

What is Waldorf?

Rhythms and Stages

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www.EarthSchooling.com



Waldorf is a form of education that works with the rhythms of the child, the day, the week, the month and the year. It works with the spiritual, emotional and physical rhythms of the body. It works with the rhythm of the earth – natural foods, toys and other materials are used in Waldorf education. When I think of Waldorf I think of a flowing river.

The rhythm of the child is the first thing we consider. What are they ready for and when are they ready for it? Imagine if you are playing in an orchestra and you have a drum that is playing out of beat. Will it help the orchestra? Will it be effective? The same happens with a child. A child is a complex being that has many systems working in synchronicity. To be able to be effective and in harmony with that child you need to synchronize the beat of your drum (their lessons) with the appropriate age.

I have included an index below and some space on each page for you to record and write your own insights into your child's needs, insights shared with you by others, or favorite quotes that inspire you.

Being able to meet a child's needs according to their natural rhythm will:

1. Foster connection, interdependence, compassion, respect, teamwork and community awareness.
2. Will create natural opportunities for conflict resolution as there will be fewer conflicts.
3. Will help the child connect with their natural rhythms in nature and spirit.
4. Will free their minds to be more creative and will encourage creativity when they most need to be encouraged.'
5. Will help you create a rhythm for your family that is "just right" – not too busy and not too slow. It will help you connect with the rhythms of nature, the day, the week, the months and the year.

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Preschool

Theme: Rhythm, Repetition and Parent Modeling. Cultivate Parent Attachment.

A toddler longs for rhythm, repetition and activities which feel safe. As a parent, you should continue on your daily rhythm or schedule and then slowly add a child, or two, or three within your daily activity. Contact other mothers while your toddler is napping and arrange a play date at the park, or some other place where there is freedom to move about and nature or animals to explore. The key is that this is a natural event. Being a part of regular activities which the child is used to is calming to the child. The mother doesn't need to feel stressed that she needs to make a certain appearance and that she is "locked in" to a set period of time. This makes everyone a lot more comfortable, and when you are more comfortable and stress free, you enjoy the time more. Up until about 20 years ago, most children this age spent all of their time at home with mother and siblings. Play dates and groups are a relatively new concept. The age appropriate behavior for a child this age is to observe and learn by modeling YOUR behavior. Toddlers don't want friends, they want to do what you do! They enjoy hanging on your hip or standing along side of you doing the dishes, the laundry, going to the market, etc. These daily activities are learning experiences and a joy for children of this age to participate in. Reassure yourself that there is plenty of time for friends later. They will have the rest of their lives to socially interact with other children, and in a few short years, they will rather run off to play with children than to spend time at your side. Don't worry about your child getting socialized. The same way they learned to talk and walk, they will learn to play and be social.

It is not just all about "playing with the child".

The child also needs to enjoy and learn by watching you work

"Doing work that has to be done over and over again helps us to recognize the natural cycles of growth and decay, of birth and death, and thus become aware of the dynamic order of the universe" Fritjof Capra

Kindergarten

Theme: The Bridge Between Family and Social Life. Cultivate Social Skills

The Waldorf Kindergarten is the bridge between family and school life. The Kindergarten child learns through imitative and creative play in a warm, homelike environment, using cloths and simple natural materials. Social skills are developed as children play side by side, listening and sharing and helping one another.

Rest and circle time follow morning free play and cleanup. The teacher leads games, poems, seasonal songs and little dramas, which work in the children to integrate their whole being. A snack at the lovely table set with candles is preceded by a blessing, then everyone moves outside for playtime.

Each day has an artistic activity which creates a soothing weekly rhythm for the child. Activities include watercolor painting, drawing, beeswax modeling, seasonal crafts, sewing and finger knitting. Hearing a fairy tale, acting it out, or seeing a puppet play completes the morning. Capable and loving teachers specializing in education for the early years plan the school life with the child's special talents and needs in mind.

Nurturing and protecting childhood in a beautiful, warm, homelike setting is a key element of the Waldorf early childhood program. Reflecting a deep belief that children's natural creative play contains the cornerstones of academic ability, the rhythm of the school day flows between lively social and quiet individual activities.

In the first seven years, the child seeks to see that the world is a place of goodness. These early years are a period of joy and exuberance during which the child will absorb and imitate everything he or she sees, and during which learning will flow through the movements of the child. Therefore, the teacher seeks to lead the work of the class in a kind, conscious, loving manner that is worthy of imitation ... and the child learns by doing.

Great care is taken in planning and providing an entry into school life that fosters wonder, joy and possibility ... the early foundations for a life-long love of learning. The Waldorf preschool and kindergarten experience is meant to enliven the imagination and lovingly guide each child toward an understanding of the world ... to plant the seeds for a successful school career and adult life.

First Grade

Theme: Ability to Build Vivid Inner Pictures. Cultivate the Imagination to Plant Seeds for Future Learning

All children are carefully assessed as to whether they are ready to embark on this journey. Are they ready to learn to write and later read and do arithmetic without thwarting some other part of their development? Are the growth forces all still needed for growing and playing or are some growth forces freed so that they can be used for their next tasks? The children around about seven years should have the concentration to build their own vivid inner pictures when being told a story, and through such imagery will continue learning in the following years.

Fairy tales are told by the teacher then retold and dramatized by members of the class. This cultivates the children's imagination. Starting with simple artwork the children learn to draw forms, which lead to letters and numbers. The four basic mathematic processes are introduced: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Nature stories provide an imaginative introduction to the natural world. These stories provide the basis for drawing, writing and the beginnings of reading and science. Elementary German and Spanish are introduced through songs and games.

Even simple numbers come to life by the way they are presented. A triangle has a neat quality of "threeness" that is qualitatively different from a square's blocky "fourness." Numbers become more than simply abstractions in sequence.

Second Grade

Theme: Strong Likes and Dislikes. React Strongly to Images. Cultivating and Guiding the Will

Second graders are at the age when they begin to have strong likes and dislikes. Eight year olds react strongly to imagery in the fables and in stories of saints. They hear fables and stories of legendary characters such as saints. These stories teach of human fallibility and present a model for overcoming adversity. Reading opens a new world of words, and the children begin to master the multiplication tables. Second graders continue to paint and explore Nature, and present their first dramatic play. They learn to crochet and play the pentatonic flute.

Third Grade

Theme: Difference Between Self and Others – Where Do I Belong? Cultivate Confidence and Security

By the third grade, children are beginning to comprehend the difference between self and other and wonder where in the scheme of things they belong. To fortify their growing personal identity, they read creation and Old Testament stories. Around the age of nine comes a very important psychological change. The child has a stronger experience of its own individuality or identity (ego) and therefore begins to question adult authority. It may feel isolated from family and friends and therefore need more sympathy and firmness from teachers and parents. Again, the subjects given to Class Three are carefully chosen and timed to relate to this inner psychological change.

The Hebrew Old Testament stories give the nine-year-old an inner picture of the security of a God who looks after His chosen people. The Old Testament story of the Fall from Paradise is a vivid image of what the nine-year-old is experiencing in its soul. (Other religious traditions may also wish to add things here). In handwork the children crochet a hat, a visible form of something protecting them. In the main lesson they learn about occupations such as house building, farming and traditional crafts. How do farmers provide our food. Unforgettable is an early morning visit to a cowshed with its characteristic sounds and smells, seeing the cows milked, feeling their warm breath, tasting the fresh milk! Farming, housing, building, measurement, and mastery of the multiplication tables and four arithmetic processes provide a practical foundation for scientific study and help ground the children. They go away together to spend a week on a farm. The study of grammar helps them to develop rational thinking. Each child takes up a stringed instrument: violin, viola or cello.

Fourth Grade

Theme: Individuality. What is my place in the world? Cultivate Awareness of Local Environment and Character.

From Class Four children have developed to a point where they can be led into the history and geography of their locality. Tumultuous stories of Norse mythology teach about character and individuality in a complex world. Children begin to learn about their place in the surrounding environment with the study of local geography and map making. They write their own compositions and increase math skills by learning fractions and long division. In music they must hold their own in playing or singing a round.

Fifth Grade

Theme: Who am I? Coming into Oneself. Cultivate Awareness of the Macrocosm of World History and How it Compares to the Microcosm of Child's Development.

Fifth graders begin to come to grips with the history of humanity with the study of ancient cultures from India, Persia, Egypt and Greece. They connect history lessons with their growing athletic prowess in a Greek-style Olympics in the spring. In geography they expand out to the United States and North America. In science they study plant life with botany. The math curriculum now includes decimals, percentages, and practical business math skills, as well as the introduction of geometry. Music, handwork and foreign language study become increasingly challenging.

The study of history brings the child into him or herself by beginning in ancient times and working up to the present day. Geography brings the child into the world by starting locally and expanding to the whole planet.

Sixth Grade

Theme: “Reality” - Thoughts Switch from Imagination to Intellectual (Cause and Effect). Cultivate Skills to Guide them in their New Thought Processes.

Children at this age are gaining a firmer relationship with the world they inhabit and want a more solid grasp on reality. At twelve, the child experiences another change. At this age the thinking begins to change from the picture building of the child to the intellectual (logical or cause and effect thinking) of the adult. However, it is only beginning, and science makes a memorable gateway to the awakening intellect for the child in pre-puberty. They study geology and begin physics with the exploration of optics and acoustics and the properties of heat, magnetism and electricity. In mathematics they learn to apply the basic processes to practical situations. They study ratios and begin algebra. English covers the writing of business and personal letters. Geography covers Central and South America. Sixth graders learn about the structural basis of modern society with the study of Roman law.

Seventh Grade

Theme: Looking Towards Adult Life and Larger Issues in Life. Cultivate Awareness of Historical Periods of Change and Current Events.

By seventh grade the young adolescent is beginning to consider larger issues that will shape the course of adult life. Seventh graders study the major changes in civilization of the Renaissance and the Reformation, which are coordinated with principles of science of those times such as mechanics, astronomy and physiology. Geography lessons also focus on Europe. Math covers more advanced algebra. In English the students writing requires deeper levels of thought and personal self-expression. They play on the school's boys and girls basketball teams. The arts--painting, drawing, singing and instrumental music--as well as drama, handwork and movement stay with the children through to eighth grade growing ever more complex and demanding along the way.

Eighth Grade

Theme: Asserting Oneself into the World. Cultivate Awareness of Powerful Historical Movements and Methods of Forming and Expressing Their One's Own Opinions

By eighth grade students are ready to assert themselves more in the world. They study the American and French Revolutions and the Industrial Revolution and their consequences. They are encouraged to form more of their own opinions. They learn about the lives of key figures of the 20th Century and write a research paper. Science and math touch on such diverse fields as organic chemistry, meteorology, ecology, aerodynamics, solid geometry and algebra. At the end of the year, the whole class goes on a field trip to a distant destination. By the time young people have finished all eight grades at a Waldorf school, they understand something about many aspects of the world they inhabit. Words, numbers, and a cross-section of the sciences have been covered. Many subjects have been coordinated with one another so that the student comprehends how different aspects of the world fit together. Most have been introduced through the arts, so that he or she knows them on a feeling as well as purely intellectual level. The young person is prepared, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to face young adulthood with enthusiasm and confidence.

Preschool & KG

Morning:

Circle Time Verses

(Finger rhymes and verses are very important for pre-math and pre-language abilities)

Shaping Bread/Snack

Storytime (Puppet show style, repetitive stories (like The Little Red Hen) and relational stories – stories about what children did yesterday, stories about their birth, stories about children like them or other children their age and what they do).

Playing with Natural Toys, Fantasy Play

Afternoon:

Nature walk – focus on touching, feeling, observing, telling stories, asking questions

Nature based crafts & art – done WITH the parent or teacher or older sibling

Watching a Parent Do Handiwork and “Helping Them”

Modeling Parent Chores and Activities – Being included in what parent is doing.

First Grade

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (counting, the four processes)

& Form Drawing (straight & curved lines), Folk Tales

Trimester Two: Language & Cultural Studies, Fairytales – European/Americas

Trimester Three: Drama & Writing, Fairytales – Asia, Australia, etc..

Afternoon:

Nature stories, nature walk

Nature based crafts & art

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages

Knitting/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Pentatonic recorder

Second Grade

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (basics, the four processes: focus on addition) & Form Drawing (linear) - Fables

Trimester Two: Lower Case Letters & Grammar - Legends

Trimester Three: Saints & Heroes

Afternoon:

Nature stories, nature walk

Nature based crafts & art

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages

Foreign language games, poems and verses

Knitting/crochet/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Pentatonic recorder

Third Grade

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (Measurements of volume, space, money and time) – Cursive writing – Form Drawing (Vertical Symmetry).

Trimester Two: Grammar & Spelling – Native American stories

Trimester Three: Old Testament stories

Afternoon:

Housebuilding & gardening

Nature based crafts & art

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Complex knitting/crochet/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Soprano recorder & reading music

Fourth Grade

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (Division, Long Division) & Form Drawing (Celtic Knots)

Trimester Two: Grammar, Spelling & Essays – Local History & Geography (incl. mapping)

Trimester Three: Poetry – Norse Mythology - Zoology

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Field trips for local geography

Practice the four math processes. Weekly review.

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Complex knitting/crochet/embroidery/sculpture/drawing/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Soprano recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument.

Fifth Grade

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (decimals, metric system) & Geometry - India & Persia

Trimester Two: Grammar, Research & Reports, Different kinds of writing, pen pals & Ancient Egypt

Trimester Three: Greek Mythology & Greece – North American Geography

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Botany/Nature walks – Vary intensity of study/science –vs- exploration and discovery

Practice the four math processes. Weekly review.

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Phrases and poems in foreign language of your choice.

Complex knitting like socks and mittens/crochet/embroidery/sculpture/drawing/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/carving, etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument. Do two and three-part rounds, harmonies and music from Persia, India, Greece, and Egypt.

Sixth Grade

Morning:

Trimester One: Literature (Spelling, Biographies, Composition & Poetry) & Physics

Trimester Two: First Half: Math (ratio & estimation) & Latin America

Trimester Two: Second Half: Math (geometry) & Physics

Trimester Three: First Half: Rome & The Middle Ages & Astronomy

Trimester Three: Second Half: Geology (We include minerals and gems and studies on their effects in healing too)

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Botany Review/Nature walks – Vary intensity of study/science –vs- exploration and discovery

Practice the four math processes.

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Communication phrases in foreign language of your choice.

Knitting and sewing toys and clothing/drawing/painting/charcoal and pencil drawing/clay/carving a spoon or small toy, etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument. Do two and three-part rounds, harmonies and music from Latin America and Rome. This is a great chance to do some of that awesome Latin music!

Seventh Grade

Morning:

Trimester One: Part One: Math (pre-algebra, geometry, negative numbers, cube root)

Trimester One: Part Two: Language (Writing reports, creative writing, spelling) & History (The Renaissance)

Trimester Two: Part One: Legends (such as King Arthur or other native legends from your region)

Trimester Two: Part Two: Physics (review and part two)

Trimester Three: Part One: Chemistry

Trimester Three: Part Two: European and African Geography

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Botany Review/Nature walks – Vary intensity of study/science –vs- exploration and discovery

Practice the four math processes.

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Communication phrases in foreign language of your choice. Start studying vocabulary lists and building vocabulary.

Knitting and sewing toys & clothing/drawing/painting/advanced drawing/advanced sculpting with clay/Advanced carving, etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument. Do two and three-part rounds, harmonies and music from the Renaissance. Ballads are also a good choice for this age.

Eighth Grade

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (algebra & geometry) & Shakespeare & Other classic literature of your region or culture.

Trimester Two: Part One: Organic Chemistry

Trimester Two: Part Two: American History & Current Events

Trimester Three: Part One: Geography of Asia, Australia and Antarctica

Trimester Three: Part Two: Physics

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Nature walks – Vary intensity of study/science –vs- exploration and discovery

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Communication phrases in foreign language of your choice. Start studying vocabulary lists and building vocabulary. Venture into some “real life” experiences.

Sewing with machines/drawing/painting/drawing portraits and animals/advanced sculpting with clay/Advanced carving, basic woodworking skills, making simple wood items...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument. Do two and three-part rounds, harmonies and music.

I found this wonderful reference list created by a Waldorf teacher. It summarizes the speeches and writings by Steiner and where he references lesson blocks.

Waldorf also works with the rhythm of the day...

The Daily Rhythm for Preschool/KG

This was my schedule for the classes I ran as a teacher. My schedule with my own children varies and yours might too. But this gives you a good idea of the thought I put into the rhythm of the day. It helps children if your daily rhythm is very similar every day!

8:30 – Arrival, free play and settle in.

8:45 – Bread shaping (Verse: Call to the Bread Table)\

9:00 Movement and Circle Time (Verse: Call to the Circle)

(Songs, Yoga or Eurhythm to break up circle, then back to the circle for music time)

9:30 – Set the table and snack time (Verse: Snack time Prayer)

9:45 – Nature Walk (Verse: Let's Walk)

10:00 – Story time (Verse: Fairies of the Story Time)

10:15 – Craft time for Children (Verse: Come Join our Craft)

10:40 – Mother's Time/ Free-Play for children in the Waldorf Room

11:00 – Class ends (Verse: Clean-up Fairies)

(Daily Rhythm for Older children is above in the section of age appropriate learning)

Waldorf also works with the rhythm of the week...

The Weekly Rhythm

As well as having a different activity assigned to each day, I also had a different theme I would meditate on as a teacher each day. Sometimes I would share this theme with the children and sometimes I would just focus on finding ways to enrich that theme through the day.

Weekly Awareness Plan

I would call this a meditation plan but the truth is that sometimes I would just think briefly about the topic of the day and would be inspired by that brief thought the rest of the day. Other days I would sit and reflect on the topic in more detail and depth. Keep in mind that these were themes for ME, the teacher to reflect on each day and this list came from MY ideas of what I wanted to bring to the children and what I felt was important to them. You need to make your own awareness plan or you can use mine to start out with.

From “The Seven Laws of Spiritual Parenting” By Deepak Chopra

Monday: We are all here for a reason – finding ways we are special and unique

Tuesday: There is potential in everything – find ways nature shows potential

Wednesday: Giving – the more you give the more you receive

Thursday: You can change the future – show ways that choices you made have helped

Friday: Work can be fun – don’t fight life

Saturday: Intention and wishing can be powerful tools

Sunday: Enjoy life – detach in some ways and feel balanced about the good and bad.

Character Building

Monday: Harmony & Developing Balance

Tuesday: Mindfulness

Wednesday: Being of Service

Thursday: Fostering Self-Reliance

Friday: Appreciating Beauty

Saturday: Nourishing Compassion

Sunday: Creating Joy

Weekly "Special Days"

There are some things that you don't need or even want to do every day. When this is the case, it is best to put these things on a weekly rotation so there is still a sense of rhythm, in the child's life. Here is a sample from my old school:

Monday: Introduce our new story or stories

Tuesday: Make a special bread (the rest of the week we make plain bread)

Wednesday: Spanish lesson

Thursday: Cook lunch together

Friday: Field trip or longer nature walk

Adult Rhythms

You can also create rhythms like this for the classroom or house itself so that you – the teacher, can stay on schedule! Here is an example of mine:

Monday: Shopping for home & class & business

Tuesday: Clean pet cages

Wednesday: Clean the bathrooms

Thursday: Sweep the floors & Scrub

Friday: Organizing day

The Monthly Rhythm

Every month we had a rhythm as well as a weekly and daily rhythm. As you look over my lesson plan guides and the vast amount of material I have provided or that you have yourself, you can use a monthly rhythm block to help you focus each week. Some things you will want to focus on or a week and other things you may want to focus on for 4-6 weeks. These are called “lesson blocks”. The E-books I sell about woodworking, knitting and other topics are meant to be used as lesson blocks. Various units of study in my lesson plans or in your own lesson plans can be used as lesson blocks too.

Here is an example of how lesson blocks can work in the month

Craft blocks for the month...

Week One: Beeswax Block Crayon Art Technique (Progressive)

Week Two: Waldorf Watercolor Painting (Various Techniques and Color Skills)

Week Three: Felt work Craft

Week Four: Craft

Week Five: Craft

Story Blocks for the Month...

Week One: *Tell* a Story (same story both days)

Week Two: Do a Play

Week Three: Puppet Show Story

Week Four: A Story POEM

Week Five: Read a Book

Science Blocks for the Month..

Week One – Four: The water cycle

Math blocks for the month...

Week One – Four: Basic Math Concepts: Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division

Waldorf also works with the rhythm of the year...

The Yearly Cycle

There are some activities I scheduled over the year based on seasonal or holiday themes. You may want to add or subtract from this list. I indicated which items are traditional Waldorf and which holidays are “extras”. We had a very international student body so, as Steiner recommends, I included celebrations that “honored all members of our community” – that is why I have so many extra holidays listed. I have left them here for you, because you may also find yourself working with or befriending families of different cultures.

January

Main Waldorf Holidays

Western Calendar New Year

Three Kings Day

Themes

Animals (Chinese Calendar Theme)

Moon

Lunar and Solar Calendars

Snow & Ice (Western World)

Other Holidays and Themes

Mozart’s Birthday

Islamic New Year - January 20th

Dia De Los Reyes - Mexico

Martin Luther King Day

Handiwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Candle Basics

Mother’s Craft

Make a doll

More themes and details on those themes are located in the member file “My Waldorf Year” for members of www.EarthSchooling.com – if you are a member and have trouble locating that file please contact me at: herbnhome@gmail.com. If you would like some curriculum support for the outline and ideas above please visit: www.Earthschooling.com – the most affordable Waldorf inspired educational curriculum on the Internet.

Waldorf works In blocks (although you can modify this for your own needs)...

Lesson Blocks in Waldorf Education & How the EarthSchooling Program Uses Lesson Blocks

By Kristie Burns of www.EarthSchooling.com

Note: This article is intended to be useful for all people following a Waldorf inspired method of schooling or enrichment. Even if you do not use the Earthschooling lesson plans you will find this article very helpful in your planning.

When Rudolf Steiner started the first Waldorf school, he established the “main lesson”—a two-hour class during which all academic subjects except for foreign languages would be taught. The subjects taught in the main lesson were studied for block of time lasting from three weeks to three months. There are many activities that would fall outside of the main lesson block category, however. These include nature walks , bread making, cooking and circle time (which happen daily), some crafts and handiwork (which naturally flow into some lessons even if they are not your main lesson block focus) and review (for example, you may include some math review in your circle time even if that is not your main lesson block focus).

Teaching in main lesson blocks is one of the most successful features of Waldorf education, for it allows teachers to cover the curriculum intensively and allows the students to become immersed. I know from experience with myself and my own students and children that immersion is the most effective way to learn many things. Learning in a block allows a student to open up to a subject slowly and naturally learn or to open up to it quickly and fully experience the joy of becoming completely involved in something.

One wonderful and unique aspect of the Earthschooling program is that you can choose to use the program as a monthly enrichment or you can use it to work in blocks with your child. This article will discuss:

- A. The importance of blocks and how to use them
- B. How to use the Earthschooling program as a block-method
- C. Some specific examples for grade one – grade eight on how to plan the day

For ages 1-7 you will not be working in blocks. Instead you will follow a schedule that balances the head, heart and hands and breathing out activities with breathing in activities. I have provided a few sample schedules for this age in The Waldorf Year Planner that comes with your EarthSchooling lessons. Note also that foreign language, eurhythm, yoga, nature walks, movement, some academic review and some music are not usually done in blocks. A child has exposure to these each week.

If you are wanting to follow a block system with my lesson plans or any other lesson plans then you would include verses, a nature walk, foreign language, and perhaps some review or “short

lessons” in various subjects every day in the afternoon. In the morning, however, you would focus on one or two blocks of lessons. Some teachers hold firm to the “one block” at a time method. However, I find that with a smaller homeschooling class that two blocks can often be done at once as long as they are complimentary subjects. For example, if we are doing a lesson block on Native American stories we could easily do a grammar and writing block at the same time as these can “go together”. Or, if we are studying Greek Mythology it is also a natural time to do the block on Greece in general and learn more about the geography and culture of the country. I have provided a sample of our plans below which include two lesson blocks at a time. However, you can easily change them if you wish so instead of doing two lesson blocks during trimester one, you could do one lesson block at the first part of the trimester and another during the second half of the trimester. I have to admit I have also done that at times when my child needed that. I have three children and sometimes I have other children over for programs so the schedule below is an outline, but even I make changes and adaptations to it from time to time. As Steiner suggested, each teacher is unique. However, I hope this sample can inspire and guide you in your planning.

There is a large variance in the way teachers across the country do it. Even Steiner varied in the length of time he suggested that blocks be done. Some lasted as long as 3 weeks and others for 3 months. He also recognized that each teacher would need to establish this time for herself and her own class so he did not set an exact “rule” for an exact number of weeks for each subject. He suggested ranges of time. Additionally, you may plan to do a block for three months but feel “finished” at two months and want to move on. That is suitable too. Part of Waldorf education is to follow the natural rhythms of the child and life in general.

So How do I Integrate this into the Earthschooling Curriculum?

How Can I Use Another Curriculum in Block Format?

Each month of Earthschooling lesson plans focuses on one handiwork block, one literature block and one science block each month, so these are already planned into the year and in “block form”. If you look at the lesson plans for each month you will notice that I provide on only one or two handiwork lessons to focus on and only one or two science subjects per month. You may choose just one of these to focus on for your science block that month.

However, if you look at the literature I have provided each month you will find that I have provided more stories than anyone could use each month. This is so you can choose the block of literature that is most appropriate for your family, culture and season for that month. All the literature provided each month is age appropriate. You do not need to go through all the stories in one month – it is intended that you choose the ones appropriate for your block each month. However, if you are not working with a pure block method it is also completely acceptable to follow the stories each month as they are provided and according to your needs and preferences.

The only blocks that are not pre-planned each month are the math, cultural and language blocks. This is because we usually spend more than one month on these blocks. If you are a year or lifetime member you are given the math and language program for the year in block format to do when you want. If you are a monthly member you can purchase the math or language block in addition to your lessons (for only \$7.50). However, I do provide a sample of each of these blocks each month so no matter what month you start in and no matter what month you are using to “try out” the program, you will have everything you need for that month without making additional purchases.

Specific Instructions on How to Block Out the EarthSchooling Lessons

Important Pre-Notes and Tips in Blocking:

1. You will notice that I have provided many more stories than you will use each month. This is so you have more freedom in your language block planning. Depending on your focus for that month you can choose stories only from that genre and then, after a few months, change the stories you are choosing. For example, in first grade you could do the following in three-month blocks: fables & folktales, learning stories, science stories, and finally, fairytales So for August, September and October you may only use the Fables in the lesson plans, for the next three months you may only focus on the science stories and for the next three months you would only focus on the fairytales. You would not be using all the stories each month anyway. There is not enough time.
2. I usually focus on two blocks at a time for one trimester each. For handiwork, science and literature I work in 4 week blocks. The main lessons below are trimester blocks that we do in the morning. The 4-week blocks of handiwork, science, foreign language and music we do in the afternoon. This is just a sample of what works for us. Additionally, I may sometimes lengthen or shorten a block depending on what my child’s needs are.
3. Note also that just because you are working in blocks does not mean you will not use the skills from all areas. For example for one trimester we may focus on language, but we will still use it the entire year. We will just not focus on it. Or we may focus on math for a trimester but we won’t avoid it the rest of the year when it comes up. As much as possible we try to integrate math and language studies into all of our lesson blocks. We also try to integrate science, music, geography and many things. So don’t limit your learning possibilities by closing your mind to “tie in” opportunities or even a little “unschooling” or child-led lesson planning. The blocks are a way to focus your lessons and not limit them.
4. In the summer months my children and I do blocks of handiwork and extra lessons such as nutrition, herbal studies, woodworking, storytelling and other subjects. I offer these blocks in the form of e-books at www.TheWaldorfChannel.com If we have not finished a block during the year we may also work on it during the summer.
5. The lists below are an outline. For comprehensive lesson plans please visit www.EarthSchooling.com

Here are some specific guides for each age and how I organize our lessons...

First Grade:

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (counting, the four processes)

& Form Drawing (straight & curved lines), Folk Tales

Trimester Two: Language & Cultural Studies, Fairytales – European/Americas

Trimester Three: Drama & Writing, Fairytales – Asia, Australia, etc..

Afternoon:

Nature stories, nature walk

Nature based crafts & art

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages

Knitting/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Pentatonic recorder

Second Grade:

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (basics, the four processes: focus on addition) & Form Drawing (linear) - Fables

Trimester Two: Lower Case Letters & Grammar - Legends

Trimester Three: Saints & Heroes

Afternoon:

Nature stories, nature walk

Nature based crafts & art

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages

Foreign language games, poems and verses

Knitting/crochet/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Pentatonic recorder

Third Grade:

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (Measurements of volume, space, money and time) – Cursive writing – Form Drawing (Vertical Symmetry).

Trimester Two: Grammar & Spelling – Native American stories

Trimester Three: Old Testament stories

Afternoon:

Housebuilding & gardening

Nature based crafts & art

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Complex knitting/crochet/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Soprano recorder & reading music

Fourth Grade:

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (Division, Long Division) & Form Drawing (Celtic Knots)

Trimester Two: Grammar, Spelling & Essays – Local History & Geography (incl. mapping)

Trimester Three: Poetry – Norse Mythology - Zoology

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Field trips for local geography

Practice the four math processes. Weekly review.

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Complex knitting/crochet/embroidery/sculpture/drawing/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Soprano recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument.

Fifth Grade:

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (decimals, metric system) & Geometry - India & Persia

Trimester Two: Grammar, Research & Reports, Different kinds of writing, pen pals & Ancient Egypt

Trimester Three: Greek Mythology & Greece – North American Geography

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Botany/Nature walks – Vary intensity of study/science –vs- exploration and discovery

Practice the four math processes. Weekly review.

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Phrases and poems in foreign language of your choice.

Complex knitting like socks and mittens/crochet/embroidery/sculpture/drawing/painting/block crayons/beeswax modeling/carving, etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument. Do two and three-part rounds, harmonies and music from Persia, India, Greece, and Egypt.

Sixth Grade:

Morning:

Trimester One: Literature (Spelling, Biographies, Composition & Poetry) & Physics

Trimester Two: First Half: Math (ratio & estimation) & Latin America

Trimester Two: Second Half: Math (geometry) & Physics

Trimester Three: First Half: Rome & The Middle Ages & Astronomy

Trimester Three: Second Half: Geology (We include minerals and gems and studies on their effects in healing too)

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Botany Review/Nature walks – Vary intensity of study/science –vs- exploration and discovery

Practice the four math processes.

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Communication phrases in foreign language of your choice.

Knitting and sewing toys and clothing/drawing/painting/charcoal and pencil drawing/clay/carving a spoon or small toy, etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument. Do two and three-part rounds, harmonies and music from Latin America and Rome. This is a great chance to do some of that awesome Latin music!

Seventh Grade:

Morning:

Trimester One: Part One: Math (pre-algebra, geometry, negative numbers, cube root)

Trimester One: Part Two: Language (Writing reports, creative writing, spelling) & History (The Renaissance)

Trimester Two: Part One: Legends (such as King Arthur or other native legends from your region)

Trimester Two: Part Two: Physics (review and part two)

Trimester Three: Part One: Chemistry

Trimester Three: Part Two: European and African Geography

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Botany Review/Nature walks – Vary intensity of study/science –vs- exploration and discovery

Practice the four math processes.

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Communication phrases in foreign language of your choice. Start studying vocabulary lists and building vocabulary.

Knitting and sewing toys & clothing/drawing/painting/advanced drawing/advanced sculpting with clay/Advanced carving, etc...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument. Do two and three-part rounds, harmonies and music from the Renaissance. Ballads are also a good choice for this age.

Eighth Grade:

Morning:

Trimester One: Math (algebra & geometry) & Shakespeare & Other classic literature of your region or culture.

Trimester Two: Part One: Organic Chemistry

Trimester Two: Part Two: American History & Current Events

Trimester Three: Part One: Geography of Asia, Australia and Antarctica

Trimester Three: Part Two: Physics

Afternoon:

Nature based crafts & art

Nature walks – Vary intensity of study/science –vs- exploration and discovery

Circle time including songs & verse in other languages & rounds

Communication phrases in foreign language of your choice. Start studying vocabulary lists and building vocabulary. Venture into some “real life” experiences.

Sewing with machines/drawing/painting/drawing portraits and animals/advanced sculpting with clay/Advanced carving, basic woodworking skills, making simple wood items...depending on the monthly focus in the lesson plans

Recorder & continue to learn to read music & start learning to do duets or work in an orchestra situation – more than one instrument. Do two and three-part rounds, harmonies and music.

I found this wonderful reference list created by a Waldorf teacher. It summarizes the speeches and writings by Steiner and where he references lesson blocks.