

Parent Handbook

Appendix 2: Grade School

Waldorf Pedagogy in Grade School

Highlights

Waldorf pedagogy is truly unique. While careful attention to individual students' needs is widely brought forward as a mark of forward thinking and 'cutting-edge' pedagogy, Waldorf education has over 90 years of successful practice in this domain, and thousands of graduates worldwide to attest to the excellent results of its pedagogical orientation. The Waldorf curriculum is designed and subtly adapted to reflect our changing times in order to present students with each subject at a time and in ways that best awaken, nurture, and fulfill their faculties and capacities. Teachers present the subject matter in ways that suit the experience, abilities, and individual qualities of their particular class, while abiding by standards of excellence monitored and supported by virtue of the school's evaluation, mentoring and evaluation policies. In this way, the curriculum truly meets the individual and develops the capacities of each unique student.

A central aim of Waldorf Education is to harmoniously nurture all of a child's faculties to provide a foundation for initiative and moral strength in adult life. Each individual's physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual needs are considered of equal importance, and the Waldorf curriculum combined with its unique teaching methods have nurtured young bodies, hearts and minds in the greater Vancouver area for over forty years.

From the sense of wonder of the toddler to the intellectual awakening and thirst for knowledge of the young adult, Waldorf education is designed to meet all stages of growth and development of children in ways both unique and proven.

The Main Lesson

The Main Lesson is the heart of the school day for every student from Grades One through Twelve and lasts for approximately two hours, from the beginning of school to the morning recess. Class Teachers guide the students for a three to four week period through a concentrated exploration of a subject allowing them to become deeply familiar with it. The focused presentations and research combined with a wide scope of artistic activities, movement, and personal research enable students to deeply connect and to develop long lasting relations with the subjects studied.

Each school year comprises around ten Main Lessons providing a leading theme for each grade directly related to the phase of development of the students.

Reports, Conferences, and Parents Evenings

Regular communication between parents and teachers is vital to the success of Waldorf education. Written reports are sent out twice a year in the Grade School. Mid-term reports are short and concise and longer narrative year end reports give a picture of the student's development, his/her strengths and weaknesses and areas of progress and potential for growth. Although these reports are comprehensive, they cannot replace regular meetings between parents and teacher for an objective review of the student's work and well-being. Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled at such times as to enable most parents to attend. Please make sure to sign-up for a conference with your child's teacher. In addition to Parent/Teacher conferences, Parent Evenings are scheduled three to four times per year. The purpose of these evenings is to nurture parents' connection and understanding of the Waldorf curriculum and their child's work in the context of his/her own class. These evenings are an invaluable opportunity to share concerns and observations of a social nature with other parents of the same class, and to bring questions and suggestions to both teachers and fellow parents. It is expected that all parents attend Parent Evenings.

Assessment of Student Development

In the Grade School the progress of students is assessed through Main Lesson books, class work, quizzes, tests, oral presentations and reviews, and also assessed through reviews of their independent work.

The Educational Support Teacher carries out a class wide screening of Grade Two students in Term 1 of each year to ensure that the development of the first seven years has been completed so academic learning can proceed.

The Ministry of Education conducts Foundation Skills Assessments (FSA) annually for children in Grades 4 & 7 as part of their Province-wide skills-based evaluation program. Individual scores are not published but are available.

The Class Teacher

The commitment of the Class Teacher to remain with a class of students from Grades One through Eight is unique to Waldorf education. While this ideal is not

always achieved and some classes experience a change of Class Teacher at some point in their Grade School education, this long lasting commitment secures a very strong sense of mutual respect, confidence, and trust in students and teachers alike.

Subject Classes

In addition to daily main lessons with their Class Teachers, Waldorf students encounter several other teachers daily. French is taught from Grade One onward. Beginning with recorder in Grade One, the music program expands to include string instruments in Grade Four and Orchestra in Grade Six. Choral singing and recitation are a daily experience throughout the grades. Movement education includes two periods of Physical Education and two periods of Eurythmy per week. Eurythmy, an art of movement unique to Waldorf Education, supports the students in their encounter with the curriculum, nurtures a sense of social awareness, and harmonizes the integration of all that is taught. For further information, go to <http://www.eurythmy.org>

Educational Support

Vancouver Waldorf School students in Grades 1-8 who have obstacles to learning that cannot be met in the classroom within the context of the Vancouver Waldorf School programs and curriculum may receive support through:

- An Educational Support Assessment
- An Educational Support Series

Educational Support Assessment

All students are entitled to an educational support assessment in school as per request by their teacher. Parents are notified when an assessment is to take place. Assessments typically include a classroom observation and up to three individual sessions with the Educational Support Teacher. Assessments may, on an individual basis, include additional consultations with parents or other educational specialists. Summary observations and recommendations are made in writing and copied to the Class Teacher, the parent(s) or guardian, and put in the student's file.

Recommendations may include further educational assessments, specific tutoring or other therapeutic options.

After the initial assessment, a further assessment is not typically offered to the same student until a new

developmental node is reached (i.e. Grades 3 and 7), or if there is significant change in areas in which support is needed.

Educational Support Series

If educational support is recommended, the VWS will provide one Educational Support Series. In some cases, sessions in Therapeutic Eurythmy may also be recommended, with costs shared between the parents and the school. A partial bursary for the parental portion is available and can be applied for through the Educational Support Teacher.

Long Term Educational Support

The school may also recommend other therapeutic measures. These may include Art or Music Therapy, Therapeutic Speech, Occupational Therapy or Craniosacral Therapy.

Academic tutoring may also be required. In some cases, families may also be requested to seek remedial advice and /or counseling services to support their child's educational experience. These costs must be covered by the parents.

If obstacles persist over time, or an external assessment such as a Psycho-Educational Assessment indicates that far-reaching adaptations or modifications to the program are necessary for a student to experience success, the Class Teacher and the child's parents will work with the Educational Support Teacher and the Pedagogical Manager to create an Individual Education Plan to support the child's learning.

If, after an educational assessment has been carried out, in addition to external assessment or not, the Class Teacher in conjunction with the Educational Support Teacher and Pedagogical Manager may determine the school is not able to meet the needs of a student. If such is the case, enrolment will be discontinued and every effort made to help determine an alternate educational program and transition the student into this program.

Vancouver Waldorf School Behaviour Guidance Policy including Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy

www.vws.ca/About/Publications/BehaviourGuidancePolicy

VWS is committed to the personal growth of its students by providing the opportunity to develop self-discipline and positive behaviours in a caring, supportive environment. Our school's approach to student behavior management is

primarily an educative one. That is, the fundamental aim is for students to learn to be responsible for themselves and their actions and to make genuine, positive contributions to their/our school community.

Grade School Code of Conduct

Note: This protocol applies to High School students when present for classes at the Grade School.

The Vancouver Waldorf School expects all students to abide by its code of conduct, behaving in respectful ways towards faculty and staff members, parents, their fellow classmates and our property. Our approach to discipline emphasizes positivity, within which students are led towards an experience of self-discipline.

Individual teachers, at their own discretion and in the context of class dynamics, are responsible for taking disciplinary actions that encourage positive change in their classrooms. They strive to apply consequences for rule infractions related to the nature of the transgressions, and they take into account the age and maturity of the students.

General Behaviour Guidelines

Students of the Vancouver Waldorf School are expected to:

- Arrive at school on time but not before 8.05 am. The first bell rings at 8:15 am with classes beginning at 8:25 am. Note: supervision for students arriving before 8:05 am and departing after 3:15 pm is NOT provided by the Vancouver Waldorf School and parents or guardians are solely responsible for them at these times.
- Leave electronic equipment at home. If brought to school, these items will be confiscated and returned at the discretion of the teacher.
- Refrain from cell phones during school hours.
- Refrain from bringing chewing gum and candy to school.
- Leave all valuables at home.
- Walk in the hallways of the school.

School Grounds

Bicycles, roller blades or roller skates, skate boards, scooters, and all other individual means of transportation are not to be used on public areas of the school grounds. These are to be walked from the property before and after school to avoid accidents with pedestrians and vehicles. When bicycles are used as transportation to and

from school, they can be ridden with the flow of traffic to and from the crosswalk.

Playground and Recess Rules: All students must

- Not climb trees, fences, and roofs.
- Refrain from throwing rocks, sticks, stones, snowballs, water or dirt.
- Ask permission to re-enter the school building during breaks and after school.
- Stay in allocated area and keep off parking lots.
- Wear shoes at all times.
- Refrain from using hard balls.
- Refrain from eating or drinking beverages other than water
- Respect Lindsay Gordon Memorial Garden.
- Wear weather appropriate clothing.

Dress

Students must wear clothing and shoes that permit them to participate safely in a range of activities throughout the day (artistic courses, crafts and physical education). Loose-fitting clothing is most appropriate. Clothing which includes distracting logos, slogans and pictures of any kind is not permitted at school. The teachers have sole authority to determine which clothing is appropriate. It is very important that children come to school with appropriate boots and raingear as they go outside in all weather.