II

Phases of Waldorf School Development

Every living being is in process, which is simply the flow, the stream of its life journey. Such processes are both archetypal—sharing commonality of pattern with all beings, such as gestation, birth, death and resurrection—as well as unique to the particular being. Individuals and social organisms (groups, organizations and communities) endowed with the gift of (self) consciousness have the possibility of becoming aware of their own processes, and thus become responsible for their own evolution.[1]

– Allan Kaplan

This description of school development gives a general picture of characteristic phases in the life cycle of a Waldorf school.[2] It is meant to provide a perspective or guide to aid faculty, administration and parents, as well as Board members to more consciously develop their school. The picture presented in no way seeks to deny the uniqueness of each individual Waldorf school's biography, but rather to point toward characteristic questions and issues which exist in the life history of most schools.[3]

Underlying this description of the life cycle of Waldorf schools are a number of principles. The first is that all institutions are human creations; they are created by people with an idea in response to a perceived need. In the case of Waldorf schools, this need is a sense that the children in a given community or region want Waldorf education. The second principle is that schools, and indeed all organizations, are living entities, with phases of adaptation, growth, crisis and development.[4] This means that organic metaphors such as seed, stalk, bud and flower; or birth childhood, adulthood and old age are more relevant to the biography of schools than mechanical images such as

that of an input-output system, a clockwork mechanism or a well-running engine. In creating a school we are indeed creating a living being, whose destiny may be unknown to us, but which requires our love and ongoing commitment to flourish.

A third principle, and one which I find to be crucial, is that there is no one right form for all Waldorf schools. There are, of course, relevant principles in forming a Waldorf school, such as the idea of a collegial institution or that of phases in the life cycle of a school. But ultimately, each group of teachers, parents, children and friends must evolve those particular forms which can most effectively express their intentions. A consequence of this principle is that school forms need to evolve and change over time in order to reflect new human and spiritual aspirations.

Working with these principles leads to a presentation of characteristic issues and developmental questions rather than specific answers. Questions bring consciousness, and consciousness is that which determines the social forms we create and how well we work with them.

Birth and Childhood: Improvising in Response to Needs

The birth of a Waldorf school has its origins in the deep commitment of one or more individuals to the ideals of Waldorf education. Such a commitment may arise through visiting an existing school, or by reading a book on Waldorf education, or through hearing an inspiring lecture. The ideals of the education light up, and an individual or a small group may say, "This community needs a Waldorf school and I am going to work on it!" This lighting up, this moment of conception, happens in a great variety of ways. It is always interesting to go back in a school's history and find out who first conceived the imagination of the school and under what circumstances it arose. One founding personality read Rudolf Steiner's name in a book while on a plane. He then ordered many of Rudolf Steiner's lectures and was struck by those given to teachers and so resolved to start a school for English children in the U.S. in the middle of World War II. This school later became the Kimberton Waldorf School. In another, quite common circumstance, a group of potential parents met at a presentation on

Waldorf education, began to study A.C. Harwood's book, *The Recovery of Man in Childhood*, and decided to start a school.[5] A third common founding experience is that of a trained Waldorf teacher who moves to a community and resolves to start a school, such as was the case of the Pine Hill Waldorf School in Wilton, New Hampshire.

Following the moment of conception is a period of gestation or pregnancy in which one or more individuals are walking around carrying this idea. This gestation period will vary in time. The Toronto Waldorf School had a long preparation period; other school groups begin a kindergarten after only one or two years of preparation. During this preparation time, lectures and workshops are organized, fairs are given and the world is being told about the initiative, about the child one hopes to bring into the world. It is at times a frightening process involving many inner and outer questions, to name a few:

Who is really committed to the school?

What is our understanding of Waldorf education and anthroposophy?

How much money will we need?

What are the right legal forms?

Do we create a Waldorf School Association as a non-profit organization?

How do we find an experienced or a trained Waldorf teacher?

How will we know when to start?

These and other questions need conscious attention before the kindergarten or school opens its doors. A central issue is whether one has the intention of developing a kindergarten and a grade school or just a kindergarten. Developing a kindergarten and a grade school together or in a short sequence has many advantages, but requires a deeper and more sustaining commitment. Equally important is the question of motive. Does the initiative group consist mainly of parents who want the school for their own children? What happens when the school or kindergarten takes a year or two longer to develop than anticipated? A core group of people whose commitment goes beyond their immediate, personal interest is essential.

Another issue is whether there is enough actual or anticipated support. Are there enough children to begin with grade one and add another grade each year? Does the region have a population adequate to support a school?

In working with very young schools or with school initiative groups, I have found seven question areas developed by my colleague Tÿno Voors to be most helpful. They provide a kind of checklist for clarification which can help new school groups and other new initiatives avoid many of the difficulties which new ventures face in the first few years of their existence.[6]

A Checklist of Questions and Issues for New Schools

1. Recognizing the Vision

   What is our imagination, our vision for this school?
   Do we have a common image?
   What ideas do we hope to realize?
   How do we relate to Waldorf education and to anthroposophy?
   What changes will the school bring about in our lives, in our children's lives, and in the community?

2. Answering a Need

   Is there a need for a Waldorf school in our community, and how do we know this?
   Are there sufficient numbers of children and parents interested in Waldorf education?
   What needs and wishes does the community express about education?
   What do these expressions of interest say about the opportunities and limitations we face in starting a Waldorf school?

3. Formulating a Direction

   What will be the name of the school?
   What image of the school do we wish to promote and realize over the next two to three years?

What activities will we foster over the next few years to nurture and support the school?
What kind of brochure should we have?

4. Commitment of People

Who is committed to the initiative and why?
Who is in the initiative group and who can be counted on for the long haul?
Who are the supporters?
Is the general community aware and supportive of the school?
Is there financial support?

5. Organizing Our Work Together

What are the right legal forms for us?
How are we going to organize the school, the association, the Board, faculty and parent group?
Who will make what decisions and how will decisions be communicated between various groups?
How will we relate to supporters, Board members, parent community and town?
What financial arrangements will we make for tuition income and for salaries?

6. Work Activities

What are the central work activities needed in the school: teaching, office, public relations, fundraising, etc?
What are our priorities?
Who will do what?
How will work be coordinated and by whom?
What do we see as volunteer work and what as paid work?

7. Finding Facilities and Resources

What building space and equipment will we need now and in three to five years?
What quality of environment do we wish to create for children and teachers?

Do we have a capital budget?
Do we have the intention of building a new school or buying an existing one?
How are we going to deal with the usual operating deficit of the first few years?
Is there a fundraising and development committee?
Do we have a development plan for the future?

New school groups are usually stronger in certain areas than in others. One has a strong sense of public relations, another for building a strong group, a third a good sense of financial and administrative clarity. Working with questions such as these can help to identify areas which have been neglected and now need attention.

Following the gestation period is the exciting moment of birth, when the school or kindergarten opens its door and the children arrive for the first time. This is a very important moment in the biography of any institution and should be celebrated accordingly. A foundation ceremony, a birthday celebration, in which teachers, parents, children, friends and visitors can participate, should be planned. In this way one invites both the visible and the invisible world to bless and support that which has been inaugurated.

If the new school flourishes, it enters a period analogous to childhood—vibrant, exciting and, of course, full of surprises. It is a time of ups and downs, of mood swings and crises. "Will we have enough money to meet payroll?" Yet, it is also a time of blessing, of unforeseen help. I remember sitting with other parents at a new school in the Boston area that was to become the Waldorf School in Lexington, wondering about how we could cover the next month's payroll, when an anonymous donation of $2000 arrived.

Generally people have a high level of motivation and much warmth toward the fledgling school because they are participating in a marvelous creation process. First there was an idea, carried by a few people, but no children, teachers, money and no building. To see one's own dream then gradually begin to incarnate is a wonderful, if tiring, experience.

As the new school grows it manifests a number of characteristic qualities which it shares with other new initiatives.

- It is generally of small to medium size—a kindergarten and a few grades or perhaps even up to grade six.
- It has a shallow, informal organizational form with a limited hierarchy. Perhaps there are three sets of founding couples and two founding teachers who jointly make important decisions over a kitchen table or in a church basement.
- Leadership in the school is personal, direct and informal. New teachers and new parents may take some time to fit in because there is a personal style of doing things. If one doesn't like this style or the personalities of those in the carrying group, social difficulties frequently follow.
- Decision making is largely intuitive rather than analytical. Things are decided more by hunch or by feel than through lengthy analysis. Hiring is based on a feeling that this person will fit in and this person won't.
- The young school has a family atmosphere about it. Everyone contributes as he or she is able, and most teachers, staff members and families have a strong sense of loyalty to the school and a sense of camaraderie toward each other. Later this sense of informal cohesion dissipates and people speak longingly of the old days, of painting classrooms together, of endless weeks preparing for the fair or of the struggle to find enough money to buy desks.
- The goals and direction of the new school are largely implicit, carried in the minds and hearts of the carrying group of founding teachers and parents. This is not to say that Waldorf education is not talked about, but rather that spelling out in detail the many aspects of what kind of a Waldorf school it will be is rightly seen as unnecessary. It would be a bit like asking a seven-year-old to tell you with precision what he or she would want to do when grown up.[7]

Childhood Illnesses

In the same way that children have childhood diseases, new schools face challenges and difficulties analogous to bouts of illness. They are seldom fatal, and they can serve to strengthen the school if worked

with. A few of the more common childhood illnesses of new Waldorf schools are:

- The pioneer godparent, who wants a Waldorf school, helps it to get started and partially funds the initiative, but is not existentially involved. The help often comes with strings attached, and the person may seek to control the hiring and development of the school. While the motives are usually positive, unless the person actually works in the school and gradually gives up his or her authority to a faculty group and Board, endless difficulties ensue.
- The golden spoon is a similar difficulty. If one or two people fund an initiative, automatically covering its deficits, then the school never has to articulate its purpose and generate support from a wider parent and community group. This situation is analogous to being excessively pampered—it spoils one and leads to not facing reality.
- The over-planned and "perfect Waldorf school" where everything is so planned out that the reality of the local setting and its needs are never seen or heard. Such an orientation creates a school incapable of responding to needs and opportunities, a school too rigid and ideological to have a living dialog with children, parents and environment.
- The reverse of the "perfect Waldorf school" is a new school whose commitment to Waldorf education is so loose that it becomes an alternative school, attempting to cater to the wishes of a very diverse parent community. Sooner or later this creates an atmosphere where no one is happy since each group has a different picture of what the school should be.
- The perfect home syndrome in which a young school group finds the ideal site, suitable for the next seven years, but quite expensive, and spends all its human and financial energy on the site before the school is actually established.
- The balanced sharing of responsibility in the life of a school is one of the most common areas of conflict as a school grows. If the school was started by a strong parent group, there is the need to give a growing teacher body responsibility for all areas of the pedagogy, including hiring. If it was started by teachers,

the challenge is one of creating a Board and parent association which have real involvement in areas of finance, publicity, outreach and a host of other areas necessary to support the education. In either case, it is a question of learning to openly share responsibility for the well-being of the initiative.

As these and other developmental difficulties are overcome, the school will grow in strength and size. Above all, it will begin to feel as if it is here to stay. The early dramas of enrollment, teacher recruitment and financial deficit still appear, but one doesn't have the feeling that they are life-threatening. Indeed after five, six, seven or more years, a sense of continuity, of growth and confidence exists in most schools.

A Time of Transition

A period of "relative" tranquility, of an understood order and way of doing things, may go on for quite a number of years. Yet as the initiative grows, with six, seven or eight grades, a new group of questions and concerns appears. Partly this is connected to size; with over 150 children and many full- and part-time teachers, the old feeling of intimacy disappears. New teachers and parents join the school who have not shared the joys and struggles of the early days and who have no relation to the school's past or to many of the people who made the school what it is. Indeed, they begin to resent the myths and sagas of the heroic old days.

In many schools this transition phase from childhood to adulthood manifests itself through a typical set of issues. One of these is a loss of confidence in existing leadership. Criticism is heard, usually from newer teachers or parents, about the "autocratic," "arbitrary" or "irrational" manner in which decisions are made. Such criticism also points to unclarity about goals, policies and direction. Earlier in the history of the school, there was a direct, personal relationship between members of the school community. Most people knew who to go to when an issue arose. As this breaks down, a need for clearly articulated goals and policies is perceived, and in their absence, questions likely to arise are: What are the disciplinary procedures in the school? How is teacher hiring and evaluation carried out? What roles do Board and parents play in the establishment of the budget?

A connected question which arises in this transitional time is the nature of teacher-parent relationships. If the faculty of a Waldorf school carries full educational responsibility for the curriculum, for teaching activities and for teacher hiring and evaluation, what is the role of the parent in the life of a school? How does a parent move from being interested in the school and supporting Waldorf education to being a member of the Finance Committee or the Board of Trustees?

Another frequently expressed concern is the inadequacy of administrative practices. In the early years, parents, teachers, spouses and friends helped in the office, answered phones and carried out a large variety of administrative work. Now the workload and the need for more adequate records and for financial expertise require more help. The call for professionalism of office and administration is indeed a need which requires a number of full- and part-time people, preferably with both a deep understanding of Waldorf education and experience in financial and administrative matters.

These issues, and others in combination, produce a crisis of confidence that is both perplexing and painful for the school community. As in adolescence, the need for change and development is recognized, but its direction appears obscure. It is in such circumstances that developmental pictures can help, not as a prescription, but as a perspective which outlines the contours of the next possible landscape.

Adulthood: Differentiation with Clarity

The challenge in this phase of a school's development is how to achieve greater clarity and a better division of responsibility so that a larger, more complex organization can thrive. In the early years, getting started and surviving was paramount. Now, it is permeating the school's life with a new consciousness, which allows more functional differentiation, without sacrificing individual creativity and commitment. I believe that achieving this balance and entering a healthy differentiation process involves paying attention to a number of interconnected elements, some of which have already been touched on.

One important need for the school at this stage of its evolution is renewing its identity and purpose by developing a shared vision of

the future and a clear mission statement. This means a renewed dialog with the original intention, with the spirit of the school. What was our original vision and what is it now? Do we wish to develop a full Waldorf school K–12 or just K–8? It is not enough to say we want a Waldorf school now, but what kind of a Waldorf school, with what qualities, and in what setting. To involve faculty, Board, parents and friends in a longer discussion of the future can focus the will and generate enthusiasm toward the work needing to be done.[8]

In addition to a picture of the future and a mission statement, the faculty and Board of the school need to become clearer about policies so that a division and delegation of responsibilities can occur. As schools move into this phase of development, committees proliferate. Yet, frequently they are not allowed to really work since the faculty or the College of Teachers wants to be involved in every decision. This is not the result of perversity, but rather that committees do not have access to clearly articulated policies on the host of issues affecting the life of the school. Policies are statements of value preference, and they should have the full support of the faculty and, in many cases, the Board. For example: What is the basis for teacher salaries? Is an experienced teacher with Waldorf training a priority? Is a part of the policy on teacher hiring to inquire about the relation to anthroposophy? What are the policies on scholarships, on expulsion, on drug use? Is there a clear policy on teacher evaluation and development? Each of these areas requires value judgments. If these judgments have not been *discussed, agreed to and embodied in policies, a committee has no basis for action*. To my mind, the absence of clear policies undermines the vitality and life of many Waldorf schools because it means that committees cannot work and that both faculty and College meetings are clogged up with a multitude of detailed issues which limit pedagogical and spiritual work.

As mentioned, an important principle in this phase of school development is that of giving clear tasks to committees and individuals.[9] If policies have been established, then the function, tenure and reporting responsibilities of committees can be defined and a form of *republican leadership*, *of delegated responsibilities*, exercised.[10] The following types of committees are common in most established Waldorf schools:

Faculty	Board
Pedagogical Committee	Finance and Budget
Enrollment	Tuition Assistance
Hiring and Teacher Evaluation	Long-Term Planning
Festivals and Special Events	Development
Administrative Committee	Buildings and Grounds

Republican leadership (I am, of course, not talking about political parties) requires trust, or at least the discipline of letting others do a task differently than you would have done it. To do so runs counter to the democratic urge to be involved in everything. Rudolf Steiner hoped that by sharing leadership responsibilities among the teachers in the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, mutual support and a new school spirit would be generated, but he was often disappointed as cliques, rivalries and ill-will were as much a danger then as now.[11]

Another aspect of the need for functional specialization and clarifying structural relationships is the necessity of refining the roles and relationships of the main decision-making bodies in the life of the school. In most Waldorf schools this includes the College of Teachers, the Administrative Council, the Faculty Meeting, the Board of Trustees, and the Parent-Teacher Association. Clarifying parent-teacher relationships is part of this task. In many Waldorf schools the quality of teacher-parent relations has not received sufficient attention, which leads to unnecessary misunderstandings and conflicts.[12]

An additional dimension of the differentiation phase in the life of a school is the need for a change in leadership and decision-making styles. In most new schools leadership is personal and decisions are made by hunch, based on a kind of intuition. As the school grows, leadership needs to become more functionally related to areas of expertise and responsibility. People need to be asked to take on different leadership responsibilities based on competence, not on who is willing to do it. A volunteer principle is appropriate in the early years of a school's life, but no longer when it is well-established. The Board Chair, the School Treasurer, the Faculty and College Chairs should, for example, all be

selected based on an understanding of the job and on an awareness of the personal qualities and job skills of potential nominees.

At the same time, decision making needs greater rationality and consciousness. Both leadership and decision making will develop over time, but the transition is often difficult as individuals used to the freer, less defined approach of the early years resent the more rational and sometimes more "bureaucratic" approach of the differentiation phase.

If the above-mentioned needs of renewed vision, clearer policies, differentiated structures and committee systems and a transformed style of leadership and decision making are met, then the school can enter a healthy differentiation process in which new forms are balanced by a new, more "administrative" consciousness. Many Waldorf schools resist meeting these administrative questions, either because of limited organizational experience or because teachers do not have the time, energy or inclination to come to grips with these types of issues. In the same way that early adulthood calls on a different awareness than adolescence, so too will the complexity of a growing school require a greater organizational awareness. When the school enters the differentiation phase, as many of the older Waldorf schools have, it manifests some or all of the following qualities:

1. Increased size and complexity
2. Clearer policies and procedures
3. Differentiated structures, with a clear committee system
4. A higher level of expertise and more specialization and professionalism in administrative areas
5. More functional leadership, with a greater dispersal of responsibilities
6. More rational modes of decision making
7. Greater clarity of work activities

One can view a school as a living being requiring the maintenance of three dialogs for its health. The first dialog is with the spirit, with the ideals of Waldorf education and with the spiritual being of the school. The second necessary dialog is with the human and social environment: with parents, children and friends and with the community. The third dialog is with the earth: with finances, administration, buildings

and grounds. The administrative focus of the differentiation phases emphasizes the dialog with the earth, and this emphasis must be consciously balanced by paying attention to spiritual ideals and to human relationships.[13]

The phase of differentiation may go on for many years in a school's life. Its emphasis on clarity and rationality suggests that this period is analogous to early and middle adulthood.

The long-term limitations of an administrative phase, when attention and consciousness is rightly focused inwardly, are very visible to those individuals working in large corporations and governmental bureaucracies. But they also manifest in older Waldorf schools, in hospitals and other smaller but well-established institutions. The weight of the past and of tradition, the number of endless meetings, a lack of purpose and leadership, communication difficulties, the absence of innovation and a growing sense of mediocrity are the most common concerns. Being well-established and in most cases quite secure, it is as if the school were experiencing a kind of mid-life crisis, in which the search for new meaning and a new way of working becomes critical.

Maturity: A Conscious Community of Learning, Meeting and Service

Bernhard Lievegoed refers to the third major phase of a school's or a cultural organization's life as a time of flowering.[14] To bring about such a flowering, I believe, requires meeting three major challenges if the school is to avoid the dangers of mediocrity and decline. These challenges are now not so much external as internal. Usually the school will own its buildings and have reasonable enrollment and a certain level of financial stability. It will also have developed traditions and habits which are both assets and liabilities.

The first challenge is that of becoming *a conscious learning community*. A teaching culture runs the risk of being devoted to knowledge acquired in the past and to imparting that knowledge to others. While this is indeed essential, over time we can become comfortable and not open to new inquiry. We may even resent other Waldorf schools' efforts to work with the grade school curriculum or with adolescents differently than we do. The first part of becoming a conscious learning community involves deepening the spiritual,

meditative and pedagogical work of teachers. Can we bring to consciousness and renew our commitment to the path of individual inner development and to the principles of Waldorf education? Can faculty or college meetings create time for individual teachers to explore with others what is working for them and what is not? Indeed this is what Rudolf Steiner had in mind: the creation of a teacher academy for mutual learning and development. Strengthening and enlivening the joint meditations of teachers in the college meeting is also very important.

A part of becoming a conscious learning community is to inaugurate a conscious professional development plan for all teachers and staff. Can the school every year ask each teacher and full-time staff person to develop a personal and professional development plan in which the goals of inner and outer development are articulated and shared? Such goals could be shared briefly in the faculty-staff meeting and worked with in more detail within the personnel committee. The visits of master teachers and the attendance at professional conferences and workshops would then have a conscious and integrated learning and development focus.

Another aspect of becoming a conscious learning community is to develop a conscious learning and review process for all organs of the school's life. As all development activities require extra effort and consciousness, perhaps a Learning Mandate group could be established to coordinate and stimulate activity. Do the mandate groups and committees have a conscious learning and review process? A good pattern is to briefly review or evaluate every meeting. Have we achieved our aims? What was the mood of our gathering, how was speaking and listening? This need not be more than five minutes, although in form it needs to be consciously varied in order to avoid boredom and routine. Every semester a longer review of functioning can be established. How is the Finance Committee working? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the faculty and staff meeting? What can we do to improve things? This applies to the Board, the parent association and the faculty and staff. Then every year, perhaps after the close of school, a Learning Forum could be held to assess the achievements and limitations of the year. Parents, Board, friends, faculty and staff could participate in a kind of learning festival in which different aspects of the school's life

can be explored for learning and improvement. In any type of learning effort, the mood is not one of blaming, but of saying what we can learn from these successes and these failures. This type of annual retreat can generate hope, for it allows the naming of issues but with the purpose of improvement, learning, and growth.

A Culture of Partnership

The second major challenge of becoming a mature school community is to develop a *true culture of partnership and of meeting*. A school is a destiny community of children, teachers, parents, staff and supporters. How can this recognition find form and substance? The first requirement is that we consciously recognize this destiny partnership and honor it. At the heart of this question is the relationship between teachers and children, staff, and parents. The teachers give their knowledge, care and love of the education and of the child; the administration supports the education and makes it possible practically; the parents entrust their children and, in the case of Waldorf schools in North America, provide the financial resources to support the education. This relationship finds expression in the organs of the school's life, in the College of Teachers, in the faculty/staff meeting, in the School Association, in the Board and in class evenings. Can the partnership be made fully conscious in agreements on rights and responsibilities? Each family could as part of its annual contract agree to a statement of rights and responsibilities which goes beyond financial matters and discipline, and also describes expected levels of involvement in the class, in parent evenings, of membership in the School Association and participation in festivals, committees and Board. It would describe the rights and responsibilities of teachers in making all personnel and pedagogical decisions, of the Board in making financial and legal decisions, and of the School Association in having the task of providing a dialog forum for issues such as school schedules, tuition levels and financial assistance, in major development and capital projects, and perhaps in areas such as disciplinary procedures and conflict mediation. Equally the teachers would sign an annual agreement which would describe rights and responsibilities as professional colleagues. This includes being clear about principles of conduct between colleagues and between teachers and children.[15]

Agreements on rights and responsibilities between teachers/staff and parents can be supplemented by agreements with children in the high school in areas of dress code, substance abuse and disciplinary procedures, and the responsibility for monitoring such agreements can be given to a mixed faculty-student group.

The school is also part of a wider community—its local region and the community of Waldorf schools. What responsibility and what opportunity for service does the school have in its local community? Does it, should it, make its festivals available to the local community? Can it open its festivals to other communities? Is there the opportunity for civic engagement, for adult education, for local volunteer and service activities? It is good if a teacher is a member of the local Rotary club or of the volunteer ambulance corp. Is the school a member of the National Association of Independent Schools, and of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA)? The mature Waldorf school can also reach out and mentor or provide assistance to new fledgling Waldorf schools in the region or support a public Waldorf-inspired initiative or a new Waldorf school in Africa, India or China. All of these activities of service give life and are part of the potential for flowering. For without this sharing and giving, an inner lassitude can set in so that we fail to recognize the many blessings which we have been given. Without service, a culture of mutual criticism, of gossip and cynicism can develop which becomes the antithesis of a healthy community life.

The inner side of this challenge of partnership is the question of how to foster true meetings between human beings. This is increasingly difficult in a time when our general culture promotes egotism and social fragmentation. As Rudolf Steiner notes repeatedly, we are increasingly isolated from each other as individuals, yet we long for community.[16] His answer to the question of a deeper meeting is that we need new social forms which help us to become conscious of our interdependence, and we need to develop a new practical social understanding which creates interest between people.[17] Waldorf school communities are new social forms, but they require a high level of social understanding and skill to work effectively. I sometimes think we have been given the legacy of new social forms but do not bring enough consciousness to the art of social creation, while conventional organizations have

old forms but struggle mightily with a new social consciousness and skill to make them work. Servant leadership, group facilitation and communication skills, decision making by consensus, mediation processes, teamwork and a service orientation are attitudes and skills which the more conventional world is busily acquiring. We have much to learn in this regard so that we can develop a social art which facilitates the building of healthy communities. I believe a systematic learning in communication skills, nonviolent communication, group facilitation, conflict resolution and biography work, as well as in the arts of promoting healthy family life, is essential if Waldorf schools are to fulfill their promise of becoming seeds for a new society. The methods and approaches for acquiring such new social skills are readily available, but we need to overcome our prejudices and be willing to learn them.

Mature schools can consciously pick up this challenge and in so doing develop a spiritually-inspired social art that can facilitate the experience of community. Consciously sharing aspects of an individual's biography, having both a chairperson and a process coach who intervenes only in times of difficulty and helps in group review, practicing listening exercises and paraphrasing, having moments when teachers share what they are working with and struggling with in the classroom, and beginning and ending in a moment of silence are all methods with which we can work consciously. They will help to bring about more life and a deeper meeting between individuals.

Underlying the question of meeting skills is the question of how we deal with our difficulties and disagreements. Learning to name them, taking responsibility for our difficulties with each other, and all of us acquiring mediation and feedback skills are essential so that the unspoken judgments and untruths don't block our meeting. Individually we can picture our colleagues, note their strengths and weaknesses and remember when we have experienced something of their striving individuality. This activity and intention is beautifully expressed in Rudolf Steiner's reflections on faithfulness:

Faithfulness

> Create for yourself a new, indomitable perception of faithfulness. What is usually called faithfulness passes so quickly. Let this be your faithfulness: You will experience

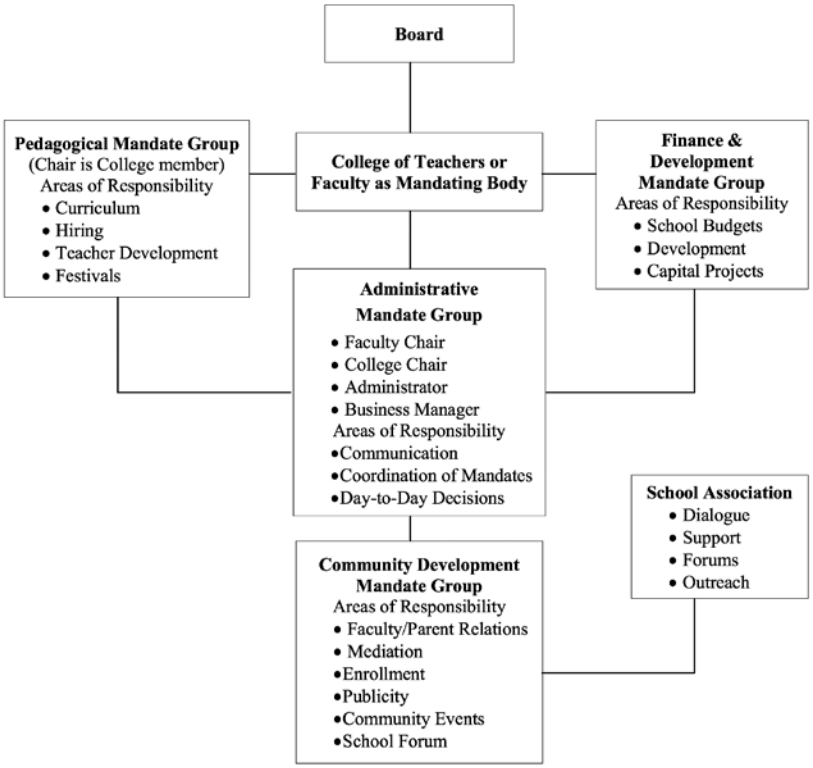
moments—fleeting moments—with the other person. The human being will appear to you then as if filled, irradiated with a spirit archetype. And then there may be—indeed, will be—other moments, long periods of time when human beings are darkened. But you will learn to say to yourself at such times: "The Spirit makes me strong. I remember the archetype. I saw it once. No illusion, no deception shall rob me of it." Always struggle for the image that you saw. This struggle is faithfulness. Striving thus for faithfulness, we shall be close to one another, as if endowed with the protective power of angels.

– Rudolf Steiner

A Federated Organization: Mandates and Responsibility Groups

A third major challenge for a mature school is to find *new ways of organizing the work of the school community*. The second phase of school development is characterized by the differentiation and the gradual professionalization of administration and decision-making forms. The dangers of this phase over time are a gradual fragmentation and loss of direction, characterized by long meetings, many committees and poor coordination and communication. What was carried by the whole faculty and by many committees can now be simplified, streamlined and delegated to a few responsibility or mandate groups. If attention has been paid to a qualitative renewal of the vision and mission of the school, to re-enlivening the pedagogical principles of Waldorf education and to a new understanding of mutual partnership, then the school can look to principles of federation, of creating a smaller number of responsibility groups with substantial autonomy and responsibility. The Toronto Waldorf School and the Pine Hill Waldorf School (NH) worked on this mode of organizing the work life of their schools for some time in the 1990s. In the case of Toronto, the full faculty was the mandating group to whom the mandate groups reported both their issues and their decisions. In the case of Pine Hill, it was the College of Teachers that was the main policymaking body, and in financial matters, the Board of Trustees. Whereas the school before may have had up to ten teacher committees and four or five Board committees, now the school may have just three or four faculty mandate groups that are empowered to make decisions on behalf of the whole, and one or

two Board mandate groups. A typical mandate structure for a Waldorf school might have the following kind of form:



In creating a mandate organization, it is imperative to have a mandating body, which can be the full faculty, the College of Teachers or the Board. The mandate areas need to be clearly defined and then the best three to five people chosen to fulfill the tasks. Here the question should be what combination of people can best be responsible for this area of work on behalf of the whole. They need to have the trust of the faculty and/or Board and also be clear about their length of tenure and the policies which govern their area of work. The Pedagogical Mandate or responsibility group can only interview potential candidates for teaching positions if it knows what qualities are being looked for in teachers, what level of experience and training, what connection to anthroposophy. These are policy and value questions which the faculty

or College of Teachers needs to have decided beforehand. Another required area of clarity is what decisions the mandate group can make for the whole and what not. Which decisions need to go to the full faculty or Board for input and which for decision?

Cornelis Pieterse has written an excellent overview of mandates in his short book, *Empowerment in Organizations—The Theory and Practice of a Mandate System*.[18] He rightly points to a distinction between constitutional mandates, like those of the Board of Trustees or the Teacher Council, as articulated in the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of the school, and operational mandates, like those of the buildings and grounds group of the Board. In most cases the groups having a constitutional mandate are also the mandating bodies for the smaller operational mandate groups. In preparing and developing a mandate for a group, it is important to pay attention to the following elements:

- a short description of the mandate group's area of decision-making responsibility and areas for recommendation
- the reporting responsibilities of the mandate group (to College of Teachers, Board, Administration) and the frequency and manner of communication
- membership criteria, length of service, and selection process
- methods of clarifying the mandate or governing policies with the mandating group
- methods of soliciting input from members of the school community before making decisions
- review and evaluation of the mandate group's work

A critical aspect of a mandate organization is the facilitation and coordination of work. This can best be done by a mandate coordinating group which could consist of the Faculty Chairperson, the College Chairperson, and key administrative staff, perhaps the Business Manager, the Administrator and/or the development person.

The particular forms of a federated, mandate structure will vary from school to school, but the principle of the delegation of decision making to smaller groups based on the principles of competence and

effectiveness is critical so that the College of Teachers, the faculty and the Board are free to do their essential work.

Another task connected to school forms at their mature phase of development is the task of penetrating the social and organizational structure of the school with the insights and ideals of spiritual science. Most Waldorf schools already work with some of these ideals, for example, in their collegial structures of decision making. Other steps would involve more intensive work with the fundamental social law of Rudolf Steiner in finding a new relation both to salaries and tuition income, or to deepening child study, or to permeating questions of inner development with more consciousness.

Many schools are moving away from needs-based salaries because it is too demanding, while others seek conventional solutions to financial and social issues. A deepening study of the social content of anthroposophy by the faculty and Board, and a more intensive sharing of the innovative practices of other Waldorf schools can become the inspiration for working with threefold principles in new ways.[19]

I believe it is only in true maturity and usually after the middle forties that individuals can give unselfishly to others. Similarly, it is in the phase of maturity, with a new commitment to their spiritual, pedagogical and social ideals, that Waldorf schools can become places where individuals and families can find the human, educational and spiritual nourishment so needed in our time.

A Conscious Ending?

If the pioneer stage can be likened to childhood, the differentiation phase to early and middle adulthood, and the integration phase to full maturity, what can be said about the death of an initiative? A convenient response is to say that schools die when they fail or are no longer needed. However, I feel that many institutions have not only become old, but also sclerotic, disposing of substantial resources, but no longer really serving human needs. If one pursues the human metaphor, perhaps institutions should live for only three generations or ninety years, if they are to serve the needs of the time. What would happen to cultural, social and economic creativity if institutions over ninety years old turned over their resources to new groups wishing

to respond to similar needs in new ways? What a peaceful, on-going, creative revolution society would experience! Another approach is to renew an older institution by consciously turning over leadership to a younger generation, to allow a new body of teachers and administrators to continue the development of the school in new ways.

The Image of Development

What has been presented is a sketch of developmental patterns in a school's life. Frequently I am asked, "Can't a stage be missed?" The answer is no. Organizations have a life cycle moving from simple to more complex, from one central organizing principle to another. This means that true development is a discontinuous, yet irreversible process in time, moving from a stage of growth through differentiation to a higher stage of integration and passing through states of crisis which offer the impetus for development. This pattern is, I believe, true for all living forms—for the human being and for schools and other organizations.

However, it is possible for initiatives to move more or less rapidly through these phases. A school which starts with six grades and a kindergarten will face questions of differentiation much sooner than one which starts with one grade, adding a new grade each year. Furthermore, it is quite common for organizations to have different segments of the institution in different stages of development. A kindergarten and grade school may have entered the differentiation phase, while the school's new high school will be in its childhood pioneering period, and the two parts of the school will feel and function differently. This definitely needs to be appreciated by the many Waldorf schools now developing high schools after 25–30 years of existence.

In presenting this picture of school development, a number of complementary images have been alluded to. The image of birth, childhood, adulthood, and maturity is a metaphor which is quite clear. The qualities of intuitive, rational and conscious refer to the characteristic ways of approaching the world and of making decisions in the different phases in the life of the initiative. Another way of seeing this development process is to realize that the dialog with the spirit (identity), the dialog with people (relationships), and the dialog

with the earth (resources) need to become ever more conscious in the school's life if the forces of decay and disintegration are not to become dominant over the course of time.

The description of school development outlined is both general and incomplete. Like all ideal-type descriptions, it cannot do justice to the rich texture of life in the Austin Waldorf School, or the City of Lakes Waldorf School in Minneapolis or the Emerson Waldorf School in Chapel Hill. Its purpose is rather to describe a landscape of possibilities, indicating paths to be pursued and pitfalls to be avoided so that we may become conscious co-creators of our Waldorf school communities.

Chapter II Reflections (individually or in small groups):

1) How and by whom was your Waldorf school started?
2) What are some of the typical themes or patterns of the school's biography (i.e., teacher-founded, rapid growth, well-funded, repeated major conflicts)?
3) Draw a picture of your school as a person. Is it a boy or a girl—large head, small feet? What does it say about your school?
4) What are some of the school's present strengths and weaknesses?
5) What phase of development is your school in?
6) If you had the opportunity, what are three things you would strengthen to aid the school in its development?

Endnotes

1. Allan Kaplan, *Development Practitioners and Social Process: Artists of the Invisible* (Pluto Press, London, XVCC 2002).
2. This essay is adapted from C. Schaefer & T. Voors, *Vision in Action: Working with the Soul and Spirit in Small Organizations,* 2nd Edition (Lindisfarne Press, Hudson, NY, 1996), pp. 27–58.
3. Both the picture of school development given and the various examples cited are based on many years of work by the author with Waldorf schools in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Brazil, China and Mexico.
4. See L.E. Grenier, "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1972.
5. A.C. Harwood, *The Recovery of Man in Childhood* (Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1982).
6. This question list is adapted and modified from *Vision in Action*, pp. 81–83.
7. See Bernard Lievegoed, *The Developing Organization*, Tavisock Publications, 1973 (Celestial Arts, Berkeley, CA, 1979), pp. 55–61. Also, *Developing Communities* (Hawthorn Press, Stroud, UK, 1995).
8. See *Vision in Action*, pp. 163–177.
9. See *Vision in Action*, pp. 81–88, on giving mandates to committees.
10. See the essay by Ernst Lehrs, *Republican–Not Democratic*, available from the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (Ghent, NY).
11. See the excellent booklet by Francis Gladstone, *Republican Academies,* for a detailed description of Steiner's intentions and his frustrations with collegial work in the first Waldorf school (Steiner Schools Fellowship, Forest Row, UK, 1997).
12. See Manfred Leist, *Parent Participation in the Life of a Waldorf School,* available from the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (Ghent, NY).
13. The concept of these dialogs and of the threefold picture of the school is elaborated in *Vision in Action*, pp. 61–63.
14. Op. cit., Lievegoed, *Developing Communities*, p. 18.
15. See the excellent articles by Heinz Zimmerman, "What Conditions Are There for Taking Responsibility in an Independent Life of Culture?" and "What Is Happening in the Anthroposophical Society," 17.4 and 18.1, 1996, 1997 (Goetheanum, Switzerland).
16. Rudolf Steiner, *Social and Anti-Social Forces in the Human Being* (Mercury Press, Spring Valley, NY, 1984).

17. Rudolf Steiner, "How Can the Soul Needs of the Time Be Met?" (Zurich, October 10, 1946).
18. Cornelis Pieterse, *Empowerment in Organizations: The Theory and Practice of a Mandate System* (Rudolf Steiner College Press, Fair Oaks, CA, 2009), pp. 41–60.
19. See the excellent studies by Gary Lamb, *The Social Mission of Waldorf Education: Independent, Privately Funded and Accessible to All* (Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, Ghent, NY, 2004) and *Wellsprings of the Spirit* (AWSNA, 2006), for rich study material.