



Pedagogical Overviews

The Waldorf School of Atlanta provides a proven educational program that nurtures students along a continuous developmental path that results in young adults who are confident, poised and have a strong inner focus for life and work.

Early Childhood ([Explore Early Childhood](#))

Our Waldorf preschool and kindergartens nurture a sense of wonder and curiosity in the young child, while encouraging reverence and joy for the goodness of life. The warmth and beauty of the classrooms and the mixed age groupings provide an opportunity for children to play and learn in a home-like atmosphere. The 3-year olds (participating in a 4 hour/day program) and the 4-year olds are engaged according to their age and abilities, while imitating the mood, gestures and work of the classroom teachers (and their older friends). The 5 and 6-year olds develop the independence and sense of responsibility necessary to become leaders in the class. In the loving and creative atmosphere of the kindergarten, these young children acquire the confidence and discipline they will need for the challenging academic work of grade school.

The kindergarten experience is rich in storytelling, puppetry, song, poetry, cooking, and artistic activities. Crafts, handwork, games, and regular outdoor play encourage the healthy growth of the child's body. Toys, art materials, and classroom aesthetics emphasize natural, simple materials, encouraging the child's imagination. Through play, each child learns a broad range of cognitive, social, and linguistic skills. As in all Waldorf classes, parents are encouraged to minimize exposure to television, videos, and other media that might hinder the free and harmonious growth of the child.

Grade One ([Explore Grade One](#))

First Grade is the commencement of formal schooling marked by the child's awakening capacities of memory and thinking. The seven-year-old retains a feeling of oneness with the world, and is more able to bring broad awareness than focused concentration to learning situations. Much learning therefore involves the presentation of an image to the child, ensuring her understanding through her own mental picturing. This leads to a pictorial approach in the teaching of all subjects.

The rhythm of working together as a class is established during this year, and the students are introduced to all areas of school life. The students are eager to learn together and take their place within the large whole. As new habits are formed, a foundation is being laid for healthy social interaction. Through the teacher's authority and presence, a sense of reverence, respect, and wonder permeates the mood in the classroom.

Throughout the first grade year, the academic tasks of reading, writing and arithmetic are embedded in the rich world of fairy tales. The archetypal pictures found within the fairy tales engage the child's fantasy in the subject matter that they encounter throughout the year. Through



these richly crafted stories, the children are introduced to speaking, writing, reading, and mathematics. All skills are reinforced with practice involving rhythmical movement, recitation and music. Bookwork is illustrated with pictures that reinforce the concepts being developed. Each lesson aims to incorporate a three-fold structure, which fosters the development of the children's feelings, thinking abilities, and will forces.

Grade Two ([Explore Grade Two](#))

In Grade Two, the familiar routines and observances of the previous year are maintained. This strengthens the rhythm of the class working together, and builds confidence and a sense of belonging in the children. The students continue to learn best when pictorial thought content is presented. Much time is spent consolidating all that was first learned in Grade One. Students continue to familiarize themselves with the fundamentals of arithmetic and language arts, and they also develop a wide range of skills in gross and fine motor movements such as jump rope, knitting, and flute playing. The children's thinking is thus balanced and reinforced by their experience in physical and artistic activity.

While in Grade One a mood of wholeness develops in the children, in Grade Two this mood can differentiate into contrasts, with a reverential mood on the one hand, and a temptation for mischief on the other. During this year, the children develop greater interest in the unique qualities of one another and become curious about individual differences. To meet this growing social awareness, teachers introduce stories where contrasting human qualities are portrayed. Wonder tales and legends of Saints from around the world show lofty striving and highlight noble human qualities, while animal fables and trickster tales satisfy the child's interest in mischief. While the morals of these tales are never explicitly stated, the students derive direction and form from the images they are given.

Grade Three ([Explore Grade Three](#))

Grade Three is marked by the physiological, psychological, and cognitive changes taking place during the ninth year. The child's walk is firmer and more balanced, and the constitution is substantially stronger. Growth begins to focus more on the limbs and metabolism, and there is an increase in the breadth of the trunk. At the same time, a significant step in self-awareness occurs during this year. The children are developing a strong sense of being separate from their surroundings, perhaps for the first time. A feeling of being alone can contrast with a sense of wonder at seeing the world in a new way. These mixed feelings often lead to confusion and insecurity as questions of purpose and identity begin to emerge. There is a longing for increased independence and autonomy as the child moves into this new phase of childhood. They have a tendency to criticize and question authority as they seek to define themselves as individuals.

The images from Hebrew stories, with their laws and guidance, foster inner security during this unsettled period. Practical activities such as farming and house building help ground the children in the physical world. When the whole group works together on these activities, feelings of separateness can be transformed into feelings of responsibility for the whole. With their new interest in the practical, material world, the children can now apply the skills learned in the first



two grades to a wide range of everyday situations like measuring, weighing, and cooking.

Grade Four ([Explore Grade Four](#))

In Grade Four, the transition from early childhood is complete. The children emerge with greater awareness, expressed in new confidence and great vigor. They want to experience the world from an individual standpoint, to find their particular place in the world. They develop a sense of where they are in relation to their environment, in both a social and geographical sense.

The fourth grade student is eager to learn more about their world, and they embrace new challenges with curiosity and enthusiasm. During the fourth grade year, students are challenged to extend themselves in every aspect of their work. Their growing interest in concrete knowledge is met through natural science, in a study of the animal kingdom in relation to the human being. The children also take up a thorough study of their surroundings in a Local Geography block, in which mapmaking skills are developed. Norse stories, meanwhile, present the children with images of diverse, strong-willed personalities all contributing to the social whole. Throughout this year, students are encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own learning. They complete several independent projects, and give their first formal presentations to the class.

Grade Five ([Explore Grade Five](#))

In the first four years of school there is a strong emphasis on form, both of the class as a whole, and of each child's habits. In the next four years, there is a subtle and gradual shift in emphasis toward content, in lessons and in the world at large. This shift in emphasis, of course, follows the child's own lead, responding to his or her changing consciousness. By age eleven, children reach a kind of balance and regular alternation between their awareness of the world and of their own inner lives. There is balance, too, in their mental, emotional, and physical growth.

The fifth grade curriculum seeks to extend the children both outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly, in terms of space, they expand their horizons of the earth and the plants that cover it. In terms of time, they experience five civilizations spanning thousands of years. Inwardly, they extend their awareness of the math processes they perform, and also of the words they speak and the sentences they write. As their intellectual faculties become stronger, students are able to approach their cognitive work in a more realistic and reasoning manner.

By the fifth grade, students have generally attained a certain ease and grace of physical movement intrinsic to their age. The celebration of their unique abilities at this time culminates in their participation in a Greek Olympiad, a pentathlon event with other regional Waldorf schools.

Grade Six ([Explore Grade Six](#))

The twelfth year is the gateway to pre-adolescence and idealism, and although the sixth grader is increasingly able to experience internal logic, their sense impressions can often be clouded by emotion and whimsy. Throughout this year, students are encouraged to develop strong powers of



observation, and precision and accuracy in their thinking. As they awaken to the intricacies of human thought and action, they readily embrace the biographies of individuals from ancient Rome and the Middle Ages.

In order to ground students in the surrounding world while fostering their fascination with the unknown, sixth graders are provided with their first formal study of natural phenomena. Mineralogy, geography, and physics lessons provide opportunity for in-depth encounters with the physical world while strengthening powers of sense-observation. In addition to being grounded by the lawfulness of the earth, students are also encouraged to develop expansiveness in their imaginative thinking. Astronomy draws students towards the heavens and provides opportunities for them to explore the mysteries of the cosmos. In an effort to recreate the experience of early astronomers, Astronomy is taught exclusively through observation of the unaided eye.

Grade Seven ([Explore Grade Seven](#))

As students move into adolescence, they need increased opportunity to feel the strength of their own initiative. The grade seven curriculum serves to ground the students, to inspire them to venture out toward the unknown, and to offer an introduction to their quest in life. Through their own engagement and striving in the world, students are able to develop strong feelings of sympathy and antipathy in relation to their surroundings. These feelings help shape their own perceptions and allow them to stand on their own with increased confidence.

Through the exploration of an unknown world, the seventh grade curriculum challenges the thought process of the young adolescent, leading them to discovery, understanding, and discernment. They learn, as the explorers did, that going one's own way means leaving behind the security and stability of familiar territory.

Grade Eight ([Explore Grade Eight](#))

A Waldorf eighth grade experiences a gradual but significant shift from the presentation of a subject solely from the teacher to the class, to the mutual consideration of a subject by teacher and class together. A sense of community develops in which speaking becomes more thoughtful and listening more attentive. With the awakening capacity for logical thinking and free, independent judgment, the eighth grader now wants to be in the world more than ever before. They want to do, to discover, to know, and to find relevance in their studies by finding connections with the outside world.

Throughout this year, the students continue to expand their sense of place in the world. They plunge into the Age of Revolution, and embark on a study of noteworthy individuals who have found the courage to follow their passions in revolt against the status quo. In addition to their continued inquiry into scientific phenomena and experimentation, students study the lives and struggles of scientists and inventors who first discovered chemical and electrical laws. These studies ground students in the human aspect of scientific thought, while providing a picture of



the profound effects of modern technology upon society and culture.

The eighth grade year marks the students' final year with their Class Teacher, and culminates in the completion of their Waldorf grade school experience. Given the huge step these students are about to take in the world, the curriculum is designed to inspire passion and highlight the incredible potential of the human mind and soul. It is our hope that our students will graduate with compelling questions that will continue to fuel their love of learning for years to come.