

“We Need People Who Can Think Differently....”

These days anyone who has been in Steiner education since the 1980's often has a strange sensation: what was once our small voice in the wilderness is now being broadcast back to us from on high as a whole new perspective on education. Glenaeon has been pioneering a creative, imaginative, child-centred education for over 50 years, and often had to justify its approach against the demands of the education authorities and the wider community's very traditional views.

Today we hear many people using the same language that Steiner schools pioneered and the most recent is Sir Ken Robinson, a leading thinker on education, creativity and innovation, who argues that education should become more creative: he says it is an economic imperative in a world where imagination and innovation are crucial to the future. He suggests that education systems around the world are too narrow and backward looking. Sir Ken has been consulted by governments and major corporations and chaired a commission for the Blair Government to define an education strategy for Britain's future. He has just published a book called The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything. He was interviewed on the ABC last week and here are selections from the transcript.

KEN ROBINSON:I always find this kind of axiomatic. I mean, they practice what generally people call "child-centred education". And I think, well, why would you even call it that? I mean, what else could it be? But they give kids a very structured environment in which they can play, think creatively and work collaboratively....And you see similar principles in other systems. Some, like Montessori and Steiner and Waldorf all have different takes on it. But the premise is the same: that in early years education, children need time to play, to socialise, to try new things out and to let their imaginations run. And what they find of course is not that this puts these kids at a disadvantage, but that they learn with a greater appetite later on.

Q: You've identified the syndrome you called the "cram school", which you say is flourishing all over the world, where small children are essentially drilled in the basics - Maths, English and so on - to give them a competitive edge over other kids. What's your view on that?

KEN ROBINSON: This cramming thing is really worrying, I think, because it assumes that if our children follow the path we followed and that we know how that's going to work, all will come right for them. And the whole purpose really of the book I've written is to show that it won't, that we need to think differently.

But I'll give you - I mean, a good example of it. I live in Los Angeles. And not long after I arrived there, about eight years ago, I saw a policy paper which said - I think the title - well, I know it was. The title was 'College begins in kindergarten'. No it doesn't. I mean, if we had more time, I could go into this, but it doesn't. You know, kindergarten begins in kindergarten. You know, but - there was a friend of mine who once said he ran a great theatre company for kids. He said a three-year-old is not half a six-year-old. A six-year-old is not half a 12-year-old. They're six. You know, but in some parts of the world - I'm sure this is true in the big metropolitan centres in Australia, kids are being interviewed for kindergarten. I mean, what are they hoping to find out? What are they looking for at the interview? You know, evidence of infancy?

Q: But at the floor of all of this is ambition, and behind the ambition is anxiety.

KEN ROBINSON: It is exactly that, yes. And I'm saying that the problem is it manifests itself very often in parents, in my view, pushing their kids in the wrong direction, pushing them against the grain of their talent, you know, because the assumption is we've got to keep them at the program, they've got to do conventional academic

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work, they've got to go to a good university, they've got to do a law degree. And presumably the assumption is once we've all got law degrees, the whole world will get back on its axis. But the truth is, people's lives are not linear like that. They develop much more organically. And many of the people I interviewed for the book - I'm sure it's been true of your life, you know, that people have got to where they have got by following their particular talents and interests and passions. And so what I'm arguing for is that at the heart of our education systems, of course we need high standards, of course we need to cover common ground, but instead of promoting conformity, we should be promoting diversity of talent.

Q: And the key to all of that is imagination and you're saying that our systems as we know them, our education systems, are at least as much about suppressing imagination as they are about encouraging it.

KEN ROBINSON: Yes, and we could re-engineer that. We could revivify education if we did this deliberately. And corporations have a big responsibility here because they need to stand up and start to say politically what I know they say to me all the time, which is we need people who can think differently. And if we get that message - if we get that connection between economic, personal and social development, then we will have the revolution that we've been waiting for.



"The revolution that we've been waiting for... "Unfortunately just as Sir Ken Robinson is urging a more creative, imaginative approach to education, the Commonwealth Government is poised to introduce a National Curriculum that potentially could standardise education and cement benchmark testing for even the earliest years of schooling. With us at Glenaeon at the moment is Peter Glasby from Mt Barker Waldorf School in South Australia. Peter is a highly regarded exponent of Steiner education who has lectured and taught around Australia and internationally (in Brazil, New Zealand, India, Thailand, Germany). He reports below on the latest efforts to respond to the National Curriculum.

*Andrew Hill
Collegiate Chair*

The Potential Threat of the National Curriculum to Rudolf Steiner (Waldorf) Schools in Australia and how Parents are responding in South Australia.

For those who may not have followed the steps:

- The idea of a NC has been around for a long time and is **supported by both sides of Parliament**, initially pushed by Liberals, now backed by Labor;
- A National Curriculum Board (NCB) was appointed by Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard early in 2008;
- Four Framing Paper were produced for comment in November 2008 (History, English, Maths and Science);
- The RSSA (Rudolf Steiner Schools Association) executive corresponded with and held a number of face to face meetings with the National Curriculum Board (NCB) around the issue of the National Curriculum;
- In December 2008, the School Assistance Bill was passed after at first being opposed. Christopher Pyne and Jamie Briggs were the only politicians to speak out against the NC and to support the rights of independent schools, specifically mentioning Steiner, Montessori, however, they caved in under the threat that independent schools would not receive Commonwealth funding. **All schools were forced to sign up to the NC** or would receive no funding – despite the NC not being written – the Schools Assistance Act is what we must comply with or not be funded;
- February 2009, a few teachers, from around Australia including Anne Jacobson and John Blackwood, gathered at the Mt Barker Waldorf School, S Australia and wrote an 80 page submission to the Framing papers which was sent in under the umbrella of the RSSA;
- In May 2009, the NCB became ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority). http://www.acara.edu.au/home_page.html
Work has begun on the writing of the National Curriculum with a time line to have draft curricula ready for comment by the end of the year.
- Julia Gillard's public statements on record are that Steiner, Montessori and IB (International Baccalaureate) education must not be compromised; later.... 'Independent schools must comply with the NC or a recognised alternative'. Of particular interest to Steiner education, is the "national identification process for legitimate internationally recognized curricula" which Julia Gillard has directed NCB/ACARA to come up with.
- The RSSA have been in touch with at least two members of this working party. Step 1 in this process, we have been advised, is to look at the diverse ways in which such curricula as ours are accommodated/recognised by State authorities in Australia, and in overseas countries such as NZ and UK. The key issues for the working party to resolve are "comparable educational outcomes' and the level of

specificity which will be required as a basis for “equivalency”. The time-line for a decision on the process is mid-September.

Two meetings have been held at Mt Barker Waldorf School with interested parents, the most recent on June 10th. Deep concern is felt that the National Curriculum has the potential to erode fundamentals of Steiner Waldorf education. A paper expressing the concern of two of the Mt Barker parents is available from Anne –Marie Taplin (wordmagic@iprimus.com.au). The larger submission, sent out under the umbrella of the RSSA, written by a number of teachers around Australia, is available either from your local Waldorf/Steiner School, the RSSA (rssa@steineroz.com), or Peter Glasby (pglasby@adam.com.au).

Out of the most recent Mt Barker Meeting a local campaign has begun and the hope is that it will build into a national campaign for parents. The timing is important: the key window is June to Dec 2009.

We are working to support the RSSA's core strategy of:

- Engaging positively with the issue of the National Curriculum;
- Keeping well informed and updated as to the progress of the process;
- Having a clear goal.

Though there are still many unknowns, the **National Curriculum** threatens to be an imposition which dictates **what and when subject material is taught**- an imposition which would compromise our schools which have an educational philosophy that has evolved a dynamic curriculum over 90 years now, across cultural and language barriers and in at least 65 countries in the World. **This educational philosophy of the Steiner/Waldorf Schools informs not only the what and the when the subject material is taught, but also the how.**

However, if the work of the Steiner / Waldorf schools is given recognition as an alternative equivalent to the National Curriculum, then the whole process could be a very positive one for the Australian Steiner / Waldorf Schools. The Mt Barker Waldorf School has enjoyed such recognition within the S Australian education scene for the last 20 years and its students success, post school, has been formally documented. If such recognition was extended to the rest of the Steiner/Waldorf Schools in Australia, then present curricula of all Steiner schools in Australia would be freer to develop the uncompromised curriculum that has been able to evolve at Mt Barker.

After the meeting a core Steering Group was formed. The group is made up of Richie Khoo, Anne-Marie Taplin, Melissa Willoughby and Jessica Fabian, with Peter Glasby as consultant. This group is in the process of setting up web facilities to keep parents informed and how they can contribute in a positive way to the process. They are also seeking to extend this work to the wider Waldorf parent community. There are approximately 5000 students in Waldorf Schools in Australia. If all the parents were involved in this debate positively we could play a part in the future direction of education in Australia. Don't forget the UN Charter, 1948, Article 26, Pt 3 states: ‘...protects the freedom of parents to choose the education of their choice’.

To contact the Mt Barker Parents Group please contact: Anne–Marie Taplin

wordmagic@iprimus.com.au

Peter Glasby

School Calendar

Important dates to remember

22 nd -23 rd June	High School Music Camp
23 rd June	Ring-a-rosie" Playgroup, Castlecrag, 5pm (NOTE: If rain – postponed to 30 th June)
25 th June	High School Music Concert, Middle Cove, 7.00pm
FUNDRAISER 27th June	Medieval Magic 5.30pm-10.30pm, Middle Cove
	
29 th June	Twilight Concert, Sylvia Brose Hall, 6.30pm
30 th June	Anaphylaxis Training, Sylvia Brose Hall, 4-5.15pm
3 rd July	Castlecrag Coffee Shop, Castlecrag, 2.50pm
3 rd July	Winter Festival Classes 1&2, Castlecrag, 5-7pm
3 rd July	Class 7 Play, Sylvia Brose Hall, 6.30pm
8 th July	End of Term 2

Campus News

HEAD LICE CONTROL

Head lice are an unfortunate fact of life that we have to live with during school years. We have had a few outbreaks recently within the school and would like to clarify the school policy on these pests! Essentially it is as follows:

You should check your child's head regularly for head lice and nits – especially if they are reporting itchiness around the head and neck. If you are unfamiliar with the appearance of head lice feel free to consult Mary Heard or a teacher for a second opinion.

If head lice are found you must **notify the school** and your child **must be kept home until they have been treated**. Treatment may include application of a home remedy or a proprietary treatment to kill the lice but **must also include application of conditioner or oil and thorough combing through with a 'nit comb'**. Nits are 'sticky' and adhere to hair shafts and need to be physically pulled off the hair. Once this treatment has been completed the child may return to school but you should be aware that you may need to repeat the treatment every few days to catch any newly hatched animals from nits you have missed. During times of lice infestation it is extremely wise to tie your child's hair well back and to check their heads daily. Mary Heard at Castlecrag has much useful information on lice treatment options.

*Sarah Sandberg
Daily Operations Manager*

STALLHOLDERS FOR FAMILY FAIR

This year's Fair date is Saturday September 26th. As usual, we make space for a limited number of external stallholders at the Fair, whose presence adds to the appeal and excitement of the day. If you, or someone you know, are interested in having a stall at the Fair, complete an Application Form and submit your details to the Fair Committee by the closing date.

Closing date for Applications: 29 July 2009
Notification of result of Applications: 5 August 2009

As there are often more stallholders who would like a stall than we have space for, the Fair Committee make a selection on the basis of having a diverse range of stalls, whose products fit with the values and ethos of our school.

For enquiries and/or to obtain an application form, email the Family Fair Committee:
glenaeonfamilyfair@yahoo.com.au

Family Fair Committee



LIBRARY MEMO

A reminder for students that all Library books are to be returned by lunchtime on Tuesday, 7th JULY 2009.

Senior College students, providing they have no overdue books and a reliable record, may borrow over the holidays.

Students who do not return long overdue books or have lost items will be invoiced at current replacement cost plus a non-refundable administration fee.

Caroline Le Gay Brereton, Teacher Librarian

SECOND HAND UNIFORM SALE

FRIDAY 3 JULY, 3.00 PM TO 4.00 PM

Second hand uniforms will be available for sale on the 1st Friday of every month, at the Middle Cove school gate, or if wet underneath the office. We do need more stock so donations of any uniforms in good condition would be most welcome. If you do have any donations, please do not send these to the office, just drop them off to us on the uniform sale day. Uniforms will be sold for \$2 to \$5.

Enquiries: Keiko Tredinnick 9958 7729 or Robyn Bentley 9958 3146

Education Tax Refund – Don't forget to claim

How do I claim the Education Tax Refund?

- In your tax return.
- If you don't lodge a tax return, claim on a separate form or over the phone.
- If you use a tax agent, make sure you ask them to claim for you.

The Education Tax Refund lets you claim up to 50% of eligible education expenses for school children. If you are eligible, you can get back up to \$375 for each primary student and up to \$750 for each secondary student.

You can claim things like text books, stationery and even internet costs.

If you receive Family Tax Benefit Part A for a child at primary or secondary school, you will be eligible. Some other people are eligible too, to find out more about this and other information such as what you can and can't claim go to australia.gov.au/educationtaxrefund or call the Tax Office on 13 28 61.

📌 Remember, you need to keep all receipts for expenses you claim.