



NEWS photo Paul McGrath
FAMILY issues expert Kim Payne is helping the Vancouver Waldorf School implement an anti-bullying program. Payne spoke at a lecture at the school in Lynn Valley Wednesday, kicking off a three-year planning process to adopt a social inclusion approach to bullying and teasing.

Waldorf tackles bullying, teasing

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The Vancouver Waldorf School has set the groundwork for the implementation of an approach to combat bullying.

Representatives of the school worked with an international expert this week, putting in motion a three-year planning process to adopt a social inclusion perspective in dealing with instances of bullying and teasing both at home and at school.

"I think that the issue of bullying is a social issue," said Walter Daroshin, trustee for the school, after the meeting. "It's an issue of our time, it's certainly not exclusive to any school whether it's independent, private, public or otherwise."

Many initiatives are underway by a variety of sectors in society, he said.

"All we've done is we think we've found something that marries an approach to an outcome," said Daroshin. "Our outcome is defined: we're a Waldorf school, we treat things a certain way. When children have challenges, we don't exclude them, we include them. We pull them closer to us. That's how we deal with things."

Daroshin said it makes sense that if they're going to develop a policy around bullying, it should be a policy that adheres to their current focus on inclusion.

Kim Payne, an international speaker on family issues was called on for his expertise. Payne spoke at a community lecture in North Vancouver on Wednesday sharing some of the solutions he has

developed for families and schools to deal with bullying through his work with Waldorf schools worldwide, and his independent family practice, research and international travels including work with non-government organizations in developing countries. Payne, an Australian currently living in New York state, has worked for 20 years as a counsellor, educator, consultant and author.

Payne's lecture was entitled *The Social Inclusion Approach: Breaking the Patterns of Put Downs, Teasing and Bullying* and was attended by more than 100 interested individuals.

"In contemporary times, we define ourselves increasingly through social relationships therefore intense social encounter becomes a new rite of passage," he said during the lecture.

Payne stressed the importance of social conflict and children being challenged in relationships with those with opinions differing from their own and their parents to avoid homogenization in thinking and experience.

However, considering that bullying is one of the major causes of childhood trauma, parents, caregivers and schools must be able to ensure children are being positively affected, not negatively by teasing that has gone too far, he said.

"It's all got to do with how we handle it," Payne said.

Studies have also shown that there are a number of negative effects experienced by bullies and the bullied as they move into adulthood, he said. "There's an undeclared war on childhood," Payne said.

Most children keep their experiences with bullying to themselves, something that has to be changed. Payne referred to the creation of a "telling culture," where in order to resolve the problem, those involved need to feel free to tell, and tell sooner rather than later.

Payne discussed a number of related issues, including the importance of simplicity in children's lives. "Every child is quirky, but quirk, plus stress, equals disorder," he said.

Payne described his "blame, shame and putdown diet," where parents and caregivers work for three weeks to cease verbal (name calling) and emotional (eye rolling) put-down use, then passing on their change in behaviour to their children.

He talked about the importance of explicit rather than implicit communication to ensure messages are heard.

"Tonight was just a peek in the window," said Daroshin. "We have the complete support of parents to do something and this is what

we've chosen to do and we began today."

This is Payne's second visit to the Vancouver Waldorf School. He visited the school last year presenting his The Soul of Discipline program, exploring ways to discipline children without taking punitive action. He will continue to visit the North Shore as the school's planning moves forward.

The Vancouver Waldorf School, located at 2725 St. Christophers Rd. in North Vancouver, is a private school that is part of an international approach to education for primarily preschool to secondary school age children. The North Van school is the only Waldorf school in the world to offer programs for children from infancy to secondary school, said Daroshin.

The Waldorf approach to education is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian researcher and educator in the early 20th century.

For more information on Payne's programs, books, and available materials, visit www.thechildtoday.com. For more information on the Vancouver Waldorf School visit www.vws.ca, or www.awsna.org.

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