



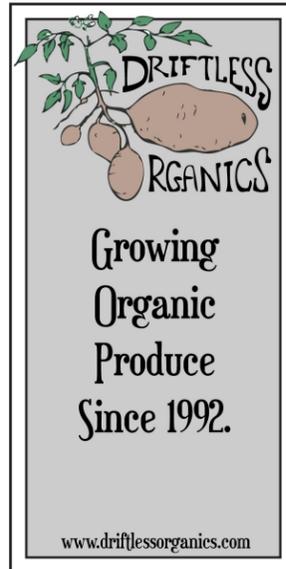
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 HIGH SCHOOL**

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### An Appeal For Your Support

Dear YIHS Community,

The purpose of human labor is to change our environment to better suit our needs. Usually at the end of such labors (when they are successful) there exists a palpable product, a discrete achievement that can be pointed to. At Youth Initiative High School we can point to many distinctive achievements, but the basic commodity that our labor produces cannot so easily be quantified because it is not a commodity at all. What we are creating through our labor is the future; a future for our students and a future for the communities that they will join and lead. It is not so easy to "sell" such a "product". But we believe that this "product" is no less valuable. It is not a car, or a microwave, or a vacation package; it is an opportunity, an idea, a hope.

Your hard work and generosity allows us to do our hard work; cultivating a cooperative dream, a society populated by free-thinking, loving human beings. It's a big world, please consider helping us make an even bigger impact with a financial contribution.

Thank you,  
 Matthew J. Voz,  
 Core Faculty Member & Assistant Development Director

September 2009

# KALEIDOSCOPE

YOUTH INITIATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

Volume 14, Issue 2

## Get to Work!



For those of us in the education field, especially the students, summer is never quite long enough. There is certainly no shame in sleeping a little later or laying in the sun with a good book and a glass of iced tea. In fact, our summers of respite are filled with growth, adventure, learning, and for most of us, no small amount of work. And though we may look upon the passing of summer

with a sort of melancholic nostalgia, there is certainly an excitement that comes with the return to classes and the rigors of school life.

As much as we sometimes avoid it or complain about it, as human beings our relationship to our work is far deeper than the simple compulsion of economic necessity. Our work, what we do, is an expression of our individuality. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, "Feeling is formed by the deeds that one does," and so at Youth Initiative High School we get back to the work that defines us - the work of education.



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### The What and the How, by Liz Cox

So, it turns out that *how* we work is just as important, and sometimes *more* important, than what we actually accomplish. When I go off to California for another training session at the Rudolf Steiner College, I always come back grateful for the Youth Initiative High School. Most of that gratitude is for the way YIHS works together. Many organizational problems stem from a lack of trust, and often poor communication skills are the cause. Here at school we are in a constant dialogue with each other and "ourselves" about how we are doing what we do. Our biggest problems have almost always been the result of a misguided or poorly executed *process*, and just having clarity about *that* is a huge lesson for a young person to take out into the world.

I'm just heading off to our annual Camping Trip for the afternoon. Communication skills are the topic of the day, and we have guest facilitators from a Non-Violent Communication Group from Madison coming to do a presentation for the students. We are hoping this will give our students a leg up as they run their own meetings and make their own decisions. These are skills that we are all working to cultivate together, and, in some ways, our students are ahead of the adults in this regard.

*"YOUR WORK  
 IS TO DISCOVER  
 YOUR WORLD  
 AND THEN,  
 WITH ALL  
 YOUR HEART,  
 GIVE YOURSELF  
 TO IT."*

- PRINCE GAUTAMA  
 BUDDHA

“WITHOUT  
WORK, ALL LIFE  
GOES ROTTEN.  
BUT WHEN  
WORK IS  
SOULLESS, LIFE  
STIFLES AND  
DIES.”

—ALBERT CAMUS

## The Challenge of Cooperation: One Teacher’s Thoughts on the Work That Lies Ahead

*The following is an edited transcript of the speech written and given by Akira Kobayashi, a member of the YIHS faculty, at the All-School Meeting in May of 2009*

When I look around me this evening I see people of different ages, of many different backgrounds, here to come together to talk about this school, not just to meet for the sake of meeting, and not to talk about the governance of a school mandated by the state, paid for by the state, and for the state-dictated education which imposes rules from the capitol. Rather we are assembled today to participate in an experiment in education, one which we hope to be holistic and voluntary, and we engage in it not for the good of the state necessarily, but

for the head, heart, and hands of our youth. I can speak here, and I can care about and be excited by this place, because we are working towards something I think is noble, just, and necessary, and furthermore we are working together as a community. The fate of the school rests on us and on this community here, and if we fail in our endeavors, if we slacken in our efforts, five years from now this school won’t exist. Scary, but also inspiring.

In my high school, an all-school meeting wouldn’t include students and it wouldn’t include parents; just teachers and administrators. Here that is far from the case. In fact, at Youth Initiative, the teachers have been historically the least constant force. The average student will stay for four years, but main lesson teachers are here for only three weeks at a time.

This appears to be changing. We now have long-term faculty. Walk around the school and you will see the same faces, and not just Jacob and Liz. This is good. This is the way it should be. There should be continuity here, not only on the side of the students, but on the side of the faculty also. Because once there is such a thing as “the faculty,” then we can actually start doing something as a faculty!

But what to do? Hopefully not very much! What I mean is that we do not want the faculty to begin assuming responsibilities that are rightly the responsibilities of students. This is, after all, Youth Initiative High School, not Faculty Initiative high school or Parents’ Initiative High School. So how do we keep the faculty working for the sake of the students, without taking power and responsibility away from them?

This question leads me to thinking about the behavior policy. Some people, especially students, were upset by it. The attitude was, “We don’t need a behavior policy; what is with all these policies?” Well, my rejoinder to this is that, yes, we don’t need a behavior policy! Why? Because it is not my job as a teacher to make you as a student behave. That is what a public school teacher does. If you don’t behave day after day, I’m out of here, I’ll quit, I’ll be out the door. I’m here to teach, not to babysit.

But I think the proper reaction on the part of the students would have been to make their very own behavior policy, make it known to the faculty what was in it, and regulate themselves in such a manner that nobody would ever have to talk about a behavior policy again. Then, with students handling the matter well, we as teachers wouldn’t have to worry about such business as behavior policies ever again.

My point is this: The way to keep the power in the hands of the students is for the students to exercise their power in such a way that the faculty and administration do not have to step in. Students should be regulating each other, making sure that their peers behave and perform well in class and meet academic standards. Then, we can focus on our real goal as teachers, which is teaching.

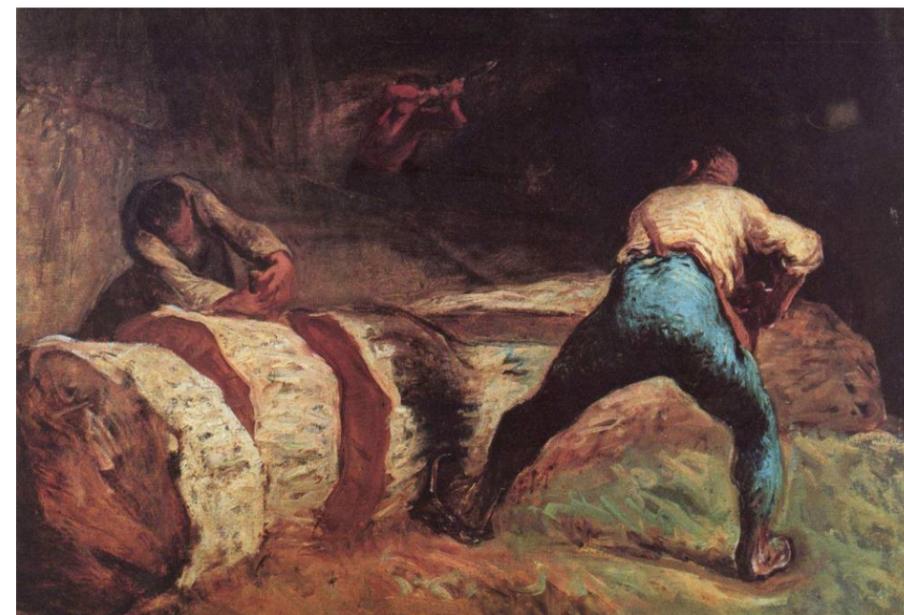
This right now is more of an ideal than a reality, which is okay, because all communal goals are ideals before they become realities. But with that in mind, this year, two students were told to seek their education elsewhere. Some students felt upset because they were not really consulted in the matter. But the students who were expelled had been doing poorly in classes for quite some time. These students failed to meet the standards of their teachers, repeatedly. But their peers, the students, should have noticed this and done something about it. Initiative, after all, is doing not just what is required but what is noble and hard to achieve. If you had regulated each other well, the teachers could have focused more on teaching and less on micromanaging students.

## From: *Education for Adolescents*

by Rudolf Steiner

“...we shall awaken in our students an understanding of what must be done in life if it is to go on. Without such an understanding, we continue to live in a foreign environment.”

This, in fact, is the terrible characteristic of our time - that people are living in an environment that is foreign to them. You only have to walk into the street and take a good look at the people boarding a street car or bus. How many of them actually know how this streetcar is set in motion, know about the natural forces necessary for it? This has an effect on the whole human constitution - spirit, soul, and body. There is a great difference between having at least an elementary knowledge of the things we use in daily life and not having such knowledge. Traveling in a car, plane, or bus, using an electrical gadget without understanding at least the underlying principles, means blindness of soul and spirit. Just as a blind person is moving through life without experiencing the effects of light, so do people move blindly through the cultural life, because they



cannot see, did not have the opportunity to learn to see and understand, the objects around them. This is a defect of spirit and soul. And the damages we see in our advanced civilizations are the result of people’s blindness in regard to their environment.

There is something else we have to consider: There is a great difference between learning something before and learning something after the age of nineteen or twenty. People generally learn a trade like surveying at nineteen or later. High school education, especially in grammar schools, does not include such practical subjects. But the long-term effects depend on it. What we learn after the nineteenth year impresses itself more outwardly; what we learn at fifteen permeates our whole being, becomes as one with the human spirit, so that it is not merely a job we can manage, but a job we can identify with, in which our entire being participates.

## Development is Back to Work by Shawn Lavoie

Over the summer the Development Office downshifted from the end-of-the-year frenzy while maintaining forward motion. We ran three new summer courses for the community, made progress on the foods curriculum, and strutted our stuff on stilts across the county (LaFarge 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade, St Elias Festival in LaCrosse, and the Kickapoo Country Fair). To prepare ourselves for the upcoming year, this August we held the first annual Development Committee Retreat in which we reflected on our purpose and accomplishments and planned for the future.

We were pleasantly surprised and affirmed by all we'd done and were eager to focus our energy more this year. The Development Committee is composed of the Development Directors and representatives from the parents, students and community. Our charge is to be a bridge between the school and its community of supporters, and to this end, we build relationships with our donor base, foster parent and student entrepreneurial efforts, and guide enrollment outreach.



The DevCom Retreat opened with an imaginative drawing exercise: draw YIHS as a living creature! (Drawing by Sirsha Erickson)

5 key items that we want to focus on this year:

1. **Matching Gift Circle:** Each year students set a fundraising goal, and each year individual and business members of the Matching Gift Circle match a percentage of what students themselves fundraise. Last year, Circle members gave \$2.40 for every dollar the students brought in. This unique program directly inspires student initiative, and we hope to expand membership and awareness.

2. **Foods Curriculum:** Developed from Jane Siemon's Nutrition's Class, which she's been teaching for 13 years, this curriculum integrates personal health with environmental health and makes it all taste good! We will begin to offer this curriculum to other schools and organizations this year.

3. **Enrollment Efforts:** Youth Initiative is a gem that we think more high school-age youth should know about. We plan to spread a wide net and start early reaching out to more potential students.

4. **Public Showing:** We're in the early planning stages of a gala YIHS art showing that would be organized in collaboration with the YIHS Art Department. Celebrating the work that students do here and gathering together our supportive community will make for a festive and fruitful event.

5. **Honoring and growing our support base:** Because we are not funded through tax money or through large foundational grants,

YIHS exists because of the dynamic web of support from parents and community members. We want to honor those who have committed significantly to the school, and invite others to back our vision.

If you or your business is interested in underwriting the joyful and inspiring education that Youth Initiative offers, please speak with the YIHS Development Office.

With hope for the years ahead!

Shawn Michael Lavoie  
Development Director, Faculty Member

If students do their job, teachers can focus on teaching. But it goes the other direction, too. As teachers we need to do our job and regulate ourselves, too: which means we should be demanding from each other excellence in teaching. This might unfortunately mean telling some teachers that their contracts won't be renewed. While we appreciate everyone who has taught here, for whatever reason in some classes, things aren't working out, and we should be looking for a new teacher.

Students, you can help with this immensely, and I encourage you to do so. If you do not think a teacher's presence is positive for the school, I encourage you to seek their removal. This is no easy task which I am putting before you but I encourage you to take up this project next year. It is hard to seek the removal of a teacher because in a community like this, nobody wants to offend anyone else. But such actions are beneficial, not for the sake of you who are here now, but for the sake of the school and those who come after, and if done correctly, nobody need be offended. Of course, if you look to remove a teacher, keep in mind that you will have to find someone to replace them--this is a tall order but with some initiative, in this robust and eccentric community, there is always someone ready to teach any subject.

Talking about this subject leads me to another one: What do we do when students and faculty disagree on some issue? It happened this year with Senior Skip Day. The most important thing in such an instance is open communication, and I think we lived up to a high ideal when we had that discussion with parents, teachers, and students. For this reason senior cut day was a beneficial experience for us all. Not because the seniors should have cut. Rather because after disagreement and resentment, we were able to talk to each other like adults. Furthermore, the motivation on the part of the seniors appears to me to have been good, though the execution perhaps was flawed. But I believe that in a community we learn more by making wrong judgments with the right motivations, than making the right judgment just by happenstance and with the wrong motivations.

I spoke of challenges when I mentioned that the faculty is becoming a more stable force. Well there is a challenge we must face now that we should have faced a long time ago: We need stricter and more explicit academic standards, and they need to be universal standards for every class, so we create a culture of standards. Not of standardization but of standards. It seems to me half the time the work I get is late work, and oftentimes basic requirements are not met. This problem is so endemic that it is not something to blame on the students. In truth if I would fault anyone it would be the faculty, of which I am a member. When we accept shoddy work or late work, we do injustice to the ideal of good work. When we are too accommodating we hurt our better students who don't ask for our accommodation. And this is a slippery slope: first we are accepting legitimate excuses, then we start accepting half-legitimate ones, until pretty soon we are putting it on the students to judge when it is okay or not okay to turn in late work. Really the judgment shouldn't be on the students or on us but on some standard to which we both can agree upon. That's how a community is supposed to run: not on what the students want, not on what the faculty wants, not on what the parents want, but upon some solution agreed upon by all.

Some system must also be established to praise acceptable work while correcting unacceptable work. I will reveal my bias that I am in favor of grades, but barring that option, I think one way to do this is to raise standards of passing so that it is not easy to pass any class: something like what would be equivalent to a B in a public school should be the basic passing level. If success means anything there must be room to fail. Furthermore, if you are to learn what it is to succeed, it is advisable to fail every now and then. And because of this I think we should also get rid of even the suggestion that two fails puts in you in danger of being booted. What that suggestion says is that failing is such a big deal that it warrants expulsion--but if success is really a challenge, then the occasional failure is not a crisis but a reminder of higher standards

These are my thoughts on the matter; doubtlessly, other faculty members will differ with me on details. But we should talk about these things and come up with some mutual agreement, and as a stable faculty we can work together to foster a climate of higher standards. Again, the onus is on us, the faculty, to make our standards strong so that students will rise up to meet them.

"DON'T WASTE LIFE  
IN DOUBTS AND  
FEARS; SPEND  
YOURSELF ON THE  
WORK BEFORE YOU,  
WELL ASSURED THAT  
THE RIGHT  
PERFORMANCE OF  
THIS HOUR'S DUTIES  
WILL BE THE BEST  
PREPARATION FOR  
THE HOURS AND  
AGES THAT WILL  
FOLLOW IT."

-RALPH WALDO  
EMERSON

“WORK IS LOVE MADE VISIBLE”  
-KAHLIL GIBRAN

# Love’s Labour:

The YIHS Religions class, taught by Lars Bergan, analyzes religion intellectually, through historical treatment and contemporary issues. It also spends time investigating the individual religious experience. Here are some excerpts from the journals of students.

## From the 2009 Religions Class:

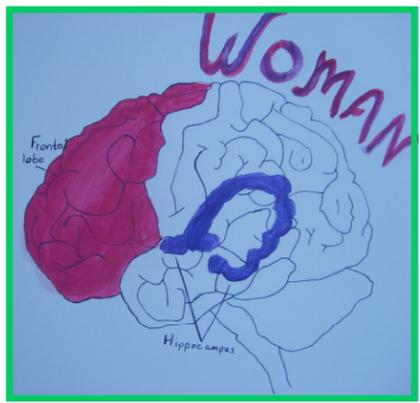
“Why so many prophets such as Jesus? Because with a free heart and a long life, how is one to discover a moral balance, a sense of right and wrong? One needs a picture of truth to be able to draw a truth.”  
-YIHS Senior

“Throughout the course of this class I have to realize how much judgment there is in the world. Despite recognizing the problem, it’s incredibly hard to do anything about it. I tried timing myself, and I could only be a non-judgmental human being for a little more than 12 minutes. The minute you put food in your mouth, think either “oh, I love this, it’s delicious, or “hmm, it’s not as good as it normally is.” It is nearly impossible to refrain from judging anything or anyone. You can tell yourself that whatever happens I won’t react, but that never seems to encompass the mental level. I suppose a lot can be said based on the fact that I recognize this problem and have experimented with my limits, and I can make a conscious decision to hold myself back for 12 minutes or so. Maybe it just takes practice, maybe it’s a gift some people have, but in any case it’s something to strive for.”  
-YIHS Senior

Why, if the [Christian] miracle stories aren’t true, did they spring up? Were people so inspired by these stories and almost believed them themselves...Even if that is the case, I don’t think it matters. The philosophies are important enough (minus the religious parts) and such good general rules that it doesn’t matter if it’s a real story or not. They’re good rules to follow in general. I mean, don’t kill anyone, love everybody equally, where is the issue with that?  
OR. Oooorrrr...There’s another possibility that also is a bit improbable; he did exist, all these miracles did happen, but he wasn’t the son of God. It could be explained by metaphysics and purely mental abilities. The power of the mind is crazy. I always wonder if you believe in something enough can it be made real? And then, does that all come back around to God? I don’t know, obviously, but I could discuss it for hours on end.  
-YIHS Senior

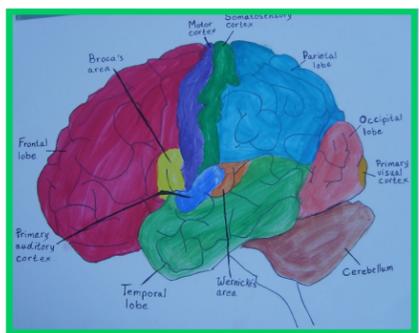
Independent studies are an important part of the YIHS curriculum. Independent studies allow students the freedom to follow an academic path that they find inspiring, teaching them self-discipline and the importance of organization along the way. This particular independent study, taken up by Katie Diaz as a junior, is a study of the differences in brain function between men and women.

From: *Sex Differences in the Human Brain*, by Katie Diaz



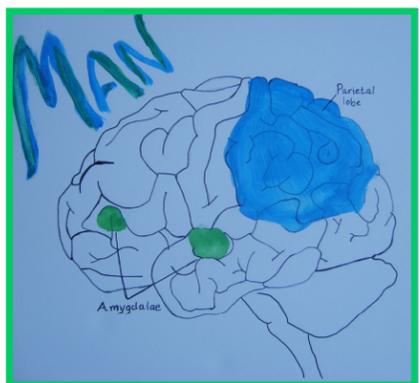
It has often been observed that women are more sensitive than men. This is because women have more gray matter, and men have more white matter. Furthermore, men have larger quantities of gray matter in their right brain. The right brain is the more artistic half of the brain while the left brain is responsible for the scientific aspects of thought such as math and getting from “A to B”. Thus, women are more likely to be artistic and men are more likely to be scientific.

White matter is the tissue through which messages pass between different areas of gray matter within the nervous system. Gray matter contains neural cell bodies which transmit and process your senses. Using a computer network as an analogy, the gray matter can be thought of as the computers themselves, whereas the white matter represents the network cables connecting the computers together. The function of gray matter is to route sensory or motor stimulus to interneurons, which are one of the many connectors from the brain to the central nervous system, in order to create a response to the stimulus through chemical synapse activity.



Furthermore, parts of the frontal lobe, which houses decision-making and problem-solving functions, were proportionally larger in women. Studies have found that the hippocampus, involved in short term memory and spatial navigation, is also proportionally larger in women than in men.

Proportionally larger brain areas in men contain the parietal lobe, which processes signals from the sensory organs and is involved in space perception, and amygdala, which controls emotions and social and sexual behavior. This explains why men are more likely to get in a physical fight due to anger. Moreover, the parietal lobe makes men feel no need to ask for directions.



In conclusion, the differences between the brains may be a reason for the way men and women act. One should consider this the next time a husband forgets his wife’s birthday, or the next time a wife demands her husband ask for directions. It’s not because one is less intelligent, it is simply that brains differ greatly between men and women.

“GREAT IDEAS ORIGINATE IN THE MUSCLES.”  
-THOMAS EDISON