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Chapter 1

THE WALDORF SCHOOL FACULTY MEETING

Some years ago, the U.S. Department of Education reported a survey in which "as many as 45 percent of the teachers report no contact with each other during the workday; another 32 percent say they have infrequent contact. As a result, these teachers fail to share experience and ideas or to get support from colleagues. Isolation may undermine effective instruction."¹

Many administrators and policy makers speak about fostering collegiality, setting aside time for faculty interaction, and involving teachers in setting school policies. However, few achieve this goal. The hierarchical structure in most schools, the absence of a shared, fully articulated philosophy of education, and the intrusion of school board politics all serve to undermine the implementation of meaningful faculty interaction.

From their inception in 1919, Waldorf Schools were designed to place faculty collaboration at the heart of all policy formulation. Teachers in Waldorf schools the world over meet weekly, often Thursdays, to do the work needed in

¹ U.S. Department of Education, **What Works?**, 1986.

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service of the children in their care. This work may include curriculum development, child observation, study, reporting, decisions on schedules, hiring, public events, etc. The meetings become real because the authority and responsibility of school direction rest with the striving teachers.

Thus the faculty meeting represents simultaneously one of the greatest opportunities and one of the greatest challenges of teaching in a Waldorf school. The success or failure of the faculty meeting can be the determining factor in the health and growth of a school.

The challenge and opportunity become all the greater because there are no formulas. In their training, Waldorf teachers receive a comprehensive picture of the developing child, a philosophic basis out of which to work, and a curriculum full of countless marvels just waiting to be discovered. However, working on a faculty of teachers remains, by its very nature, a new frontier. There are no guides for faculty meetings, nor should there be! Each group explores together, researches the possibilities and develops an organizational structure that fits the character and needs of the particular school. This ongoing, active searching is a crucial ingredient in all faculty work.

The thoughts that follow are therefore intended as a stimulus for further exploration.

Why have faculty meetings?

A long, sedentary meeting in the traditional sense could rightly be viewed as anathema to the spirit of Waldorf education. Teachers work so hard already, planning lessons, holding parent/teacher conferences, serving on numerous committees, teaching long hours at low wages — is not a long afternoon of meeting just asking too much?

The answer might well be "yes" if the teacher feels she is merely fulfilling an obligation. If the content is not of interest, if the structure is not artistically organized, then time will weigh heavily on the minds of all participants. Everything depends on what colleagues bring to the meetings.

In an age characterized by Rudolf Steiner as the time of the Consciousness Soul, we can no longer let others do our tasks. Headmasters and principals cannot truly replace an active faculty of teachers. We need to emancipate ourselves, stand on our own "pedagogical feet," and abandon the old supports. To a large extent, public education has failed to do this, and therefore remains fettered to an old system of governance that stifles initiative and actually impedes the real practice of pedagogy. A Waldorf school must first of all have a faculty that is free to set pedagogical policy. The responsibility is tremendous, but completely in harmony with the needs of our times. Liberty, fraternity, equality: these three words served as a clarion call before and during the French Revolution, and continue to resound in one form or another in the years since then. Yet unfortunately, these three mighty ideals are often understood only in terms of physical realities, i.e., the redistribution of material wealth, freedom "from," and equality in the workplace. This materialistic interpretation, though valid in its own sphere, misses the main thrust of these ideals. We need to achieve fraternity on the physical plane, a real caring of one another's needs. However, liberty needs to be addressed in psychological terms, the ability to give space for the thoughts and feelings of others, the ability to be free in relationship. Equality, in the ultimate sense, is a spiritual matter. We are most equal in our striving as human beings, in our strenuous searching for insight. In a Waldorf context especially, it is our striving that brings us together.

A faculty meeting is a wonderful experiment, an attempt to implement the three ideals of the French Revolution in the sense described above. Certainly there is a "fraternal" aspect, known to all the colleagues who congregate around the snack table! During snack, everyday concerns are shared, genuine interest in the needs of others is furthered when the afternoon schedule allows for informal human interchange. In fact, much can be accomplished during what appears to be purely informal conversation. Concerns about family, housing, finances, and lesson materials are taken up. When faculty meetings are too tightly scheduled, often in the name of efficiency, one senses the lack of "fraternal" carrying in the school. Strangely enough, being too efficient is often inefficient.

Likewise, group work either enhances or impedes individual "liberty." A headstrong drive to reach consensus can stifle individuality (see decisions' section of chapter), but when done well, a faculty gathering can be a time of inner

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freeing, a chance to truly share. Respectful of each colleague's insights and contributions, an atmosphere of psychological "liberty" deepens the pedagogical work of each teacher. In this atmosphere, Waldorf teachers can create a new language to meet one another out of enhanced Anthroposophical insight. In striving toward this goal, colleagues can experience spiritual "equality."

Some years ago, Jørgen Smit asked a gathering of teachers in Garden City, "What are we doing so that the living spiritual substance can grow within the schools?" This question goes to the heart of our faculty and college work: the need to forge a new social form, a living vessel for spiritual/pedagogical inspiration.²

Continued Teacher Training:

Faced with the constant press of business, the outer circumstances of school life can easily determine faculty priorities. A pressing issue of one sort or another always arises, such as, "What happened to the planning for tomorrow's assembly?" After some discussion of what went wrong, a group becomes immersed in the **details** of how many chairs to set up, where the display should go, etc. Yet all the "apparent" business, in the most amazing and varied way, obscures the central business of a Waldorf school faculty meeting: the self-development and continued training of the entire body of teachers.

In the Torquay lectures, among other instances, Rudolf Steiner spoke of the teacher's meetings as, "the heart and soul" of the work, a place and time when "each one learns from the other":

"... We have our Teacher's Meetings in the Waldorf School which are the heart and soul of the whole teaching. In these meetings, each teacher speaks of what he himself has learnt in his class and from all the children in it, so that each one learns from the other. No school is really alive where this is not the most important thing, this regular meeting of the teachers."³

². Jørgen Smit, June 1989, Garden City, notes of T. Finser

³. Rudolf Steiner, Torquay Lectures, 19.8.24.

An active teacher is constantly learning from others, even when discussing chairs. However, this general, indirect method is not enough.

A faculty needs to consciously schedule a time for "sharing." The spontaneous outpouring about a successful lesson, a heart-rendering story of an especially difficult day, or the joyful sharing of lessons and newly discovered materials can reunite a faculty socially, all of which stimulates further growth. The class reports and child observations given at many faculty meetings also enhance teacher training, but the heart-inspired, spontaneous sharing is what I have found irreplaceable. Over and above setting aside a time in the meeting for spontaneous sharing, too much planning or structure forces the situation, and then everyone feels they have to say something profound, or worse yet, not speak at all.

The health of a school depends on the attitude of each teacher and the quality of group work in a faculty:

"Thus these constant staff meetings tend to make the school into an organism in the same way as the human body is an organism by virtue of its heart. Now what matters in these staff meetings is not so much the principles but the readiness of all the teachers to live together in goodwill, and the abstention from any form of rivalry. And it matters supremely that a suggestion made to another teacher only proves helpful when one has the right love for every single child. And by this I do not mean the kind of love which is often spoken about, but the love which belongs to an artistic teacher." ⁴.

It is interesting to observe how the content of the above quote is organized. The "organism" of the school depends upon the meeting of teachers in "goodwill," which in turn rests upon the love each teacher fosters for the children. When the children are carried in a living, loving manner, the whole organism is strengthened. We know that each child should come before the faculty in the course of a year, even if only for a few minutes. Teachers perfect their work, become true artists, by practicing child observation. This means sharing images of the child, characterizing behavior and school work, allowing differing perceptions to live in

⁴. Rudolf Steiner, Manchester College Lectures, 16.8.22, 25.8.22.

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the circle, and carrying the child inwardly between meetings. Each child presents a sort of riddle, or a series of riddles, and from the human striving to understand these riddles come the soul forces a teacher needs to work effectively in the classroom.

Pedagogical work is an artistic activity that cannot be learned from a text. So often, the faculty study becomes a simple recapitulation of the lecture, and colleagues settle in for a brief inner nap. Of course a faculty study of lectures can be helpful, but it is the **activity** that results from the study that develops concrete teaching skills. Books are simply impulses for self-development.

A faculty cultivates the goal of becoming a new kind of university, a place where individual research is shared, ideas developed and insights fashioned out of conversation. Teacher meetings can become the life blood of a school when original work finds a respectful audience and an eager, appreciative circle of colleagues.

The soil for all the above mentioned work is prepared through regular artistic activity. So many teachers observe their colleagues' talents and feel hopelessly inadequate. Yet most of those very talents were developed and refined through regular, not so glamorous practice. **Everyone**, in reality, still has areas that are in need of work. So when a faculty of teachers sings, draws, paints, moves and speaks together, the artistic configuration of the entire group blossoms, research is inspired, and issues are resolved.

Finally, when a faculty works to continue teacher training, the children sense it. Their teacher's striving, an intangible element, becomes food for the children. Lesson plans do not reach the class as effectively as the *teacher activity* that stands behind their preparation. Likewise, when the teachers stand up and sing together at an assembly, one observes a remarkable change in the children. One has just to look at their sparkling eyes and ruddy cheeks! In a few brief moments of singing together, a faculty strengthens the etheric sheath of a school.

Structure:

All the aforesaid is possible only when the form of the meeting fits the content, when clarity and structure permit freedom and artistic expression. Thus the agenda becomes a crucial element in any faculty meeting.

Ideally, the weekly agenda reflects the life of the entire school. When a school is large it may be advisable for two or three colleagues from different areas and with different responsibilities to contribute to the drafting of the agenda. For instance, when the faculty chair, administrator and college chair meet weekly to draft the agenda, they can also serve as an administrative committee to handle designated administrative tasks that need attention. Regardless of who forms the agenda, however, the key consideration is: what is occurring in the life of the school that needs to be brought to the full circle of teachers? Rather than have the agenda become a personal document, these guiding question helps raise the work to a more objective level, a service to the "whole."

Just as the human being works through the structure of its various "members," so, too, the work of a faculty is enhanced through careful consideration of the several aspects of a meeting's structure. There are the *physical* needs and concerns, such as materials, room arrangements, time slots, report format and of course, snack. However, the *etheric* rhythm requires consideration of the life-engendering activities in a meeting: working with movement, speech and painting, perhaps for a month at a time. If the agenda takes into account the dynamics of the afternoon meeting, the *astral* element is engaged. Here the pacing of the agenda becomes crucial. For example, after a long, involved discussion, one might skip to announcements. The chairperson can conduct the agenda so that variety enlivens the session. Finally, one needs to carry constantly a consciousness of the **process** while it is occurring. Somewhat like "thinking about thinking," one is involved, yet aware of the nature of the process. This work with conscious perspective directly calls upon the human **ego**.⁵

Nothing, including the above, can be adhered to in a rigid fashion. A living form requires moments of contraction and expansion. Teachers often give this careful attention in their lessons, yet the structure of a faculty meeting deserves the benefit of the same insights. During the five years I served as a faculty

⁵. Rudolf Steiner, **Philosophy of Spiritual Activity**.

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chairman, I found that preparation made all the difference, especially in speaking ahead of time to those colleagues scheduled to give reports. Concise reporting upholds discipline and structure, while also allowing more time for classroom "sharing" and child observation. Needless to say, if one does not have to do much teaching, everything can be properly prepared and considered!

One of the major challenges facing Waldorf schools today is the health of our teachers. Not that we are all falling apart, but some issues have long been neglected. We need to lead healthy lives, even on Thursdays. Anthroposophical study and long faculty discussions are not a substitute for basic human needs, such as exercise, nutrition and artistic work. The physical well-being of teachers strongly influences relationships — with colleagues, parents and children. We often become so caught up in the periphery that we lose "the center." Teachers need a time to relate some personal elements, aspects of biography, during a faculty meeting. These need not be long, but even a conversation around the theme, "Where were you at age nine?" can help. Waldorf teachers deserve time to process childhood issues, while awakening to those of others. The exercise of looking back, whether on biography or at the end of a day, can strengthen the etheric.

Here are some possible agendas that attempt to incorporate some of the above considerations:

- A.** Eurythmy (30-40min.)
 - Pedagogical discussion and /or child observation (30-40min.)
 - Minutes of last meeting (5 min.)
 - Reports, which might include: (30 min.)
 - College of Teachers
 - Lower School, High School, Kindergarten
 - Parent/ Teachers Association
 - Board of Trustees
 - School Committees
 - Questions on the reports/ discussion/free sharing (15-20 min.)
 - Announcements (10 min.)

- B.** Opening Quote (5 min.)

Minutes (5 min.)

Reports —might be similar to the above (30-40 min.)

Pedagogical discussion: class nights and parent/teacher work, all school meetings (40 min.)

Announcements (10 min.)

Rehearsal of faculty play (60+ min.)

C. Opening Quote

Faculty study — lecture from **Study of Man** (45 min.)

Child observation (30 min.)

Singing (15 min.)

Minutes (5 min.)

Reports see above (30 min.)

Announcements (10 min.)

Review and Closing Verse

(In all the above examples, the faculty snack would precede the meeting, although many have scheduled it half way through.)

Chairing a Faculty Meeting:

Before examining the specifics of chairing, a few reflections on the role and concept of leadership, in general, may be helpful. For nowadays, all leaders are suspect. Partly because of the abuse of power in modern history, and partly due to the strong current of egalitarianism in the western world, leaders are hardly given a chance anymore. If everyone is equal, so they say, then why have any leaders? This pervasive mind-set influences everything we do, even in a Waldorf context. Part of our present-day challenge is to create a new definition of leadership.

A faculty of Waldorf teachers works as a group. Without the active participation of all teachers, pedagogical policy becomes an abstraction. However, group work does not preclude the need for leadership. In fact, to say, "we have no leaders here, we do everything ourselves" obscures the reality of the situation. In every discussion, in every decision, in every form of implementation, **there are leaders!** Not to recognize them means to deny them the conscious support they urgently need in carrying out the will of the school. However, a

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leader in one area of school life may not be suited for leadership in another. We need to learn to recognize our leaders.

We can do this by sharpening our perception of human capacities, learning to recognize talent and yet practicing inner discernment so those talents can be applied to the right tasks. Much can go awry when good people are given the wrong tasks. "But, so and so will learn to," is a refrain that does not succeed in administration. Of course, everyone can learn from experience, and for Waldorf **teaching** this is a central, pedagogical imperative. However, school administration should not, in my opinion, be the training ground for well-intentioned but otherwise ineffectual leaders. Teacher training, as described earlier, is a pedagogical affair. The damage done by misplaced administrative authority can be irreparable, not only for the circle of forgiving colleagues, but for the wider parent community.

The main task of a faculty chairperson is confidence-building. One can do this in so many ways, both large and small: encouraging colleagues with appropriate talents to take up new tasks, connecting people with each other, fostering an atmosphere of appreciation for the parents, board and colleagues, planning events and agendas that work, and developing a fine sense for "timing." A faculty chair facilitates, makes it possible for good things to happen in a school, keeps things moving. Confidence within and confidence without grows when issues are clearly perceived and the "warmth realm" is valued. (See "Social Challenge" section at end of chapter)

A faculty chairperson should expect little glory and much detail work. The words of Robert Louis Stevenson help those who have been given the "**Guardian Knot**" of faculty chairing:

We require higher tasks because we do not recognize the height of those we have. Trying to be kind and honest seems an affair too simple and too inconsequential for men of our heroic mold: we had rather set ourselves to something bold, arduous, and conclusive... the task before us, which is to co-endure with our existence, is rather one of microscopic fineness, and the heroism required is

that of patience. There is no cutting the Guardian Knots of life; each must be smilingly unravelled." ⁶.

Patience and humility are the rewards of faculty chairing.

Here are some practical suggestions for the faculty chair:

- Ask colleagues to submit agenda items at least a day in advance.

The best agendas are destroyed by too many last-minute submissions.

- Post the agenda on the faculty bulletin board before the meeting.

Expect that with advance notice, members will arrive prepared.

- Begin and end all meetings punctually. Teachers can be asked to

follow the same high standards we ask of the children. Besides maintaining a regular rhythm, ending the meetings on time does wonders for family life. When punctuality is not observed and meetings frequently go past the allotted time, discuss it as a symptom. Is more time in fact needed? Is the faculty working as it should?

- Be an active chairperson. This does not mean dominating or doing

a great deal of the talking (indeed, nothing is more annoying than a chairperson who holds forth by virtue of the position). Rather, the chairperson's activity should be in **seeing and hearing**. Know what's happening, anticipate events as much as possible, and draw things to a close with a firm hand. Advance preparation is crucial, as well as a healthy dose of intuition!

- When an issue or discussion starts to go in circles, call a break or

do something else for a while. Even waiting a week can help everyone gain perspective. In the latter case, the key to subsequent discussion is for the chair to summarize the salient points of the previous conversation. If people feel that their views

⁶. Robert Louis Stevenson, **A Christmas Sermon**.

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are acknowledged, there is a relaxing of "positions" and less chance of repetition.

- Compliments, when things go well and reports are clear, can be a marvelous tool for encouraging more of the same.
- One must be careful that reports and announcements don't turn into discussions. These "back-ended discussions" are often disorganized, too personal and generally inconclusive. When an issue "flares up," let the group know that it is recognized and will be placed on the agenda of the next meeting.
- Even when submerged in all the details of school administration, a faculty chair holds a vivid image of the big picture, and focuses the meeting on the things that in the final analysis matter most in a Waldorf school faculty meeting: child-centered activities, Anthroposophy, and curriculum development. When the essentials are not given enough room, no mastery of the details can make up for it.
- If all the above is not enough, here is one last suggestion: Meetings are not just hard work, they can and will be fun, too! The goodwill and humor of the faculty chair can be wonderfully infectious.

Delegation:

The faculty chairperson's task of confidence building is furthered through delegation, which also develops the faculty as a working group.

A faculty chairperson, indeed the entire faculty, can benefit from the conscious delegation of tasks. Delegation is actually the natural outcome of the heightened perception of human capacities mentioned earlier.

Once a task is assigned to a colleague or committee, **trust** becomes the vehicle through which they can function successfully. Trust does not mean blind faith — we cannot go back to the middle ages! However, when trust is exercised

in this age of the Consciousness Soul, the questions and concerns one might have are properly directed to those individuals who have assumed responsibility. So much damage is done to the living being of a school when "parking lot" conversations prevail. Giving input to the designated individual(s) needs to happen **early in the process**, so that the final product reflects as much as possible the insights of the larger faculty. Thus, when a recommendation or report comes back to the full circle, acceptance occurs more readily. Equally important, if the recommendation is **not** agreed to, then the responsible individual or committee should be entrusted with making the necessary changes and reporting back again. Nothing destroys confidence more than working hard at a project only to hear afterwards that it is not wanted after all, or have a group of twenty-five people take apart and rewrite everything. At each stage, everyone must seek to build, not destroy, confidence.

The following is a "shorthand" delegation sequence that might be considered by a faculty of teachers:

- Imagine the need. Build a picture that is vivid enough and clear enough so that it lives in the whole faculty.
- Given the picture of what is needed, find the individual or group that can best help that picture incarnate. The selection should be based on talents in the subject or area under consideration, as well as the basic social skills of listening, working together and following through.
- Set a definite time frame so members can make timely contributions and the committee can report back to the faculty.
- Don't forget about them in the meanwhile. Extend trust and helpful suggestions. Visualize their success with the project, and it will happen.
- Hear their recommendations. Ask for their reasoning if the solutions appear problematic. Remember to extend gratitude for much needed work done on behalf of the whole school.

Making Decisions:

Groups do not make decisions. In our age of the Consciousness Soul, individuals make the decisions, and the group can **recognize** when a totality of individual decisions has occurred and consensus exists.

Arriving at a consensus is a magical moment. When true consensus lives in the room, one senses that something more than human willing and deciding is at work. A moment of consensus can be fleeting, yet when it arrives a special union arises between the divine spiritual and the struggling, earth-bound consciousness of those in the room. When true consensus is present, it can be felt, experienced. If it is not experienced in the feeling life of the colleagues, if there is any question about whether consensus was reached or not, then it is not a consensus decision.

Striving for consensus is part of the spiritual path of a Waldorf teacher. In aiming to realize consensus on an issue, one is really calling upon the hierarchies; colleagues experience something greater than their own ego. Consensus-building means fashioning the spiritual vessel whereby the hierarchies can become active in a school. They need our conscious efforts.

"It is this spirit which matters above all. And if it is alive, it will engender enthusiasm, irrespective of the personnel or the leadership of the school. And then one can also have confidence that something of an objective spirit will live throughout the school, which is not the same as the accumulation of each teacher's individual spirit." ⁷.

There are many, many times during faculty work when consensus cannot be reached. This reality, when it occurs, needs to be recognized and not papered over. To represent a decision as the result of consensus when it is not, is a serious injustice. Group manipulation by a few, or the tyranny of the "majority" can wreak havoc in a cultural institution. Especially in our western world, the democratic rule of the majority creeps in wearing all sorts of disguises. One

⁷. Rudolf Steiner, **A Child's Changing Consciousness**, 22.04.23.

might say that the "rights life" as described by Rudolf Steiner is far too strong in the English speaking world. In a cultural institution, the "truth" of the matter may find expression in the voice of a minority of one (1). Many times, I have heard all in the majority express the same opinion, only to have the tables turned when a previously silent colleague shares a few words of wisdom near the end of a discussion. Decision making in a Waldorf school must thus be made on the basis of insight.

Again, there is no magic formula for making decisions on the basis of insight. Here are a few brief suggestions of a practical nature:

- Imagine. Do picture-building and share perceptions **without** the pressure of deciding. Separating the discussion/picture building phase from the decision making opens up the sharing. Pressure kills true image-building. At this early stage, everyone should try to see **all sides** of the issue.
- Make sure everyone is heard from, even if it is only a "yes" after a colleagues' contribution. Decisions come unravelled when people save their words of wisdom for after the decision. Working with Rudolf Steiner's indications on the planetary influences can be helpful. (For instance, the "Mars" people are great initiators but need to appreciate more fully the "go slow" approach of the "Saturn" folks!)
- One way to "collect" the individual decisions, to see if consensus has occurred, is to go around the circle, asking each one to share, in a sentence or less, a summary thought on the subject.
- Use the element of time creatively. When issues are carried through the portal of sleep and back again, something is always gained. In the end, three weeks to process a decision is more efficient than making a series of quick but poor decisions.
- Let the "heart realm" speak. The web of thoughts can confuse and obscure. A decision may be intellectually correct, but if it does not feel right, if enthusiasm cannot be kindled, it can hinder the growth

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of a school. This is especially true with regard to hiring, where karma is so strongly at work.

- Review the school's decision making process from time to time.

Every group needs to renew its commitment to process, just as a violinist has to practice those scales again and again.

- Finally, no matter how important a decision may seem at the moment, one needs to keep perspective. A decision is really nothing more than a spiritual intention, a resolve to act in a certain way to achieve the desired goal. For every decision is really a challenge, a conscious moment when direction is given for implementation. All the "incarnating" work still lies ahead. Failure to plan the communication and implementation can render any decision useless.

As indicated earlier, a consensus decision is a kind of gift, one that calls upon the members present to move forward with common resolve.

Role of the Scribe:

In many ancient cultures, the scribe held a sacred position. It was the scribe who preserved for humanity the spiritual wisdom of the Gods. In ancient Egypt, the entire physical world was seen as the handwriting of the Gods.

In a faculty meeting, preserving the "wisdom" of the discussions and recording the decisions require a special perspective and sense for the essence of each subject. Some colleagues are more able than others to distill the essence of the past.

A scribe can help the group review the meeting, as well as refresh teachers' recollections at the start of the next session. Reading the minutes before new reports are given is always helpful. Generally, minutes that are clear and simple with emphasis on major points and decisions work best. A pedagogical discussion is diminished by recording **everything**, especially when the children are discussed, since writing things down tends to fix and freeze the situation.

The scribe can work closely with the faculty chair between meetings to ensure that items needing attention are carried forward to the next agenda and details receive the necessary follow-up.

Review of the Meeting: _

Rudolf Steiner hoped that the teacher's meetings would be a practical manifestation of Anthroposophically-inspired pedagogy. A real meeting of Waldorf teachers is more than an exercise in communication. It is a workshop, a practical session in "applied" Anthroposophy. How we approach each part of the meeting can strongly influence the development of spiritual insight in a school.

The review portion of a meeting can be considered in this way. Recollection calls for spiritual activity; it is not the preservation of old ideas or images, but a chance to perceive anew the events of the previous meeting. The goal is greater than a repetition of the old content. In reviewing, something new, less fettered by the "here and now" is created and then released. A good review can help colleagues "let go" of their personal attachment to previous events, while learning from the process.

A passage in **Theosophy** speaks to the development of new capacities through review:

"When the human spirit encounters an experience similar to one to which it has already been linked, it sees therein something familiar, and is able to take up an attitude towards it quite different from what would be the case were the spirit facing it for the first time. This is the basis of all learning. The fruits of learning are acquired capacities." ⁸.

Thus, rigorous review is an archetypal schooling of new human faculties. This deep human insight and schooling of new faculties can affect modern relationships in a positive way.

The Social Challenge:

Relationships today are increasingly difficult. Nothing can be taken for granted, all assumptions are off. Stripped to bare individuality, teachers and par-

⁸. Rudolf Steiner, **Theosophy**, Anthroposophic Press.

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ents need to rebuild not only the educational structure for our children, but the very social fabric itself.

The faculty meeting gives impetus for social healing in the community of parents and teachers.

"... Instead of taking interest merely in my own way of thinking, and in what I consider right, I must develop a selfless interest in every opinion I encounter, however strongly I may hold it to be mistaken. The more a man prides himself on his own dogmatic opinions and is interested only in them, the further he removes himself, at this moment of world evolution, from the Christ. The more he develops a social interest in the opinions of other men, even though he considers them erroneous — the more light he receives into his own thinking from the opinions of others — the more he does fulfill in his inmost soul a saying of Christ which today must be interpreted in the sense of the new Christ language... In whatever the least of your brethren thinks, you must recognize that I am thinking in him; and that I enter into your feeling, whenever you bring another's thought into relation with your own, and whenever you feel fraternal interest for what is passing in another's soul. Whatever opinion, whatever outlook on life, you discover in the least of your brethren, therein you are seeking Myself." ⁹.

These words from **The Inner Aspect of the Social Question** by Rudolf Steiner provide the possibility for renewed collegueship and renewed community work. Fraternal interest in others has the effect of drawing people forward, calling forth the highest in each individuality. Whenever a group is fortunate to have a body of knowledge unique in contemporary thinking, there is a danger of becoming ingrown, shutting oneself off from the "superficial" outside world. In the long run, a movement cannot be effective in the world unless it is capable of widening its circle. We need to draw people in, not push them away.

Teachers can do this by entering into the life of the community, joining local initiatives, fundraisers, town improvement projects, local libraries, etc. If every colleague in a school took up just one community endeavor outside of Waldorf education, what an effect that would have! The impulse for such involvement can come from the faculty meeting, when reports and contributions from outside the

⁹. Rudolf Steiner, **The Inner Aspect of the Social Question**, R. Steiner Press.

school are allowed to enter the circle, when colleagues actively practice the art of taking fraternal interest in each other and the world at large.

When one practices inner tolerance and cultivates interest in the thoughts of others, something new unfolds. This can best be described as a heightened feeling of responsibility for every action one performs."¹⁰. Not just the child-teacher relationship, but in fact, every relationship in the school community matters.

Once again, the child observation sessions can be a training, this time in a social sense. For when we "learn to listen to the revelation of spirit and soul in the growing child as they existed before birth," we see a journey that is greater and longer than we can fully comprehend with ordinary sense perception.¹¹. We can contemplate the path of destiny, strive to see the child's eternal core, and in so seeking, "our relationship to the eternal core of man's being will become less and less egotistical."¹². Child observation, when carried as an inner quest, lays the basis for an unegotistical mood of soul.

Thus the children help us become less egotistical. They promote renewal of the social life; they become our teachers. This attitude of soul, when present in a faculty meeting, works to the good of the entire community.

Much of the above may sound too idealistic, even impossible. Yet even when we do not succeed as we would wish, our struggles still help. For when the **intention** behind having faculty meetings lives strongly in a group, then the specifics and weekly details can better fall into place. The spiritual intentions of a faculty gathering, as well as the mood of soul, are the intangibles without which we cannot be Waldorf teachers.

The mystery dramas by Rudolf Steiner offer a lively example for a faculty's collective striving and group work. This concluding quotation could serve as a motto for faculty meetings:

10. Ibid.

11. Rudolf Steiner, **Education as a Social Problem**.

12. Ibid.

THE WALDORF FACULTY MEETING

"In future times it will behoove us
As men to live each for the other
— No longer through the other's being.
So shall the cosmic goal be reached
When man is rooted in himself
And each gives to the other
What neither wills as his."¹³.

May men and women, working together in the context of the faculty meeting, find the insight, the fraternal interest and the good will to actively nourish one another and the community we serve!

¹³. Rudolf Steiner, **Sketches for the first Mystery Drama**.