



Curriculum Overview

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INTRODUCTION

The Waldorf School of New Orleans (WSNO) is an independent school that believes education should nurture children to become individuals who are whole in body, intellect, and spirit.

The methods used focus on developing not only intellectual abilities, but also the artistic, social, and emotional capacities of each child. The Waldorf curriculum and approach to education provides solid academic studies taught through the arts.

At WSNO we strive to develop balanced individuals who are able to create a life full of meaning and purpose.

This Curriculum Overview is meant as an introduction to Waldorf Education at WSNO.

THE HISTORY OF WALDORF EDUCATION

“In April 1919, just months after the end of World War I, Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner visited Stuttgart, Germany. There, a member of the Anthroposophical Society, Emil Molt, asked Rudolf Steiner two remarkable questions: Is there a way to educate children that will help them develop into human beings who will be capable of bringing peace to the world; and if there is, will you start such a school? Steiner’s answer to both questions was in the affirmative. Within a few months, he had selected and recruited teachers for the school and had delivered a series of lectures on the curriculum and pedagogy that was to be the basis of this new type of education.

The first Waldorf School opened in Stuttgart in September 1919 with 175 children and 8 teachers. Most of the students were children of workers at the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory, of which Molt was the director. The school was called the Freie Waldorfschule, the Free Waldorf School, free because it was totally independent of all state or other outside control. It was, for its time, a deeply radical school. It was a school in which all capacities of the child—physical, emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual—were nurtured and developed. The school welcomed all children, boys and girls, those destined for the university as well as those destined for the factory and shop, and educated them together and in the same way. It was a school in which art, music, and handcrafts were as important as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Each day included activities for the intellect, but also for the hands and for the whole physical being, and for aesthetic and emotional development. A class

teacher remained with the same group of students for their eight years of elementary schooling. It was a school governed by those most intimately connected with the educational needs of the children - the teachers.

The Free Waldorf School's explicit purpose was to help children become creative, independent, moral individuals, able of themselves to impart meaning and purpose to their lives. Its task, and that of all the Waldorf schools that have followed it, can be summarized as accept the children with reverence, educate them with love, and send them forth in freedom. Interest in Waldorf Education spread rapidly. Soon there were Waldorf schools in Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and the Scandinavian countries. The first Waldorf school in North America, the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City, opened in 1928. During the National Socialist era in Germany, the Waldorf schools, perceived as antithetical to the totalitarian ethos of the state, were closed down. They reopened immediately after the war, and today Waldorf Education is a major force in German education with over 60,000 children in about 150 schools.

Worldwide, there are currently about 900 schools in over eighty countries. The movement is especially strong in western and northern Europe. Since the collapse of communism, Waldorf Education has flourished in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. There are many Waldorf kindergartens, schools, and teacher training programs in Russia, the Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia, and so on. There are Waldorf schools also in India, Nepal, Japan, Kenya, Egypt, Israel, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, South Africa, Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand, and Australia. There is even a developing movement in The People's Republic of China. Each year, new schools open in many nations around the world.

The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) is a membership organization that supports independent Waldorf schools, initiatives, and teacher training institutes, as well as promotes Waldorf Education through North America. The association now includes 250 schools and fourteen teacher training institutes. There are about 20,000 students in Waldorf schools in North America, coming from some 13,000 families, and there are approximately 2,500 active Waldorf teachers. Anthroposophy, Steiner's view of the nature and destiny of the human being and of the world, is the foundation upon which Waldorf Education rests."

~ Excerpt from, "Schooling the Head, Hands and Heart" by Ronald E. Koetzsch, PH.D.

WALDORF CURRICULUM AT WSNO

In Waldorf education, students are educated in recognition of their own individuality and in rhythm with their own physical, mental, and emotional development. Lessons are alive, interesting, and infused with artistic activities. They challenge and stimulate imagination because the children are addressed not as beings of intellect alone, but as beings of will and feeling.

The uniqueness of the curriculum lies not only in what it contains, but also in how children are taught. In presenting a topic of study, encounter comes first, then encounter becomes experience, and out of the experience concept arises. Perception, feeling, and idea: three steps in a genuine learning process that is in harmony with the child's nature and meets the child's needs. Through this approach, the imaginative and creative powers of childhood are preserved and learning is a joy.

To educate the whole child, the heart and will must be reached as well as the mind. The Waldorf approach to education takes the subject and presents it in a way that lives. It speaks to the child's experience.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

The young child learns through action and imitation, by seeing and doing. The teacher sets an example in an environment worthy of a child's imitation.

Reading, math, science, and language arts are all addressed through the children's work and play activities. Seasonal stories (science) and folk tales from around the world (social studies) are integrated with how we foster cooperation, communication, and respect among the children.

The Early Childhood classes provide a caring, home-like environment with plenty to do. Activities may include household tasks, cooking, baking, sewing, games, simple crafts, beeswax modeling, painting, drawing, singing, play acting, creating puppet shows, and creative play.

The equipment is simple and made of beautiful, natural materials, so that a child's imagination can be stimulated. For example, a length of silk may become the king's cape, a tent for travelers, or a tablecloth for tea.

Rhythm is an important aspect of the young child's daily experience. Every day includes creative play, morning circle and storytelling time. In morning circle, the child learns to enjoy the sounds of language, to share through socializing games, and to achieve coordination and balance through a variety of rhythmical activities.

An ecological awareness is fostered through reverence for nature. Fairy tales, which provide strong archetypes for the child's imagination as well as rich language, are the

basis for the stories. Also, the yearly rhythm of festivals and holidays provides many important celebrations in the early childhood program.

THE GRADES PROGRAM

The Waldorf curriculum achieves an integrated balance between the sciences, the humanities, and the arts, as it leads the child through the basic branches of knowledge.

A unique aspect of Waldorf education is that the class teacher stays with the class for multiple years. The teacher sets an example of someone who is always learning. The class teacher is responsible for the main lessons, and through them, introduces the entire panorama of the elementary school curriculum.

The breadth of the Waldorf curriculum is possible only through the main lesson system. The main lesson is a long class period at the beginning of each day focusing on one subject area for three to four weeks at a time. The continuity helps to strengthen the students' interest. Once their interest and enthusiasm is aroused it becomes easier to treat a subject in greater depth and cover the subject area using all modalities of learning.

During main lesson the students create their own books in which they write and express in pictures the essential content and three-dimensional experience of the subject matter.

The following is a brief description of the main lesson topics in each grade.

First Grade -- Great care is taken in laying a thorough foundation for writing, reading, and arithmetic. Letters are learned in the first grade as they originated: first as pictures, then as abstracted signs, then as written symbols. The picture of the Mighty Mountain, as told in a fairy tale, becomes the "M" shape and finally the letter "M." The first adventures in reading come from what the students have written in their own main lesson books. The numbers and the four basic arithmetic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) are also introduced through imaginative stories.

Second Grade -- Fables and legends are told, retold, acted out, and written in the main lesson book. All these activities greatly enhance memory as well as imagination and verbal skills. Arithmetic work continues with the four basic processes and carrying and borrowing are introduced.

Third Grade -- Curriculum is based on what historical cultures considered basic, practical life skills: farming, food preparation, shelter and building, spinning, and weaving. The study of geography begins as the differing kinds of food, building, and clothing are related to various geographical locations. The creation stories of various cultures illustrate the problems people have in learning to live on the earth. As part of the practical aspects of the third grade curriculum, measurement and time are studied.

Fourth Grade -- Curriculum emphasizes local geography. Geography and map-making skills are developed with this main lesson. Norse myths are also an important part of the fourth grade curriculum as well as the animal kingdom. Fractions are introduced in arithmetic studies.

Fifth Grade -- Ancient history begins with a study of the classic Hindu stories of India, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Egyptian and Greek myths are studied, as well as Greek history. American geography is explored through the different Native American tribes. The plant kingdom is the focus of the fifth grade science lessons. Decimals and the calculation of area and volume are studied in mathematics.

Sixth Grade -- Roman history, leading to the Middle Ages, is the basis for the history lessons. The first introduction to physical sciences begins with the study of heat, light, and sound. Mineralogy is also studied in the sciences as well as observational astronomy. Geometric drawing provides an introduction to the study of Geometry. Mathematics is expanded to include percentages and interest.

Seventh Grade -- Curriculum begins with the Middle Ages and ends in the Golden Age of the Renaissance. Geography is expanded by a study of the explorers and their routes around the world. Astronomy examines the relation of the earth to the universe. The physical sciences continue with the study of electricity, magnetism, and mechanics. Inorganic chemistry is first introduced in the seventh grade. Physiology begins with a study of nutrition. Perspective drawing develops out of a study of the Renaissance artists. Mathematics in this grade includes the study of Algebra.

Eighth Grade -- American history brings the student to the present day. As part of the literature of today, the short story is studied. In science, mechanics, meteorology, and organic chemistry are introduced to further enhance an understanding of the natural world. Physiology continues with a detailed study of the bones and organs. Algebra and solid geometric calculations are the focus of mathematics.

In addition to the main lesson, the students are taught other subjects such as Spanish, physical education, music, painting and art, handcrafts, and library. Students in the Fourth Grade begin learning the violin.

GRADES 1 – 8 CURRICULUM AT WSNO

Further below is an overview of the 1st through 8th Grade curriculum covered in both the Main and Specialty Lessons.

COMPREHENSIVE AND BALANCED

The Waldorf Elementary School curriculum is designed to both stimulate and support the developing child. The subjects studied during the Main Lesson in the morning are often woven into artistic activities later in the day. The challenges of handwork, music, and the fine arts are not separated from the academic subjects, but are presented as vital parts of a complete education.

MAIN LESSONS

The Main Lesson is a long class period at the beginning of each day focusing on one subject area for three to four weeks at a time. The Main Lessons are taught in “blocks”, which are an intensive 3-5 week focus on a particular subject, such as science, language arts, math, or history.

In the Waldorf system, the students are completely immersed in a subject during Main Lesson, and whenever possible, the subject is tied to the subject classes as well. The continuity helps to strengthen the students’ interest. Once their interest and enthusiasm is aroused it becomes easier to treat a subject in greater depth and cover the subject area using all modalities of learning. We do not have contiguous History and Science classes, however we have additional practice throughout the year in Math and Language Arts.

The Main Lesson topics change between the two grades, however the blocks are still generalized. For example, in the first grade, a focus is brought on learning to write block letters. In addition, basic reading and phonics are introduced. Math blocks include number facts, place values, and an introduction to the four operations using whole numbers. In the combined 1/2 Grades, younger students do more basic work, while second graders work with lower case letters and more advanced phonics/reading. Math work is slightly more advanced for the 1/2 class, but follows the same theme. Skip counting and multiplication tables become a focus.

As some classes included combined grades, the curriculum they follow will depend on which grade combination is happening that year. For example, a year where there is a 4/5 class, they will follow the 4/5 Main Lesson curriculum. The next year, that class will become a 5/6 class and will follow that Main Lesson plan.

In the early grades, an Extra Main class is additional Main Lesson time with the class teacher. Initially, the focus of these classes is fluid, based on the needs of the students, but generally includes more practice in Math and Language Arts. Later on, these become

distinct Math and Language Arts practice periods. For 7th and 8th Graders, a special section has been added to bring the last half-year of the curriculum to the oldest students in the divided grades.

SPECIALTY LESSONS

Throughout the year the following subjects are covered in each grade, at a level appropriate for that grade. This is in addition to a main lesson that might focus on one of these subjects.

- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Fine and applied arts: handwork, painting, drawing, modeling
- Music
- Foreign language: Spanish
- Movement

MAIN LESSONS

GRADE 1

Form Drawing – 2 Main Lesson blocks encompassing 5-6 weeks

Language Arts – 3 blocks encompassing approximately 16 weeks featuring:

- Fairytales
- Introductory Reading and Writing
- Class Play

Math – 3 blocks encompassing approximately 16 weeks featuring:

- Introduction to Numbers
- The Four Basic Operations (Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, and Division)

Curriculum work completed in EXTRA MAIN only: **Nature Studies**

GRADE 1/2

Form Drawing – 2 blocks encompassing approximately 4-6 weeks

Language Arts – 3 blocks encompassing approximately 16 weeks featuring:

- International Folktales
- Upper and Lowercase Letters
- Basic Reading and Writing
- Class Play

Math – 3 blocks encompassing approximately 16 weeks featuring:

- Number Concepts
- Calculation with the Four Operations
- Introduction to the Times Tables

EXTRA MAIN: Reading Groups, Nature Studies

GRADE 2/3

Language Arts – 3 blocks encompassing approximately 14 weeks featuring:

- Fables
- Stories of Holy Men and Women
- Phonics
- Introduction to Cursive
- Class Play

Math – 4 blocks encompassing approximately 18 weeks featuring:

- Calculation with the Four Operations
- Times Tables
- Borrowing and Carrying
- Measurement
- Time and the Calendar

Social Studies – 1 block encompassing approximately 4 weeks featuring:

- Housebuilding
- Native American Structures

EXTRA MAIN: Form Drawing, Reading Groups, Gardening

GRADE 3/4

Geography – 1 block encompassing approximately 3 weeks featuring:

- Mapmaking
- Local Geography

Language Arts – 3 blocks encompassing approximately 12 weeks featuring:

- Old Testament Stories
- Norse Myths
- Parts of Speech
- Cursive Writing
- Class Play

Math – 2 blocks encompassing approximately 6 weeks featuring:

- Fractions
- Money
- Calculations and Times Table Mastery

Social Studies – 1 block encompassing approximately 4 weeks featuring:

- Housebuilding II
- Native American Cultures and Folklore

Science – 1 block encompassing approximately 4 weeks featuring:

- Zoology I

EXTRA MAIN: Form Drawing, **Gardening**

GRADE 4/5

Geography – 2 blocks encompassing approximately 6 weeks featuring:

- Louisiana
- United States

Language Arts – 2.5 blocks encompassing 8 weeks featuring:

- The Kalevala
- Handwriting Mastery
- Paragraph Writing
- Class Play

Math – 2 blocks encompassing approximately 7 weeks featuring:

- Decimals
- Introduction to Geometry

Social Studies – 1.5 block encompassing approximately 4 weeks featuring:

- Ancient Cultures I (Babylon, India, Egypt, Persia)

Science – 2 blocks encompassing approximately 7 weeks featuring:

- Zoology II
- Botany I

EXTRA MAIN: **Gardening**

GRADE 5/6

Geography – 1 block encompassing approximately 3 weeks featuring:

- US States and Capitals
- The North American Continent (Canada, Central America)

Language Arts – 2 blocks encompassing approximately 6 weeks featuring:

- Creative Writing
- Grammar
- Class Play

Math – 2 blocks encompassing approximately 17 weeks featuring:

- Geometry of the Circle
- Business Math
- Pre-Algebraic Concepts

Social Studies – 1 block encompassing approximately 4 weeks featuring:

- Ancient Cultures II (Babylon, India, Egypt, Persia)
- Ancient Greek Myths

History – 1 block encompassing approximately 4 weeks featuring:

- Ancient Greece
- Ancient Rome I
- Pentathlon

Science – 3 blocks encompassing approximately 9 weeks featuring:

- Botany II
- Physics I
- Geology

EXTRA MAIN: **Gardening**

Note: All subsequent blocks are approximately 3 – 4 weeks in length and identified by their titles

GRADES 6/7

Geography

- South America

Language Arts

- Poetry Writing
- Class Play

Math

- Geometric Concepts & Perspective Drawing

History

- Ancient Rome II
- Empires of Asia
- The Middle Ages and the Quest for Knighthood

Science

- Physics II
- Astronomy
- Chemistry I

EXTRA MAIN: Gardening, Test Prep/Computer Skills

7TH GRADE SPECIAL SECTION: Civics and Debate, Modern History/ Current Events, Meteorology/Earth Science

GRADE 7/8

Geography

- Biomes of the World
- Age of Exploration

Language Arts

- Creative Writing (Wish, Wonder, and Surprise)
- Literature Studies
- Class Play

Math

- Three-Dimensional Geometry

History

- The Renaissance and the Enlightenment
- United States History I

Science

- Physics III
- Chemistry II
- Human Physiology

EXTRA MAIN: Gardening, Test Prep/Computer Skills

8TH GRADE SPECIAL SECTION: Anatomy, Modern History / Current Events & Journalism, Africa, 8th Grade Project

GRADE 8

Geography

- World Political Geography and Current Events
- Africa

Language Arts

- Journalism
- Playwriting
- Class Play

Math

- Advanced Topics in Geometry

Social Studies

- Civics and Debate

History

- United States History II and the Modern World

Science

- Physics IV
- Human Anatomy
- Meteorology

EXTRA MAIN: 8th Grade Project, Test Prep/Computer Skills, Gardening