

Waldorf education is noted for its detailed, richly artistic curriculum that recognizes the developmental stage of children in each grade, mirroring the inner transformation of the child from year to year. The students can relate this age-appropriate content to their own experiences, and therefore become interested and engaged in their own education.

The students in the grade school are guided by their class teacher who brings a daily two-hour morning lesson of the academic subjects, including language arts, math, social studies, history, geography, and the sciences. The students' day is rounded out with subject lessons taught by special subjects teachers. These lessons include German, Spanish, music, games and P.E., folk dancing, gardening, painting, drawing, sculpture, knitting, sewing, and wood working. Every subject contributes to the development of a well-balanced individual.

Every morning, the class teacher greets each child individually with a handshake, and the two-hour morning lesson begins. This main lesson is a concentrated period where a subject is studied in depth for a three to five week period, allowing the students and teacher to become immersed in the material. Time is given for projects, individual and group work, artistic activities, field trips, and deep exploration and discussion.

The main lesson content is taught through the teacher's imaginative descriptions and storytelling, calling on each child's ability to create an inner picture to develop a relationship with the subject. The story curriculum speaks to each age: in first grade, the fairy tales and nature stories are "soul milk" to the new grade school child, while in eighth grade, the revolutionary ideas of John Adams and Ben Franklin, and the struggles of Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi appeal to the young adolescent.

Students also learn through active doing and movement. In the younger grades, children practice their multiplication tables by clapping, stomping, and jumping rope, and in the older grades students may learn the bones in the human body by a movement exercise or discover the laws of mechanics by lifting a classmate in the air with a system of pulleys and ropes.

## Music

Music permeates the main lesson, and singing and recorder playing fills our school every morning as music wafts out of each classroom. The music made by each class is age appropriate, with the young grades singing simple pentatonic melodies and folk songs, while the older grades sing rounds and part-songs. The music may be related to seasons and festivals or directly related to the curriculum. In their study of the Renaissance, seventh graders may sing and play madrigals; eighth graders may sing African American spirituals or protest songs as they study the Civil War and twentieth century history; in their study of North American geography, fifth graders may travel the continent through regional folk songs. Foreign language classes are full of music as well, and students get closer to an understanding of the language and culture through singing songs in German and Spanish.

## Art

Art fills the school day as well, with drawing, painting, sculpting with clay or beeswax, in main lesson as well as in art classes. Seventh graders come to a deeper understanding of the Renaissance by drawing copies of Renaissance masterpieces and studying perspective drawing. Fifth graders may build a clay model of a ziggurat or a pyramid as they hear stories of

ancient Babylon and Egypt. In their study of Norse mythology and the Vikings, fourth graders draw beautiful knotted designs. Students learn the language of color through watercolor painting, and develop their skill in drawing through frequent practice and their books and classroom walls are filled with the students' imaginative illustrations.

## Science

Science has its beginnings in the early childhood, where children are exposed to the natural world, developing a loving relationship to the world around them. In the younger grades, children hear nature stories of the world around them, told in fairy tale form, where their attention is drawn to plants and animals, rocks and mountains, clouds and oceans, sun, moon, and stars. These stories transform to the objective sciences in the older grades when students begin their first formal studies in zoology, botany, earth sciences, astronomy, physics, chemistry, anatomy, and physiology. The science curriculum is observation and experiential, where students are asked to first observe scientific phenomena, and out of the observations, come to an understanding of the concept and scientific laws surrounding the phenomena. This encourages a true interest in and love for nature and scientific inquiry.

## Mathematics

Mathematics is taught both actively and artistically, with students in the early years developing their relationship with numbers, first learning about the quality of numbers, for example, exploring where in the world we observe the number one (one sun, one moon) and how it contains many (one world, many people; one class, many students), the number two (dualities of night and day, left and right), and other numbers. From the four arithmetic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in the early grades through fractions, decimals, percents, and algebra, students see how math occurs in their daily life. The harmony and beauty of mathematics is seen in the numbers themselves, and also in the beautiful geometric forms that students create, from simple free hand forms to complicated constructions with compass and straight edge, and the creation of three-dimensional platonic solids.

## History

The curriculum awakens in the child an appreciation and respect for cultural origins and historic foundations as the students learn about the world, its peoples and their cultures. Through their study of geography, students learn how human beings make a place their home, and with stories, map making, studies of natural history and geography, a connection is made with all of earth's inhabitants. History takes the students to ancient cultures, and through the stories of the people and individuals in history, helps the children to relate to their place in history.

## Language Arts

Literacy is approached first through the spoken word. The richness and beauty of the language is presented through the teacher's storytelling, and also through the students' recitation of verses and poems. Letters are introduced in first grade in a picture form, for example, the mountain will form the M, the swan will form the S, or through an active movement, then the children will write in their main lesson books and read their own writing. By the time students are in eighth grade, they are familiar with many types of writing and poetry, and can write descriptive, narrative, and expository essays, as well as writing poetry, and are able to recite a

variety of poetry. Each class participates in drama and performs a class play that comes from the curriculum content.