

CONFLUENCE

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NEWSMAKERS

Woodland Star Charter School: The Future of Public Waldorf Education

BY BROOKE SEVENAU

Woodland Star Charter School, in Sonoma, CA, is unusual among schools founded on the core principles of Public Waldorf education in that it serves a significant and growing population of Latino families and English Learners. This growth is a direct result of conscious intention by the school's founders to serve all of the children of the Sonoma Valley, and of fierce determination by a succession of school leaders to pursue diversity over the sixteen-year life of Woodland Star. In October 2016, twelve former and current school parents, teachers and administrators met to talk about Woodland Star's process, successes and challenges of attracting and serving Latino families. This knowledgeable group created a timeline of the growth of the Latino population and of significant events that supported that growth. This article tracks those events chronologically in the hope that it can point to actions that other schools may take to broaden their populations to reflect local demographics.

From even before its founding in 2000, Woodland Star has striven to reflect the demographics of the Sonoma Valley, where about 50% of public school students are Latino. Founder and former administrator Chip Romer honored founding parent Jennifer Goode for her leadership in ensuring the school's diversity: "Jennifer did the research about how to attract and serve Latino families. She advocated that we have a \$2,000 annual salary bump for Spanish bilingual staff, and, recognizing that we would be serving working parents, planned an aftercare program from day one. Jennifer led the outreach campaign to La Luz (the Latino community center) and at all kindergarten fairs and community events, such as Sonoma's annual Cinco de Mayo celebration. Diversity was her drumbeat."

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Left to right: **Annie Cassidy**—parent, volunteer kindergarten Spanish teacher, Charter Council member; **Anna Pier**—retired bilingual class teacher and Spanish teacher; **Gabriela Padilla-Sanchez**—parent, Padres Unidos Vice-President, kindergarten assistant; **Heather Graham**—step-parent, parent, former Spanish and EL teacher, Padres Unidos/ELAC supporter; **Evelin Sanchez**—parent, Padres Unidos President; **Nilda Pizano-Arguello**—parent, Padres Unidos member; **Sonia Mendoza**—parent, Padres Unidos member; **Jose Diaz**—parent, Padres Unidos member; **Sallie Romer**—kindergarten teacher; **Jamie Lloyd**—Spanish bilingual administrator. Not pictured: **Chip Romer**—founder and former administrator; **Trina Saldana**—parent, Padres Unidos member, Charter Council member.

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Annual Conference at Rudolf Steiner College
Widening the Circle: Culturally Relevant Practices with **Linda Williams**, Ed.D.

January 13 - 15, 2017

Registration begins December 1

CONFLUENCE

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The Future of Public Waldorf Education

Data provided by California Department of Education

YEAR	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
% Latino students					11.5	11.8	9.6	11.4	10.6	12.4	16.7	17.3	23.4	25.4	27.4	28.1

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 Woodland Star offered Spanish instruction to grades K-8 from the beginning, has always offered Spanish language school tours and done bilingual outreach to the community. The school currently has all important communications, including the school newsletter, translated into Spanish. In 2002, the school placed its first Latina, Monica Conway, on its board, and the following year two Spanish bilingual class teachers were hired. One of them, Anna Pier, who also taught Spanish, initiated an annual Dia de los Muertos celebration with a large altar in the school's main hall. "It was easy and organic to start that tradition because that fall the father of one of my third graders had been hit on his bicycle and killed. Danny O'Reilly was a leader of the Parent Council, and our whole community was grieving, so the altar was widely embraced. The tradition has continued ever since."

The following year, the school funded an English Language Development program, headed by Anna Pier. Ms. Pier, Mr. Romer and Spanish speaking parent Annie Cassidy formed a committee that met weekly with the intention of building Latino enrollment, promoting the school at numerous community events in English and Spanish, and developing a Latino parents' social group, which eventually became Padres Unidos. When Mr. Romer expressed his frustration with the difficulty of attracting a diverse student body, a friend in the Latino community advised him to focus on finding one family, promising that one happy family would lead to others. By this time, the school was gaining in popularity, and enrollment lotteries threatened to sabotage any outreach success. Mr. Romer explained how he overcame this: "Fortunately, we had an enrollment preference for children of employees, and I was able to hire a Latino custodian with twins and a Latina aftercare assistant with two boys; as employees, they were able to get their children into the school. It finally felt like we had some momentum."

In 2005, Annie Cassidy, from the Latino outreach committee, was elected to the Charter Council. When budget cuts in the following year threatened kindergarten Spanish, Ms. Cassidy became the volunteer kindergarten Spanish teacher. In 2007, Anna Pier brought an English language summer camp for Spanish speakers to the campus, offering a Waldorf model that integrated teaching with

carpentry, gardening and the arts. Offered through Common Bond, a Sonoma nonprofit that promotes cultural opportunities and understanding between the Spanish and English communities, the camp introduced many new Latino families to Woodland Star.

In 2007, parent Heather Graham (then Zavaleta) was hired to teach Spanish throughout the grades and to teach English Language Development. She worked actively with Padres Unidos to initiate a new tradition with an annual Posada, a Mexican Christmas celebration during which families participate in a procession that re-creates the pilgrimage of the Holy Family on their way to Bethlehem. Parent Jose Dias recalled, "When I went to the first Padres Unidos and all the teachers there were speaking Spanish, it made me feel so good that they were speaking my language. People actually taking the time to learn our language is awesome. It's good, really good!"

In 2008, the first Spanish-only speaking student entered the school in Sallie Romer's Dandelion Kindergarten. "As a kindergarten teacher, my initial response to students who arrived with no English was to be impressed that this curriculum is tailor made for English learners because it is so verbal—they just started speaking English because it's all around them and they can take their time as learning arises. Now, with more experience, I'm seeing that immersion isn't enough—we have to turn our attention to what is getting missed."

In 2007, Latina parent, Trina Saldana, enrolled her son, Aaron, in kindergarten at Woodland Star. Her decision to join the community was reaffirmed when her son's teacher asked her if Ms. Saldana would prefer that she and the class use the Spanish language pronunciation of her son's name. Ms. Saldana had not initially indicated that preference but was very appreciative of the teacher's proactive cultural sensitivity.

In 2009, Ms. Saldana joined the Charter Council. She talked about an ongoing challenge: "As happy parents, we're always trying to 'convert' families to Waldorf; but this is a big hurdle for families who don't speak English. To stand by the pedagogy takes strength when we're surrounded by wary family members and people who aren't familiar." Padres

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Scenes from lively Woodland Star kindergarten classrooms.



At the Heart of Education: Essential Principles of Public Waldorf Education

BY LIZ BEAVEN, ALLIANCE PRESIDENT

What is essential for an educational approach or a school to be considered “Waldorf?” This question has become more complex in our country as Waldorf education has expanded beyond its traditional private school domain into new communities. The topic has been taken up in many quarters and was the subject of a recent one-day conference in Sacramento, California. On a sunny Saturday, over 100 public and private educators gathered to explore what lies at the heart of Waldorf education: those core principles that are essential to this approach. The Conference was offered by the Pedagogical Section Council (PSC) and was co-sponsored by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and our Alliance. This collaborative event took place at George Washington Carver High School of Sciences and Arts (an Alliance member school), and was coordinated by Jennifer Snyder, a member of the Pedagogical Section Council and one of a growing number of teachers with direct experience in both private and public school settings.

The Pedagogical Section is part of the Anthroposophical Society. Anyone who sees the merit of Steiner’s spiritual research and its implementation can join the Anthroposophical Society; specialized Sections devoted to the major areas of anthroposophy in the world are available to those members who wish to work further on behalf of that research. Waldorf education is possibly the most visible of Steiner’s many endeavors. In this country, the Pedagogical Section’s Council is comprised of twelve individuals with lengthy careers in Waldorf education. Their task is to interest themselves in and research contemporary experiences and issues of child development and education wherever Waldorf education may be finding expression. The Council views itself as a sense organ for Waldorf education and is traditionally focused on the inner life and work of the teacher and on broad trends that impact our work. Recent topics have included questions of technology and festival life. Council members come from across the country to meet in person four times each year.

AWSNA and, more recently, our Alliance, are more focused on questions of implementation of Waldorf education in schools. With the development of a broader spectrum of schools working from the impulse of Waldorf education, there has been protracted discussion on what is and is not a “Waldorf school;” therefore the Section Council decided to work to identify the “core principles” of Waldorf education. This task paralleled work on the international stage, conducted by the International Forum, reflecting the fact that Waldorf education worldwide has expanded beyond its original European base and focus and that this expansion has brought exciting questions and challenges for everyone involved in the work. Questions of definition have become more urgent—how do we recognize and protect the essentials of a Waldorf approach in any setting, yet support necessary change and innovation?

The Sacramento conference provided a forum for discussion and exploration. It began with the chair of the Pedagogical Section, Elan Leibner, stating the importance and timeliness of the topic and the PSC’s desire to look at the entire movement, rather than focus on differences between public and private expressions. Mr. Leibner emphasized both the

core essentials and the need for taking them as a basis of innovation, continuing to enliven the art of education. He raised some provocative questions, including: Why do we see so much replication in schools of practices that were established many, many years ago? How many of these practices can be linked to Steiner’s indications? Might Steiner be startled if he appeared in a modern Waldorf classroom, and be moved to ask why we are still doing some things that were relevant for children in 1919 Germany but possibly less relevant for American children today? What can we identify in a school that truly reflects the unique aspects of its surroundings, community, and time? From this, Mr. Leibner spoke of the delicate balancing act between maintaining fidelity to essential, core principles and the imperative to innovate in order to keep our educational approach alive and to truly meet the need of contemporary children.

Next, Stephanie Rynas, one of AWSNA’s executive leaders, described AWSNA’s work in developing and updating their Principles, which will be used as a basis for the AWSNA self-study and accreditation process. I represented the Alliance, describing our board’s process of developing and refining the Core Principles of the Alliance. Both AWSNA and the Alliance used the Council’s Principles as a basis for alignment and then clarification of the unique and essential qualities of their member schools.

Through its research, the Pedagogical Section Council members arrived at seven principles that they consider to be core to Waldorf education, regardless of its setting. (For those interested in reading more, Council members have written articles on them, published by the *Research Bulletin for Waldorf Education*.) The Principles address:

1. **The Image of the Human Being**
2. **Phases of Child Development**
3. **Developmental Curriculum**
4. **Freedom in Teaching**
5. **Methodology of Teaching**
6. **Relationships**
7. **Spiritual Orientation**

Conference attendees were able to select two of these topics and participate in discussion groups. Lively conversation was reported from all groups. A range of artistic workshops followed the discussion groups. The day concluded with singing led by Christiana Quick-Cleveland. Most of us left feeling enlivened and eager to continue discussions with colleagues on these crucial aspects of Waldorf education.

The Alliance also arrived at seven core principles:

1. **Image of the Human Being:** Public Waldorf education is founded on a coherent image of the developing human being;
2. **Child Development:** An understanding of child development guides all aspects of the Public Waldorf educational program, to the greatest extent possible within established legal mandates;
3. **Social Change through Education:** Public Waldorf education exists to serve both the individual and society;

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Since 2004, the Latino student population at Woodland Star has tripled and stands today at 28% of all students enrolled.

The Future of Public Waldorf Education

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4 Unidos President Evelin Sanchez agreed: “Everyone in our families questions our choice of Waldorf. As Latinos, we’re not used to this type of curriculum. It is totally different from what I experienced from my education in Mexico, and that is why I wanted it for my kids. They get to be kids here. Kindergarten is play and learning at the same time without the kids knowing that they’re learning. I didn’t have that. This is more loving and welcoming. It’s totally right—but we have to put up with a lot of negativity and criticism because it is so unfamiliar. We’re here because we are strong.”

Gabriela Padilla agreed, “As a kindergarten assistant I saw that it’s a huge challenge to talk about Waldorf philosophy. People don’t get it easily. Parents need information, little pieces everywhere. Parents are busy all the time. When parents have two jobs, kids, they’re all over the place; how do you translate Waldorf for them? We need a whole packet of information.”

“I’m always learning from the school and sharing about it with others,” Nilda Pizano-Arguello reported. “As I talk about it, people want to learn more. Before coming to this school I called a psychologist in Mexico and a teacher in Mexico to ask, is this the right thing for my kids. Will it work for them? Both said, ‘Don’t do that.’ But my husband said, ‘It’s up to you.’ So I’m here and very happy that it’s working.”

Jose Diaz confirmed this challenge: “Many of our parents didn’t have an education. We have parents who didn’t even finish second grade. So some kids are coming from a house where there

is no education at all. We can’t expect parents to quickly understand Waldorf. We’re the new era. We are the people who are thinking beyond. I want my kid to be a kid. When I grew up in Mexico I was always by playing. When I see my kid playing hide and seek I remember that’s what I used to play. I like that, instead of looking at my kid playing video games. When I see my kid painting rocks, which is kind of weird, I’m fine. It’s what he likes. He’s happy.”

In 2010, the school initiated Homework Club twice a week for Latino students, led by volunteer teachers and parents. One of these teachers was Sallie Romer: “We are waking up to what extra services we need to provide so that English Learners proceed successfully through school. Just because a student acquires English fluency in the kindergarten doesn’t mean she’s finished. I can look at my whole class and see them progressing well, but I need to keep refining the way I see English Learners to be sure that they are truly progressing. I worry that if we’re not careful, English Learners can start compensating and, while it looks like they are understanding everything, they might not be. This is a frontier. We have some catching up to do here.” Now Homework Club is ongoing and available to all students.

In 2011, parent Gabriela Padilla and teacher/parent Heather Graham founded a Mexican folk dance troupe for girls and boys, Las Estrellas, which represented Woodland Star the subsequent year at “Waldorf at Weill,” the annual performance gathering of ten North Bay Waldorf schools. “With a mariachi band and our wildly colorful Mexican costumes, Woodland Star was

At the Heart of Education

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

4. Human Relationships: Public Waldorf schools foster a culture of healthy human relationships;

5. Access and Diversity: Public Waldorf schools work to increase diversity and access to all sectors of society;

6. Collaborative Relationships: Public Waldorf school leadership is conducted through shared responsibilities within established legal structures;

7. Schools as Learning Communities: Public Waldorf schools cultivate a love of lifelong learning and self-knowledge.

It is interesting to note where the Pedagogical Section Council’s original Core Principles directly overlap with those developed by the Alliance and where they diverge. When the Alliance board completed its work on these and approved them at its September meeting, it was with great enthusiasm and a sense that we have developed a set of foundational “essentials” that will ensure the quality of our member schools yet will allow for the uniqueness of each school. We believe that our Principles will support an ever-expanding spectrum of Public Waldorf education as educators respond to local interest, enlivening education and meeting the needs of a diverse group of students.

Formation of our Core Principles has been a large part of our ongoing engagement with AWSNA on use of the Waldorf/Steiner service mark, as we have worked to define essential, shared characteristics, identify the differentiation that is necessary for a public school setting, and develop a means of assuring the quality of our member schools. We will be sharing more details of the Principles at our January Conference, and will ensure that there is ample opportunity for the type of discussion and exploration that was enjoyed at the one-day conference. We are working with AWSNA on final approval of language of our Principles: they will then be available to schools and to the public and will form the basis of a revised self-study and membership process. We greatly look forward to active exploration with our schools and teachers of what lies at the heart of Public Waldorf education. ■

The Future of Public Waldorf Education

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5 really different from the other schools,” Ms. Padilla said. That same year Padres Unidos was formally organized as Woodland Star’s English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) with Evelin Sanchez as President and Gabriela Padilla as Vice President. “This gave the group—and the Latino community—formal authority in the school, and in the district,” Heather Graham said. Trina Saldana was pleased: “The Latino community at Woodland Star is embraced and encouraged to take leadership roles. It’s a real testament to the Woodland Star community.”

To build on the Homework Club intervention, in 2013 Heather Graham initiated a faculty-led summer camp to maintain academic progress over the summer for Latinos and especially English Learners. This was popular and successful, has continued in subsequent summers, and is now open to all Woodland Star students.

In 2012 Teresita Landin, bilingual/bicultural parent, was hired to assist Heather Graham with Spanish instruction as well as English Language Development. Today she and Cristina Ruiz, bilingual/bicultural Spanish teacher hired in 2014, conduct a robust Spanish language program spanning kindergarten through eighth grade and manage ELD for the school.

In 2014, to further serve needs of working parents, the school began before-school care, including breakfast, at 7:00 AM.

In 2016, Woodland Star hired Spanish bilingual Jamie Lloyd as administrator. Formal faculty study is being initiated to improve English Language Development. “The ELD program is my biggest curiosity right now—and will be the focus of many faculty meetings,” Mr. Lloyd said.

NEXT CHALLENGES

“[Current ELD teacher] Teresita Landin and I worked really hard in developing the ELD program,” Heather Graham recounted. “We needed to ensure we had the services in place to meet student needs. It required funding—the school had to put the money where the need is. This was huge. We still have to work to get teachers trained so that they are integrating ELD in the classroom. This struggle is not unique to Woodland Star; this struggle is in every school throughout California that has English Learners. Teresita was a very smart, driven partner in developing that program. She was an English Learner herself, so she knows how the process works. We didn’t have a road map—because it’s Waldorf and ELD. Having to put those pieces together has been a real challenge. English Language Development should always be connected to curriculum, not something randomly floating out here on the side. Ideally, the ELD program would be done in the classroom, by the most educated person in the room—the class teacher.

“If the EL education is done poorly, there is a certain danger. We have families with English Learner students who have left the school because it didn’t work for them. It’s a really sticky piece—how to bring along academic language, bring along those early reading skills for English Learners in such a way that kids are successful, or if they’re not being successful you catch it and remediate with interventions early on. If that doesn’t happen, and kids get up to sixth or seventh grade, parents have a feeling of betrayal because there were promises and commitments made. The grades teachers need to get on board with what does it takes to teach an English learner. If it’s done poorly, it affects that child’s

academic development forever. This piece needs to be tightened—not just at Woodland Star; everywhere. Because Waldorf students stay with the same teacher over a number of years, there aren’t the checks and balances you have in a mainstream school where a student is going from teacher to teacher.

“English learners are a more vulnerable population, so assuming the responsibility for their education is huge. I felt that responsibility every day and took it very seriously. With Waldorf teachers taking on a new curriculum every year, English Language Development has to be a piece of every year’s preparation. Teachers have to be thinking: what are my interventions throughout the year? What is my ELD plan?”

Jose Diaz agrees: “I went through the whole public school system, but it was only when I was working that I learned English. I came to the U.S. as a ten year old, and in school I didn’t learn anything. It was really hard. It’s always embarrassing as a kid learning another language. I can tell you from my experience. It looked like I was learning, but I was not. Because of the language barrier, I was afraid to communicate, to tell the teacher that I wasn’t understanding. I wanted to do it, but they didn’t have enough people to help. Woodland Star is different. It’s a learning experience, even for myself as a parent. I want it.” ■

Brooke Sevenau is a former Waldorf student, UCLA graduate and parent of two Woodland Star students. She is a writer and the owner of the public relations firm Studio Seven.

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"All of Our Children Are from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds"

BETTY STALEY INTERVIEWS LINDA WILLIAMS

Betty Staley: What has been your work in Waldorf education? I know you have been a class teacher, but I am not up-to-date on the various career shifts you have made.

Linda Williams: I began my Waldorf teaching career in 1987 with my first class at Detroit Waldorf School. I took this class through fifth grade, spent a year teaching in our first class for three-year-olds, and then joined Urban Waldorf School in Milwaukee in 1993. After spending three years there, I returned to Detroit to look after my elderly parents. I assumed the directorship of the Waldorf teaching program in Detroit (Waldorf Teacher Development Association), and began working on my doctorate. When a class teacher was needed at Detroit Waldorf School, I took up a second grade while continuing my graduate studies. We all "graduated" in 2006 – my class completed eighth grade, and I finished my doctorate. From there I joined Eastern Michigan University as a literacy professor, and I spent eight years there before I decided (around my third lunar node) to return to class teaching. I am now in third grade with my class. Over the years I have served as a class teacher, mentor, teacher educator, and board member. It is more refreshing to be with children again after five to six years out of the classroom.

BS: As a classroom teacher of many years experience, what are you seeing that is different in the children today? How are their needs being met?

LW: There are definitely some differences in the children I am seeing today, but I also have to think how much our culture has changed over the last 30 years. Compared to previous classes, my current students generally come from smaller families. Probably due to our digital technologies, they are much more aware of the outer world and mainstream media. They are more awake in general, and seem more confident in cognitive skills, such as reading. They want to read, are eager to meet the world, and are much more involved in extracurricular activities. They are also a bit more fragile, they seem to sleep less deeply, are more prone to anxiety and stress, and more children seem to exhibit some learning challenges in the areas of attention and executive functioning.

BS: How have your relationships with parents changed?

LW: Parents are increasingly more attached to their children. I find that I now address my parents differently and speak more out of my life experience, and I don't worry as much when they are allowing their children to do things I would have worried over in the past. I work more with the parents through suggestions, rather than telling them what they should do.

BS: Does Waldorf education meet the children of today?

LW: I believe the Waldorf classroom—surrounded by sound practices throughout the school—can meet the needs of modern children. A Waldorf school is only as good as the strength and integrity of its faculty and staff. When the structure of the school supports the self-development of faculty and staff, then amazing things can happen for the entire school community. Our children and families benefit when a school shares rich pedagogical study, has regular, penetrating child and class studies, and when teachers and staff are supported and encouraged to engage in mindfulness and other practices that strengthen their own capacities. Out of this rich soil we are helped to find ways to meet the children that go beyond habit and (God forbid!) dogma.

BS: How are the needs of children from culturally diverse backgrounds being met by the curriculum, and what changes do you think still need to be made?

LW: I think one thing we must constantly remind ourselves is that all of our children are from culturally diverse backgrounds, and the answer to this lies in the daily communing with the children, their families, and our colleagues. This is why I think that Waldorf education can be truly revolutionary. One of our responsibilities, I think, lies in realizing that an education towards freedom means helping our students develop the tools to see clearly, feel deeply, and think reflectively. What this means for curriculum is being able to discern, being awake to the selective stories we tell. What (and who) are we including? What (and who) are we excluding? What do our children need to know to be inspired adults of the 21st Century? Whose stories help to bring this?



Dr. Linda Williams will be the keynote speaker at the Alliance Annual National Conference in January 2017.

What needs emphasis? What needs disruption? These questions can only be answered by thoughtful communities of practice—teachers, administrators, and families.

BS: Can you give an example?

LW: This year at the Michaelmas assembly, Michael was played by a teacher, a young black woman alumna of Detroit Waldorf School. All of the references to "he" were changed to "she." The whole assembly was designed by the community, rather than by a single source. By working together, we were able to respond to our community and disrupt our habits of thinking.

BS: What do you see as challenges in the Waldorf movement in the area of the conference theme of "Widening the Circle: Culturally Relevant Practices?"

LW: Culturally relevant practice is in some ways global and some ways specific. The global part grows out of what I mentioned above: Structures that allow teachers and staff to hone the capacity to see and experience the children before them without rushing to judgment or habituated stereotyped thinking. The specific part is responding creatively and imaginatively to the children and to the place where the school is located. Sometimes I think we confuse these in our Waldorf movement. We sometimes impose a global "Waldorf" view in our pedagogy, where we reproduce our Waldorf habits to the extent that class-

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Understanding Special Education in the Public Waldorf Movement

BY JEFF LOUGH, NATIONALLY CERTIFIED SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

I discovered Waldorf education when my first daughter was born fourteen years ago. After teaching special education in the Los Angeles Unified School District, I began practicing as a school psychologist in a highly competitive school district in Southern California. My job primarily involved intellectual assessment and counseling for students with academic and/or emotional and behavioral struggles. Like all school psychologists across the country I worked with a team that consisted of a special education teacher, general education teacher, administrator, and often a speech and language specialist. If motor skills were poor enough, an adaptive physical education teacher or occupational therapist would do her own assessment and provide additional services. Each of us had our separate rolls, and therefore independent views, of what a child needed.

By the time my daughter was old enough for kindergarten, I knew enough from the children I had assessed for learning disabilities to understand that early academics were not in line with child development. So, my wife and I found and enrolled in a school founded on the core principles of Public Waldorf education 45 minutes from our house. As a parent and school psychologist, I am a firm believer in public education as a basic human right. That said, my conventional graduate training and that of the well-meaning teachers and specialists with whom I worked often under-emphasized child development for the sake of “educational progress,” which itself was too narrowly defined.

In the spring of 2008, I was presented with an opportunity to transform a failing “alternative” school in my district that was approaching a 50% student attrition rate and multiple systemic issues into a viable school-of-choice for families. With blissful ignorance, I left my job as a school psychologist and became the school’s administrator. Over my five years as principal, the school’s population grew from 96 students to 330. It was clear there was a strong desire for something different in the community. Over that time, our school incorporated more and more principles of Public Waldorf education through various trainings at Rudolf Steiner College. While our overall student population grew, so did our percentage of students with special needs. In fact, our percentage of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP’s) was approaching 20%, which was nearly twice the district average at the time. For reasons beyond the scope of this article, this discrepancy may come as no surprise to many schools.

When I speak with other schools working with the core principles of Public Waldorf education, special education is often a very hot topic. Nowhere else is pedagogy more closely governed by federal and state laws than in special education—from our legal obligations of “child find,” eligibility, and systematic monitoring of annual goals/objectives to ensuring the child is placed in the “least restrictive environment.” In my view, the Waldorf

educational philosophy has greatest potential to do these effectively.

Our schools have the incredible opportunity to take full advantage of conventional wisdom in building multi-tiered intervention systems while at the same time implementing and strengthening a curriculum and methodologies that, at their very core, address the many difficulties of students with learning challenges. In fact, while delivery is “whole-group,” Waldorf education rests upon meticulous observation of the individual student. To further this point, free-play in the early years is essential in strengthening learning and social capacities and enhancing creativity. Speech and memory exercises, daily prescribed movement games, a developmentally synchronistic curriculum with inherent relevance to the child’s age, and the use of art as a vehicle for deepening understanding are all essential aspects of what our teachers do daily and are all evidenced-based practices for students with learning challenges. Additionally, research on looping students (keeping the child with the same teacher over multiple years) has also been widely evidenced to reduce behavior problems and increase academic gains.

As new initiative schools emerge and established schools continue to deepen roots, we are all tasked with creating comprehensive special education programs. In the most severe cases, Public Waldorf schools may not be the answer, but until that is decided for the individual student, we are obligated to demonstrate efficacy. Needless to say, meeting ethical and legal requirements is not always easy. School-wide assessments must be meaningful and ongoing to inform progress and practice. Our understanding of typical development must be strong. Referral practices and child-study should consider the whole-child and be data-driven. Lastly, our approach to remediation needs to integrate both mind and body as Waldorf education innately understands. ■

Jeff Lough is a practicing Nationally Certified School Psychologist, a Licensed Educational Psychologist, and former school principal. He is the chair of the Pedagogical Committee for the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education and teaches in the Department of Psychology graduate program at Humboldt State University.



Jeff is a founder of the Mariposa School of Global Education in Agora Hills, CA and currently a parent at the Coastal Grove Charter School in Eureka, CA.

The Social Justice Impulse in Public Waldorf Education

At the September Alliance board meeting at SunRidge Charter School in Sebastopol, California, Liz Beaven led participants in the construction of a timeline of the development of Public Waldorf education in the U.S. While the development of the majority of schools founded on the core principles of Public Waldorf education was led by self-interested parents who sought this education for their own children, Liz identified another founding impulse, which she named “social justice.” These schools are founded not primarily by self-interested parents, but by altruistic educators who have come to know the value and wonder of Waldorf education and seek to make it available to a generally underserved, urban population. Successful schools born out of this social justice impulse intend to support the healing and rebuilding of the broader community where the school is located. Our January 2017 issue will provide some history and context, then highlight three social justice initiatives that serve or plan to serve the communities of Oakland, Watts and Southeast Washington, D.C.

“If we are not of the community we wish to serve, we must be listeners and learners to build trust and learn before starting a school,” says Ida Oberman, Ph.D., founder of Oakland’s Community School for Creative Education. “We spent three years as community organizers before our school opened, and we continue to be active in building partnerships. We are a full-service community school, with family services such as get out the vote, shoo the flu, a food pantry, job training for parents and housing workshops.”

“What can a community school in Watts be?” asked Orland Bishop, Executive Director of the ShadeTree Multicultural Foundation and developer of the ShadeTree Community School initiative in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. The ShadeTree Multicultural Foundation was founded in 1995 and serves as an intentional community of mentors, elders, teachers, artists, healers and advocates for the healthy development of youth. “The most important thing is community building. How do you help someone find healthy relationships and community?” These questions will inform the development of a K-8 public school in Watts guided by the core principles of Public Waldorf education.

Lydia Witham, M.Ed. is a Waldorf parent in Bethesda, Maryland who learned about Waldorf education while earning her graduate degree in Mind, Brain and Education at Harvard. Laurene Powell Jobs’ well-marketed QX Super School project, which offered a prize of \$5M to launch innovative new high schools, inspired Ms. Witham to develop the Washington High School of Arts and Academics, guided by the core principles of Public Waldorf education, for a high-poverty African American population in Southeast Washington, DC. Ms. Witham described the three pillars of her school: 1. Public Waldorf; 2. Community collaboration; and 3. Inclusive for everyone. “In our school we have to model the society we want,” she affirmed. ■

* Look for an in-depth exploration of the social justice impulse manifesting in these and other schools in a special January Conference edition of *Confluence*.



Left to right: **Ida Oberman**, Community School ED & Founder; **Orland Bishop**, ShadeTree Lead Advisor; **Dirk Russell**, ShadeTree Initiative Team Member; **Liz Beavan**, Program Developer, California Institute for Integral Studies and Alliance Board President; **Joan Jaeckel**, ShadeTree Initiative Co-Lead; **Alice Faber**, ShadeTree Initiative Co-Lead; **Clifford Thompson**, Community School Principal; **Gina Stiens**, Community School Dean of Culture; **Michele Meyer**, Community School Board Member and 6th Grade Teacher; **Winifred Day**, Community School 1st Grade Teacher.

THE INTERVIEW

“All of Our Children Are from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds”

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6 room and main lesson books look alike, no matter where they are located. This perspective leaves little time to delve deeply into the culture of the place and families from where our children come. Our children, our families, and the spirit of the place where our communities are located provide a rich source for pedagogical decisions. Out of this we can weave a living Waldorf perspective with an informed understanding of culture.

BS: What is needed in teacher education to meet the needs of children today?

LW: One of the aspects of graduate literacy education I enjoyed most was learning about the qualitative and ethnographic stories around literacy we had to digest and understand. I wish there was time to include studies of this nature in Waldorf teacher education. I think that we as teachers need more of the anthropologist’s tools to understand culture and human development. We do this some, for instance, we do some biography work—but we need more biographical/cultural work that explores deeply the nuanced cultural streams that inform the larger culture of this nation, this continent. We also need more history that situates Waldorf education in the larger story of American education. We will talk more about this in the January conference. ■

Betty Staley, Alliance Advisory Board, directs Waldorf High School Teacher Education as well as programs for public school teachers at Rudolf Steiner College. A Waldorf educator for over thirty years at the kindergarten, elementary, high school and teacher training levels, she is a founder of the Sacramento Waldorf High School where she taught history and literature for nineteen years. Betty is author of numerous books including *Between Form and Freedom: A Practical Guide to the Teenage Years* and *Hear the Voice of the Griot!: A Guide to the History, Geography and Culture of Africa*.



Lessons Learned: 学以致用 The First International Forum on Public Waldorf Education in China

BY MARY GERVASE, PH.D. AND MARY GORAL, P.H.D.



This September, two road-weary consultants, Dr. Mary Goral and Dr. Mary Gervase, journeyed to Senlinhu Primary School, in Zhengzhou, China, nestled on the banks of the Yellow River, the birthplace of Chinese civilization, to address the participants attending the First International Forum on Public Waldorf Education in China. Although their presentation focused on the “lessons learned” in public school choice in the United States, they are quick to point out, “We learned far more from our Chinese and European colleagues, than they from us!” Below is an overview of their more poignant findings. Please take into account their understanding is somewhat filtered by the communication skills of their English translators.

WALDORF EDUCATION IN CHINA

“Study the past if you would divine the future.” — Confucius

Waldorf education is indeed burgeoning in China. Although there is no official tally, the present estimates extend to 600 kindergarten programs and 60 elementary programs. Waldorf has become an education choice readily available in every major Chinese city. In addition, there are five Waldorf preschool and seven primary school teacher training centers. Two of these teacher training centers are affiliated with universities. Teachers from all over China are enrolling in training courses, some with the intention of teaching in Waldorf schools, and many others with the desire to “freshen” their own teaching by incorporating Waldorf practices into the traditional public school setting.

This growth of Waldorf education in China is even more remarkable when you consider its short trajectory, with the first elementary Waldorf school opening in Chengdu in 2005. But public Waldorf does not yet exist in China. All Waldorf schools are private institutions and therefore, tuition based. Yet the momentum continues to build. Senlinhu Primary School, where the conference was held, is presently a private Montessori day and boarding school—but not for much longer. The curriculum director explained that they are transitioning to a dual Montessori and Waldorf school beginning next school year. Their enthusiastic teachers are already participating in biannual Waldorf training and incorporating Waldorf instructional practices within the existing Montessori school curriculum. Such is the flavor of the unbridled Waldorf “movement” in China!

China’s economic boom has created a substantial middle class, who are both able to afford private education and aggressively seeking educational options for their children. Disenchanted with their own formative education, which was narrowly focused and government dictated, these parents are seeking an education for their own children that is more relevant, holistic, humanistic, creative, and culturally reflective.



No surprise that a large portion of public disgruntlement revolves around the high stakes “college entrance exam,” the *gaokao*, which determines and narrows one’s options for higher education. But even more importantly, higher education is the gatekeeper for one’s career and employment options. As such, a child’s future opportunities are almost solely determined by their *gaokao* performance. Students are ranked in comparison to every other student who sat for the exam throughout China, and their rankings are made public. If you were fortunate enough to receive top marks, your prospects for future education and employment are truly satisfied. Predictably, the Chinese public school curriculum is driven by the exam requirements, which also drive the plethora of after school and weekend private tutoring services. While many of us may bemoan the test-driven culture of the United States and Europe, it pales in comparison to China’s high stakes, “single assessment” system.

At the same time that Waldorf is gaining traction in China, having the economic means to send one’s child to a private Waldorf school does not guarantee attendance. Presently, the demand for Waldorf far exceeds the available school seats, with every Waldorf school touting multiyear waiting lists. Even relatively new schools have had to completely stop accepting new students. To add to this, school leadership is unable to find trained, experienced Waldorf teachers to staff their schools. Not unlike the United States’ Public Waldorf movement, China finds itself trying to “build the plane while flying it!”

THE CONFERENCE

“The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.” — Confucius

The grassroots First International Forum on Public Waldorf Education in China brought together Chinese Waldorf enthusiasts, educators, administrators, university professors and parents to consider lessons learned from the international public Waldorf education movement. Armed with this knowledge, the participants would then be in position to craft the next steps necessary to expand Waldorf beyond its present private school reach. As captured below, the slate of speakers provided multiple paths for consideration as well as diverse viewpoints to ponder. CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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FROM AUSTRALIA'S PERSPECTIVE

Joseph Kecskemeti, Headmaster of Freshwater Creek Steiner School, described the Australian landscape in which all private schools, including Waldorf schools, receive comprehensive government funding that covers all education costs, including facilities and construction. Having served in the Education Ministry, he provided details on the steps taken so that now the 70 Australian independent Waldorf schools follow a “government” approved standardized Steiner curriculum. The government-approved university teacher training programs include four years of traditional teacher pedagogy followed by two years of Waldorf-specific training. All teachers in Australia are held to the same professional standards, being required to participate in approved professional development to then recertify every four years. All students are required to sit for government assessments. Waldorf students typically do poorly on the third grade exam, but by grade five, Waldorf students perform comparably to their peers. Even while existing within the government strictures, Waldorf schools have significant autonomy. Mr. Kecskemeti described his work with a physical therapist to totally rethink and redesign their school playground around the “lower” of the twelve senses. He closed with a succinct overview of the traditional components of private Waldorf education.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE FIRST WALDORF SCHOOL IN CHINA

Zewu Li, the current director of the first Waldorf school in China, Chengdu Waldorf School, built the case for why he believes public Waldorf is indeed achievable in China. Currently a preschool through eighth grade configuration, Chengdu will launch a Waldorf high school program this coming year, and with it, the state required *gaokao* now becomes their reality. Mr. Li acknowledged the microscope he and his colleagues are under as the original pioneers of Waldorf education in China, but he appeared undaunted by the prospects of the *gaokao*. The faculty will be dedicating two hours per week for intensive exam preparation. His staff believes this will be ample time to enhance the existing Waldorf curriculum with the test-specific knowledge students will need to perform well.

Historically, Mr. Li's students have met with success when transitioning to the local public

high schools with only minimal problems, primarily in the area of reading. Chengdu is the only Waldorf school in existence long enough to be able to track the success of their first high school graduates. Two of his graduates were able to score high enough on the *gaokao* to attend Chinese universities—not top-tier institutions, but nevertheless, respectable options. For the other graduates, the parents chose to send their children to universities outside China, thereby skirting the high stakes exam performance completely.

Mr. Li offered strong words of advice and a message of hope. He emphasized to the audience that this was not a time for idealism nor a time to follow exactly what Rudolf Steiner had written on such and such a page. It is their role to bring Waldorf education down to earth in China. He challenged the audience to consider how to create Waldorf education for China that was culturally appropriate and at the same time, “never forgetting Waldorf's roots.” He also reminded the conference attendees that Steiner was “inclusive” when it came to working with the government of his time. Steiner directed his teachers to begin working with the government beginning in grade three, although the specifics of how this unfolded are less clear.

Mr. Li acknowledged that there are pockets of animosity existing between public school and Waldorf teachers. He admonished that there was much to be learned from the public schools, “We are not opposite each other, private and public, yin and yang.” In his experience, he found teachers who came to Waldorf from the public school sector exhibited a much stronger pedagogical foundation and transitioned easily into the Waldorf setting. His school is in the process of “translating” Waldorf nomenclature into the more familiar public school terminology, which they are finding greatly enhances their communication about Waldorf education to the general public and government officials. He demonstrated how his school was able to meet the same government requirements expected of any public schools in all areas including facilities, school construction, lesson sequencing, school policies such as homework and class sizes, the school calendar, student behavior expectations, and even the flag raising requirement. He added, “Even the government textbooks have some value in how they sequence the skills.”

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THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

- Can Waldorf education prepare children to be successful in the Chinese public education system?
- Can Waldorf educated students compete competitively or comparably with their peers on the *gaokao*?
- What would it take for the Chinese government to recognize Waldorf education as a legitimate and certifiable education methodology in China?
- Could Waldorf education be incorporated into the present public education system, and if so, how?

FROM THE UNITED STATES PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Gervase discussed the history of the school choice movement in America, the unintended consequences of these practices only now coming to light, and the new face of school choice for the 21st Century and beyond. Dr. Goral began by asking the audience to consider, “What makes Waldorf, Waldorf?” She then outlined the progression of the Public Waldorf movement in the U.S., discussed the difference between traditional Waldorf schools and Public Waldorf schools, and walked the audience through the components of what a typical main lesson might look like in one of our public schools. Both presenters shared their “lessons learned” from their unique perspectives and provided relevant research and resources for the conference participants.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10 His message was clear: although we meet the children's needs differently in Waldorf education, we need to find ways to share and engage our public school counterparts in these discussions. We need to invite people to visit and experience our education. We need to be professional and read widely and not just limit ourselves to traditional Waldorf/Steiner texts. In closing he offered, "Waldorf won't cure every disease. But we need to be open-minded, have the courage to face the truth, and then make things work."

FROM A MONTESSORI CURRICULUM DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Mr. Mu, who is in the process of adding a Waldorf strand to Senlinhu Primary School, provided a glimpse into the harsh reality of an exam-driven education model. He showed heart-wrenching "mottos" written by some of his students to inspire them to "do well" on the impending university entrance exam.

"Go through the darkness into the light."

"Destiny kissed me with pain."

He continued by reminding the audience that there have even been instances of students murdering other students to try and affect their chances of success on the exam. Mr. Mu acknowledged that although these are extreme cases, "the darkness of the government examination rules the souls of the students in China."

Mr. Mu then provided a number of examples of how Waldorf teaching could be infused with local culture and history to capture the imagination and exuberance of children. For example, using the traditional Mid Autumn Day Feast, a significant Chinese harvest celebration, he demonstrated different lessons about "seeds" but taught from a Waldorf perspective that used the Chinese arts, geography, and environment for delivery. He posited, "How can students hate learning when taught in these ways?"

He ended by outlining the efforts of his colleagues to create a curriculum to teach Chinese characters more efficiently through pictures in Waldorf schools. Although there is no agreement on how to teach the characters, educators are painfully aware that Waldorf students are transitioning back to public high schools with limited reading ability partly due to their lack of character recognition. He ex-

plained that the Western approach to literacy instruction does not apply when teaching Chinese. "There are no vowels and consonants in Chinese." This has implications for a number of aspects of Waldorf curriculum including how or whether eurythmy is taught. He ended his presentation with this: "The importance of this cultural issue cannot be underestimated. If you don't recognize Chinese characters, you can never understand China."

FROM A TAIWANESE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

Hung-Ping Liao, Director of the Chaocuo Waldorf School, in Taiwan, explained how Waldorf education has slowly moved from being a private school choice to a public school option over the past fifteen years in his country. Waldorf education has followed two paths: it can be found as either a stand-alone public school, or a separate Waldorf strand offered within an existing public school. Not surprisingly, Taiwanese schools that add an additional Waldorf choice to their two-tract systems find it quickly becomes the most popular choice. Mr. Liao offered many examples of how the Waldorf curriculum in Taiwan is culturally relevant, infusing the curriculum with traditional operas, folk stories, festivals, art forms and the local historical and geologic features. He also noted that Taiwanese students educated in Waldorf curriculum have performed successfully on the government university entrance exams.

FROM A UNIVERSITY TEACHER TRAINING CENTER

The presentation by Wan Ying and Lui Li Sichuan Normal University outlined how Waldorf methodology is incorporated into the existing undergraduate public school teacher preparation courses, thanks to a six-year government grant. These courses were building a solid foundation to support the spread of Waldorf education in China. Students majoring in education can now minor in Waldorf education. There are also interested parents enrolled in just the Waldorf courses. Prospective teachers spend a week in a Waldorf kindergarten observing as part of their education experience. This year, curative education was added as part of the course load. On campus, they have even constructed a "demonstration Waldorf classroom" where the courses are held. They enlist professors from

within China and abroad to teach the classes, and also purchase packaged Waldorf courses from Australia and Sweden. Waldorf education is an increasingly popular topic for students' masters' degree publications, contributing to a growing body of research focusing on China's Waldorf movement.

A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR'S PERSPECTIVE WAS THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL OF THE CONFERENCE BUT PERHAPS MOST ACTIONABLE

Dr. Li Shen, from the School of Teaching and Management of Beijing Normal University and a pioneer in biodynamic farming in China, offered an intriguing and at times humorous counter argument, namely, that the present efforts in public Waldorf education were premature. He was not convinced that there was yet a real, demonstrated community demand for a public Waldorf option. He cautioned that if nurtured properly, Waldorf would develop as part of the natural growth cycle. But if forced, it could risk damaging the entire movement. In his words, "The public schools didn't order this food."

He first called into question the relatively poor performance of Waldorf students transitioning into public high schools when compared to their public school peers. He reminded the audience that these students have problems in reading, including reading Chinese characters.

Second, he called attention to what he called a "mismatch" between Waldorf concepts and Chinese sensibilities. "Our culture is based on the *I Ching*. Concepts such as spirit, reincarnation, higher worlds, clairvoyance, Buddhism, anthroposophy, paintings of the Madonna, are taboos and not allowed in Communist classrooms. And although Waldorf is not a religion, it looks a lot like a religion. These go against our universal values. We have a Chinese expression: "We know the face. It's hard to know the heart."

He postulated that if student performance could be improved and these taboos could be resolved, there would be no resistance on the part of the government to include Waldorf education within the public arena. He also included suggestions on how to move forward. Collaborating with universities and the international community of scholars to publish

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high quality research would provide needed CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11 guidance for both existing Waldorf schools as well as public schools interested in Waldorf education. He also noted that the present education officials were encouraging the introduction of innovative practices into the government-run public kindergartens. With 600 Waldorf kindergartens in China, Dr. Li urged that this would be an advisable place to start. Or in his words, "To go into a building, you must first find the door."

Lastly, Dr. Li urged that to be successful, the public Waldorf movement in China needed to follow the Communist way, which is to start small; then cross one river by putting down stones. He warned, "You must be excellent if you want to prevail. You need to be better than the public schools. When you are, the public schools will come to you. They will then be willing to put 'Waldorf' food in their stomachs."

"It is only when we have the courage to face things exactly as they are, without any self-deception or illusion, that a light will develop out of events, by which the path to success may be recognized." — *I Ching*

LESSONS LEARNED

There is no doubt that with such momentum, the Waldorf education movement in China is poised to greatly influence the direction of this pedagogy throughout Asia and the Pacific. The challenges ahead are both monumental and exhilarating. How does a country both harness and redefine what originated as a European education movement, to ensure program fidelity as well as cultural congruency? And how will China ensure that as Waldorf moves into the public education arena, it is truly a suitable pedagogy for the 21st Century and beyond?

China and the United States face many of the same challenges as Waldorf becomes public. We both lack a cohesive infrastructure that defines the parameters of a consistent, quality public Waldorf experience and product. We both lack accreditation functions to ensure that teacher training programs meet standards of quality, rigor, comprehensiveness, and "authenticity." We both are scrambling to create a pool of qualified Waldorf teachers and mentors to take this movement forward. We both are grappling with how to define a public school Waldorf curriculum that is intellectually demanding, culturally congruent, and holistic (teaching to the head, heart and hands). Is it even possible for all of our students to "perform" well and comparable to their peers on the mandated government assessments, or do we instead need to craft a new generation of assessments that can truly measure what is valued in Waldorf education? We Americans, too, struggle with staying true to the roots of Waldorf while crafting a Public Waldorf methodology



for the 21st Century and beyond. Additionally, the United States has also experienced unbridled growth in Public Waldorf education through the burgeoning charter school movement, driven by parent choice.

No doubt, China's education leaders are plowing new ground, with no template to follow, and with minimal oversight and guidance for their existing and developing schools. And yet throughout China, Waldorf education is thriving and gaining solid ground. The great challenge for both the United States and China is the unintended consequences of Waldorf's rapid rise—that Waldorf teaching will be superficial or an

"add on," rather than the transformational, rigorous, holistic education experience that emanates from a deep understanding of the child, as Rudolf Steiner envisioned.

"By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest." — Confucius

Mary Gervase, Ph.D., was a co-founder and director of the first school founded on the core principles of Public Waldorf education in Idaho, Syringa Mountain School.

Mary Goral, Ph.D., chairs the Alliance Task Force to develop standards for Public Waldorf teacher preparation. She is the author of a Waldorf teacher education curriculum, *Transformational Teaching*, and teaches, trains and consults throughout the

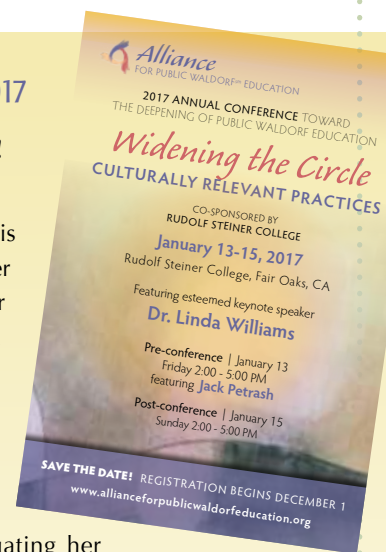
Annual National Alliance Conference 2017

JANUARY 13 - 15, 2017 | SAVE THE DATE!

Widening the Circle is the theme of this year's Annual National Conference at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, CA, featuring keynote speaker **Linda Williams**, who served as a class teacher at the Detroit Waldorf School from 1987-1992, after which she taught grades 1-3 at the public Urban Waldorf School in Milwaukee. Returning to Detroit, she became the Elementary Program Director of the Waldorf Institute of Southern Michigan, also teaching grades 2-8. After graduating her class at the Detroit Waldorf School in 2006, she became professor of Teacher Education at Eastern Michigan University. Linda received her doctorate in Curriculum, Teaching & Educational Policy from Michigan State University. She returned to the Detroit Waldorf School in 2016 as the first grade class teacher.

Jack Petrash will be back with us this year to lead a pre-conference workshop. Alliance President **Liz Beaven**, Ed.D., will present an update on Alliance work, including Core Principles, the importance of self-study and peer review, our revised Path to Membership, stewardship of the Public Waldorf service mark, and on-going collaborative work with AWSNA. This session will provide opportunities for your voice to be heard as we shape our next steps.

REGISTRATION BEGINS ON DECEMBER 1.





BY VICTORIA
TEMPLE

NEW ALLIANCE BOARD MEMBER

Please welcome **Nikki Lloyd**, former class teacher and current Executive Director of the Novato Charter School (Novato, CA) who joined the Board at its September 2016 meeting as the new Conference Committee Chair. <http://www.novatocharterschool.org/>



NEW BOARD SECRETARY

Chamomile Nusz, Administrator of the Tomorrow River Community Charter School (Amherst Junction, WI), who joined the Board at its March 2016 meeting, was elected Secretary of the Board at the September 2016 meeting. <http://tomorrowrivercommunityschool.org/>



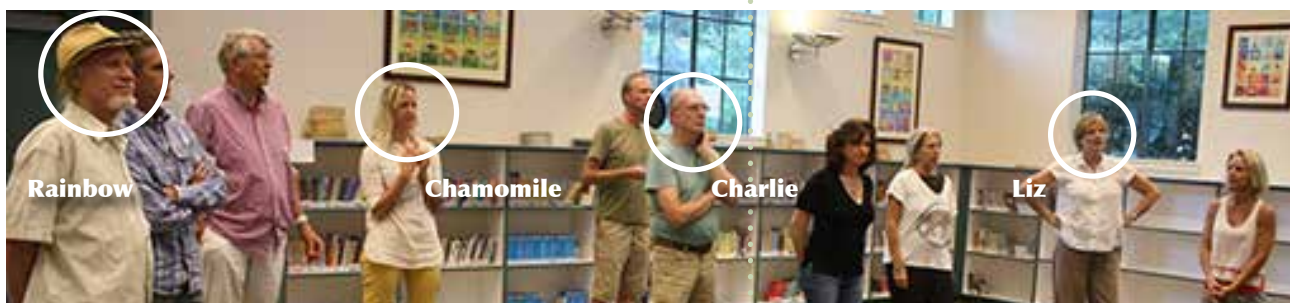
NEW SCHOOL INITIATIVES

In 2016, the following new initiatives in development have reached out to the Alliance for support:

- Good Earth Charter School, Maple Glenn, PA
- Peace Valley Charter School, Boise, ID
- Raleigh Oak Charter School, Raleigh, NC
- Sycamore Creek Community Charter School, Irvine, CA
- Willow Tree School, Fallbrook, CA
- Washington High School of Arts & Academics, Washington, DC
- ShadeTree Community School, Los Angeles, CA

NEW MEMBER SCHOOL

- Wasatch Charter School, Holloday, UT



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The current Executive Committee, that serves as the operational leadership of the Alliance, is now composed of **Liz Beaven**, President (Sacramento, CA), **Rainbow Rosenbloom**, Vice President (Santa Cruz, CA), **Chamomile Nusz**, Secretary (Amherst Junction, WI), and **Charles Burkam**, Treasurer (Phoenix, AZ). Kudos to this dynamic team that is taking the Alliance to a new level of service to member schools.

SHARE YOUR STORIES!

We welcome news about **Happenings** at your school and in your school community! Help us deepen our shared knowledge about our movement. Please drop Victoria a line at alliance.public.waldorf@gmail.com or call her at 707-628-4322 to set up a time for a conversation.

NEW SCHOOL LEADERS

Golden Valley Charter Schools, located in the greater Sacramento, CA region, are pleased to announce the hire of their new Executive Director, **Caleb J. Buckley, Ed.D.** Dr. Buckley has a long history in Waldorf education and the charter movement, including past president of the Alliance. In 2015, Golden Valley Charter Schools became a Charter Management Organization (CMO) overseeing two schools: the **Golden Valley River School** and the **Golden Valley Orchard School**. The founding principal, **Deborah Lenny**, led Golden Valley through this transition and retired in THE spring of 2016. Dr. Buckley will oversee the Charter Management Organization, central office operations, maintain strong rapport with the school district and guide the schools through growth and expansion.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING JANUARY 15

The Alliance will hold an Annual General Meeting of the non-profit corporation, open to the public, at the conclusion of the 2017 Conference, on Sunday, January 15, beginning at 2:00 pm at Rudolf Steiner College. Everyone welcome!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership Renewal forms were mailed to all members schools in late September. If you have questions please contact Victoria Temple at alliance.public.waldorf@gmail.com.

BOARD MEMBERS: **Liz Beaven** (CA) President; **Rainbow Rosenbloom** (CA), Vice President; **Chamomile Nusz** (WI), Secretary and Development Committee Chair; **Charles Burkam** (AZ), Treasurer; **Hellene Brodsky Blake** (CA), Faculty Representative; **Jeff Lough** (CA), Pedagogical Committee Chair; **Cassandra Bridge** (CA), Outreach Committee Chair; and **Nikki Lloyd** (CA) Conference Committee Chair.

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS: **Allegra Allisandri** (CA), **Daniel Bittleston** (CA), **Donna Burgess** (CA), **Mary Goral**, Ph.D. (IN), **Chris Hecht** (HI), **George Hoeffecker** (CA), **Chip Romer** (CA), **Betty Staley** (CA), and **Chris Topham** (CA).

Escuela Woodland Star Charter: El Futuro de la Educación Waldorf Pública

POR BROOKE SEVENAU & TRADUCIDO POR EVELIN SANCHEZ

La escuela Autónoma Woodland Star, en Sonoma, California, es inusual entre las escuelas basadas en los principios básicos de la educación Waldorf Pública en que atiende a una población significativa y creciente de familias latinas y aprendices de Inglés. Este crecimiento es el resultado directo de la intención consciente por parte de los fundadores de la escuela para atender a todos los niños del Valle de Sonoma, y de la determinación feroz por una sucesión de líderes de la escuela para perseguir la diversidad sobre la vida de dieciséis años de Woodland Star. En octubre de 2016, doce anteriores y actuales padres, maestros y administradores de la escuela se reunieron para hablar del proceso, los éxitos y desafíos de atraer y servir a las familias latinas de Woodland Star. Este grupo conocedor ha creado una línea de tiempo del crecimiento de la población latina y de eventos significativos que apoyaron ese crecimiento. Este artículo rastrea los eventos cronológicamente con la esperanza de que pueda apuntar a acciones que otras escuelas pueden tomar para ampliar sus poblaciones para reflejar la demografía local.

Desde incluso antes de su fundación en 2000, Woodland Star se ha esforzado por reflejar la composición del Valle de Sonoma, donde alrededor del 50% de los estudiantes de las escuelas públicas son latinos. Fundador y ex administrador, Chip Romer ha honrado a uno de los padres fundadores, Jennifer Goode por su liderazgo en garantizar la diversidad de la escuela: “Jennifer hizo la investigación sobre cómo atraer y servir a las familias latinas. Ella defendió que tenemos un bache en el salario anual de \$ 2.000 para personal bilingüe en español y reconociendo que estaríamos sirviendo a los padres que trabajan, planeó un programa de cuidado desde el primer día. Jennifer dirigió la campaña de difusión de La Luz (el centro de la comunidad latina) en todas las ferias de jardín de niños y eventos de la comunidad, tales como la celebración anual del Cinco de Mayo de Sonoma. La diversidad fue su golpe de tambor.

“Woodland Star ofreció instrucción en español para los grados K-8 desde el principio, siempre ha ofrecido recorridos por la escuela en español y ha



De izquierda a derecha: **Annie Cassidy**, madre y profesora voluntaria de español, miembro de la Mesa Directiva; **Anna-Pier**—Profesora bilingüe retirada y maestra de español; **Gabriela Padilla Sánchez**—Padres Unidos vicepresidente, asistente de jardín de niños; **Heather Graham**—madre, ex maestra de español y EL, Padres Unidos / ELAC; **Evelin Sánchez**—madre, Presidente de Padres Unidos; **Nilda Pizano-Argüello**—madre y miembro de Padres Unidos; **Sonia Mendoza**—madre, miembro de Padres Unidos; **José Díaz**—padre y miembro de Padres Unidos; **Sallie Romer**—Profesora de jardín de niños; **Jamie Lloyd**—Administrador bilingüe-español. Sin ilustración: **Chip Romer**—fundador y ex administrador; **Trina Saldaña**—madre, miembro de Padres Unidos, miembro de la Mesa Directiva.

hecho una extensión bilingüe a la comunidad. La escuela cuenta actualmente con todas las comunicaciones importantes, incluyendo el boletín de la escuela, traducido al español. En 2002, la escuela contó con su primer miembro latina en la Mesa Directiva, Mónica Conway, al año siguiente se contrató a dos profesores de las clases bilingües en español. Uno de ellos, Anna Pier, que también enseñaba español, inició una celebración anual del Día de los Muertos con un gran altar en la sala principal de la escuela. “Fue fácil y orgánica para iniciar esa tradición porque ese otoño el padre de uno de mis alumnos de tercer grado había sido asesinado en un accidente al ser golpeado en su bicicleta. Danny O’Reilly era un líder del Consejo de Padres, y toda la comunidad estaba de duelo, por lo que el altar fue ampliamente aceptado. La tradición ha continuado desde entonces”.

“Al año siguiente, la escuela financió un programa de desarrollo del idioma Inglés, dirigida por Ana Pier. La Sra Pier, el Sr. Romer y una madre de familia que habla español, Annie Cassidy formaron un comité que se reunía semanalmente con la intención de aumentar la inscripción latina, la promoción de la escuela en numerosos eventos comunitarios en Inglés y Español, y el desarrollo de un grupo social de los padres latinos, que finalmente se convirtió en Padres Unidos. Cuando el señor Romer expresó su frustración por la dificultad de atraer a un alumnado diverso, un amigo en la comunidad latina le aconsejó que se centran en la búsqueda de una familia, con la promesa de que una gran familia feliz daría lugar a otros. Por este tiempo, la escuela fue ganando en popularidad, y las loterías de inscripción amenazaba con sabotear cualquier éxito al alcance. El Sr. Romer explicó cómo se sobrepuso a esto: “Afortunadamente, teníamos una preferencia de inscripción para los hijos de los empleados, y yo tuve la oportunidad de contratar a un custodio latino con gemelos y un asistente de la guardería, Latina con dos hijos; como empleados, pudieron inscribir sus hijos en la escuela. Al final, se sentía como que tenía algo de impulso”.

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año	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
% de estudiantes					11.5	11.8	9.6	11.4	10.6	12.4	16.7	17.3	23.4	25.4	27.4	28.1

los datos proporcionados por el Departamento de Educación de California

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En 2005, Annie Cassidy, de el comité de alcance latino, fue elegido para ser miembro de la Mesa Directiva. Cuando los recortes presupuestarios en el año siguiente amenazaron la clase de español del jardín de niños, La Sra. Cassidy se convirtió en el maestro voluntario de español en el de jardín de niños. En 2007, Anna Pier interpuso un campamento de verano de idioma Inglés para hablantes de español al campus, ofreciendo un modelo Waldorf que integra la enseñanza con la carpintería, jardinería y las artes. Ofrecido a través de Common Bond, una organización no lucrativa de Sonoma que promueve oportunidades culturales y el entendimiento entre las comunidades en español e inglés, el campamento introdujo muchas nuevas familias latinas a Woodland Star.

En 2007, Heather Graham (en aquel entonces Zavaleta) fue contratada para enseñar español en todos los grados y para enseñar Desarrollo del idioma Inglés. Ella trabajó activamente

con Padres Unidos para iniciar una nueva tradición con una Posada anual, una celebración de Navidad mexicana durante el cual las familias participan en una procesión que recrea la peregrinación de la Sagrada Familia en su camino hacia Belén. Padres José Díaz recordó: "Cuando fui a la primera junta de Padres Unidos y todos los maestros que ahí había hablaban español, me hizo sentir tan bien porque hablan mi idioma. Que la gente realmente ha querido tomarse el tiempo para aprender nuestro idioma es impresionante. Es bueno, muy bueno!"

En 2008, el primer estudiante que hablaba solo español entró en la escuela, en la clase de león de Sallie Romer. "Como maestra de jardín de niños, mi respuesta inicial a los estudiantes que llegaron sin Inglés era para mi impresionante ya que este programa está hecho a medida para estudiantes de inglés porque es muy verbal- ellos sólo empiezan a hablar Inglés porque es lo único que les rodea y que pueden tomar su momento en que surge el aprendizaje. Ahora, con más experiencia, estoy viendo que la inmersión no es suficiente, tenemos que dirigir nuestra atención a lo que estamos pasando desapercibido".

En 2007, la madre Latina, Trina Saldana, inscribió a su hijo, Aarón, en el jardín de niños en Woodland Star. Su decisión de unirse a la comunidad se reafirmó cuando el maestro de su hijo le preguntó si la señora Saldaña preferiría que ella y la clase usarán la pronunciación en español del nombre de su hijo. Saldaña no había indicado inicialmente que la preferencia, pero estaba muy agradecido por la sensibilidad cultural proactiva del profesor.

En 2009, la Sra Saldaña se unió a la Mesa Directiva. Ella habló de un desafío permanente: "Como padres felices, siempre estamos tratando de 'convertir' a las familias a Waldorf; pero esto es un gran obstáculo para las familias que no hablan Inglés. Para permanecer en la pedagogía toma fuerza cuando



Desde 2004, la población de estudiantes latinos en Woodland Star se ha triplicado y hoy día está a 28% de todos los alumnos inscritos.

estamos rodeados por miembros de la familia cautelosos y personas que no están familiarizados". Presidente de Padres Unidos, Evelin Sánchez estuvo de acuerdo: "Todo el mundo en nuestras familias cuestiona nuestra elección de Waldorf. Como latinos, no estamos acostumbrados a este tipo de plan de estudios. Es totalmente diferente a lo que yo he experimentado desde mi educación en México, y es por eso que yo lo quería para mis hijos. Este es el lugar donde pueden ser niños. El Jardín de niños es el juego y el aprendizaje, al mismo tiempo sin que los niños se den cuenta están aprendiendo. Yo no tuve eso. Esto es más amoroso y acogedor. Es totalmente correcto, pero como Latinos tenemos que soportar una gran cantidad de negatividad y crítica, porque es tan poco familiar. Estamos aquí porque somos fuertes".

"Gabriela Padilla estuvo de acuerdo," Como

asistente de jardín de niños vi que es un gran reto para hablar de la filosofía Waldorf. La gente no lo entiende fácilmente. Los padres necesitan información, pequeños pedazos por todas partes. Los padres están ocupados todo el tiempo. Cuando los padres tienen dos empleos, niños, tienen que estar por todos lados; ¿Cómo se traduce Waldorf para ellos? Necesitamos todo un paquete de información".

"Siempre estoy aprendiendo de la escuela y compartiéndolo con los demás", informó Nilda Pizano-Argüello. "Al hablar de ello, la gente quiere aprender más. Antes de llegar a esta escuela, llame un psicólogo en México y un maestro en México para preguntar, ¿es lo correcto para mis hijos. ¿Es bueno para ellos? Ambos dijeron, 'No hagas eso.' Pero mi marido dijo: 'Todo depende de ti.' Así que estoy aquí y muy feliz que está funcionando".

José Díaz confirmó este desafío: "Muchos de nuestros padres no han tenido una educación. Tenemos padres que ni siquiera terminaron el segundo grado. Así que algunos niños están viniendo de una casa donde no hay educación en absoluto. No podemos esperar que los padres entiendan rápidamente Waldorf. Somos la nueva era. Somos las personas que están pensando más allá. Quiero que mi

hijo sea un niño. Cuando crecí en México siempre estaba jugando. Cuando veo a mi niño jugando a las escondidas, recuerdo que eso es lo que solía jugar. Me gusta, en vez de mirar a mi hijo jugando juegos de video. Cuando veo mi niño pintando rocas, lo cual es un poco raro, esta bien. Es lo que le gusta. Él es feliz".

En 2010, se inició el Club de Tareas dos veces por semana para los estudiantes latinos, dirigido por los profesores y padres voluntarios. Uno de estos maestros fue Sallie Romer: "Estamos despertando a los servicios extra que necesitamos proporcionar de manera que los estudiantes de inglés procedan al éxito escolar. El hecho de que un estudiante adquiere fluidez en Inglés en el jardín de niños no significa que haya terminado. Puedo mirar toda mi clase y verlos progresando bien, pero necesito ir mejorando la forma en que veo los estudiantes de inglés para estar segura de que están realmente progresando. Me preocupa que si no tenemos

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15 cuidado los estudiantes de inglés pueden empezar a compensar y, aunque parece que pueden comprender todo, puede ser que no. Esta es una frontera. Aún tenemos que alcanzar esta parte. Algunos hemos ponerse a hacer aquí". Ahora Club de Tareas está en marcha y está disponible para todos los estudiantes.

En 2011, la madre Gabriela Padilla y la maestra/madre Heather Graham fundaron un grupo de danza folclórica mexicana para niños y niñas, las estrellas, lo que representó a Woodland Star posteriormente en "Waldorf Weill," la reunión anual de desempeño de diez escuelas de North Bay Waldorf. "Con una banda de mariachis y nuestros coloridos trajes mexicanos, Woodland Star era muy diferente de las otras escuelas", dijo Padilla. Ese mismo año, Padres Unidos(ELAC) se organizó formalmente como Comité de Woodland Star, con Evelin Sánchez como presidente y Gabriela Padilla como vicepresidente. "Esto le dio al grupo - y la comunidad latina- la autoridad formal en la escuela, y en el distrito", dijo Heather Graham. Trina Saldaña estaba satisfecha: "La comunidad latina en Woodland Star se abrigada y animada a tomar roles de liderazgo. Es un verdadero testimonio de la comunidad Woodland Star.

Para construir la intervención del Club de Tareas, en 2013 Heather Graham inició un campamento de verano dirigido por la facultad llevando a mantener el progreso académico durante el verano para los latinos y en especial los estudiantes de inglés. Esto fue muy popular y exitoso, ha continuado en veranos posteriores, y ahora está abierto a todos los estudiantes de Woodland Star.

En 2012 Teresita Landin, madre bilingüe / bicultural, fue contratado para ayudar a Heather Graham con la instrucción española, así como el Desarrollo del Idioma Inglés. Hoy ella y Cristina Ruiz, maestra bilingüe/bicultural que fue contratada en 2014, llevan a cabo un programa sólido de la lengua española que atraviesa el jardín de niños hasta el octavo grado y gestionan ELD para la escuela.

En el año 2014, para servir aún más las necesidades de los padres que trabajan, comenzó el cuidado infantil por la mañanas antes de clases incluyendo el desayuno, a las 7:00 AM.

En 2016, Woodland Star contrató a Jamie Lloyd como Administrador quien es español bilingüe. El Estudio de la facultad formal está siendo iniciada para mejorar el Desarrollo



Escenas de las clases alegres de kinder en Woodland Star.

del Idioma Inglés. "El programa de ELD es mi mayor curiosidad en este momento, y será el tema central de muchas reuniones de la facultad", dijo Lloyd.

PRÓXIMOS RETOS

"[maestro de ELD actual] Teresita Landin y yo trabajamos muy duro en el desarrollo del programa de ELD," Heather Graham contó. "Había que asegurarse de que teníamos los servicios en su lugar para satisfacer las necesidades del estudiante. Es necesaria una financiación- la escuela tiene que poner el dinero donde está la necesidad. Esto es enorme. Todavía tenemos que trabajar para conseguir maestros capacitados a fin de que se está integrando ELD en el aula. Esta lucha no es aplicable sólo a Woodland Star; esta lucha es en todas las escuelas a través de California que tienen los estudiantes aprendices de inglés. Teresita fue una compañera muy inteligente, e impulsada en el desarrollo de dicho programa. Ella era una Estudiantes de Inglés sí misma, así que sabe bien cómo funciona el proceso. No teníamos un mapa de carreteras, porque es Waldorf y ELD. El tener que poner esas piezas juntas ha sido un verdadero reto. El desarrollo del Idioma Inglés debe estar siempre conectado al plan de estudios, no es algo que flota al azar aquí o por un lado. Idealmente, el programa de ELD se llevaría a cabo en el aula, por la persona más educada en la sala- el profesor de la clase.

"Si la educación EL se hace mal, hay un cierto peligro. Tenemos familias con Estudiantes Aprendices de Inglés que han dejado la escuela porque no funcionó para ellos. Es una pieza muy pegajosa- como traer el lenguaje académico junto con las habilidades tempranas de la lectura de un aprendiz de inglés,

de una forma en que los estudiantes puedan alcanzar el éxito, o si no están teniendo éxito captarlo y remediar con intervenciones desde el principio. Si eso no ocurre, y los niños reciben hasta el sexto o séptimo grado, los padres tienen un sentimiento de traición porque había promesas y compromisos adquiridos. Los maestros de los grados tienen que subir a bordo y hacer lo que se necesita para enseñar a un aprendiz de Inglés. Si se hace mal, afecta el desarrollo académico de ese niño para siempre. Esta pieza debe ser más estricta- no sólo en Woodland Star; en todos lados. Debido a que los estudiantes Waldorf permanecen con el mismo maestro durante varios años, no son los pesos y contrapesos que tiene en una escuela normal, donde un estudiante va de maestro a maestro.

"Los aprendices de inglés son una población más vulnerable, asumiendo que la responsabilidad de su educación es enorme. Sentí la responsabilidad todos los días y lo tomé muy en serio. Con maestros Waldorf aceptando un nuevo plan de estudios todos los años, el Desarrollo del Idioma Inglés tiene que ser una pieza de la preparación de todos los años. Los maestros tienen que estar pensando: ¿cuáles son mis intervenciones durante todo el año? ¿Cuál es mi plan de ELD.

José Díaz está de acuerdo: "Fui a través de todo el sistema de educación pública, pero fue sólo cuando yo estaba trabajando que aprendí Inglés. Vine a los EE.UU. como un niño de diez años, y en la escuela no aprendí nada. Fue muy difícil. Siempre fue embarazoso como niño el estar aprendiendo otro idioma. Les puedo decir desde mi experiencia. Parecía que estaba aprendiendo, pero en realidad no lo estaba. Debido a la barrera del idioma, tenía miedo de comunicarme, de decirle al maestro que no estaba entendiendo. Yo quería hacerlo, pero ellos no tienen suficiente gente para ayudar. Woodland Star es diferente. Es una experiencia de aprendizaje, incluso para mí mismo como padre. Lo quiero." ■

Brooke Sevenau estudiaba en una escuela Waldorf, se graduó de UCLA y es una madre de dos estudiantes en la escuela Woodland Star. Es escritora y propietaria de la empresa de relaciones públicas Studio Seven. **Evelin Sanchez** trabaja como enlace comunitario bilingüe en el Distrito Unificado del Valle de Sonoma, es madre de tres estudiantes de Woodland Star y actual traductora de la escuela.