

## *First international European Waldorf Diploma conference at Emerson College*

*6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> October 2011*

The European Waldorf Diploma (EWD) aims to be an accredited and internationally recognised qualification for Steiner Waldorf schools in Europe. The project has been in progress for approximately three years and will enter a pilot phase for some selected subjects from January 2012. The EWD project group includes members representing the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education, the European Portfolio Certificate, Crossfields Institute and a number of European Waldorf schools.



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The EWD Emerson conference at the beginning of October was a successful and productive event. Many people representing approximately fifteen schools from eight different European countries as well as the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education, the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, the London Waldorf Trust and Crossfields Institute.

One aim of the conference was to work on an assessment rationale for the EWD. In secondary school education, teaching and learning has become an increasingly assessment driven process and this has had a strongly negative impact on the general quality of teaching and learning. There is now growing recognition that assessment should serve teaching and learning rather than the other way round. The European Waldorf Diploma will embrace student and teacher centred approaches to assessment, with the clear belief that this results in a better quality of education, not just from a Steiner Waldorf perspective but from any perspective that places quality and depth of learning at the centre. The aim of the conference was to begin to sketch out what this might actually look like in practice in the context of the EWD.

A keynote of the conference was a presentation given by Peter Gallin, a mathematician, teacher of mathematics and Professor of mathematics education at the University of Zürich. Peter developed "Dialogic Learning" together with his teaching colleague Urs Ruf, who held similar positions as a teacher of German. The introduction of standards and standardised testing that comes in its wake only

have a positive effect on learning "if the algorithms on which they are based are the outcome of a dialogic interaction of the learner with the task contained in those standards", Peter Gallin writes (<http://zhshf.ch/content-n283-sD.html>), calling for a foundation of standards and testing in the process of learning itself. "The respective competence can only be gained in a learning situation not characterized by a large hierarchical gap between teacher and learner, [but rather in] a situation in which the teacher systematically encourages learners to take responsibility for their own learning." (ECSWE has uploaded the article: "Dialogic Learning. From an educational concept to daily classroom teaching" to its WREN research database at <http://www.ecswe.org/wren/documents/Article3GallinDialogicLearning.pdf> )

Drawing on Peter Gallin's presentation and on subsequent discussions, the conference arrived at the following key points for an EWD assessment rationale which will be developed further:

- The EWD will use a formative, enquiry-based approach to assessment with the teacher and the student at the centre.
- Central to the assessment process will be various forms of assignment, including: Tasks set by the teacher; Journal; Portfolio.
- Summative assessment methods are acceptable to the extent that these serve a formative principle and are based on outcomes of dialogic interactions of learners with a given task. Etymologically, the word 'test' is related to the word touch (tactile etc), leading

the conference to coin the term 'tactful testing', realising that words can also be reclaimed from negative associations.

- The process of assigning value judgements to the work of students should be formative, that is, it should serve the learning of the student and help them to move forward. Put another way: assessment should promote the self-activity of the young person.
- The assigning of value comes from the 'feeling of rightness' (this is a provisional term for something that needs further elaboration) or the sense of judgement. This judgement or feeling of rightness can emerge through:
  - The teacher (the teacher assesses the student)
  - Peer review (students assess each other)
  - Self assessment (the students assess themselves)
- The EWD approach to assessment will use a variety of assessment methods in combination to maintain the possibility of adaptation and flexibility to the given situation. This will require training and guidance for teachers.
- Peter Gallin brought an innovative approach to the setting and marking of assignments which was felt to be very useful. This involved setting frequent and small assignments (to reduce teacher work load) and using a system of simple ticks to mark them (one to three ticks). The aim was to encourage the student to show their thinking process - whatever that was - rather than to give marks only for 'the right' answer. This process is best started with an anomaly, that is, a puzzle or something that sets up a question. Furthermore, lesson planning should only happen on the basis of the previous lesson. This also reduces work load when done effectively.
- It was agreed that both Dialogic Learning and the European Portfolio Certificate (EPC) should inform the assessment guidance for the EWD.
- An ongoing, collaborative dialogue between Dialogic Learning, EPC and EWD was proposed to create an EWD assessment guidance document as a first step.
- This must also be linked to delivery guidance of individual subjects as well as to teacher training.
- Teachers are also learners. This ethos should be an integral part of the assessment process as well as other aspects of the EWD.

Another speaker from outside traditional Steiner Waldorf circles was Jonathan Even-Zohar of Euroclio (<http://www.euroclio.eu/new/index.php>). He

presented the approach to European history teaching that is promoted by Euroclio, the European Association of History Educators. This is an innovative approach that aims to bring deeper understanding and tolerance of difference (e.g., ethnic and religious) through multi-perspective history teaching. The method has been successfully applied in situations of conflict such as the Balkans. Jonathan's presentation was very well received and there is an agreement to collaborate on the development of a history unit for the EWD. It was clear from both Peter's and Jonathan's presence at the conference that a lot could be gained from working with people outside the Waldorf movement who have developed fruitful methods of working.

There was a general awareness at the conference of the critical situation facing Steiner Waldorf upper schools. This was particularly strong given that it was echoed in one way or another from all countries present. There is a real prospect of Waldorf upper school education dying out if something is not done soon. The two central problems are those of incompatible accredited learning taking over the Steiner Waldorf approach, and the lack of dedicated teacher training for upper school teachers.

Another central focus at the conference was the EWD pilot. The next step in the EWD development process is to pilot a small number of core upper school subjects in a few Steiner Waldorf schools internationally. This will offer an opportunity to practically test the EWD on a small scale, so that we can see what really works in practice. The first step is to write the pilot units including delivery and assessment guidance (some of this work has already been started) and to develop a pilot version of the supporting quality assurance systems, including teacher training.

If all goes well, development of all written resources for the pilot would take place between January 2012 and September 2012. Depending on delivery dates, quality assurance and teacher training will take place in the second half of the 2011/12 academic year or in the first part of the 2012/13 academic year. Delivery of the pilot is planned in the 2012/13 academic year.

Funding remains an issue. There is a small amount of development money from the German Waldorf Bund but otherwise the project still needs funding. ECSWE

has agreed to work together with the EWD to raise funds in the coming year. The EWD remains an ambitious solution to the problems that Steiner Waldorf upper school education faces, but it is also perhaps the one solution that could address the real problems at their root. It therefore also provides - in our view - the best opportunity for real regeneration and lasting positive change within the Steiner Waldorf movement.

*Fergus Anderson (Crossfields Institute, EWD UK coordinator)  
and Detlef Hardorp (EWD European coordinator)*

For more information about the EWD, please contact Fergus or Detlef (fergus@crossfieldsinstitute.com, hardorp@ecswe.org)

## *Saying it With Song and Dance*

*An International Music and Movement Week at the Ringwood Waldorf School.*

Nearly 60 pupils and teachers from five countries gathered at the Ringwood Waldorf School in Hampshire, to take part in a workshop of art, music and movement, funded by the EU Comenius programme.

Ringwood Waldorf School hosted the first of the one week workshops in song, dance and eurythmy. The week culminated with a special assembly and evening show where both the visiting pupils and local pupils took to the stage as one.



**The Orchestra Performs**

The Estonian children also had their zithers, teachers from Spain and Germany introduced the Flamenco, Italian pupils performed a Tarantella and Turkish youngsters a traditional song, with their own musical accompaniment.

Ringwood Waldorf School pupils will now visit schools in Spain, Germany, Italy, Turkey and Estonia to learn drama, circus skills and sculpture.

They are due to go to Germany early next year, then Italy, and Estonia in September. The Spanish and Turkish workshops are due take place in 2013.

The week was a feast of colourful costume, music and dance. In working together pupil's experienced new skills and different cultures, language barriers simply disappeared and new friendships were made.

*Roy Allen  
Upper School Teacher  
Ringwood Waldorf School, UK*

## *Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework Recognised*

*News that the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework has been officially recognised as an alternative curriculum.*

Dear Members, Great News!

Last night we received the official notification from ACARA that the submission for our Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework to be recognized as an alternate curriculum is now included for the Phase 1 subjects, English, Maths, History and Science on ACARA's Recognition Register...

To read the full article visit our website at:-

<http://www.ecswe.net/ecswenews.php#australian-steiner-curriculum-recognised>

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