

WHY WALDORF WORKS

LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ON THE SUCCESSES AND CHOICES OF WALDORF ALUMNI

Excerpted from "Life After Waldorf High School"

By Abraham Enten

"Education Toward Freedom" is one of the most important principles of Waldorf Education. Many schools use this phrase as a motto or as a key principle in describing themselves in brochures and other public material.

When Waldorf educators speak of "education toward freedom", they refer to the development of individuals who are, out of their own inner strength, able to forge their own destinies and find their rightful places in the world. For parents, one of the most important ways in which this "freedom" can be manifested is in their Waldorf-educated child having more, rather than fewer options in their post-Waldorf educational life.



*"If I had a child of school age,
I would send him to one of the
Waldorf Schools."
— Saul Bellow*

In my work as a consultant to schools, I find this to be one of the most important issues about which parents need reassurance. "If I move, will my child be okay in a public school?" "After eighth grade, how will she do in a non-Waldorf environment?" are often-asked questions. And now, with more than twenty Waldorf high schools operating in North America, the question has become, "If my child goes to a Waldorf high school, will she be accepted into the college of her choice?"

For several years, AWSNA has collected information about "life after Waldorf high school" from the various high schools in North America. I would like to look at the information about college and university admissions for Waldorf students.

The information covers the years 1993-99. It is restricted to students from the United States. During this period, more than 1100 students graduated from Waldorf high schools. Of these, 78 percent immediately entered college after finishing high school. An additional 10 percent were planning to attend, but were delaying their entrance for a variety of reasons. Thus, almost 90 percent of all Waldorf high school graduates during this period continued their formal education after finishing Waldorf high school.

In this context the crucial question is not whether Waldorf graduates go to college, but, rather, "Where are they accepted and where do they go?"

The simple answer is, "Everywhere". They go to schools from Amherst to Yale and from The University of Maine to the University of California at San Diego. They go to local community colleges and to elite Ivy League universities. The top students go wherever they want, and the ones who struggle go wherever they can. Some go to design school or to schools that concentrate on music or the visual/performance arts. Some even go to West Point. The California graduates are accepted at every campus of the university system and the students in other states attend public universities in their areas.

It is important to point out, though, that schools of a certain type actively seek out Waldorf graduates as potential students. These are some of the top strata "liberal arts" universities and colleges. They appreciate the cultivation of thinking and individual initiative that takes place in a Waldorf environment. Waldorf students consistently are accepted and attend schools such as Sarah Lawrence, Vassar, Bard, and Oberlin, as well as St. John's College and the Claremont Colleges in southern California...

...The gifts that a Waldorf high school education can bring are of benefit to the individual and the community. It is gratifying that the value of this educational experience has been recognized by so many leading academic institutions. As the number of Waldorf high school graduates continues to increase, we are hopeful that these individuals will grow into positions of leadership and responsibility in which their education can play a role in their positive work in the community and the world.

Abraham Entin and his wife, Rachael Flug, have been parents at Highland Hall Waldorf School in Los Angeles since 1978. They have two children who graduated from that school's high school. One has graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz, and the other still attends the University of California at Berkeley. They also have a child still in lower school. Mr. Entin currently consults to Waldorf schools on enrollment issues and on strategic planning, and has conducted numerous AWSNA-sponsored workshops on enrollment.