

are engaged in a process of ongoing learning. Truly, it's hard not to be in a state of constant individual growth when our schools are so new, there is so much work to be done, and there are so many different people involved. Even when we're not inclined toward self-reflection we can usually see the value in making new mistakes rather than simply repeating old ones.

My burning questions have more to do with the sufficiency of our collective learning processes, both as school communities and as a larger movement for social transformation. Do we have the courage to keep reimagining what Public Waldorf is and what it might become? Do our schools have the vitality and flexibility they need to rise up and meet the tremendous needs and opportunities of our time?

The Alliance core principles document begins with the assertion that the purpose of the principles is to ensure that Public Waldorf education is ever-evolving, and continuously renewed through practice, research, observation, and active reflection.

I love that sentence. I also know that it's far more difficult to live out that assertion day by day than it was to put it into words. It means there's no relying on what has always been done. No getting comfortable. No future where we have it all figured out.

Even the "essential" practices enumerated in Principle Seven can lose their freshness and potency if we don't pay attention to how we practice them. "Artistic activities" can get inserted into meetings just to check off that box. Study groups can become places where people don't speak for fear of being judged (or where people actually are judged). Any practice can become deadened or perfunctory.

This includes how we relate to Rudolf Steiner as a primary source of guidance. Waldorf educator and Alliance advisory board member Betty Staley puts it plainly: "It does not help if students or teachers imitate Steiner's statements without understanding them, as this leads to dogmatism." More of her commentary can be found in a guide to a series of foundational Steiner lectures recently published by the Pedagogical Section Council of North America as part of the preparation for the upcoming international "Waldorf 100" celebration. I hear in it both invitation and admonishment. To continue to benefit from the depth and breadth and complexity of Steiner's research and insights, we will have to continue to do our own hard work.

Reading through Principle Seven one more time, it's the word "cultivate" that sticks. I see a farmer. I see a field. I see how the farmer moves through the field with attention and care. To cultivate is to enhance the living qualities around us and within us. One does not happen without the other. ■



**AMY BIRD** works on the lending team at RSF Social Finance. Previously, she was administrator and then development director at Desert Marigold School in Phoenix, where she lives. Amy has a certificate in Waldorf Administration from Rudolf Steiner College. She served on the Alliance executive committee from 2011 to 2015 and is currently a member of the Alliance Advisory Board.

# Alliance FOR PUBLIC WALDORF EDUCATION CORE PRINCIPLES

Members of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education are committed to the core principles listed below. They ensure that Public Waldorf education is ever-evolving and continuously renewed through practice, research, observation, and active reflection.

## 1 Image of the Human Being

Public Waldorf education is founded on a coherent image of the developing human being.

- Each human being is a unique individual who brings specific gifts, creative potential, and intentions to this life. Public Waldorf education addresses multiple aspects of the developing child including the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, cultural, moral, and spiritual. Through this, each child is helped to integrate into a maturing whole, able to determine a unique path through life.
- Rudolf Steiner's educational insights are seen as a primary, but not exclusive, source of guidance for an understanding of the image of the human being.

## 2 Child Development

An understanding of child development guides all aspects of the educational program, to the greatest extent possible within established legal mandates.

- Human development proceeds in approximate 7-year phases. Each phase has characteristic physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions and a primary learning orientation.

The Public Waldorf educational program, including the curriculum, teaching methodology, and assessment methods, works with this understanding of human development to address the needs of the individual and the class in order to support comprehensive learning and healthy, balanced development.

- Our developmental perspective informs how state and federal mandates, including curriculum sequence, standardized testing, and college and career readiness, are met.

## 3 Social Change Through Education

Public Waldorf education exists to serve both the individual and society.

- Public Waldorf education seeks to offer the most supportive conditions possible for the development of each student's unique capacities and for engendering the following qualities to work towards positive social change:

- A harmonious relationship between thinking, feeling, and willing;
- Self-awareness and social competence;
- Developmentally appropriate, academically informed, independent thinking;
- The initiative and confidence necessary to transform intentions into realities; and
- An interest in the world, with active respect and a feeling of responsibility for oneself, one's community, and the environment.

- Such individuals will be able to participate meaningfully in society.

## 4 Human Relationships

Public Waldorf Schools foster a culture of healthy relationships.

- Enduring relationships – and the time needed to develop them – are central to Public Waldorf education. The teacher works with each student and class as a whole to support relationship-based learning.

- Healthy working relationships with parents, colleagues, and all stakeholders are essential to the well being of the student, class, and school community. Everyone benefits from a community life that includes festivals, events, adult education, study, and volunteer activities.
- Public Waldorf education encourages collaboration in schools, within the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, among all schools working out of a developmental approach, in conjunction with the broader field of education.

## 5 Access and Diversity

Public Waldorf Schools work to increase diversity and access to all sectors of society.

- Public Waldorf schools respond to unique demands and cultures in a wide range of locations in order to provide maximum access to a diverse range of students. Schools work towards ensuring that students do not experience discrimination in admission, retention, or participation.

- Public Waldorf schools and teachers have the responsibility to creatively address the developmental needs of the students with the most inclusive possible approaches for all learners.

- The Public Waldorf program and curriculum is developed by the school to reflect its student population.

## 6 Collaborative Leadership

School leadership is conducted through shared responsibilities within established legal structures.

- Faculty, staff, administration and boards of a Public Waldorf school collaborate to guide and lead the school with input from stakeholders in groups. To the greatest extent possible, decisions related to the educational program are the responsibility of those faculty and staff with the knowledge and experience of Rudolf Steiner's educational insights.

- Governance and internal administration are implemented in a manner that cultivates active collaboration, supportive relationships, effective leadership, consequential action, and accountability. A Public Waldorf school is committed to studying and deepening its understanding of best practices of governance appropriate to its stage of organizational development.

## 7 Schools as Learning Communities

Public Waldorf schools cultivate a love of lifelong learning and self-knowledge.

- Public Waldorf education emphasizes continuous engagement in learning and self-reflective practices that support ongoing improvement. At the individual and classroom level, teachers reflect regularly on their observations of the students and of school-wide work and professional development include self-reflection, peer review, faculty and individual study, artistic activity, and research.

- Rudolf Steiner is a primary, but not exclusive, source of guidance for developing an active inner, meditative life and an understanding of the dynamics within society.

- Public Waldorf schools encourage all community members to engage in active and ongoing ways to enhance their capacities as human beings through self-reflection and conscious social engagement.

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## CORE PRINCIPLE #5: ACCESS AND DIVERSITY

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Mary Barr Goral, Ph.D., began her career in education over 30 years ago. After teaching in the public schools in Bloomington, Indiana for eleven years, she received her masters and doctorate degrees in curriculum studies and math education from Indiana University. Mary taught in higher education for twelve years, and she currently works with Public Waldorf schools, coaching and training teachers through her educational organization, Transformational Teaching.

Mary pioneered two other Waldorf teacher trainings, Great Lakes Waldorf Teacher Training in Milwaukee (started in 2002) and Kentahten Teacher Training, a regional teacher training in Louisville (started in 2005). She currently serves as Executive Director of Kentahten Teacher Training. Her book, *Transformational Teaching: Waldorf-inspired Methods in the Public School*, tells the story of teachers in Louisville who use Waldorf methods with their public school students.

Mary served on the board of trustees of Rudolf Steiner College and is currently on the Advisory Board of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education. She chairs the Alliance's Task Force for Teacher Education, a committee working on standards for Public Waldorf teacher training.

## CORE PRINCIPLE #6: COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

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ing viewpoints in important decision making. Leaders are responsible for maintaining the good of the whole, and not simply those aspects that are compatible with their personal preferences.

This highlights the need for another aspect of healthy leadership, essential to the “servant leader”: humility. Humility is extremely difficult to describe and is unfortunately too often misunderstood to be self-deprecation, or self-diminishment. There is a different aspect to humility germane to collaborative leadership, and it surrounds the understanding of what Steiner referred to as “world wisdom” (sometimes translated as “world direction”). Steiner suggested that were we to become aware of this, we would see the multitude of both support and guidance available. Sometimes, as leaders, we must step back in humility, recognizing that we do not truly understand all that is unfolding. We must examine whether our sympathies and/or antipathies are at work too strongly, thus influencing our perspective. And we must trust that the approved, hygienic process we have been charged to guide is leading us to the “right decision,” though maybe a different one from what we may have hoped.

Collaborative leadership can be an art; the focus of leadership may shift depending on the issue or process at play; the designated leader may at various times be prominently visible or more in the background guiding and supporting others; a wide variety of stakeholder perspectives are heard and considered to the greatest possible extent; classroom and curriculum decisions are, whenever possible, guided by the teachers; and decisions are made in support of the vision, mission, and greatest good of the school as a whole rather than from one individual's perspective. ■

Rainbow Rosenbloom, MEd, founded Live Education!



in the fall of 1997, after twelve years of working with homeschooling families and co-ops, both privately and within the public schools. He studied Waldorf education at Emerson College in England and worked as a class teacher and a high school teacher in several

Waldorf schools. Rainbow also helped to construct an innovative Waldorf charter school program in Monterey, CA and served as its director for three years. He has a BA in Philosophy from The University of Tulsa and an M.Ed. from Harvard.



BY VICTORIA  
TEMPLE

## DESERT MARIGOLD HIGH SCHOOL WINS SUSTAINABLE GARDEN GRANT

**Desert Marigold School** (Phoenix, AZ) was awarded \$5,000 from the Lowe's Toolbox for Education Charitable & Educational Foundation, thanks to grant writer and parent volunteer, **Sara Wall**. Desert Marigold High School teachers, **Christie Martin** and **Linda Roessler**, along with Tower Project Coordinator, Sara Wall, presented their experiences, research, findings, and results from their first year of growing produce utilizing aeroponic tower gardens as part of the Arizona State University, School of Sustainability Urban Garden Series: Creating a Sustainable Urban Garden without a Soil Footprint. **Congratulations!**



## TOMORROW RIVER SCHOOL CELEBRATES ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP

2017 has marked the fifth year of partnership between the **Central Wisconsin Environmental Station** (CWES) and the **Tomorrow River Community Charter School**. A community breakfast to mark the occasion took place on October 30. The event included an update on the two major projects: "Forest Restoration at CWES" and "Year 5 of the Tomorrow River Community Charter School" that is located on the environmental station. The school's enrollment continues to grow, students are spending valuable time outside, and partnerships with the community are strong.

## ABOUT NATIONAL FARM TO SCHOOL NETWORK

The National Farm to School Network is an information, advocacy and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing, school gardens and food and agriculture education into schools and early care and education settings.

**National Farm to School** empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities. National Farm to School Network provides vision, leadership and support at the state, regional and national levels to connect and expand the farm to school movement, which has grown from a handful of schools in the late 1990s to approximately 42,000 schools in all 50 states as of 2014.

**Syringa Mountain School** is involved in the network. Located in Hadley, ID, Syringa is the first public charter school in Idaho that is guided by the core principles of Public Waldorf education. For more information visit [www.syringamountainschool.org](http://www.syringamountainschool.org) or contact Nigel at [info@syringamountainschool.org](mailto:info@syringamountainschool.org).

## SUMMER TEACHER TRAINING

The **Kentahten Institute for Waldorf Instruction's** Summer Institute will take place in Louisville, KY, **June 11-22, 2018** at Foxhollow Farm (a biodynamic farm) and will offer classes for Public Waldorf teachers. For more information contact Mary Goral at [drmarygoral@gmail.com](mailto:drmarygoral@gmail.com).

## WALDORF 100 POSTCARD EXCHANGE



The idea of exchanging postcards is as simple as it is enchanting: When every Waldorf school in the world sends just one (real!) postcard to every other Waldorf school in the world, then 1,100 postcards will arrive in every school! Each school could create a huge display, a "card wall from the world" that everyone can touch and feel, making the Waldorf network a personal reality for many. A million-fold Waldorf greeting from around the globe.

To make the idea work, the Waldorf 100 team is sending every Waldorf school a package containing 1,200 blank postcards already bearing all the different school addresses. The back side is empty, so that the pupils can design and decorate themselves and, of course, add the name and address of their school. The whole school community can participate in the process, creating cards that reflect each individual school.

We are also setting up a donation fund to help schools with fewer financial resources to cover the price of postage and make it possible for them to participate in the project. We will print, of course, all the cards with environmentally-friendly inks using climate-neutral printing on Blue Angel paper. For realizing this project in a sustainable way, we work together with our eco-friendly printing partner Lokay e.K. and send the postcards via UPS to the world by the end of May.

We are looking forward to reading your comments here, telling us where the first packages arrived and which schools received the first painted postcards. For more information: [www.waldorf-100.org/en/project/postcard-exchange/](http://www.waldorf-100.org/en/project/postcard-exchange/)

