PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS IN EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE WALDORF TEACHER

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ABSTRACT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS IN EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE WALDORF TEACHER

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In the past few years of immersion into the Waldorf world through both my work and my educational pursuits, I have recognized that there is an absence of basic special education knowledge in the practice of Waldorf education. My research sought to answer the question: What topics of educational support are most relevant and needed for Waldorf teachers and trainees today? My literature review explored best practices in special education and Waldorf education and connections with polyvagal theory. More specifically, it includes a basic review of special education law, best practices in special education, how a Waldorf education meets the needs of the dysregulated child, a synopsis of Waldorf education and the key tenets of Anthroposophy as they relate to the topic, as well as an outline of polyvagal theory. I used action research to identify specific areas of improvement for teachers. Through teacher questionnaires, I discovered the areas where teachers need support around learning differences. Following the teacher surveys, I utilized explanatory mixed methods and conducted expert interviews to offer perspective on the resulting data. My work directly initiates a solution to address ableism in the classroom and to create equality in access to the Waldorf model of education. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: Waldorf, educational support, special education, professional development, Anthroposophy

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In the past few years of immersion into the Waldorf world through both my work and my educational pursuits, I have recognized that Waldorf teachers are not prepared to address the variety of educational support needs that present in the modern classroom. Throughout a 3-year teacher training program, 3 years of employment in a Waldorf school, and two summers of residency, I have recognized there is a need for training and support for Waldorf teachers to enable them to meet the diversity of modern learners.

In the summer of 2023, I completed a 3-year teacher training program in Waldorf education which certified me to be a Waldorf teacher. Throughout the 3-year program, there was no coursework on how to work with students with special needs in the general classroom. When I asked the program leaders when special education would be addressed, I was told it would be in a specific course titled, "Today's Child," that I took the final summer of my training. When it came time to take this course, an overarching model of support for students with learning challenges was discussed. This model of support, while helpful and thoroughly presented, did not discuss differentiation or practical strategies for teachers to meet the needs of students in their classes, nor did it educate teachers on common neurodiversity of students today, such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, trauma, and dyslexia. Furthermore, we did not discuss how to handle behavior challenges that arise in the classroom. In a 3-year program that produces trained Waldorf teachers, there was no discussion on how to meet the support needs of the students in a general classroom.

In my experience in Waldorf charter schools, the teachers possess limited knowledge and experience in addressing the common special education needs that exist in their classrooms. They struggle with behavior and are unfamiliar with strategies and language to address these

needs and behaviors. As students matriculate, the discrepancies between learners grow, in part because of the lack of differentiation. Additionally, the conversations around supporting the challenging students often involves language or ideas that are offensive and/or illegal, such as putting all the challenging students together in a class or how we can discourage the challenging students from enrolling in the school, rather than an inclusive approach that asks, how can we change what we are doing to meet the needs of these students? My experience is just one perspective; however, I have talked to others who have similar experiences.

During the past two summers, I participated in residencies with students from around the country who were enrolled in various Waldorf teacher training courses. In talking with these teachers during my residencies, it became clear that this was not just an issue in my experiences, but it is an issue in Waldorf schools around the country. Additionally, I have spoken with leaders in the Waldorf movement who acknowledge that educational support and special education is an area of need and concern in their schools. Both public charter Waldorf schools and independent private schools could benefit from addressing these concerns, particularly when addressing special education needs. Public schools have a legal obligation to address special education concerns, while independent private schools might see increases in enrollment if they were equipped to handle students with special needs. Special education needs and equity concerns are an issue in all types of schools throughout the country, Waldorf schools are not the exception to these concerns.

I have been working in special education since 2005. I started as a paraprofessional and then completed the teacher training to be a special education teacher. I worked in special education for a few years before taking a break to have my own children. In that time when I was not working in schools, I discovered Waldorf education. When my children were young, I

homeschooled them for several years using Waldorf principles and met many parents of children with learning differences. It was often heartbreaking to hear stories of how their children were treated in school. They were given low expectations and underestimated; they were unsupported and had their rights violated. I lived in five different states and the stories were similar in every state. The stories made me angry for them and ignited a passion for advocacy that I had not experienced prior to becoming a mother. I completed my first year of Waldorf teacher training online in the summer of 2021. I was intrigued by the spiritual work of the program and felt a strong connection to Anthroposophy. Over the past few years, these two passions have come together to clarify my path.

My combined passions for special education and Waldorf education have led me to explore the research question: What topics of educational support are most relevant and needed for Waldorf teachers and trainees today? Additional questions include: What are the best practices in educational support that align with the Waldorf pedagogy? What are the practices in Waldorf pedagogy that can be applied to specific classroom struggles? What are the anthroposophical explanations and indications for common learning differences? My work also explores the scientific aspects of learning challenges, through the lens of polyvagal theory. I plan to take the answers to these questions and compose a series of professional development modules to inform teachers on how to work with common learning challenges in their classrooms.

The purpose of this study is to identify the areas where Waldorf teachers feel they need the most education and support and to make connections to the best ways to address those needs. I used the research based polyvagal theory as the scientific lens through which I explored dysregulation in the classroom (Porges, 2022). I surveyed literature to discover best practices in Waldorf education for addressing the common struggles that teachers report. Upon completion of

my research, I will be outlining basic special education knowledge alongside the techniques that align with those forms of struggle that teachers identify to create professional development modules. It is my hope that these modules will increase the capacity of Waldorf teachers to work with students with learning difficulties.

I anticipate that my study will be impactful in the area of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice; specifically, my study will impact students with learning differences and their teachers. I imagine that this study will inform my work to provide education for Waldorf teachers in special education. It is my hope that my study will produce a practical and useful tool with which to educate Waldorf teachers in the area of special education. After completing research into the needs of Waldorf teachers and trainees in special education, I will create professional development modules to inform teachers of those areas of need. This professional development will be based on the data gathered through research and the literature review combining best practices in special education, trauma, behavior, and Waldorf education. It is my hope to create a module where Waldorf teachers can learn how different disabilities and challenges manifest in the classroom and then apply evidence-based techniques that align with the pedagogy to address those struggles. My work is the beginning steps to directly address ableism in the classroom and to create equality in access to this model of education. Presently, the traditionally trained Waldorf teacher is not equipped with the education to work with diverse populations of learners. The purpose of my research project is to inform subsequent professional development work towards the future goal to prepare Waldorf educators with the training to meet a variety of learners' needs. Through this training, I hope to facilitate access for diverse learners to the unique and beautiful pedagogy. Ultimately, this research is the first step in working to break down barriers to educational opportunities and increase accessibility.

Beyond benefits to students, I also hope to contribute to the sustainability of the Waldorf educational movement. By enabling schools and teachers to meet the needs of their students, both public and private institutions will be better equipped to answer the question of, how can we change what we are doing to meet the needs of the students? Furthermore, if private institutions are better equipped to work with students with challenges, then perhaps they will be more inclined to enroll students with differences, therefore increasing accessibility and bolstering enrollment. The benefits of my study could potentially extend beyond student needs to the realm of sustainability of the Waldorf pedagogy.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions that I made regarding this study. Firstly, I assumed that all participants answered truthfully regarding their areas of struggle in the classroom. Secondly, I assumed that teachers possess adequate self-awareness to be able to identify the challenges they experience in their classrooms. I also assumed that the experiences of the teachers I surveyed generally approximate the struggles of Waldorf teachers across America. Finally, I assumed that the teachers I surveyed are experiencing challenges based on a lack of knowledge of learning challenges.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study is limited in its nature. Because I focused on convenience sampling for surveying, my study does lack generalizability to the Waldorf school movement as a whole. Moreover, my study is limited in that it does not directly address the parent experience or allow for parent input. Finally, the methodology of surveying has limitations including reliance on self-reported data, and the limited depth of survey questions in general.

Delimitations of this study exist. This survey had 50 participants and included teachers in Waldorf schools around the country including charter schools, independent schools, and online programs. The study focused on common struggles and did not address rare conditions or individual situations. Teacher experiences were the focus of this study rather than student or family experiences. The study will not look at the challenges of teacher assistants, counselors, parents, or administrators.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to define the terms I am using. This study focuses on Waldorf teachers; in this study I use the term Waldorf teachers to refer to teachers currently employed in a Waldorf school. The term educational support refers to assistance that is required for students to access their education; this could be academic, social-emotional, or behavioral assistance. Dysregulation means a state of being unable to stabilize one's emotions. Special education refers to services for students who have an identified disability according to the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act (2004). The special education process refers to the process of referring, identifying, and serving students with special needs. Anthroposophy is the spiritual science that informs Waldorf education.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

For those who will to work
With those who guide
The future of humankind

Bring forth spirit potentials
In yourself-
And so achieve
The power to awaken
Dormant faculties in others

Cultivate the seed points,
Foster forces of growth
Recognize future becoming.

–R. Steiner, as cited in *A Call to Teach*

Waldorf education is a developmentally driven approach that endeavors to foster growth in a healthful way (R. Steiner & Trostli, 1998). How does a Waldorf education meet the needs of the child in a way that is unique from other methodologies? Moreover, what does the Waldorf teacher of today need to know to meet the educational support needs of the children before them? More specifically, what is the science behind the common struggles and dysregulation seen in the classroom and how does it overlap with Anthroposophy? This literature review will explore common classroom struggles through the lens of Anthroposophy, the connections between the biology of polyvagal theory, and how a Waldorf education meets the needs of the dysregulated child. A foundational understanding of human development according to Anthroposophy and how that relates to Waldorf education is essential to conceptualizing the research. The review will begin with a synopsis of Waldorf education and the key tenets of Anthroposophy as they relate to the topic as well as descriptions of Anthroposophical views of common dysregulations. This will be followed by an outline of polyvagal theory. Next, there will be an exploration of dysregulation in the classroom, including connections to polyvagal theory. The review will

conclude with a synthesis of the ways that a Waldorf education meets the needs of the dysregulated child.

Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy

An Anthroposophical View of Child Development

Take some time to create a mental picture of the beginning of the school day: A group of students is gathered outside their classroom waiting to begin their day. The teacher stands in the doorway and greets each child individually as they enter, intentionally taking the time to connect for a brief moment with each one. Around the world students line up outside their classrooms and begin their day in this way. It is a way to begin the day with ritual and intention and to take a moment to notice and connect with each child in the class. For the Waldorf teacher, taking this moment to look each child in the eye and greet them is an opportunity to make a connection with the higher spirit self of each child. It is a chance to refresh daily the image of the potential of the child that can often become obscured throughout the demands of the day. The morning greeting is one area of importance that can be universally understood by Waldorf and non-Waldorf teachers alike, regardless of the spiritual emphasis one may place on the greeting. The first principle of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA, n.d.-b) is that, "The image of every human being as a spiritual being informs every aspect of the school" (AWSNA, n.d.-a, para. 1).

Waldorf education is a whole child education ideology that was created by Rudolf Steiner in 1912 (AWSNA, n.d.-a). Anthroposophy is the philosophy that informs Waldorf education; it is a spiritual philosophy that connects the human experience to the spiritual world (Sydney Rudolf Steiner College, n.d.). It is essential to have a foundational understanding of Anthroposophy and how it informs Waldorf education to understand the distinction of my

research question. In Anthroposophy, before the spirit descends into a new life body, this new life body is constructed in perfection; however, along the way each being collects the karma from their previous life and this comes together to form a new imperfect being (Brown, 2016). Important aspects of Anthroposophy to consider when examining the Waldorf pedagogy are the concept of the fourfold human being, reincarnation and karma, the conceptualization of a disability, the 12 senses, and the pedagogical law.

A foundational concept in Anthroposophy is the understanding of the human as a fourfold being that develops in stages. R. Steiner (1997) posited that the human being is composed of four parts: The physical body, the etheric body, the astral body, and the I-body or ego. The physical body is the tangible or material parts of the person. The etheric body is the life force of the human being and responsible for life processes such as growth, metabolism, and reproduction. The astral body is the aspect of the human being that is one's thoughts, emotions, and desires. Finally, the I-body is the part of the being that is connected to the higher world; it is one's spiritual essence (R. Steiner, 1997). These different facets of the human being go through different periods of development or incarnations. To begin, from the ages of 0–7 the child comes to embody their physical form; in this first stage, the child learns primarily through imitation and exercising their will (Schaefer, 2013). From ages 7–14 the child's etheric body unfolds; in this developmental stage they learn through imagination and feeling (Schaefer, 2013). Next, from ages 14–21, the astral body takes its place, and the child has the capacity to learn from authority and thinking (Schaefer, 2013). Finally, from ages 21–28, the human I incarnates the other parts of the being (Schaefer, 2013). This concept of the fourfold human being is a tenet to Anthroposophy and Waldorf pedagogy.

Reincarnation is a key anthroposophical idea that informs the Waldorf pedagogy. R. Steiner (1924) has indicated that we are born from the spirit world and begin our descent into a new life as a perfect being, however along the path to our rebirth, we are shaped by our karma from previous experiences. This is true of all humans, though each person has different struggles to work through. Although these beliefs inform the pedagogy, they are not taught as truths in the Waldorf school. R. Steiner (1924) was conscious and intentional about leaving space for children and families to hold their own religious beliefs (Rawson & Richter, 2000).

Anthroposophy describes a spiritual origin of disabilities. In Anthroposophy, before the spirit descends into a new life body, this new life body is constructed in perfection; however, along the way each being collects the karma from their previous life and this comes together to form a new imperfect being (Brown, 2016). R. Steiner (1924) describes the origins of abnormalities as karma from the previous life. He gives an analogy of a milk jug. In this analogy, he describes the perfect thoughts or wisdom as the milk and every individual has their own jug. A child may come into this world with an ineffectively formed "jug" that poses difficulty to pour out their wisdom, but every child comes into this world with this wisdom. There are no children who lack intellect, but there are those who struggle to reform their jug to allow the wisdom to flow. R. Steiner (1924) indicated that it is our job as educators to change the karma and help the milk flow more easily. R. Steiner implores educators to find the connections to struggles and cautions against labeling student's deficiencies. While these spiritual thoughts may be difficult to reconcile to modern western thinking, it can be reimagined as the job of teachers is to help remove barriers from children's lives to allow them to live fully. Each child comes to this world with gifts to share and it is the educator's job to help them shine.

In R. Steiner's (2022) lectures on "Curative Education," they are clear to say that any abnormalities are actually based on one's perception of what is normal. It is important to understand that these are subjective perceptions. R. Steiner asserts that what exists as abnormality in the child exists in us to some extent as well. When a teacher can understand the degree of how that abnormality exists in themself then they can understand how to help the child (Brown, 2016). For example, imagine the feeling of watching a long movie in the theater in the daytime then emerging from the dark theater into the bright light and sounds of the world. This can be a jarring experience and may give an understanding of how a child can be overwhelmed by normal lights and sounds and perhaps give insight on how to work with that child effectively. R. Steiner's indication is that the teacher needs to recognize that bit of abnormality in themself in order to lead the child through their struggle (Brown, 2016). The emphasis is on finding the connection to the child's struggle, not labeling a behavior as abnormal which has a connotation of separation. R. Steiner (1924) describes the detriment of labeling students with deficiencies or disabilities as they are called now. When a student is labeled based on their disability there are judgements that go along with the label. There needs to be a conscious effort to observe without judgment and recognize the potential in each child; "Look at things as they are. What have we before us in the human being?" (R. Steiner, 1924, para. 5).

Another important concept in Anthroposophy is that the human being has 12 senses. Albert Soesman (1990) provides a detailed account of R. Steiner's description of the 12 senses. Soesman outlines 12 senses that fit into three categories and develop along the same timeline indicated above. The will senses, also called basal or lower senses are touch, life, movement, and balance; these perceptions emerge first from ages 0–7 (Soesman, 1990). The feeling or emotional perceptions are smell, taste, sight, and warmth; these perceptions progress from ages 7 to 14.

Finally, the spiritual or higher senses are hearing, thought, word, and I; these higher senses emerge from ages 14–21 (Soesman, 1990). The 12 senses develop in an evolutionary manner and can be nurtured according to pedagogical law.

The final tenet of Anthroposophy that fits the scope of this work is R. Steiner's (1996) concept of pedagogical law. This is the notion that the higher parts of the being work on the lower parts of the being (Glöckler, 2000). For example, when an individual wants to learn something new, the I or ego decides to pursue this new knowledge, the new knowledge becomes incorporated into the soul (astral body) and can then work on changing the habits (etheric body), which will eventually lead to change in the physical body (Glöckler, 2000). This can also apply to interpersonal relationships. In the student-teacher relationship, the teacher's I-body works on the child's astral body. It is a hierarchical process whereby the higher faculties bring about change to the lower faculties; pedagogical law elucidates development (Glöckler, 2000).

Anthroposophical Viewpoints

Anthroposophy and Autism

Through the lens of Anthroposophy autism has been described as an ego-integration problem (Woodward & Hogenboom, 2000). Ego-Integration refers to a process of self-realization and awareness in which the spiritual essence of a person gradually becomes more unified and consciously guides their thoughts and actions (Woodward & Hogenboom, 2000). This incarnation of the ego can be impacted in many ways; one major contributor to this disruption in the incarnation of the ego is an inhibition in digestion and metabolic process (Woodward & Hogenboom, 2000). Additionally, disruptions in sensory processing can also impact ego-integration (Prasanna & Kokinos, 2018). The increasing prevalence of autism can be seen as a karmic reflection of the current time; indifference, social isolation, timidity, and lack of

empathy are characteristics of both autism and the greater society (Prasanna & Kokinos, 2018). This view of autism is a karmic representation that can be a remedy to the materialistic problems of our society as well as the result of those problems (Prasanna & Kokinos, 2018).

Anthroposophy and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has multiple anthroposophical descriptions. One way R. Steiner (1923) described students was through using polarities; as the child incarnates from the spiritual realm, they may develop in closer alignment with earthly or cosmic polarities (Blanning, 2017). A child closer to the earthly polarity is by description further from the spiritual or cosmic polarity, whereas the opposite is true for a child closer to the cosmic polarity (Blanning, 2017). R. Steiner (1921) describes the work of the teacher as striving to balance spiritual (cosmic) and hereditary (earthly) streams first through observing the head and limbs. Students with ADHD were described as either small-headed or large-headed (Blanning, 2017). There are many characteristics for the large-headed or small-headed child. The large-headed child may be more inclined to spiritual exploration and abstract thinking, while the small-headed child may be more concerned with the physical realm and sensory experiences (Blanning, 2017). The small-headed child describes what presently may be called hyperactive-type; whereas the large-headed child describes what presently may be called inattentive-type (Blanning, 2017). The general anthroposophical description of ADHD is one of a disturbance in the balance between the spiritual and earthly influences within the human being.

Anthroposophy and Trauma

Bernd Ruf is an educator, leader, and activist who has done substantial work in the field of Emergency Pedagogy, a pedagogical trauma intervention. Ruf (2013) states that trauma, when viewed from an anthroposophical lens, is a separation or detachment of the fourfold human

being; specifically, the I-body becomes disengaged from the other aspects of the being. In children, trauma can prevent the I-body from properly incarnating (Ruf, 2013). Ruf (2013) likens dysregulation to a spasm or cramp, but rather than a muscle cramp; trauma can cause a soul cramp.

Dysregulation in the Classroom

Teachers are faced with a myriad of representations of classroom dysregulation. In the classroom, this can be represented in many ways including autism, ADHD, and trauma responses. Current data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.), shows that of 8-year-old children in the United States, 1 in 44 have autism. Students with autism struggle in the classroom with distraction, anxiety, and class participation (Jones et al., 2020). One in 10 children are diagnosed with ADHD (Danielson et al., 2018). Increased behavior problems, lower engagement, and higher inattention than their peers are a few ways that ADHD can be represented in the classroom (N. J. Steiner et al., 2014). Most prevalently, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) data demonstrates that one in seven children have experienced trauma (How Big is the Problem section, para. 1). In the classroom, trauma can be mistaken for other issues, and it can manifest in a variety of ways including trouble forming relationships, poor self-regulation, negative thinking, hypervigilance, and executive function challenges (Miller, 2024). Trauma can also present as concentration or memory problems, learning difficulties, behavioral challenges, sleeping problems, eating disorders, or somatic symptoms (Ruf, 2013). Common educational practice suggests specialized services, a trauma-informed classroom, accommodations and modifications, and the addition of class assistants, but what is the biology behind these types of dysregulations?

Dysregulation is commonly quantified using a measurement of cardiac vagal tone (Beauchaine, 2001). This measure can demonstrate behavioral functioning in children and adults (Beauchaine, 2001). There have been many research efforts that have demonstrated vagal tone correlates to a number of temperamental and behavioral variables (Beauchaine, 2001).

Polyvagal Theory

Stephen Porges (2022) developed polyvagal theory as an explanation of the way the nervous system regulates social behaviors. Porges brings a connection between the idea of feeling safe and neurophysical responses. There are three key concepts to polyvagal theory; these are autonomic hierarchy, neuroception, and bidirectional communication. Porges's (2022) polyvagal theory can explain classroom dysregulation and be used to develop strategies to work with dysregulated children.

The autonomic nervous system consists of three hierarchical aspects. The first is the brainstem where the dorsal vagal complex resides; this is the most primitive and often referred to as the reptilian brain (van der Kolk, 2014). When confronted, this system relies on the strategy of immobilization. The second is the limbic system or sympathetic nervous system, which enacts a fight or flight response to trauma (van der Kolk, 2014). The final, and most recent evolutionary addition is the neocortex or the ventral vagal complex. This system is unique to mammals and offers safety through the strategies of communication, connection, and social engagement (Porges, 2022). Porges explains the activation of different levels of the nervous system as linear and reflective of evolution. When the body is in a state of activation, those later developing, higher-level skills are the first defense, but when they do not work, the nervous system will regress to a more primitive response like fight, flight, or freeze (Porges, 2022).

Another essential concept polyvagal theory posits is neuroception. This refers to the subconscious perception of the nervous system that can activate an autonomic response (Porges, 2004). The amygdala is the part of the brain that acts as a gatekeeper and determines if a stimulus is safe or unsafe. In individuals who experience dysregulation, this gatekeeper can become hypersensitive or stuck in a state of feeling unsafe (Porges, 2004). When humans feel safe, they can access the higher levels of their brain and the ability to coregulate with others. In this way, Porges (2004) gives a neurological explanation for some of the symptoms of dysregulation that are seen in the classroom.

An additional facet of polyvagal theory is the concept of coregulation or bidirectional communication. This is the biological basis to what is commonly known as the mind-body connection (Porges, 2015). The vagus nerve runs from the brain stem and branches out to the major organ systems including the heart, throat, stomach, and colon (Porges, 2015). The vagal pathways regulate the heart and controls the muscles of the face and head, creating a face-heart connection. This face-heart connection enables an individual to communicate “safety” and potentially form social relationships. This is a dimension of the higher-level ventral vagal system present in mammals (Porges, 2015).

Polyvagal Theory and Autism

There is a demonstrated connection between dysregulation of the nervous system and autism. Porges (2005) determined that individuals with autism have insufficiently developed nervous systems and that they struggle to regulate in complex social situations. He asserts that individuals with autism have underdeveloped social engagement systems that are easily overwhelmed, resulting in the use of the fight, flight, or freeze safety strategies of the lower parts of the brain (Porges, 2005). Subsequently, Patriquin et al. (2019) found that individuals with

autism exhibit chronic states of hyperarousal, as measured by cardiac vagal control. This evidence validates that autism is related to dysregulation in the nervous system.

Polyvagal Theory and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ADHD has also been correlated to nervous system dysfunction. Suess et al. (1994) demonstrated that children who struggle with mental effort and attention exhibit poor vagal tone. Additionally, it has been found that children with ADHD experienced decreased cardiac vagal control while undergoing tasks that required self-regulation and emotion regulation (Rash & Aguirre-Camacho, 2012). A 2017 study by McQuade and Breaux shows a pattern of emotional dysregulation that is specific to individuals with ADHD. These studies demonstrate the connection between ADHD and dysregulation of the nervous system.

Polyvagal Theory and Trauma

There is ample research demonstrating the connection between polyvagal theory and trauma. Porges's (2015) polyvagal theory presents a model in which the brain utilizes a hierarchical system of responses to threats. The primary response to threats is to utilize the social engagement systems. However, during trauma, this is not sufficient; therefore, the brain moves to a state of fight, flight, or freeze. Trauma impairs neuroception; it can cause a prolonged disruption to the amygdala's ability to determine whether a stimulus is dangerous (Porges, 2015). Traumatized children and adults can get stuck in fight, flight, or freeze mode that can result in repeated patterns of trauma responses and negative classroom behaviors (van der Kolk, 2014).

A Healing Education

R. Steiner (1996) describes the process of karma shaping the human being during the incarnation process, a connection can be drawn between how karma shapes a life and creates hindrances and the hindrances or cramps that occur through trauma. R. Steiner has used multiple

metaphors to facilitate understanding of the fourfold human being and the various effects the being can undergo either through incarnation or other life events. R. Steiner uses a description of a misshapen jug to explain how karma can inhibit one from pouring forth their inner wisdom (Brown, 2016). R. Steiner (1996) also uses a metaphor for incarnation as putting on a glove. One can extrapolate the glove metaphor and imagine that trauma can be represented by a glove that has undergone some kind of trouble in the wash and now when one wears the glove, movement is inhibited. Once this connection of both trauma and karma creating hindrances has been made, it becomes clearer why similar patterns of curative education can be applied to loosen the cramp and remove hindrances.

In many modern schools there is a struggle to serve the increasingly neurodiverse population of students. Under the Waldorf umbrella, there are several different approaches to what R. Steiner (1924) called curative education. These different levels of programs could be compared to how the non-Waldorf realm serves students in need. There are residential programs, curative education schools, or curative education programs embedded into the general school. Additionally, there is another level of support called the extra lesson, as well as whole class strategies to target the development of the whole child.

In 1940, Karl König founded the Camphill movement to put into practice many of R. Steiner's ideas of curative education (Karl König Institute, n.d.). The Camphill movement is made up of residential communities that support children and adults with developmental disabilities to be fully integrated into the community through education, employment, and activities of daily life. There are more than 100 Camphill communities throughout the world (Camphill Foundation, n.d.). The Camphill school could be compared to the highest level of specialized service typically offered in a residential facility.

There are also many schools rooted in Waldorf pedagogy that offer day programs specifically for students with special needs. One example is the Mulberry Classroom at Poppy Hill, a program in California founded by Robyn Brown (2016). This school serves small groups of mixed age students in an educational farm setting (Brown, 2016). These schools could be compared to a day treatment educational facility. Though there are individual schools serving students with special needs, Rudolph Steiner intended for curative education to be part of every Waldorf school (Brown, 2016).

Across the country, there are curative education programs embedded into traditional Waldorf schools and Waldorf public charter schools. This gives the opportunity for all students to be supported through curative education. These programs could be compared to the self-contained special education setting in the traditional public school. However, because the Waldorf school looks at the whole child and areas outside of academics, more children may be supported in these embedded classrooms than what traditional educators may consider as a typical self-contained classroom population. This is also true for the extra lesson.

Unique to Waldorf education is the extra lesson. The extra lesson was developed by Audrey McAllen (2013) and it consists of additional work that is done with a child to support their development. A child is typically identified by their teacher as needing extra support. Often, students undergo grade level readiness assessments which are a standardized list of skills including social emotional, gross motor, and fine motor skills in addition to academic expectations (Auer, 2017). If a child is found to be having difficulty in one of these areas or in need of support in the classroom for behavioral or social skills, then they may be prescribed the extra lesson. Broadly, the extra lesson consists of movement, drawing, and painting exercises. A typical extra lesson may consist of movement activities involving balance, crossing midline,

body geography, and spatial orientation, drawing exercises that include prescribed colors, imitation, and using both hands, and painting exercises with special attention to color, brush stroke, and paint placement (McAllen, 2013). Additionally, the extra lesson may address hand-eye coordination, eye tracking, number relationships, and reading, writing, and spelling activities (Auer, 2017). The extra lesson can be compared to pull-out services. The extra lesson work can also be compared to tier-2 interventions in the traditional public school. Any child who is identified as in need of support by their teacher may receive extra lesson support. Some schools may also offer extra work with art, music, speech, spatial dynamics, or therapeutic eurythmy, though these subjects are also embedded into the curriculum for all students.

In the Waldorf classroom, there are a variety of activities and support integrated into the curriculum for all students. There are activities like tossing a bean bag while counting, recitation with movement, and singing with or without gestures. Inherent to the classroom is a strong and predictable schedule or rhythm as it is called in the Waldorf school. Part of this rhythm allows for a natural flow from movement-based externalizing activities to concentrated internalizing activities. This can be referred to in terms of breath, breathing in and breathing out activities. There are many therapeutic opportunities for a variety of learners to find success, such as singing, painting, drawing, modeling, drama, music, and movement.

Bernd Ruf (2013) founded an aid organization called Friends of Waldorf Education that helps children and adults all over the world in the aftermath of war and natural disasters. Through this organization Ruf constructed a response to crisis called emergency pedagogy that aligns with the biology of polyvagal theory and uses the curative exercises of Waldorf education. Ruf's foundation work focuses on dysregulation caused by trauma. Bernd Ruf (2013) asserts four steps in what he calls "holistic stabilization"; this is a way to ease the soul cramp and restore the

human being. The first step is to ensure physical stabilization by making sure the individual is safe and injuries are cared for; this is restoring the physical body. The second is somatic stabilization which refers to supporting life functions like nutrition and hygiene; this strengthens the etheric body. The third is psychosocial stabilization which is a nurturing of relationships and the astral or soul body. The final step is mental-biographical stabilization which works to replace negative experiences with positive ones and restore the I-body. Restoring the being follows an evolutionary or linear process that is reflective of the incarnation process.

Nurturing the Basal Senses

A Waldorf education gives attention to the developing senses in a sequential manner beginning with the basal senses (life, touch, movement, and balance). A sense of safety is imperative; the body must feel safe (Ruf, 2013). The life sense includes the ability to feel at peace in one's body (Kohler, 2001). This can be accomplished by developing an unhurried peacefulness and reverence while maintaining a rhythm and routine that includes regular care to feeding, warming, hygiene, and sleep (Kohler, 2001). Safety and awareness can be developed through a structured routine with clear rhythm (Ruf, 2013). Working with the sense of touch can be done through manipulating clay, beeswax modeling, kneading dough, playing with water or sand, working with papier-mâché, or through light touch massage (Ruf, 2013). Caring for the sense of touch allows an individual to experience the other through learning boundaries while simultaneously figuring out how to work with an object's particular attributes and through working with the concreteness of other, one can further an awareness of self (Kohler, 2001). The remaining basal senses of movement and balance can be addressed together through a vast variety of activities including walking a balance beam, jumping rope, juggling, stilt walking, circle games, folk dances, skipping, cycling, swinging, and rocking (Ruf, 2013). Movement and

balance activities can help remove hindrances by releasing blocked energies and synchronizing the two hemispheres of the brain (Ruf, 2013). The daily activities of the Waldorf school consistently address the needs of the developing child while providing structure and activities to support the dysregulated child.

Imagination, Play, and the Arts

Developing the skill of imagination can lead a struggling child from a role as victim to the role of hero and empower them to transform the situations they encounter (Kornberger, 2008). In the aftermath of a trauma, a child can use imagination as a way to free themselves (Ruf, 2013). Bernd Ruf (2013) gives an example of a child who witnessed the Twin Towers fall and had to flee the scene; the child repetitively drew the same picture of the scene. Ruf explains in his example the child was stuck in a traumatic experience. The therapist was able to lead him through the trauma using the power of imagination to transform his drawings, one imaginative detail at a time. Children use play to make sense of their world; they may reenact the same situations over and over again in an attempt to understand, according to Ruf (2013). When allowed to play freely, children can use imagination to navigate through the challenges of their lives.

Equally important to free play is organized play which gives children a structured way to develop essential skills. In the Waldorf school, traditional games are valued for their ability to enhance physiological and emotional development (Tunkey, 2021). Jeff Tunkey (2021), a Waldorf teacher, and lead instructor in healing education, emphasizes the differences between organized play through games and sports activities. He cites several distinctions including organized play being created for children while sports are created for adults, focus on children's needs and preferences versus a focus on trophies and tournaments, and losing being a redeeming

feature of play compared to an undesirable outcome in sports. Physical activity strengthens connections between the hemispheres of the brain and reinforces nerve pathways while simultaneously fueling the brain with oxygen and decreasing stress (Tunkey, 2021). Games and other types of organized play can improve sense perceptions, foster social development, and develop perseverance. These are vital skills for students who struggle with dysregulation. Repetition in games allows children to practice skills such as catching, throwing, and running; a clumsy awkward body becomes more agile through repetition. Tunkey (2021) notes that children who struggle to socialize can develop skills of taking turns, respect, accepting defeat, and cooperation. Through play, children can learn self-control, restraint, to follow rules, and how to distinguish between right and wrong (Tunkey, 2021). The skills required for organized play can enhance development for both the struggling and the typical child.

The arts are an integral part of a Waldorf education. Typical arts in a Waldorf school include eurythmy, singing, music, drama, drawing, form drawing, painting, modeling of various materials, and handwork such as knitting, sewing, weaving, crochet, and woodworking. These activities are woven throughout the day, week, and grades and maintain a regular part of the rhythm; they are taught by both class teachers and specialists. As discussed above, various forms of modeling can help integrate the aspects of the human being through the sense of touch (Kohler, 2001). Handwork has the benefit of encouraging crossbody movement that strengthens connections between brain hemispheres; there is an added benefit of producing an artifact (Ruf, 2013). In manipulating materials to produce something, Ruf notes that individuals can overcome feelings of helplessness. Eurythmy is a movement practice unique to Waldorf schools. It helps children integrate the brain hemispheres, gain body awareness, and move as a group. Eurythmy can help harmonize the elements of the being through ensouled movement. Activities like

singing, music, and drama can allow children to express their experiences and work with others (Ruf, 2013). Art can harmonize the human being through working with the senses manifesting soul development (Bruin & Lichthart, 2003). The activities that are built-in to the Waldorf school facilitate the metamorphosis of the developing child while supporting students who are struggling.

Conclusion

This literature review has drawn a connection between common forms of classroom dysregulation, Anthroposophy, and the polyvagal theory. Throughout it has been shown how Waldorf pedagogy addresses dysregulation by nourishing the basal senses, harnessing the power of imagination, fostering play, and cultivating the arts. A similar evolutionary pattern has been established between polyvagal theory, R. Steiner's pedagogical law, and holistic stabilization. For optimal functioning, one must secure the most basic primitive senses and organs and build up the capacity for higher senses and cognition. The Waldorf school emphasizes joy, imagination, and play; these powerful tools can be transformative for students who struggle with dysregulation. Further studies could explore the biological basis of the healing powers of the various aspects of Waldorf education and make connections between various elements of the pedagogy and how they serve to repair those dysregulations on a biological level.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

I used action research as my methodology. The major goal I set out with is to engage in research that has practical applications and is personally meaningful. Action research is aimed at targeting local problems and developing solutions to those problems (Creswell, 2015). This research model encourages change in schools through involvement of communities of professional practice, commitment to professional development, systematic reflection, and developing action plans based on results (Creswell, 2015). More specifically, I used practical action research. This method, as described by Creswell, examines a specific school-based problem, and strives to create improvement through change in practice; it is narrowly focused within a specific site or district and undertaken by individuals within that setting (Creswell, 2015). The research also included a component of explanatory mixed method where the data was reviewed by experts to corroborate and explain the findings.

I identified a problem within my school and the greater Waldorf community and chose to examine the extent to which teachers feel prepared and familiar with their knowledge of educational support practices. The study examined teachers in Waldorf schools around the United States. The goal was to determine the areas where teachers feel they need the most support and knowledge regarding students with support needs. For the purposes of this study, a Waldorf teacher is considered someone who teaches in a school that utilizes the Waldorf pedagogy. This includes teachers in independent Waldorf schools, charter schools or online programs. This study examined teachers with varying levels of teacher experience and training because that is who is teaching students in the present educational climate in the United States. The problem I observed is that teachers in many settings feel unprepared and unsupported in addressing common educational challenges encompassing academic, social-emotional, and

behavioral difficulties including trauma, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, and dyslexia. The goal of the study was to identify areas where teachers are in need of support.

Data collection included survey questionnaires to define self-identified areas for desired professional development. The data was collected and analyzed to determine commonalities and patterns. After these patterns were uncovered, I consulted with experts in the field of Waldorf educational support to corroborate the data and explore common themes. This concludes my research for the purposes of this dissertation. Moving forward, I hope to create targeted professional development to address the identified needs. The plan I utilized for my research is in direct alignment with the principles of action research.

Rationale

The Waldorf pedagogy has been around for more than 100 years, however little scholarly research exists on the methodology and even less scholarly research in the area of special education or educational support in the Waldorf school. Additionally, the treatment of children with educational support needs has changed tremendously in the last 100 years. There are many children who would have been educationally neglected 100 years ago, who are now included in mainstream classrooms as well as a dramatic increase in the quantity of educational support needs across the country. The surveys I administered address the most common disabilities in the classroom as well as trauma. Identified students are categorized under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act; these categories can also be considered a high-incidence or low-incidence disability (The University of Kansas, 2022). For example, students with dyslexia may be identified as having a specific learning disability; this is the most common identification of students with special needs with 32% of students receiving special education services falling under this category (Digest of Education Statistics, 2023). A specific learning disability is

considered a high-incidence disability (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2023). I also considered students who may not be identified by reframing questions around the most prevalent behaviors in the classroom. My research compiled teacher input and expert commentary to inform professional development activities that are grounded in data, connected to evidence-based practices in Waldorf pedagogy, meet teacher needs for professional development and ultimately meet student needs for educational support.

Recruitment and Data Collection

Participants were recruited using broad convenience sampling. A digital survey link was sent out to participants enrolled in the summer 2024 Renewal training courses through the Center for Anthroposophy, a group of approximately 200 teachers who come to renew their training and skills over the summer (see Appendix A). Additional survey links were sent to leaders and teachers to share with their faculties and colleagues at various Waldorf schools around the country. The survey link was valid for a span of 3 weeks during the summer of 2024. In total 50 participants responded before the survey was closed. Data was collected using a digital questionnaire. Questionnaires included both qualitative and quantitative data including basic descriptive statistics and Likert-style responses with a scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” Additionally, questionnaires contained multiple response questions, where participants selected all that apply or supplied an “Other” answer.

In addition to surveying teachers. I also conducted expert interviews (see Appendix B). I interviewed a renowned author, therapist, and Waldorf teacher trainer; he has been given the pseudonym, Mr. Reed. His extensive experience in teaching and working with teachers, schools, and families made him uniquely qualified to comment on my topic. A major part of his current

work is to consult with schools to develop educational support programs. He has worked with over 230 schools around the world (Simplicity Parenting, n.d).

The second person I interviewed was given the pseudonym Ms. Dunham; she is a former special educator and Waldorf teacher who currently trains teachers in the area of educational support and conducts evaluations of students. Her training as both a traditionally trained special education teacher and a Waldorf teacher with educational support background provides the complete scope of background knowledge on my topic. Additionally, she is presently working with teachers and students in the area of educational support which makes her well-grounded in current needs. The information gathered from surveying teachers was validated by these professionals who also offered additional perspective on the questionnaire items.

Data Analysis Procedures

Creswell (2015) describes the importance of using descriptive statistics to summarize data tendencies and trends. Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to identify descriptive statistics including frequencies, range, and mean as well as statistical significance between variables. According to Creswell, qualitative data provides a look into participants' views that is not restricted by a limited response set. The qualitative data collected from teachers and experts was compared and analyzed looking for patterns and similarities in responses as well as commonalities in "other" responses.

Validity

Validity concerns were addressed through triangulation. In addition to surveying the faculty, interviews were done with educational experts to determine if the trends observed in the surveys align with what they are seeing in their practice. Findings from the data would be most representative of teachers across the United States with at least a rudimentary knowledge of the

internet and the accessibility required to complete a digital survey. Triangulation of the data through interviews establishes validity of the results through corroboration with different individuals and data collection tools.

Following data collection from surveying, the data was analyzed. Expert interviews were conducted to corroborate and extrapolate the data, as well as ensure that the results are representative, complete, and realistic.

Ethical Considerations

Many ethical considerations were made. Firstly, prior to conducting surveys and interviews, the study was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Antioch University. Participation in the study was voluntary. The benefit to participants of completing the survey is that they contributed to research that will hopefully lead to increased accessibility to professional developments targeted towards improving the efficacy of the pedagogy for the marginalized populations that the survey content is directed towards. Participants were free to not participate in the study, there was no coercion, penalty, or additional benefits. Researchers considered the safety of the participants in conducting the survey as well as the potential for harm. Survey data was treated confidentially; participants were assigned identification numbers and data was entered into a spreadsheet that is only accessible to the researcher. Digital data was stored on a secured database separate from consent forms. Ethical considerations took priority in this study.

Researcher Role

As a teacher and leader in my school, I observed a problem where many teachers seemed to struggle in working with students with diverse learning needs in my school. In networking and conversation with teachers around the country, I realized that this problem was not limited to my

school. Action research led me to develop a plan to investigate this problem. Following data collection, I led a committee focus group to examine the data and develop a plan moving forward to support teachers in my school as well as schools and training programs around the country.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This study seeks to identify key areas of need for professional development of Waldorf teachers in the area of educational support. Questionnaires were administered to 50 Waldorf teachers to determine their self-identified areas of need. Additionally, two interviews were conducted with experts in the field of Waldorf education to determine their perceptions of the needs of Waldorf teachers. This results section will summarize the quantitative findings of the teacher questionnaire data as well as examine qualitative themes of the interview data. The findings are reported in descending order of frequency.

Demographic Data

The survey questionnaire was administered to 50 Waldorf teachers who teach in schools across the United States. Three respondents were removed from the data set because they are not teachers in a Waldorf school; two of those respondents identified themselves as teachers in an independent/private non-Waldorf school and one identified themselves as a public school teacher. The average years of experience reported by the teachers surveyed was 12. The most frequent response was 10 years of experience which was reported by eight respondents. The range of data spanned from 2 years of experience to more than 21 years of experience. Table 4.1 summarizes the data regarding years of experience.

Table 4.1

Reported Years of Experience

Reported Years of Experience	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
10	8	17%
21	7	15%
14	5	11%
15	4	9%
4	3	6%
5	3	6%
8	3	6%
12	3	6%
13	2	4%
17	2	4%
20	2	4%
2	1	2%
6	1	2%
7	1	2%
11	1	2%
16	1	2%

Of the 47 teachers included in the survey, they identified working with students ages preschool through adult. The majority of respondents report working with elementary aged students. Only one respondent reported working solely with high school aged students. There were three respondents who marked that they taught both elementary and "other." These three respondents subsequently clarified their "other" response; two teachers also worked with preschool ages three to six and one person worked with adults. Table 4.2 summarizes the data regarding grade levels taught by the teachers surveyed.

Table 4.2

With Which Grades Do You Work Primarily?

Grades Served	Number of Teachers	
	n	*%*
Elementary (K–5)	21	45%
Elementary and Middle School (K–8)	17	36%
Middle School (6–8)	6	13%
Elementary and Other	2	4%
Middle and High School (6–12)	1	2%
High School (9–12)	0	0%

Sixty-six percent of respondents report having their Waldorf teacher certification and having completed that training an average of 8 years ago. Fifty-one percent have a traditional teacher certification and report having completed that training an average of 14 years ago. Thirty-four percent have both a Waldorf teacher certification and a traditional teacher certification. Seventeen percent have neither a Waldorf teacher certification nor a traditional teacher certification. Table 4.3 summarizes the data regarding teacher certification.

Table 4.3

Respondent Certification

Certification Type	Number of Teachers	
	n	*%*
Both Waldorf and Traditional Certification	16	34%
Waldorf Certification-no traditional	15	32%
Traditional Certification-no Waldorf	8	17%
Neither Certification	8	17%

The teachers surveyed work in a variety of Waldorf settings including independent/private Waldorf schools, public charter Waldorf schools, and online Waldorf schools. Sixty percent of respondents indicated that they work in an independent/private Waldorf school. Thirty-two percent of respondents indicated that they work in a public charter Waldorf school. Four percent work in online Waldorf schools and four percent marked "other." The two respondents who marked an "other" response subsequently specified the setting; one respondent clarified that they work in a Waldorf-Inspired home education center and another indicated that they work in a Waldorf-Inspired public charter school. Table 4.4 summarizes the data regarding the type of school where respondents teach.

Table 4.4

What Type of School Do You Teach At?

Type of School	Number of Teachers	
	n	*%*
Independent/Private	28	60%
Waldorf Charter	15	32%
Online	2	4%
Home Education	1	2%
Waldorf-Inspired	1	2%

Following the demographic data collection, questions were administered regarding professional development needs, the process of special education, behavioral supports, and specific disability areas. These sections utilized a combination of five point likert scale responses indicating confidence on a scale ranging from very confident to very lacking confidence and "select all that apply" responses indicating specific areas of need.

Professional Development Needs Data

The first question in the professional development needs section was: How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support the students in your classroom? Table 4.5 summarizes the results of this question. A majority of teachers responded that they are somewhat confident or very confident.

Table 4.5

How Confident Do You Feel in Your Ability to Effectively Support the Students in Your Classroom?

Response	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
Somewhat confident	26	55%
Neutral	9	19%
Very confident	8	17%
Somewhat lacking confidence	3	6%
Very lacking confidence	1	2%

The second question similarly asked, How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with special needs in your classroom? The results of this question are summarized in Table 4.6. A majority of teachers responded that they are somewhat confident or neutral.

Table 4.6

How Confident Do You Feel in Your Ability to Effectively Support the Students with Special Needs in Your Classroom?

Response	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
Somewhat confident	18	38%
Neutral	18	38%
Somewhat lacking confidence	8	17%
Very confident	2	4%
Very lacking confidence	1	2%

The final question in the professional development needs section asked, What areas of special education do you feel you need further training or support in? This question allowed participants to select all areas of need that apply. Table 4.7 summarizes the data from this question. Three respondents selected the "other" response and subsequently specified. One respondent specified needing further training and support in, "Extra Lesson." Another respondent specified, "Anthroposophical understanding of today's labels for learning disabilities and children's individual incarnation and the integration processes and the adjustments made to teach each chapter according to such matters understanding." The final respondent who marked, "other" indicated they need support in, "Sensory integration."

Table 4.7

What Areas of Special Education Do You Feel You Need Further Training or Support in?

Area of Need	Number of Respondents
	n
Understanding and addressing various disabilities (e.g., autism, ADHD, dyslexia)	27
Supporting students with emotional and behavioral disorders	27
Behavior management strategies	23
Collaboration with special education team members and support staff	23
Differentiated instruction techniques	21
Individualized Education Plan (IEP) development and implementation	20
Assistive technology integration	16
Other (please specify)	3

Process Data

Regarding the special education process, respondents were asked, "How confident are you in your knowledge of the special education process?" Responses are reported in Table 4.8. Participants went on to indicate areas of needed support in the special education process. This question allowed participants to select all areas of need that apply. Table 4.9 summarizes specific areas of needed support.

Table 4.8

How Confident are You in Your Knowledge of the Special Education Process?

Response	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
Neutral	17	36%
Somewhat confident	11	23%
Somewhat lacking confidence	9	19%
Very confident	7	15%
Very lacking confidence	3	6%

Table 4.9

Which of the Following Areas of the Special Education Process Do You Feel You Need Further Training or Support in?

Area of Need	Number of Respondents
	n
What are the legal requirements and obligations for providing special education services in my classroom?	26
How do I create and implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with special needs?	21
What should I do if I suspect a student may have a learning disability or other special need?	16
What is the process for identifying students who may need special education services?	12

Respondents were asked about their confidence in their knowledge of tiered systems of support. Responses are summarized in the Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

How Confident are You in Your Knowledge of Tiered Systems of Student Support?

Response	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
Somewhat lacking confidence	12	26%
Somewhat confident	10	21%
Neutral	10	21%
Very lacking confidence	8	17%
Very confident	7	15%

Behavior Data

Regarding behavior management, teachers were asked, "How confident are you in your knowledge of behavior management strategies?" Responses are presented below in Table 4.11. A majority of respondents marked that they are somewhat confident or neutral. Respondents further specified that they would like further training or support in specific areas. This question allowed participants to select all areas of need that apply. Table 4.12 summarizes the results.

Table 4.11

How Confident are You in Your Knowledge of Behavior Management Strategies?

Response	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
Somewhat confident	19	40%
Neutral	17	36%
Very confident	6	13%
Somewhat lacking confidence	4	9%
Very lacking confidence	1	2%

Table 4.12

Which of the Following Areas of Behavior Management Do You Feel You Need Further Training or Support in?

Area of Need	Number of Respondents
Defiance and Oppositional Behavior: Some students may openly defy authority, refuse to follow instructions, or challenge teacher directives, leading to power struggles and disruptions in the classroom.	28
Special Needs and Individualized Support: Students with special needs or behavioral challenges may require individualized support and interventions to address their unique learning and behavioral needs effectively.	28
Non-Compliance with Rules and Procedures: Students who consistently disregard classroom rules and procedures may create an atmosphere of chaos and undermine the teacher's authority.	24
Disrespectful Behavior: Disrespectful or inappropriate behavior towards teachers or peers, such as talking back, swearing, or mocking others, can undermine classroom morale and mutual respect.	23
Off-Task Behavior: Students may engage in activities unrelated to the lesson, such as doodling, daydreaming, or playing with objects, which can impede their learning and distract others.	20
Disruption: Students talking out of turn, making noise, or engaging in off-task behavior can disrupt the flow of the lesson and distract other students.	17
Lack of Attention: Students who struggle to maintain focus or attention during lessons may miss important information or fall behind academically.	17
Attention-Seeking Behavior: Some students may seek attention through disruptive or attention-seeking behaviors, such as clowning around, making jokes, or seeking negative reinforcement.	17
Incomplete Assignments or Lack of Participation: Students who consistently fail to complete assignments or participate in class activities may struggle academically and disrupt the learning process for others.	16
Aggression and Conflict: Physical or verbal aggression, bullying, and conflicts between students can create a hostile or unsafe learning environment.	15

Specific Disability Areas Data

Concerning autism, teachers were asked, "How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with autism in your classroom?" The results are reported in Table 4.13. Respondents were then asked to identify the specific areas concerning autism they felt they needed more training or support. This question allowed participants to select all areas of need that apply. The results are reported in Table 4.14. Five participants marked "other (please

specify).” The individuals who marked “other” subsequently specified the other support and training they feel they need. One individual indicated needing support to give attention to the individual while also addressing the class as a whole. Another indicated needing support guiding peers of students with autism in their interactions with students with autism. A third individual specified needing support in finding and applying strategies from qualified individuals in a timely manner. Another seeks support with behaviors of rigidity and not wanting to participate. The final “other” response indicated a desire to understand and address the roots of autism.

Table 4.13

How Confident Do You Feel in Your Ability to Effectively Support Students with Autism in Your Classroom?

Response	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
Neutral	19	40%
Somewhat confident	13	28%
Somewhat lacking confidence	10	21%
Very confident	3	6%
Very lacking confidence	2	4%

Table 4.14

Which of the Following Areas Related to Autism Do You Feel You Need Further Training or Support in?

Area of Need	Number of Respondents
	n
Differentiating instruction for students with autism	32
Addressing challenging behaviors	28
Facilitating social skills development	27
Managing sensory sensitivities and sensory integration challenges	24
Collaborating with parents and other professionals	21
Understanding the characteristics and behaviors of autism	12
Implementing visual supports and schedules	12
Other (please specify)	5

Teachers were asked, “How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with ADHD in your classroom?” Results are reported in Table 4.15. Teachers were then asked in what specific areas of ADHD they felt they needed more training or support. This question allowed participants to select all areas of need that apply. Table 4.16 summarizes the results. Two participants marked “other” and subsequently specified their needs. One expressed needing support in finding and applying strategies from qualified individuals in a timely manner and the other expressed a desire to understand the spiritual realities that manifest as ADHD.

Table 4.15

How Confident Do You Feel in Your Ability to Effectively Support Students with ADHD in Your Classroom?

Response	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
Neutral	24	51%
Somewhat confident	13	28%
Somewhat lacking confidence	5	11%
Very confident	4	9%
Very lacking confidence	1	2%

Table 4.16

Which of the Following Areas Related to ADHD Do You Feel You Need Further Training or Support in?

Area of Need	Number of Respondents
	n
Implementing strategies for managing attention and focus in the classroom	29
Providing behavioral supports and interventions	26
Differentiating instruction for students with ADHD	22
Collaborating with parents and other professionals	19
Creating structured environments and routines	15
Understanding the characteristics and behaviors of ADHD	11
Other (please specify)	2

Regarding trauma, teachers were asked, “How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students who have experienced trauma in your classroom?” Table 4.17 summarizes the responses. Teachers then identified specific areas of needing support when

working with students who have experienced trauma. This question allowed participants to select all areas of need that apply. Table 4.18 summarizes the responses. One respondent marked "other (please specify)"; the person who marked "other" did not specify their need.

Table 4.17

How Confident Do You Feel in Your Ability to Effectively Support Students Who Have Experienced Trauma in Your Classroom?

Response	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
Neutral	18	38%
Somewhat confident	11	23%
Somewhat lacking confidence	8	17%
Very confident	6	13%
Very lacking confidence	4	9%

Table 4.18

Which of the Following Areas Related to Trauma-Informed Practices Do You Feel You Need Further Training or Support in?

Area of Need	Number of Respondents
	n
Implementing trauma-sensitive teaching strategies	33
Recognizing signs of trauma in students	25
Collaborating with trauma specialists and support staff	25
Providing social-emotional learning opportunities	24
Understanding the impact of trauma on learning and behavior	15
Creating a safe and supportive classroom environment	15
Building positive relationships with students who have experienced trauma	14
Other (please specify)	1

In relation to dyslexia, teachers answered the question, “How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with dyslexia in your classroom?” Results are summarized in Table 4.19. As a follow up question, respondents were asked to specify areas they feel they need additional training or support. This question allowed participants to select all areas of need that apply. These responses are summarized in Table 4.20. Three respondents indicated “other (please specify).” When specifying the “other” response, one individual expressed needing support to address the individual while maintaining the whole. Another individual expressed a desire to understand how a diagnosis of dyslexia might impact an individual’s well being in the practical arts, particularly woodworking. A final respondent indicated needing support in “extra lesson.”

Table 4.19

How Confident Do You Feel in Your Ability to Effectively Support Students with Dyslexia in Your Classroom?

Response	Number of Respondents	
	n	*%*
Neutral	19	40%
Somewhat confident	8	17%
Somewhat lacking confidence	8	17%
Very confident	6	13%
Very lacking confidence	6	13%

Table 4.20

Which of the Following Areas Related to Dyslexia Do You Feel You Need Further Training or Support in?

Area of Need	Number of Respondents *n*
Providing appropriate accommodations and modifications	34
Differentiating instruction for students with dyslexia	33
Supporting students with dyslexia in accessing the general curriculum	32
Implementing multisensory reading instruction techniques	30
Recognizing early signs of dyslexia	23
Collaborating with parents and other professionals	15
Understanding the characteristics and behaviors of dyslexia	14
Other (please specify)	3

General Feedback Data

In the conclusion of the survey questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate some general feedback regarding professional development in the area of educational support. First, they were asked to rate current professional development opportunities provided by their school using a four-point scale that included, excellent, good, fair, and poor. These results are summarized in Table 4.21. Participants were asked what types of professional development activities they found most beneficial. This question allowed participants to select all areas of need that apply. The results are summarized in Table 4.22. Participants were asked to indicate their preference for the frequency of professional development activities. Table 4.23 summarizes the responses.

Table 4.21

How Would You Rate the Current Professional Development Opportunities Provided by Your School or District in the Area of Special Education?

Rating	Number of Teachers	
	n	*%*
Fair	19	40%
Poor	17	36%
Good	10	21%
Excellent	1	2%

Table 4.22

What Specific Types of Professional Development Activities Would You Find Most Beneficial?

Type	Number of Teachers	
	n	*%*
Workshops or seminars	35	74%
Peer collaboration and learning communities	31	66%
Coaching or mentoring	29	62%
On-the-job training	22	47%
Online courses or webinars	21	45%
Other (please specify)	0	0%

Table 4.23

How Frequently Would You Prefer to Engage in Professional Development Activities Related to Special Education?

Preferred Frequency	Number of Teachers	
	n	%
Monthly	21	45%
Weekly	5	11%
Quarterly	4	9%
Annually	3	6%
As Needed	3	6%
Daily	2	4%

The final question of the survey asked for any additional comments or suggestions regarding teacher professional development in the area of educational support. One respondent indicated, "We need more awareness of Auditory Processing Disorder too!" Another indicated, "I wish that my school had an educational support person or at least teacher assistants." Another noted, "As it pertains to Waldorf Schools, I think studying Steiner's Course in Curative Education and related secondary Anthroposophical literature should be integrated into the general Education Waldorf Teacher Training in principle today." Another response was,

> If we (Waldorf schools) are going to engage with the children coming to us, we have got to recognize the behaviors and meet them in some stepwise fashion with the rest of the world. We are lucky to have "more time" or a slower pace, but that does not mean the students/families aren't needing or wanting a more direct approach to meet the needs of their students and to manage them within the context of the rest of the class. Early intervention seems to have better outcomes for the individual and social/inclusive health of the class/families/greater community. More support in this area feels long overdue so thank you for taking this time to see what "we" are needing.

Another response stated,

> Our special education district does not work well with our charter school here in NH. We are lucky our school and teachers are ready to address developmental challenges with a

> tiered system we have in place. The hardest thing is to work with the public school district and get the services that our students need delivered to them. We are constantly advocating and met with "we don't have enough people."

One individual noted, "Please note that I am currently working on my Waldorf Teacher Certification. My background is largely in mental health." Another individual expressed, "I feel strongly that Waldorf Education Training Programs need to address working and supporting with IEPs within the classroom and Tiered Level of Support." The final comment stated, "We should get paid for each professional development hour. It is A LOT. It is in addition to all the other work I do...and can be super overwhelming."

Correlations

Correlations were performed to determine if an individual's response to a question was related to how they responded to other questions. This study used a Pearson correlation coefficient to determine strength of correlations. Many significant correlations were found in this study.

Teachers' confidence in their ability to effectively support students in their classroom was correlated with many other variables. Teachers' confidence in their ability to effectively support students in their classroom was positively correlated with their confidence in supporting special needs students in their classroom. Teacher confidence in their ability to effectively support students in their classroom was also positively correlated with confidence in knowledge about the special education process, behavior management strategies, and confidence supporting students with ADHD in the classroom. Furthermore, it was positively associated with confidence in knowledge of tiered systems of student support and supporting students with dyslexia. These findings are summarized in Table 4.24 below.

Table 4.24

Correlations with Teachers' Confidence to Effectively Support Students in Their Classroom

Variables	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*	*Statistical Significance (p-value)*
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with special needs in your classroom?	0.38	0.008
How confident are you in your knowledge of the special education process?	0.38	0.009
How confident are you in your knowledge of tiered systems of student support?	0.32	0.03
How confident are you in your knowledge of behavior management strategies?	0.55	0.001
How confident do you fell in your ability to support students with ADHD in your classroom?	0.37	0.01
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with dyslexia in your classroom?	0.33	0.022

Confidence in one's ability to effectively support special needs students in the classroom has many correlations. It is positively correlated with confidence in the following areas: supporting students in the classroom, one's knowledge of the special education process, supporting students with trauma, supporting students with dyslexia, behavior management strategies, supporting students with autism, and supporting students with ADHD. These results are summarized in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25

Correlations with Teachers' Confidence to Effectively Support Special Needs Students in Their Classroom

Variables	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*	*Statistical Significance (p-value)*
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support the students in your classroom?	0.38	0.008
How confident are you in your knowledge of the special education process?	0.37	0.011
How confident are you in your knowledge of behavior management strategies?	0.38	0.009
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with autism in your classroom?	0.54	0.001
How confident do you feel in your ability to support students with ADHD in your classroom?	0.42	0.003
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students who have experienced trauma in your classroom?	0.36	0.013
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with dyslexia in your classroom?	0.36	0.013

There were many correlations related to confidence in one's knowledge of the special education process. Positive correlations were found between confidence in one's knowledge of the special education process and knowledge of tiered systems of student support, behavior management strategies, and ability to support students with ADHD in the classroom. These results are summarized in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26

Correlations with Teachers' Confidence in Their Knowledge of the Special Education Process

Variables	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*	*Statistical Significance (p-value)*
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support the students in your classroom?	0.38	0.009
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with special needs in your classroom?	0.37	0.011
How confident are you in your knowledge of tiered systems of student support?	0.65	0.001
How confident are you in your knowledge of behavior management strategies?	0.42	0.003
How confident do you feel in your ability to support students with ADHD in your classroom?	0.52	0.001

There were correlations between confidence in one's knowledge of tiered systems of support and other areas. There were positive correlations between confidence in one's knowledge of tiered systems of support and confidence in supporting students, knowledge of the special education process, behavior management strategies, ability to support students with ADHD, and ability to support students with dyslexia. These findings are summarized in the Table 4.27.

Table 4.27

Correlations with Teachers' Confidence in Their Knowledge of Tiered Systems of Support

Variables	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*	*Statistical Significance (p-value)*
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support the students in your classroom?	0.32	0.03
How confident are you in your knowledge of the special education process?	0.65	0.001
How confident are you in your knowledge of behavior management strategies?	0.49	0.001

Confidence in behavior management strategies was correlated with other areas. Positive correlations were found between confidence in behavior management strategies and confidence in supporting students, supporting students with special needs, knowledge of the special education process, knowledge of tiers of student support, confidence in supporting students with ADHD and confidence in supporting students with trauma. The results are presented in Table 4.28.

Table 4.28

Correlations with Teachers' Confidence in Their Knowledge of Behavior Management Strategies

Variables	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*	*Statistical Significance (p-value)*
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support the students in your classroom?	0.55	0.001
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with special needs in your classroom?	0.38	0.009
How confident are you in your knowledge of the special education process?	0.42	0.003
How confident are you in your knowledge of tiered systems of student support?	0.49	0.001
How confident do you feel in your ability to support students with ADHD in your classroom?	0.46	0.001
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students who have experienced trauma in your classroom?	0.33	0.025

How confident one felt in their ability to support students with autism was positively correlated to one's confidence in supporting students with special needs, confidence in supporting students with ADHD, confidence in supporting students with trauma, and confidence in supporting students with dyslexia. These results are summarized in Table 4.29.

Table 4.29

Correlations with Teachers' Confidence in Their Ability to Support Students with Autism in Their Classroom

Variables	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*	*Statistical Significance (p-value)*
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with special needs in your classroom?	0.54	0.001
How confident do you feel in your ability to support students with ADHD in your classroom?	0.44	0.002
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with dyslexia in your classroom?	0.38	0.008
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students who have experienced trauma in your classroom?	0.53	0.001

Confidence in one's ability to support students with ADHD in the classroom had many positive correlations. A positive correlation was found between one's confidence in ability to support students with ADHD and confidence in the following areas: supporting students, supporting students with special needs, knowledge of the special education process, tiers of student support, behavior management strategies, autism, and one's confidence in one's ability to support students with dyslexia. These findings are summarized in Table 4.30.

Table 4.30

Correlations with Teachers' Confidence in Their Ability to Support Students with ADHD in Their Classroom

Variables	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*	*Statistical Significance (p-value)*
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support the students in your classroom?	0.37	0.01
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with special needs in your classroom?	0.42	0.003
How confident are you in your knowledge of the special education process?	0.52	0.001
How confident are you in your knowledge of tiered systems of student support?	0.54	0.001
How confident are you in your knowledge of behavior management strategies?	0.46	0.001
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with autism in your classroom?	0.44	0.002
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with dyslexia in your classroom?	0.54	0.001

How confident one feels in their ability to support students who have experienced trauma is positively correlated with other variables including confidence in supporting students with special needs and confidence in supporting students with autism. These findings are reported in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31

Correlations with Teachers' Confidence in Their Ability to Support Students Who Have Experienced Trauma in Their Classroom

Variables	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*	*Statistical Significance (p-value)*
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with special needs in your classroom?	0.36	0.013
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with autism in your classroom?	0.53	0.001

One's confidence in their ability to effectively support students with dyslexia in the classroom is positively correlated to other areas including confidence in supporting students, confidence in supporting students with special needs, knowledge of tiers of support, and supporting students with ADHD. These results are summarized in Table 4.32.

Table 4.32

Correlations with Teachers' Confidence in Their Ability to Support Students with Dyslexia in Their Classroom

Variables	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient*	*Statistical Significance (p-value)*
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support the students in your classroom?	0.33	0.022
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with special needs in your classroom?	0.36	0.013
How confident are you in your knowledge of tiered systems of student support?	0.37	0.01
How confident do you feel in your ability to support students with ADHD in your classroom?	0.54	0.001

Summary of Interview Data

Interview 1

The first expert interview was conducted on July 22, 2024 with educational support teacher and teacher trainer. She is presently the extra lesson teacher at an independent Waldorf school in New England and on the board of the Association for Healing Education, where she is also the codirector of educational support training. In addition to her expertise in educational support, she is also a former special education teacher. The pseudonym Ms. Dunham has been given to this interviewee. A full transcript of the interview can be found in Appendix C.

The interview began with questions about perceptions of Waldorf teachers' abilities to effectively support students with and without disabilities in the classroom. Ms. Dunham responded to these questions by stating the importance of the knowledge of the foundational principles of R. Steiner's work. According to Ms. Dunham, this includes an understanding of the "human working in three-dimensional space," and understanding of the foundational skills of body geography, spatial orientation, and auditory skills. When asked what areas of special education she felt teachers could use more training or support in, Ms. Dunham referred to the importance of those foundational skills and the teacher's understanding of the foundation that was laid for the child.

Further questions explored areas of challenge. When asked about further needs for support or training in behavior management, Ms. Dunham pointed out that this was something that was not included in the Waldorf teacher training. She noted that her understanding of behavior management came from observation of master teachers and that the "best behavior management … is when people hold the bar really high."

The next questions asked about specific disability areas. For students with autism Ms. Dunham noted, “That’s a really hard challenge for teachers … and then there are so many variations of what it means to be on the spectrum.” For students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), she stated that, “It depends on the person doing the teaching. Overall … teachers may not be that well prepared.”

In the area of trauma, Ms. Dunham identified that she did not have a clear sense of how well teachers are prepared to support students with trauma. She further identified a necessity for a global understanding of the needs of children coming from trauma. Specifically, she mentioned the need for warmth and the arts including beeswax and clay modeling as well as lots of painting. She notes the need for specialty therapists like painting therapists and storytelling on a therapeutic level.

When asked about dyslexia, Ms. Dunham spoke of educators having a baseline understanding of the need for interventions such as Orton Gillingham. She also noted a need for teachers to understand the foundational skills related to dyslexia and the importance of developing those foundational skills and ensuring that, “The ego spiritual body is really well anchored in the physical.”

The next questions asked about Ms. Dunham’s perception of the state of educational support in Waldorf schools. Ms. Dunham noted, “If you’ve got an educational support program in a Waldorf school that has someone with extra lesson training, that’s a huge advantage.” She also noted that she is seeing more schools who are asking for help. Ms. Dunham identified that schools need to have workshops and mentoring to have people coming in to provide teachers with hands-on tools and techniques to utilize in the classroom. When asked about her impression

of parent concerns related to educational support, Ms. Dunham noted the need for more parent education around why things are done certain ways in Waldorf schools.

The concluding questions asked for Ms. Dunham to comment on the results of the teacher questionnaires. The major trends that were identified in the teacher survey data demonstrated that teachers are citing needs for support in the areas of behavior management, understanding and addressing various disabilities, and supporting students with emotional and behavioral disorders. When asked to comment on this, Ms. Dunham noted that teachers can be overwhelmed by having to be social workers and that she has noticed the presence of counselors even in private Waldorf schools. She notes that there are also parents who want an alternative school and do not have knowledge of the pedagogy which can be challenging for teachers. Another related question asked about teacher's identified need for support in the areas of defiance and oppositional behavior and noncompliance, as well as aggression, disruption, and disrespectful behavior. Ms. Dunham noted the perspective from experts such as Robin Brown and Adam Blanning as being helpful in aiding teachers in understanding the constitutional types and recognizing the function or origin of a behavior to understand how to support it.

When asked to comment on teacher's identified low confidence in supporting students with autism and dyslexia and specific areas of need related to those disabilities, as well as a need for understanding trauma, Ms. Dunham again noted a need to understand how to "read the child" to understand behavioral concerns. She also noted the importance of using anthroposophical sources to understand the foundation and work preventatively to remediate in order to have fewer children presenting with dyslexia.

The final questions asked for anything my interview may have missed regarding educational support and additional comments on the needs of the Waldorf teacher in relation to

educational support. To this question Ms. Dunham commented on today's children growing up in a push-button world and how this does not align with the needs and design of the physical body. This is resulting in unrest, anxiety, and sleep issues. She notes children are experiencing a lack of chores and contribution to family life and that human beings are meant to go to sleep at night feeling that they have accomplished something important. Her suggestions for support include increasing workshops and training and providing more education and understanding of the fundamental principles.

Interview 2

The second expert interview was conducted on August 5, 2024 with a renowned author, educational consultant, and Waldorf teacher educator. He has consulted with approximately 270 schools worldwide on educational support and developed a system of support used widely in Waldorf schools. He has also authored several parenting books and a well known podcast. A pseudonym has been given to this interviewee. A full transcript of the interview can be found in Appendix C.

The interview began with asking Mr. Reed to describe the state of educational support in Waldorf schools presently. Mr. Reed described a bit of history and his background then noted the need for social support arising in the 1990s and early 2000s. He noted that, "There aren't specific courses because … our teacher training institutions are lagging significantly behind in the need and not putting in place robust enough social and behavioral learning for future teachers." He identified a third wave of need that arose in the last 10 to 15 years in the area of behavior. He identifies, "Teachers needing very significant support, much more than teacher training institutions are providing ... I don't think they are preparing our students as a whole, as a worldwide movement for the real time that they're getting in the classroom."

When asked about teachers' ability to effectively support students with special needs, Mr. Reed talked about the core of Waldorf education being a healing education and the history of the curriculum development arising from the second world war and being trauma-informed in its foundation. He bridges the history of the development of the curriculum as a healing education with the idea that the modern task of the Waldorf educator is to bring the children to the place where they can experience healing. He further extrapolates to include healing children, parents, and teachers citing a cycle of unsustainability in education. He notes, "There are not proactive supports put in place … we are still not training for the reality of this and (not) spending anywhere near enough time on this."

Next Mr. Reed was asked to identify the concrete needs for schools or teachers to improve their ability to support students with needs. He noted the importance of having proactive, transparent processes in place and not being involved in rampant individualism as teachers. He identifies a "desperate" need for threefoldness in policy, process, and practice to support our students with social and behavioral difficulties and to maintain our ability to serve all of our students without those with the most needs dominating the environment. He notes an approach of light holding, moderate holding, and close holding and the need to train teachers extensively on these approaches.

When asked about behavior management, Mr. Reed's reaction was to get rid of the words behavior management. He states the need to understand the spirit soul need and the karmic needs of the individual. To do this, he says, "We need to free ourselves from the feeling that we need to manage this and move into deep observation of the child, to base it on observation as opposed to management." One point that he makes is that the support we offer needs to arise from the heart of Waldorf education, not an add on program we subscribe to. Mr. Reed goes on to note a need

for a shift in approach to asking, “How does what we do orient the child?” He equates this to neuroscientific terms of regulating the sympathetic nervous system through coregulation.

The next question asked about Mr. Reed’s impression of parent concerns regarding educational support. He noted that the main concern is that kids are not getting enough educational support. Additionally, he identified that there is a concern about pathologizing children through labeling them. He asks for consideration of, “How can something be naming and knowing and not labeling and limiting?”

The final question asked for any concluding thoughts on educational support and the needs of the Waldorf teacher. Mr. Reed stated, “There is a burning need in teacher training for us to up our game and there’s a burning need for administration in schools both independent and charter schools to understand that.” Mr. Reed concludes by noting that a number of schools in the United Kingdom have closed down because they are not meeting the social, behavioral, and learning needs of the students.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

In this research process, I sought to gain a greater understanding of the professional development needs of the Waldorf teacher in the area of educational support. My current position and experience as a special education teacher in a Waldorf charter school inspired me to examine these needs. Through my work at my school and networking with colleagues in various schools around the country, I understood there is a great need in the area of educational support. One of the features of Waldorf education that I appreciate most is the hearts of teachers who are drawn to this methodology. The individuals I have encountered in my journey are some of the most caring professionals I have ever met; they meet the students with steadfast tenderness and care for the whole child. In my conversations and interactions with many teachers, I saw many teachers who were striving to serve their students and struggling to understand and educate students with special needs. I want to help these teachers to understand and educate the students they serve. Through this research project, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the specific areas of need to improve teacher knowledge and confidence. I took my understanding of the basic tenets of Waldorf education and my experience as a special education teacher and used this knowledge to shape my research. Ultimately, my objective is to find ways to improve educational support in Waldorf schools, so that students with special needs could have their needs met through this unique pedagogy. Understanding the needs of the teacher is a first step in my objective to improve educational support for students with special needs.

The purpose of my research was to gain a greater understanding of the needs for professional development in educational support for the Waldorf teacher. I used a combination of action research and explanatory mixed methods. In my research, I distributed questionnaires to Waldorf teachers to determine their self-identified needs for professional development in the area

of educational support. I questioned teachers on their confidence in working with students with varying educational struggles including ADHD, trauma, autism, and dyslexia. These are four areas of educational support that are most commonly encountered in schools. Following the survey, I conducted two expert interviews to examine the data and consider additional questions regarding the professional development needs of the Waldorf teacher. I examined the research question, "What are the professional development needs in the area of educational support for the Waldorf teacher?"

This research study provides insight into the professional development needs of the Waldorf teacher in relation to educational support. The results of this study are plentiful, though there are some stakeholders that are not represented in this study and this should be considered when interpreting results. This discussion chapter provides a reflection on the literature and the research process with consideration for the limitations and potential consequences of the design. Additionally, the results will be discussed including implications for their interpretation. The chapter continues with recommendations for the future including suggestions for future research. In conclusion, this section shares my personal reflections on the research.

Connections to the Literature

Through the literature review, this study sought to identify the anthroposophical explanations and indications for common educational challenges. These explanations and indications were examined in alignment with the scientific lens of polyvagal theory to identify best practices in educational support that follow the Waldorf pedagogy. Additional consideration was given to identifying the practices of Waldorf education that can be aligned to specific classroom struggles. The foundational information presented in the literature review serves to

inform the content that teachers and experts identify as the needed areas of professional development.

Based on the surveys and interviews, teachers could benefit from the inclusion of topics of educational support in the initial teacher training as well as through periodic opportunities for professional development; this training could include information from the literature review. Necessary components for educational support training include a review of the basic foundations of anthroposophical child development. Further exploration of the 12 senses and the importance of nurturing the basal senses should also be included. Finally, explorations on anthroposophical explanations and understandings of ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and trauma are essential components for teacher preparation and continuing development. The above areas were all discussed in the literature review and through the research surveys and interviews were found to be needed components to give Waldorf teachers a basic understanding of educational support.

Based on the research data, there are some areas that should be included for professional development and teacher training that were not explored in the literature review. Additional considerations for professional development should be given to outlining legal requirements and obligations in special education. Furthermore, there are additional remediation strategies that could be included such as therapeutic painting and eurythmy. Finally, a thorough examination of school-wide systems of support for educational challenges that align with the Waldorf pedagogy would also be important to include. These areas were identified through the research as necessary components for professional development, however they were not explored in the literature review.

Implications for Practice

The scope of this research project was somewhat limited. There are additional considerations that were not addressed as part of this research. These include limitations in the inclusion of stakeholders and limitations in methodology. As well as the aforementioned, components that were not explored in the literature review.

This research study sought to explore the professional development needs of the Waldorf teacher through the lens of the teacher and experts. Other major stakeholders in this topic include the students and families that the teachers serve. Students or former students and caregivers may be able to provide a unique perspective on their needs both met and unmet by the schools and teachers that served them. A thorough exploration of the perspective of this group could include students and families that are currently enrolled, alumni, or those who have left the school.

The methodology of this study was action research and explanatory mixed methods. The study included a broad survey of Waldorf teachers across the United States and points to a broad need for professional development. As such, individualized teacher and school-based needs may be better addressed with a focused internal study of the teachers within a specific school. Additionally, a wider survey of experts could provide a more comprehensive view of the professional development needs.

Implications of Results

The results of this study directly address the research question: What topics of educational support are most relevant and needed for Waldorf teachers and trainees today? Through the teacher surveys and expert interviews major themes and directions for additional training for Waldorf teachers were identified.

Teachers were surveyed through questionnaires. Many participants identified support needs in the area of understanding various disabilities and supporting students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Additionally, they identified a need for instruction in specific strategies related to ADHD and trauma, as well as differentiating instruction for students with autism, and providing accommodations and modifications for students with dyslexia. Furthermore, participants identified needing training and support in the legal requirements and obligations for providing special education. In regards to behavioral supports, defiance and oppositional behavior and special needs and individualized support were two areas identified by teachers in the teacher survey.

Major themes were identified through the expert interviews. Two expert interviews were conducted to corroborate the findings of the teacher surveys. One theme interviewees identified was a need for teacher training in special education. Additionally, a specific need for instruction in the area of behavior supports was noted as well as a need to include anthroposophical therapeutic supports. The importance of understanding foundations of development according to Anthroposophy was also noted. Finally, implementing proactive supports, policies, and practices was also identified as a necessity.

This research study confirmed professional development for Waldorf teachers in the area of educational support is needed. In the introduction, I noted that I had a plan to create professional development modules in the area of educational support for Waldorf teachers. This research serves as the basis for those modules I would like to go on to create. Based on this research and literature review a well-rounded professional development program could begin with an overview of systems of support and focus on having foundational policies in place to support students who are struggling. It could continue with an emphasis on practice and

equipping teachers with strategies and tools to work with students with educational support needs. When working with teachers on strategies to support students, a review of the development of the child through the lens of Anthroposophy should be included with attention drawn to the foundational senses. This review could continue with a discussion of the manifestations of various disabilities including autism, dyslexia, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder as well as how trauma can impact students in the classroom. Additionally, a well rounded approach could address specific strategies for how to work with students with educational support needs and include behavior supports, not just academic supports. For Waldorf teachers, professional development grounded in Anthroposophy and anthroposophical therapeutic applications is essential. Finally, briefly touching on the legal obligations for providing special education could finish off a professional development program in educational support for Waldorf teachers.

Next Steps

Moving forward this research can serve several purposes. This research can serve as a way for schools to explore the professional development needs of their teachers and inform an improvement plan by administering a similar survey. Teacher training institutions can take the information from this study and use it to inform their programming to ensure their course offerings are meeting the teacher's needs. The results of the research can be used to create professional development modules for teachers.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research in this area could elaborate on the findings of this research. A review of the populations of students in Waldorf schools could be done to determine what subgroups exist for educational support. Students and families could be addressed to round out the stakeholder

perspective. Additionally, a similar study done on a larger scale could provide a broader view of teacher needs. Furthermore, a study that included a greater variety of experts and experienced principals might yield more in depth perspectives on teacher needs.

Reflection

This research project has provided a foundation for me to build up a program of professional development modules to guide teachers in their work with students with educational support needs. I am excited to take what I have learned through my research and apply it in my professional work. The work I am taking up in my school is greatly informed by my research. I have created two teams at my school (one at the lower level covering grades K–5 and one at the upper level covering grades 6–12). These teams each meet weekly to discuss the needs that are present at each campus. Through these teams, we are striving to implement multi-tiered systems of student support utilizing the three streams of integrative student support by Kim John Payne (n.d.). We are also creating small professional development opportunities to explore during our faculty meetings as a result of our faculty input that demonstrated a need for more professional development in the area of behavior. Additionally, our leadership team has prioritized the three fold system of operation policy/thinking, process/feeling, and practice/willing that was recommended in my second interview. I feel knowledgeable and confident in my ability to lead my colleagues in the realm of educational support. Not only have I grown in knowledge and confidence, but I have also experienced a transformation in myself.

When I embarked on this research, I had just begun to understand my direction and purpose in my professional life. I started out as unsure, dissatisfied, and questioning. After conducting this research, I feel I have a clear direction towards my purpose and what brings me joy in my work. Through this process, I have learned a lot about myself, perseverance, and my

place in the work I do. I have grown in confidence and understanding. Prior to completing this work and program, I had an admiration for those who serve in social justice, but did not know how to be a part of the work. Now, I feel like I have gained an understanding of how I can take my passion for helping others and channel my work and effort into making a difference. I feel like I now understand how to strive to be like those I could only admire before. Not only do I have a blueprint to become who I want to be, but I am proud of who I am.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Your feedback will help us understand the professional development needs of teachers in the area of educational support. Please answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your ability.

Demographic Information

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have in total?
2. With which grades do you work primarily?
    - ○ Elementary School (K–5)
    - ○ Middle School (6–8)
    - ○ High School (9–12)
    - ○ Other (please specify)
3. Do you have Waldorf certification?

    If yes, what year did you complete your training?
4. Do you have a traditional teacher certification (not Waldorf)?

    If yes, what year did you complete your training?
5. What type of school do you teach at? (Select one)
    - ○ Public school
    - ○ Waldorf Charter School
    - ○ Non-Waldorf charter school
    - ○ Independent/Private Waldorf school
    - ○ Independent/Private non-Waldorf school
    - ○ Online program Waldorf

- Online program non-Waldorf
- Other:

  Please specify:

Professional Development Needs

6. How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support the students in your classroom?
   - Very confident
   - Somewhat confident
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat lacking confidence
   - Very lacking confidence
7. How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with special needs in your classroom?
   - Very confident
   - Somewhat confident
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat lacking confidence
   - Very lacking confidence
8. What areas of special education do you feel you need further training or support in? (Select all that apply)
   - Differentiated instruction techniques
   - Behavior management strategies
   - Individualized Education Plan (IEP) development and implementation

- Understanding and addressing various disabilities (e.g., autism, ADHD, dyslexia)
- Assistive technology integration
- Collaboration with special education team members and support staff
- Supporting students with emotional and behavioral disorders
- Other (please specify)

Process

9. How confident are you in your knowledge of the special education process?
    - Very confident
    - Somewhat confident
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat lacking confidence
    - Very lacking confidence
10. Which of the following areas of the special education process do you feel you need further training or support in? (Select all that apply)
    - What is the process for identifying students who may need special education services?
    - What are the legal requirements and obligations for providing special education services in my classroom?
    - How do I create and implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with special needs?
    - What should I do if I suspect a student may have a learning disability or other special need?
11. How confident are you in your knowledge of tiered systems of student support?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neutral
- Somewhat lacking confidence
- Very lacking confidence

Behaviors

12. How confident are you in your knowledge of behavior management strategies?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neutral
- Somewhat lacking confidence
- Very lacking confidence

13. Which of the following areas of behavior management do you feel you need further training or support in? (Select all that apply)

- Disruption: Students talking out of turn, making noise, or engaging in off-task behavior can disrupt the flow of the lesson and distract other students.
- Lack of Attention: Students who struggle to maintain focus or attention during lessons may miss important information or fall behind academically.
- Defiance and Oppositional Behavior: Some students may openly defy authority, refuse to follow instructions, or challenge teacher directives, leading to power struggles and disruptions in the classroom.
- Aggression and Conflict: Physical or verbal aggression, bullying, and conflicts between students can create a hostile or unsafe learning environment.

- Off-Task Behavior: Students may engage in activities unrelated to the lesson, such as doodling, daydreaming, or playing with objects, which can impede their learning and distract others.
- Incomplete Assignments or Lack of Participation: Students who consistently fail to complete assignments or participate in class activities may struggle academically and disrupt the learning process for others.
- Disrespectful Behavior: Disrespectful or inappropriate behavior towards teachers or peers, such as talking back, swearing, or mocking others, can undermine classroom morale and mutual respect.
- Attention-Seeking Behavior: Some students may seek attention through disruptive or attention-seeking behaviors, such as clowning around, making jokes, or seeking negative reinforcement.
- Non-compliance with Rules and Procedures: Students who consistently disregard classroom rules and procedures may create an atmosphere of chaos and undermine the teachers' authority.
- Special Needs and Individualized Support: Students with special needs or behavioral challenges may require individualized support and interventions to address their unique learning and behavioral needs effectively.

Professional Development Needs in Autism:

14. How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with autism in your classroom?
    - Very confident
    - Somewhat confident

- Neutral
- Somewhat lacking confidence
- Very lacking confidence

15. Which of the following areas related to autism do you feel you need further training or support in? (Select all that apply)

- Understanding the characteristics and behaviors of autism
- Differentiating instruction for students with autism
- Implementing visual supports and schedules
- Managing sensory sensitivities and sensory integration challenges
- Facilitating social skills development
- Addressing challenging behaviors
- Collaborating with parents and other professionals
- Other (please specify)

Professional Development Needs in ADHD

16. How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with ADHD in your classroom?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neutral
- Somewhat lacking confidence
- Very lacking confidence

17. Which of the following areas related to ADHD do you feel you need further training or support in? (Select all that apply)

- Understanding the characteristics and behaviors of ADHD
- Implementing strategies for managing attention and focus in the classroom
- Differentiating instruction for students with ADHD
- Creating structured environments and routines
- Providing behavioral supports and interventions
- Collaborating with parents and other professionals
- Other (please specify)

Professional Development Needs in Trauma-Informed Practices

18. How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students who have experienced trauma in your classroom?
    - Very confident
    - Somewhat confident
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat lacking confidence
    - Very lacking confidence
19. Which of the following areas related to trauma-informed practices do you feel you need further training or support in? (Select all that apply)
    - Understanding the impact of trauma on learning and behavior
    - Recognizing signs of trauma in students
    - Creating a safe and supportive classroom environment
    - Implementing trauma-sensitive teaching strategies
    - Building positive relationships with students who have experienced trauma
    - Providing social-emotional learning opportunities

- Collaborating with trauma specialists and support staff
- Other (please specify)

Professional Development Needs in Dyslexia

20. How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively support students with dyslexia in your classroom?
    - Very confident
    - Somewhat confident
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat lacking confidence
    - Very lacking confidence
21. Which of the following areas related to dyslexia do you feel you need further training or support in? (Select all that apply)
    - Understanding the characteristics and behaviors of dyslexia
    - Recognizing early signs of dyslexia
    - Implementing multisensory reading instruction techniques
    - Differentiating instruction for students with dyslexia
    - Providing appropriate accommodations and modifications
    - Supporting students with dyslexia in accessing the general curriculum
    - Collaborating with parents and other professionals
    - Other (please specify)

General Feedback

22. How would you rate the current professional development opportunities provided by your school or district in the area of special education?

- ○ Excellent
- ○ Good
- ○ Fair
- ○ Poor

23. What specific types of professional development activities would you find most beneficial? (Select all that apply)
    - ○ Workshops or seminars
    - ○ Online courses or webinars
    - ○ Peer collaboration and learning communities
    - ○ Coaching or mentoring
    - ○ On-the-job training
    - ○ Other (please specify)
24. How frequently would you prefer to engage in professional development activities related to special education?
    - ○ Daily
    - ○ Weekly
    - ○ Monthly
    - ○ Quarterly
    - ○ Annually
    - ○ As needed
25. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding teacher professional development in the area of educational support?

Thank you for your participation! Your input is valuable to us.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Demographic Information

1. What is your current role?

2. How do you interact with students with educational support needs or Waldorf teachers?

3. Tell me a little bit about your background:

    a. How long did you teach? And in what setting?

    b. How long have you been in your current profession?

I'd like to ask you some questions similar to those I asked in my survey of Waldorf teachers:

Questions Reflecting Those Asked in the Teacher Survey

4. To what extent do you feel teachers are able to effectively support the students of today in the classroom?

5. To what extent do you feel teachers are able to effectively support the special needs students of today in the classroom?

6. What areas of special education do you feel teachers could use further training or support in?

7. What areas of behavior management do you feel teachers could use further training or support in?

8. How well do you feel Waldorf teachers are prepared and able to support students with Autism in the classroom?

9. How well do you feel Waldorf teachers are prepared and able to support students with ADHD in the classroom?

10. How well do you feel Waldorf teachers are prepared and able to support students who have experienced Trauma?

11. How well do you feel Waldorf teachers are prepared and able to support students with Dyslexia in the classroom?

Questions Differing from Those Asked in the Teacher Survey

12. How would you describe the state of educational support in Waldorf schools?
13. What trends are you seeing in the area of educational support?
14. What concerns are you seeing in the area of educational support?
15. What do you think are some of the needs for schools or teachers to improve their ability to support students with educational support needs?
16. Do you have an impression of what parent concerns in the area of educational support might be?
17. I'd like to share my questionnaire data with you and ask you some questions about it.

Questions Regarding the Questionnaire Data Collected from the Teacher Survey

18. Do you agree with the trends I have identified through my survey?
19. What are additional areas of educational support that I may have missed?
20. If you were to design professional development for Waldorf teachers, what areas do you think are most important to target?
21. As my last question, what else would you like to say about educational support and the needs of the Waldorf teacher?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION INTERVIEW 1

Date: July 22, 2024

Location: Zoom

Interviewee: Educational Support Teacher and Teacher Trainer

Interviewer: Leah Mrozinski

Interviewer: All right. So, I have a couple of demographic questions. First, what is your current role?

Interviewee: Well, first of all, I'm a part time extra lesson teacher at the Upper Valley Waldorf School. And I am on the board of AHE, The Association for a Healing Education. And AHE runs a few programs. And one of the things we run is our educational support training. I'm a co-director of that training. And I've been a co-director since 2012. Before that I taught in the program. So, the educational program run by AHE is for people, generally they're from the Waldorf world. Or they're from another situation, perhaps they work in a in a child advocacy role at an agency. Or maybe they're in an early intervention program through the state they live in. But mostly the people are from the Waldorf world. And people who come to our program like the EC teachers, grades teachers, support teachers, sometimes high school teachers, not too often, sometimes hand work teachers. So, people who want to better understand how to meet the needs of children in today's world.

Interviewer: Great. You kind of answered those other questions. And then, so I'd like to kind of continue by asking you some questions that are really similar to the questions I asked teachers in my survey, so I can kind of gauge, maybe, like a comparison. So the first question is, to what extent do you feel teachers are able to effectively support the students of today in the classroom?

Interviewee: Well, I think, without a deep understanding of Rudolph Steiner's view of the human working in 3-dimensional space. Without understanding that, then teachers don't really have a foundation from which to work to help children establish a good baseline or academics to be successful. Because if we just go at it thinking, "well, there are so many children in my class who need extra help, so they all need math tutors. They all need reading tutors. They all need speech therapists," whatever. That's not looking at the underlying foundational principles given to us by Steiner, and then people like Audrey McAllen, who developed the extra lesson.

Interviewer: Yeah. How about students with special needs? To what extent do you feel teachers are able to effectively support students with special needs in their classrooms?

Interviewee: Right, that that could mean different things. Of course, if it's a student who has a physical issue where they need accommodations. Perhaps they're in a wheelchair or they have extra thick eyeglasses, or they have hearing aids. Those are physical issues. So those accommodations are usually addressed by the public school district, giving support, I imagine. In a Waldorf, school classroom, I think what teachers don't understand is that (emphatically) They! (the teacher), can work from a different place and that could result in fewer children being identified as having special needs. So, working from a different place means understanding the physical body geography and spatial orientation. That's really essential. And also understanding the importance of good listening skills and being surrounded by good speaking models. So, language development starts with good auditory skills. And then also, we need to broaden teachers' understanding of body geography and spatial orientation, as it relates to everything in the academic realm.

Interviewer: Yeah. And then what areas, you kind of just answered this, but what areas of special education do you feel teachers could use for their training or support in?

Interviewee: Right. Well, you know it's, It's a little bit tricky for me to work with this concept of special education, because years ago I got a degree in special ed that was before I heard the word Waldorf.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And it, It meant a whole different thing to me back then. Now I don't have such a familiarity with it. Well, what does it mean? Are we talking about the children who need physical accommodations? Where to seat them in the classroom, or closer to the board, or whatever versus children who really haven't had a good foundation in those early years of life including the early years, the first 3 years, but up to age 7. To have that foundation, so that their capacities kind of unfold easily for academic learning. So, so what does special Ed mean? These days, and from our Waldorf framework, what does that mean? So, when I think about teachers' issues about children who have difficulty with math and language arts. I'm wondering what kind of foundation was laid. What the beginning, was. Was information just poured in? Or did children really have a bodily experiential way to understand the world of letters and language and numbers.

Interviewer: Yeah. How about in the areas of behavior management? Are there certain areas where you feel teachers could use further training or support?

Interviewee: Absolutely. I didn't even get this in my own Antioch training.

Interviewer: Yes, this is kind of the core, the crux of what I'm working on here.

Interviewee: So you know my teachers were Ann Pratt and Arthur Auer and Torin and wonderful people Names, you know, Signe. We had all these wonderful courses, foundation studies, and then courses in all the basic tenets of Rudolf Steiner's philosophy. When I really came to understand behavior management, it was when I could view master teachers in the classroom.

And we did not get this from, say Arthur, who taught a lot of the hands-on, your in the classroom work. It was beautiful painting, here's how you do with second grade main lesson book, and here's how you do sixth grade geology, or whatever. But, for me, I really see when a master teacher has control of their class. Those are the golden nuggets and in a nutshell. What it really is, we know that the children want to behave. They want to be good and yet they're also expressing a need to us. "See me see me? Do you see me?" And then there's this whole other layer of "do you see us as a class?" "Do you see us as the children coming in today who have incarnated in this time. We came here with a mission. Here's what we are doing." So, in a nutshell, Leah, I would say that the best behavior management I have seen is when people hold the bar really high. And if we are asking children to stand for the verse, and they do it in a sloppy way, pushing their chairs in making noise, whatever. "Let's do that again." And if, maybe in a class of 20, there's still one person banging the chair into the desk. "Let's do that again." So that we recognize that we can hold the whole class, not 90%, not 95, but the whole class to a standard of there's, "Okay that we stand up and push our chairs. There's a way that we stand up right to see our verse," and it goes through the whole day. And with all the subject teachers.

Interviewer: Yeah. Now I'm gonna ask some more little bit more specific questions. How well do you feel that Waldorf teachers are prepared to support students with autism in the classroom?

Interviewee: That's, a really hard challenge for teachers. I know some children who are identified as being on the spectrum and have outside support coming in and some parents are paying out of pocket. It's the rare parent who can afford to pay $20,000, a year for an aide, right. So those are rare cases. And then, there are so many variations of what it means to be on the spectrum.

Interviewer: Yeah. How about children with ADHD? How well do you feel, Waldorf? Teachers are prepared to support children with ADHD?

Interviewee: Probably it depends on on the person doing the teaching. Overall, I would say teachers may not be that well prepared, but if we understand what does it mean if you have ADHD? That means you cannot easily come to stillness to pay attention.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So one of the things I love to refer to is Robin Brown's book. You know Robin Brown's book [2016; *A Practical Guide to Curative Education*]. It's I think it's page 102 going up to page 103, it's right around there where she clearly illustrates this example of that one child in the class who's still not ready. And if you go on with the lesson and that one child's fooling around, and they haven't come to stillness. But all the other children have, and the teacher starts teaching the lesson, you haven't really helped the class, because that one person is still wanting to be noticed, and honored and seen. And so it's a matter of you wait for the whole class even if it means looking right at that child "we'll begin when we're ready." I think if more teachers could understand this the way Robin Brown brings it to us, and the way master teachers exemplify this in a classroom it's really being able to hone in, on "let's take the time now to establish our baseline of expectations of behavior, and then we'll begin." It's a concept that I see us fitting into Steiner's soul economy. You kind of take the time to do your work, and down the road you have benefits because you've taken the time at the beginning.

Interviewer: Yeah. How about children who have experienced trauma? How well are Waldorf teachers prepared to be able to support students who have experienced trauma?

Interviewee: Again. I don't, I don't have a clear sense of that. I imagine some based on their own empathy and personal experiences might have better understanding than others. I know

Karine is doing a wonderful job in her program bringing in specialists. But I think there could be more of a global understanding, of what children coming from trauma need they really need that one on one? They really need the warmth. And they need the arts. And the arts could be visual, beeswax, clay modeling, painting, lots of painting. I'm a big fan of watercolor painting because when the colors flow, those colors that flow go right into the soul via the astral body, and then they work into the body as well because of that water element. So, a lot of work with the therapeutic arts is really to be understood. So, an example is this year where I worked, a couple siblings experienced the loss of a parent and it was a sudden loss and I had one of those siblings in my room once a week for about 10 weeks, and just painted magenta. With him, and he was allowed to just cover the surface of the paper with magenta, which is this major healing color. [The] color of the mother and I first learned about this through Karine back when she was my Antioch teacher. And then I also was able to work with this child's sibling a few times as well, but just to have taken in that color experience once has been very beneficial, so it would be wonderful to have more. Hello! Painting therapists in the school. And other therapists, perhaps more storytelling that really on a therapeutic level, meets them deeply.

Interviewer: Yeah. And then kind of the last in this vein. How well do you think, Waldorf teachers are prepared and able to support students with dyslexia in the classroom?

Interviewee: Okay. That's an area I love to talk about. I think that coming out of regular education training or special Ed. training or the Waldorf trainings, there may be a baseline understanding of, "Oh, okay, this child has this, this child needs Orton Gillingham. So, let's start that as soon as we can." And I'm all on board with great reading tutoring, Orton Gillingham. I took a reading reflex course myself and I know some people do Wilson. I know there are probably Orton Gillingham people affiliated with many, many Waldorf schools in this day and

age, and years ago it was rare. Now, it's very, very common, of course, and that's all good. What I want teachers to understand is the baseline of dyslexia. So that if we say, "Well, this child comes from a lineage of both parents having dyslexia on their side of the family." Fine! That's great, but whether there's a family history or not, let's help teachers to understand the foundation, so that if a child does, save Orton Gillingham tutoring. Maybe the parents have to pay for that for 2 years instead of 5 years. That's a huge financial difference.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And these kinds of things can be addressed really early on, and it really goes back to early childhood. Back when we hear these auditory situations like children who say "aminal" and "basgeti" Instead of spaghetti and animal, right? So, it goes back to the listening and the maturation of the body so that the ego spiritual body is really well anchored in the physical.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: These are principles we work with in our training.

Interviewer: Yeah. All right, so, here's some kind of broader questions that differ from the ones I asked. Teachers. How would you describe the state of educational support in Waldorf schools?

Interviewee: I think, for those schools that have an educational support program where someone has had a training in extra lesson, so that could be our program, AHE, that support program, the one called Waldorf Learning and there are some people who are trained in other programs. Maybe they were trained in England, or the Netherlands or something, and they have that foundation. They're working in a Waldorf school with that framework and that spills out into the greater faculty community. Then those schools are at an advantage. If an educational support program is only academic based and we've got the speech people and we've got the OT people, then they have missed the understanding that comes from Rudolf Steiner's principles. So, I think

if you've got an educational support program in a Waldorf school that has someone with extra lesson training, that's a huge advantage.

Interviewer: Yeah. What trends are you seeing in the area of educational support?

Interviewee: I'm so I'm seeing more schools say, "we need help." And, we're always thrilled when we get people into our program who really want to take this up and take it into their schools. So, we just graduated a cohort on Friday down in Lexington, 15 people. We started with more, but life happens, and so some people have to drop out for various reasons and it's interesting how probably a third of these people have a master's in special ed and I had a master's a special ed from the early 80s. And once I took this extra lesson program, completely changed my view of everything, child development and how we acquire the capacities for reading, writing, and math. So, I think the state of the support programs right now is, if people have been exposed, at least to this understanding, then they approach their teaching in a whole different way. For example, currently I'm across working across the state 2 days a week at the Upper Valley Waldorf School in Quechee. The person who's now going into third grade, Julia _____, she has a website, by the way, called _____ Pathways. She might be a good person for you to interview. I worked with her in her last cycle because I was going down there sometimes as a consultant over the years and I remember in her last cycle that first grade play they did lots of stomping and really strong movement. And then, when I would go back and visit other teachers here and there, I pop in to see her class, and I remember walking in her class when they were in fourth grade and they were working out of a spelling workbook from a mainstream source, but maybe it was from a homeschooling website. So, it was really good spelling workbook and 75% of the children had a perfectly proper pencil grip, five had a functional pencil group, but it wasn't horribly awkward. And she said, "You know they're pretty good spellers."

So now here we are again, I came in last year to replace someone who left the school and so I've worked with Julia in first grade, second grade. Now those children are going to the third grade, and I could see this year walking into her room, she really brought it back to the basics in terms of reading. We are still working on these vowel teams at the end of second grade to get these vowel teams really clear. And math, we are still counting piles of gems and putting them into bags and making estimations just the basics at the end of second grade because she really wanted to establish that firm foundation. So why, rush them ahead, if we haven't established important work? So, I'm happy to give you her contact. I think she could really speak from experience about how the influence of educational support in the Waldorf realm has changed her, well it's enhanced her teaching. She was already good teacher, this has enhanced it.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's great. Are there any concerns you're seeing in the area of educational support?

Interviewee: Well, I would say it's either people understanding that this is a continual process of helping us to do further work, do further trainings. Schools need to have workshops to have people come in. In our AHE world, we do online consulting with schools. Sometimes that might just mean 3 hours spread out over 2 months of consulting. Here's why you play these games with the fingers and the toes and visiting the upside down world. All these easy things you can bring to the classroom. So, consulting and mentoring, and I think people need more mentoring. And I think that more people with the training like I have should be in a school from time to time mentoring. So that we can help, especially younger teachers understand. You've gone to Antioch, you've gone to Sunbridge, you understand the curriculum, but here's some hands-on tools that can really support you right now, every day in the classroom.

Interviewer: Right, yeah. What do you think? Well, this you just answered that one. I'm not gonna ask you that one. Do you have an impression of what parent concerns in the educational support area might be?

Interviewee: That's huge. It's really huge. There's been a sea of change in the parenting world in this new generation of parents. So, I'm not, I'm not talking about parents in their 20s. I'm talking about parents who are in there 30s and 40s, say maybe early 50s and there's a real focus on the comfort of my child. "My child has to be comfortable." Well, it's true. Your child needs to be emotionally secure and your child also has to meet some expectations. So, I think that there could be more parent education early on to help them understand, "Here's why we do what we do in a Waldorf school. Here's why we're still jumping rope in third grade or picking up a crayon with our foot and writing with our foot in third or fourth grade. Here's why we do these things, so your child has developed a major sense of competency with their body, so that their cognitive skills are freed up to really do cognitive work that we are teaching them or bringing to them." So, I think there could be a lot more parent work and helping parents understand that we're in charge, but there's a different relationship to authority these days than in my generation. In my generation in school, you got in trouble if you didn't follow the teacher's directive. Nowadays, there's a little bit more finessing to how the teacher brings the directive, so that the children meet it with respect. So there's that difference between being authoritarian and authoritative.

Interviewer: Yeah. I'd like to share a little bit of the data I have so far with you, and then just ask you a few questions about it. So I surveyed Waldorf teachers so this kind of just summarizes what I'm seeing. And what we're seeing is teachers are, significantly less confident in their abilities to support students with special needs than they are to support students just in general.

They are citing needs in the areas of behavior management, understanding, and addressing various disabilities, and supporting students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Those are I guess major trends and I just kind of want to I guess, get your opinion on those. So maybe we do them one at a time. So, do you have any thoughts on that trend?

Interviewee: Well. I can imagine. That in a school like Gathering Waters, which is a public charter, that there are more behavioral difficulties than in a private Waldorf school and teachers are overwhelmed by having to be social workers.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: So that, that is really hard, and of course many Waldorf schools, private Waldorf schools now have counselors right, and maybe they come from a Waldorf world or not. But there are counselors in a school. Like I live up here in Burlington area, Lake Champlain, there's a counselor I don't know who they are, what they do, but I know that they're on the website. And I don't know what that looks like in terms of pullout during the day. The child's having a rough day. Can they just go down the hall and talk to that person? But I think in the in the times we live in, imagine parents are under so much stress and that filters right down to the children. And then we have children from single family homes and mixed parenting homes, where there's just not a solid proven, predictable lifestyle. I can imagine it's probably harder, and it's harder than in a private Waldorf school, where you have a more homogenous group of people paying tuition. I want this education, but then there are lots of people paying tuition because they just want an alternative school. They know nothing about the philosophy. But I think it's really with the way the world is today.

Interviewer: Yeah. A majority of teachers feel confident in their knowledge of special education process, though they identify needing support and training in legal requirements and obligations for providing special Ed services.

Interviewee: Right. I'm so far removed from that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: These days I mean. Yeah, so far removed from that. But I understand, it is really important to legally follow protocol.

Interviewer: While a majority of teachers about feel at least somewhat confident in their knowledge of behavior, management strategies, they are still identifying needing support in the areas of especially defiance and oppositional behavior and non-compliance; those are rated very highly. As well as support and training in aggression, disruption, and disrespectful behavior.

Interviewee: Right. Sometimes I think some of these issues can be softened and addressed through understanding the principles. The way Robin Brown brings them or Adam Blanning brings them. Understanding these children who explode every few months, we can kind of see it coming. Just understanding, the patterns they have and where they're going, and how to support parents with that, too. And then there are times where we are probably just at a total loss because in a public school, of course you've got all these resource people and this administrative structure that Waldorf schools often don't have. But I do think it can help a lot of teachers to have more training in the constitutional types. For example, to understand, as Adam or Robin Brown brings it, so that we can help these children to feel like they're met. I. Another thing that I've seen be really useful, is, so I think about the children who are disruptive in class, if we can start to look through the behavior, what's this disruption about? Is it because you need to see me today? Do you see me? Or I can't come to stillness. My sense of balance has never been good,

and it's spinning out again. Those kinds of things. So even, Gosh! years ago, I would see children out in the hallway. Those kinds of things where it was that isolation, "Go out in the hall, sit on the bench for a while," whatever. There's so much less of a trend to do that in my small world I have. I'm not in a lot of schools, but I'm in a few and more of a focus on, "You're having a rough time right now, but here's something I'd like you to do." So it could be going to the corner and tossing a weighted ball so they have that sense of gravity or doing something helpful for the class. So that could look like, "Well, I would like you to pass out the supply." So instead of having that child meet the demand, so we're doing this activity now, and everybody better be doing it versus I am giving you a task so you are part of the group, and you're being helpful and you're providing a service, even though you can't do this other activity that everyone else is doing. So recognizing where we have those opportunities, but that's an art to come to that place of recognition.

Interviewer: Yeah, we almost have. We have a lot of kids that are removing themselves from the classroom because they're, it's too much, they're recognizing that. And they're removing themselves. So, it's kind of interesting. It's not so much getting sent out, but it's a fairly constant, "I can't handle this" and removing themselves.

Interviewee: Right. Right. Yeah, that's interesting.

Interviewer: The last area is, teachers expressed low confidence in supporting students with autism and dyslexia, notably not ADHD, so just autism and dyslexia, citing need for support and addressing challenging behaviors, differentiating instruction, managing sensory needs, facilitating social skills, development, implementing trauma sensitive teaching practices, again social emotional learning opportunities, recognizing signs of trauma. And then in the area of dyslexia, the signs implementing multisensory reading instruction, differentiating,

accommodating, modifying, and supporting students with dyslexia, and accessing the general curriculum.

Interviewee: So. So what would you like me to respond to.

Interviewer: Right. So those are kind of in general things. The last one were the trends that I identified in my survey. So that's kind of what teachers are feeling like.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: So I'm just wondering if you have comments on that area?

Interviewee: Most mostly I would say, well, the behavior behavioral stuff is learning to read the child.

Here's a really simple example. It's probably too superficial almost, but I. When I am at the Upper Valley School, I'm a subject teacher, I do whole class grades 1, 2, 3, 2 days in a row, extra lesson for the whole class and then that gives me a period each day to do something else, like screening an incoming student, or doing a little one on one work. So, back in May, I was in the second grade. I had them last year, they know me, they know my expectations. When I'm standing in the front, it's time for them to do the verse with me. So, we've said "Hello!" and there's a child still crouching down in the back row behind the desk. Now sometimes, there'll be that child crouching down because they're being a little naughty like second graders. Well, I'm going to be a little squirrely today and give you a little of a you know, little bit of a push to the teacher. So, I thought, "Okay, is this a little bit of defiance?" And I verbally said again, "And we're all standing." And this child was still crouched down, so then I got the thought, "maybe this child's not being a prankster today. But maybe something's going on." So I'm, I walk over there, and I'm thinking maybe, there's a bathroom issue, maybe pants are wet or soiled. Maybe the student is sick, has cramping, feels they're going to throw up. So I'm thinking, "Okay, what

are all the possibilities?" And I go crouch down and I said, "Okay, feeling, okay?" And yeah and then it turns out someone had commented on his pink shirt, as a boy wearing a pink shirt. Oh! I understand. I love pink shirts, and my husband has this beautiful pink shirt, but I can understand now, is there something you have you can change into? Why don't you go do that? So, he does that and then later, I was able to tell the class teacher and by interviewing each child separately. She figured out who was the one who made the unkind comment. Then she was able to address individually and with the whole group. So it was, it was reading that situation. Is this defiance, or something else going on? And maybe, it would have been. That day could have been the boy who lost a parent this year and there was defiance there and there were times where he could not do the plan that I had for the day because he just needed to do his own thing, but I gave him a job to do. "So here, you hold the heavy ball on your lap." But if you started fooling around with it, I said, "No, I think you're not ready for this today. That's not how I wanted you to use it." So, it's learning to read the situation behaviorally. But going back to the dyslexia issue, we have anthroposophical sources about understanding the foundation with this. So, if more teachers can understand that starting in early childhood going into first and second grade, understanding we would have fewer children presenting with dyslexia symptoms, and we would have parents paying for fewer years of Orton training because there's a way to address this early on, so that the children who are top notch really fit the bill of dyslexia. They're the ones getting the tutoring and not half the class.

Interviewer: Right. Yes. Are there any additional areas of educational support that I might have missed. I kind of tried to break it down into both behaviors that we see, as well as kind of specific diagnoses if you will. But are there some areas of educational support that I might have missed.

Interviewee: Well in the world we live in today. Children are growing up in a push-button world, and we saw this coming in the last century. So now we are really in a push-button world, and sometimes now it's not even push a button. It's just a swipe. So the physical body is doing less and less and less. And that's not how the physical body was designed to operate in the realm of spiritual science, just not the way it was meant to be. So in the realm of spiritual science, the hierarchies laid down this blueprint a long, long time ago, before Earth was Earth. Here's a blueprint, a three-dimensional human body, operating on a three-dimensional earth. And now we are in this time where we're living in a swipe. So that was not the plan, so children are having a lot of unrest and anxiety and sleep issues. Because when they go to sleep at night their nighttime experience being in the spiritual world does not match their daytime experience. So imagine going back years or more where children were, unless they were little princes and princesses, children were walking, doing chores, contributing to family life. Nowadays, we have devices in our homes, not in my home. Devices in homes telling you where? "Where's your raincoat? Where's your backpack? Will you do this for me? So, I don't have to." And children, not learning how to cook and make their beds, and tidy up whatever. They go to sleep each night not having really accomplished a reasonable amount of work as a human being. And that's not the way we are meant to live our lives. We are supposed to go to sleep at night, having felt like we really accomplished something important. Add to the world to make the world a better place, and that that starts with learning in kindergarten how we wash the dishes and set the table.

Interviewer: Yeah. As my last question. Is there anything else that you would like to say about educational support and the needs of the Waldorf teacher?

Interviewee: More workshops, more trainings, more education, more understanding of really fundamental principles. It's not rocket science.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, thank you so much, Ms. Dunham. I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to me today, and I would love it if you sent me. Did you say her name was Jennifer _____?

Interviewee: Julia.

Interviewer: Julia.

Interviewee: You can actually just go.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Go to her website, Pxxxxxxx Pxxxxxxxx, find the contact form. Put in, "I just talked to Ms. Dunham, she said. I might interview you."

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I think she would be fabulous because she's the class teacher who's been through coming out of Antioch years ago in the 90s and she's in her fourth cycle now, plus she's picked up needs as they arise in a school, and she really has seen the benefit of having an Ed support person at the Upper Valley School for the past years.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: How it's changed her teaching.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, thank you so much. And I'm sure we'll cross paths again soon.

Interviewee: Okay. Leah. Take care.

Interviewer: So thank you. Bye.

Interviewee: Bye.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION INTERVIEW 2

Date: August 5, 2024

Location: Zoom

Interviewee: Author, educational consultant, and Waldorf Teacher Educator

Interviewer: Leah Mrozinski

Interviewer: Great. So I want to jump right in because the last, I think this interview, the whole thing was about 45 minutes. So, I'm going to take some of the questions out. But I want to make sure we can try to get to everything. So my first question for you is, In your current role. What way do you interact with students with educational support needs, Waldorf teachers or parents?

Interviewee: So my role is, the interaction is probably twofold. One is teacher training directly with Antioch. I've been a core faculty member there and then I was a adjunct member for 25–26 years. So that's way. The other way is I am a consultant to usually about 30 schools at any one time. I've worked with about 270 schools worldwide. The only reason I know that is, someone asked me a little while ago, and I said, I'll find out. In that capacity, I visit in classrooms. I have, I work with schools for 3 years setting up what's called the three streams of integrative support. And in that process I work with whole faculties, and then I form a team, an integrative support team within the school which they're the holders of this. And then that basically, the work I do with them is train the trainers so that they gradually roll this out on a week by week basis to the faculty and so that's weekly. And then, once a term, I meet with the faculty myself.

Interviewer: Great. How would you describe the state of educational support in Waldorf schools presently?

Interviewee: I think back in the 70s we had a distinct need to understand learning support as it was emerging, more academic/cognitive learning support. And I and my colleague who, you

know, founded that a lot of a lot of that work. Her name was Audrey McAllen. And I was a young teacher at the time, very much admiring her work. We were on the same care team for a number of years. And that—she started trainings all over the world in Britain and then Australia, New Zealand. And then it came to the United States. So I think we did quite well. And we're doing okay, we're doing better. And now there are—that is a recognized need in Waldorf education. Before that, it simply wasn't. And we had children sailing through our schools, you know, who had very distinct learning support needs who were not being served, not fully. Then around, then the 90s to the early 2000s a really strong need arose for social support. And we needed to improve what we did there, and to some extent I wouldn't put it in the category of the learning support. There aren't specific courses because still our training, our teacher training institutions are lagging significantly behind the need and not really putting in place robust enough social and behavioral learning for future teachers. I think this is a very significant need still. But in the schools directly, the schools kind of got ahead of the teacher training institutions because the schools started doing a bunch of professional development work and I started serving them and doing social inclusion, social support work, and I worked with countless schools on that. Then, towards the end of the 2000s to now about the last sort of 10 to 15 years, a third need, and all these cumulative, you know. But the third, a wave of behavioral needs mainly fuel (the wave). The social behavioral, I think, and the learning are all fueled by the growing rise of anxiety. And so. And anxiety strikes in many ways, but so. Now this third stream, this third wave has arisen of teachers needing very significant support, much more than teach training institutions are providing. Now teacher training institutions are still very engaged in the curriculum development and in the arts and in the behavioral and social arts, I think there's still a very large need. I don't think we're fully preparing our students as a whole, as a worldwide

movement for the real time that they're getting in the classroom. And in the past it would have been perhaps those students wouldn't have even been able to be in a Waldorf classroom. They are being accepted now and because of the enormous growth in the United States of charter schools there's no choice. Those children are in the classroom. In fact, they're in larger numbers because the parents are looking for alternatives. They're the children who aren't doing well in other public school settings, so they're finding Waldorf Charter schools. So, this behavioral need now has come into play. And again, a big part of my work is in what is Waldorf-based restorative discipline/restorative behavioral support. So that's how I see it has evolved.

Interviewer: Yeah, that very much targets exactly what my work is trying to, kind of, bring to the surface, this need for some additional training for our teachers to work with the needs of our students today. So, the next couple of questions kind of reflect what was in my teacher survey, and you kind of touched on them. But to what extent do you feel teachers are able to effectively support the students of today in the classroom, and then, just to give you a hint, the follow up is going to be how can they effectively support students with special needs? So this (first) question is just kind of students in general.

Interviewee: Yeah. I think, Waldorf education is at its core a healing education. We often forget when people say, "Well, you know, we need to do much more," and I agree we do, but the curriculum is trauma informed. It was formed; I actually did a study into this, just a personal study, into the forming of the Waldorf curriculum. Because when I was training, my trainers were the founders of the Waldorf movement, both in Stuttgart, the very first school, and Michael Hall, the very second school. And they showed me a number of documents that related to curricula development after. But particularly there was a lot of what we would now call

action-based qualitative, but action-based research with them taking the theosophy, the evolution of consciousness, as Dr. Steiner laid it out and saying, “Okay, and his indications were the curriculum needs to follow from the early consciousness through to modern and you need to give curricular expressions to that.” And I think that work was done beautifully. The concern of the of my mentors, who were in their late 80s and early 90s at the time when I met them, this was, you know, a long time ago now. Their concern was is that we would forget that curriculum based research. What they said exactly was “You young teachers worry us because you think the curriculum is a thing? It’s not. We made it up.” Quote unquote, “We made it up.” And they showed me, you know, the early letters going backwards and forwards. And a lot of those letters detailed the tremendous loss that these children had gone through, the dislocation, the death, the destruction, the leveling of Stuttgart, the blitz in London. We’ve sort of forgotten that the Waldorf curriculum arose out of the ashes of the second world war. The concept of it arose between the first and second and then was of course it opened. And so we had this huge trauma on a scale we’ve not seen since, not in the West. And that’s where Waldorf education came from. So I think we are meeting at its very foundations Waldorf education is trauma informed. And what our task is now is to not take that, in a sense, for granted, but to dig into that and say, “Now what do we do with the arts that we’ve been given-the approach to art? What do we do with our approach to reading? With our approach to numeracy? How do we now, and not modernize it?” I don’t want to become victim to modernity, where we throw things out just for the sake of it because the Waldorf education has within it so very much to offer that supports and heals. And this gets to your second question. Now, I’m sort of pivoting a little bit. Parents are almost instinctively drawn towards Waldorf education because they know there that it’s balanced. They know that it’ll heal. They know that it’ll serve. “There’s something about it.” I’ve heard that said

many times. But the curriculum itself should not be taken as a rigid finished product. As I said, I was mentored by teachers who invented it because of the needs of their children that they were teaching at the time. Given more time I could give you tons of examples of this because I saw the documentation of it. But the curriculum is like this shining city on a hill. This is the metaphor I think of; it's this beautiful healing, wonderful, magical place. But we have many children wandering in the forest down below unable to find the road to even get to the city. So a lot of our task as modern educators is to not rest on our laurels and say, "Well the curriculum is healing and it'll take care of it." Well, the curriculum is here at healing, but we need to bring children to that place where they can be healed. And I think that specifically is one of the modern tasks of the Waldorf educator. Anxiety is not new. Waldorf educators in and through to the big curriculum development time through the second world war were very aware of anxiety, very aware of trauma. And they had classes of 30 to 40 children, as indeed I did when I was a class teacher. But the task we have now is, how do we not only bring the children to that healing place, but how do we bring parents to that healing place? And how do we bring ourselves as educators to that healing place? Because what a lot of educators are doing now is they're engaged in a cycle of unsustainability because there are not proactive supports put in place, number one. And number two, we are still not training for the reality of this and spending Anywhere near enough time on this. What is happening is that the teachers are spending tremendous amount of their time. Some teachers have said to me, I spend 80% of my day focused on a small group of children and the rest of the children combined get 20%. And this is the cycle of unsustainability. Because then, what happens is that teachers and parents start to withdraw children who have low social and behavioral needs quite low learning, needs, social needs, behavioral needs because of the difficulties or I've heard it described as chaos in the classroom with so much attention being

given to children who are struggling. And so those children start to become withdrawn from the school and then there's pressure on independent schools to take in new students. In charter schools, there's a wait list, so new students come and those students generally are, guess what, they are students of high learning, social, and behavioral needs. So now the circle of sustainability becomes even more intense. So do you, I kind of wove the answer there, Leah, into both those questions.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, no, it's really exactly what I see that here at Gathering Waters as you know.

Interviewee: Oh, I know it!

Interviewer: The struggle that we're having for sure.

Interviewee: I know for a fact that you're having it there, actually because I work with some parents from the school.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, I'm gonna skip these. So what do you think are some kind of the concrete needs for schools or teachers to improve their ability to support students with educational support needs you kind of touched on that a little bit.

Interviewee: I think the key thing to perhaps emphasize it, I touched on it just then, briefly, to emphasize it is to have proactive, transparent processes in place, and basically not wing it. And to not become involved in rampant individualism as class teachers. To understand that we can deal with the "I Am" quote unquote "I am" of the individual class teacher in that spontaneity, and that reaching deeply into the spirit/soul life of a child (we) never want to, you know, cut across that, of course. But as a child's needs become greater, we move from the I am to the "we are" quote unquote. So we need comprehensive proactive processes in place long before the issue even arises. And what I mean by this is the threefoldness of policy/thinking,

process/feeling, and practice/willing. We talk about this all the time: Head, heart, hands, but we actually need desperately, and I don't mean to use that word lightly, to put that in place when it comes to helping children with social difficulties, with bullying and teasing, with behavioral issues, with significant learning issues and for the life for a large part we don't. So we might have policies and they're written down on paper and that's good; I'm glad they are. But, as Dr. Steiner indicated, a policy is dead. Once you write something down, it's dead. It has no life. Unless we, as an act of consciousness, give it life. And so the life is the process. What is our process? To enact those good thoughts. And then on a very practical level, what do we do when that child in the kindergarten, in second grade, in sixth grade, what do we do very practically when the classroom environment is not serving them and that when the disturbance they're creating is not serving the other children. What do we do? In terms of this threefoldness, what I call light holding, moderate holding, and close holding. And we train teachers extensively. This is what I do; I train teachers extensively in how to-in classroom-based support structures that's light holding if a child's not thriving. Then what we can do then to move from the "I am" of the light holding to the "we are" of the moderate to close holding so that child, then that student then, has a proactive and it's not just a behavioral plan, you know, another behavioral plan on yet another IEP. This is something much deeper than that. Yes, of course it has be in compliance with IEPs. In the world of the charter movement, we are significantly not in compliance with a lot of IEPs and we're skating on thin ice. I'm being very blunt here, Leah, but you know I'm 60 years old now. I don't have to be polite anymore, you know. But, what do we do when a child then needs that more moderate holding? And then what if that doesn't work? What are our close holding? And all that is worked out ahead of time and it's held by the whole faculty. But it's led by an integrative student support team.

Interviewer: Yeah. What are some areas of behavior management that you feel teachers could use for their training or support in?

Interviewee: The first thing is to dump the word behavior management.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Managing. If we're the managers and the kids are the workers, they will unionize. It's not managing their behavior, it's understanding spirit soul need. It's understanding the karmic need. And I don't know if you can talk about that in your paper, you know, on a doctoral level paper. I tried to put that in a doctor level paper, and every time, it was pushed back to me, you know, at my dissertation. [We need to] free ourselves from the feeling that we need to manage this and move into a deep observation of the child, to base it on observation as opposed to management. And then to, with observations really deeply held, and we were given all the tools we need for that in the child study. I don't know if you do child study at the school, but many charter schools do not, but some do. But to take it from those deep observations. Then to proactively have this, to have the strategies and the support strategies available, so that the teachers as a whole are very consistent in what they're supporting a child doing. But that support arises out of the ethos of Waldorf education, not of some bolt on, you know, restorative discipline program that we brought into the school. I mean basically, God help us for more programs. They come, they go, they come, they go, usually about 3 to 5 years, and another one's gone and another one. And we invest a lot of time and energy in it and resources, and they go. What I feel we need is a shift that needs to be embedded right in the DNA of the school's approach. So that when a child is struggling with their behavior, we proactively have an understanding, first of all, of what is going on. We understand, and Leah you may have come across this in my writing, I talk about, I was a Waldorf school counselor, for you know, 20 plus

years. But I've never met a disobedient child in my life and I've met some right little rotters, I can tell you. But I've never met a disobedient in my life, I've only met a disoriented one. So what's with that concept? And it's more just than just kind words with that concept of disorientation. How does what do orient the child? How do we to put it in more modern neuroscience? How do we quiet the sympathetic nervous system and give space and a culture that can really meet the parasympathetic needs, the soothing, calming. What can we do? Because when that teacher is well regulated, then a child can regulate and co-orient. And I see that as being a major need, the major need.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you have an impression of what parent concerns are in the area of educational support?

Interviewee: Their main concern is that kids aren't getting enough of it. And other parents are concerned with, oh particularly in the charter movement, are concerned with pathologizing children.

And I work, you know, extensively with the charter movement and IEPs and health plans and such. Always, you know, go to some lengths together with my colleague, Bonnie River, who would be in a very interesting person for you to speak with, by the way, is to how can something be, it's what I call naming and knowing and not labeling and limiting. When a parent meets a group of people who take the evaluations and say, now, what does this mean for the heart of the child, not just from the head. But what does this mean? How can we not label? Pigeonhole? I think a lot of parents are very wary of that and because of that they often will not move forward with educational or neuroscience evaluations, they'll actually hold them back and won't even show them to the school. I found more of that in the Waldorf movement than I have in the public school movement, I mean the traditional public school movement where parents very much want

the evaluations, the IEPs. [They are] much less concerned about pathologizing and much more concerned about services that kids are given, and I see a subtle difference between them.

Interviewer: Yeah. Alright. So I have one last question for you. Really just to wrap it up. Is there anything else you would like to say about educational support and the needs of the Waldorf teacher?

Interviewee: Not really. I think I've, you know, there is a burning need in teacher training for us to up our game and there's a burning need for administration in schools both independent and charter schools to understand that. And I'm, I again, I'm being blunt with this, that Waldorf education will not survive unless we meet this. In the U.K., have you been following the closure of schools in the U.K.?

Interviewer: I have not.

Interviewee: So, there are very few Waldorf Schools left now in the U.K. Most, yes it is true to say I don't know the actual [number]. I could do it pretty quickly, but, you know, schools that have been around for 80 years have been shut down, one after another, after another, after another, 8 or 9. There are not so many Waldorf schools in in the U.K., as there are here in the U.S., but if I had to guess, I think it's Fifty percent to 60% headed upwards, because there's that are also two that are going to close next year. 50% to 60% of schools have been closed. You'd have to verify that with numbers, you know. And it's because they're not meeting the social behavioral and learning needs. And the OFSTED, who are the inspectors, the government inspectors, are just closing the schools down saying, "You cannot have a school doing this." Now I know the U.K. schools; I worked in them. And they're actually doing better than some of our schools here in the U.S. and yet still they got closed down. And the land is sold, the classrooms are now empty, being made into hotels and flats. It's, you know, apartments. It's

tragic, really. I don't think we're going to have Waldorf education in 20 to 30 years time, unless we get very, very serious about addressing this. And at the moment we're making steps, but it's still administrations all around this country, some still only slowly, waking up to the need.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, that is exactly kind of what my hope is to work on. Carla reached out to me, earlier in the summer about wanting to discuss, you know, including some more special education training or some special education training in the teacher training. So, I'm really hopeful that we can do that for our teachers and really, you know, kind of give them some foundational skills to serve the students that we have in all of the classrooms.

Interviewee: Okay, see, Carla is talking about, you know, in faculty meeting this came up the very significant needs of the children and that the teachers are reporting this in. What was very interesting to me in the faculty meeting is that in the conversation there was no mention of behavioral and there was no mention of social support. It all was about learning support, you know, quote unquote "special education and learning support." And it was very interesting and it's a positive step forward. But a child can't learn, this is Daniel _____'s Figures, that the child very significantly shuts down over 80% of their frontal lobe neocortex activity for learning if there are social and behavioral problems, emotional problems. So, dealing with just the learning issues for me needs very much the underpinning of working with the emotional issues, the social, particularly the social and behavioral issues. And yet still, we're talking about educational needs, support for the academic learning. And I think that's barking up one right tree, but there are other trees, the social and behavioral.

Interviewer: Yeah, my survey that I did, that's really what it's pointing that teachers want. So I surveyed teachers to see, what do they want, and what do they feel like they need? And it's really pointing to this behavior.

Interviewee: Yep. And yet, as training institutions, we're still talking about learning support.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: We're about 20 years behind.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, thank you so much. I can't tell you how grateful I am that you took this time to meet with me. And it really just you know, confirms everything that I'm seeing and so I appreciate that so much. And I hope that we can, you know, move forward and kind of make some of these changes for our teachers and for our students, because I don't want our schools to close. I think we're offering some really beautiful things here, and I hope that we can make these changes, so we can keep doing that. So.

Interviewee: Couldn't agree more, absolutely. All right Leah, very best wishes to you.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you so much. Bye.

Interviewee: Bye, bye.