

## Work and Statement of Disavowal

Your Golden Valley faculty and staff, in partnership with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, have raised as one of our priorities the careful review and disavowal of racist and antisemitic words from Rudolf Steiner.

We acknowledge our own pain that the visionary behind our cherished Waldorf education expressed views that elevated whites and Christians over others, and that such views have been used to rationalize systemic injustices.

In our work, we strive to ensure that we show no tolerance for prejudicial language. We will not contextualize or otherwise justify it. We stand against words that hurt. This is even more important when those words come from sources we may otherwise trust or give authority.

We reject any notion of superiority of one group of people over another. We choose to embrace only those of Steiner's words and ideas that serve ALL children and families.

### **How are we working to address the harm done?**

The work of our DEI Committee, which includes faculty and staff members, is our first answer to this question. Its Mission Statement is:

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee comprises faculty, staff and families working collaboratively to advocate, educate and support inclusiveness in our community. We encourage opportunities for students, staff, and faculty to grow in their own understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion. We actively promote equality of representation in the school and curriculum. We take a stand against discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice. We offer opportunities and safety for all.

When we foster inclusiveness, opportunities and safety for all, our community grows and diversifies, forging new bonds that help us overcome our ignorance of and bias against others. When we educate, we break down flawed views of our world and invite deeper, more connective perspectives. When we stand against discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice – from any source – we embody the values we want to see in our schools and world.

To address, specifically, the prejudice in Steiner's words, we started by increasing our awareness. Steiner was a prolific speaker and a full examination of his recordings was beyond our resources. The DEI Committee reviewed and offered secondary sources – writings from others who had undertaken this work before, as well as several primary sources<sup>1</sup> – publications of Steiner's words containing racism and/or antisemitism.

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<sup>1</sup> A secondary source we consulted, and recommend for your personal reading, was the Frankfurt Memorandum, available (at the time of writing) at [https://info3-verlag.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Frankfurt\\_Memorandum\\_English.pdf](https://info3-verlag.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Frankfurt_Memorandum_English.pdf)



Through group discussion, exploration through puppet play (a time-honored Waldorf approach to tough topics), and private writing and reflection, we explored Steiner's words, their effect on our feelings about Steiner and Waldorf, and how we want to move forward.

**We came to three conclusions:**

Foremost, we assure our Golden Valley community that prejudice and bigotry – from any source – is not espoused or tolerated in our schools. The Golden Valley Charter Schools are committed to keeping it out of our curriculum, pedagogy and community.

Second, we recognize that bigotry is a contagious and harmful disease, and that none of us is immune to it. It can come to us through overt expressions that we may choose to believe because of our relationship to the source. It can also quietly play upon stereotypes and create the impression of believability or correctness. It masquerades as truth and drives us away from a unique and personal knowledge of one another.

Third, we affirm our faith in the good hearts and intentions of this community. Collectively, we can bravely work to acknowledge any bigotry in our heritage and in our lives. We can, by understanding prejudice and its effects, strengthen ourselves against discrimination and become better advocates for DEI, our children, and our families.

**We would like to share with you the reflections we have made through this process, and encourage you to take your own journey with this content.**

Barbara Ames, the River school's Principal through the school year ending in 2022, wrote, "I feel good about disavowing these words from Steiner and making public our 'striving' and vision for DEI...I agree with all three [of the DEI Committee's] conclusions and support posting them publicly...[and] would like to see if this 'vision' could be part of the strategic plan."

Ryan Sutton, our new Principal for the River school as of fall 2022, adds, "In my opinion, acknowledging and even denouncing the mistakes, flawed logic, or shortcomings of otherwise great people in human history, does not tarnish their legacy or suddenly render them irrelevant. On the contrary, that recognition of fallibility humanizes them and requires us to think more critically about our heroes, rather than placing them on a precarious pedestal."

Becky Page, the Orchard Principal, shares, "It's important to me to publicly disavow the discriminatory statements made by Rudolf Steiner. While Steiner developed many methods to admire and follow, including Waldorf education, prejudice against any group of people cannot be condoned or ignored. It goes against the ideals of Waldorf education and our Golden Valley community."

Several other faculty and staff members share anonymously:

"Even in good thoughts and teachings there can be very harmful and belittling words. I wonder what Steiner would say today. [This inspires me] to make the choice to disown these racist and and/or antisemitic statements and feel proud that GV holds these beliefs, too."



"When I first heard such references I considered it as from a long time ago and that times have changed, and chose not to give them any energy. I appreciate the DEI commitment and authenticity to research, process and help us have courage to face and to disavow [these statements] for our GV community. [This inspires me to] be more authentic and increase my personal awareness of my own bias."

"We need to be very conscientious about accurately representing our diverse culture and being extremely mindful of microaggressions."

"It makes me more conscious of what others may think about Waldorf education based on these quotes, and ready to disavow his statements....we need to be careful not to glorify [Steiner], just because he had good ideas does not make all of his ideas good. He is a man, and thus is fallible. He is not a prophet. We need to take the good and leave the bad. To do this we need to consciously explore every aspect of Waldorf education to eliminate any insidious bigotry."

"...this is a lifelong work of healing – education and discussion are key components of this task...For me, the disavowal is a community process, born (well, conceived) in the faculty, birthing support from parents, [the] BOD, students and community."

**We are pursuing additional steps on this journey, including:**

- As faculty and staff, reviewing our curriculum for subtle bigotry, and to actively make it more inclusive and reflective of the world around us;
- As a district, performing outreach and actively promoting Waldorf education to more diverse populations, to increase diversity in our student body and among our staff; and
- As a leadership team, vetting – with the support of our teachers and DEI Committee – the training offered to our teachers to ensure that any racism or other bigotry in Steiner's words is not being presented as part of the Waldorf philosophy.

Your faculty, staff and DEI Committee remain faithful to this work. Our Golden Valley community welcomes ALL children, families, educators and staff. We invite you to join us in disavowing words that exclude, demean or belittle others and instead voice a resounding, "Yes!" to words and actions that heal.

Please reach out to the DEI Committee at [diversity@goldenvalleycharter.org](mailto:diversity@goldenvalleycharter.org) with questions, concerns, or ideas for how to further support our community on this journey.