

Waldorf School

Education to Freedom and Responsibility


Rudolf Steiner (1861 – 1925)



„ At school, it's not about getting all the possible education, but about getting prepared so that we could get it out on life experience“

Rudolf Steiner (1861 – 1925)

- founder of Waldorf alternative school
- austrian philosopher, educator, literary critic, artist, playwright, social thinker, esoteric
- was significantly influenced by the philosophy of W. Goethe
- * 1861 Kraljevec (Austrian and Hungarian border) in the family of an Austrian railway official
- † 1925 Dornach (Switzerland)
- final exam in Vienna, mathematics and natural sciences at university + lectures on philosophy, literature, psychology and medicine

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- student and teacher
 - 1891 field studies in philosophy at the University of Rostock
 - 1899 - 1904 teacher in Berlin - his life mission is to find new methods of exploring the soul on a scientific basis, he lectures the results of his investigation to a narrow range of interested listeners
 - personal correspondence with famous personalities of the cultural life (Ernst Haeckel), official representatives of German culture didnt notice to him for a long time
 - 1904 work Theosophia
 - author of anthroposophy

1913 Anthroposophic the company its base is
Goetheanum (Dornach)





Anthroposophy

- from Greece anthropos = human, sofia = wisdom
- the science of the spiritual nature of a man
- system of philosophical and pedagogical views on the education of a man
- based on Christianity, Eastern philosophies, Egyptian and Greek mysteries, the natural mysticism of Goethe's work



Waldorf School

- is one of the most significant ideas of alternative pedagogical thinking 20th century (the first school was founded in 1919)
- they vary in a number of knowledge, the teaching of foreign languages, nature is not divided into isolated parts when being taught
- there is a special subject called eurythmia (rhythmic aesthetic teaching)
- they pay close attention to the teacher's personality and for that reason creates a two-year teacher training

Waldorf Schools about themselves

- general development of a child in practical and artistic fields
- it is based on anthroposophy anthropology (distinctive view of a human, evolution cultivates respect for freedom of human individuality)
- want to discover pupil's abilities
- not to give freedom in the curriculum to any subject over a second one
- to achieve harmony between science, art and spiritual values
- illuminating basic principles by using obvious examples, not to overwhelm pupils with encyclopedic summaries



Waldorf Schools about themselves

- teaching of the main subjects conducted in two-hour blocks - called epochs, which are further divided into the rhythm, teaching and narrative part
- the lack of books (books can be complementary but the most important are pupil workbooks that they make themselves)
- certificate in the form of verbal assessment, it is not possible repeat a year
- one class teacher throughout the whole time of school
- an important part of the training is image, rhythm and movement, activity



The first Waldorf School

- open on 7th September 1919 on the request of Emil Molt in the village of Waldorf, Stuttgart
- by the establishment of a school based on Steiner's ideals Molt wanted primarily to give to his employees children the possibility of new adequate education
- first Waldorf school started with eight teachers and 175 pupils
- management of first Waldorf School was very loose for those times
 - voluntary tasks formulated to arouse interest
- strict, externally enforced discipline is rejected
- all school activities = thanks to direct contact between teachers and students

Anthroposophy as the basis of Waldorf education

- educational system of philosophical views, science about the nature of human
- Rudolf Steiner founded the first Anthroposophic Society in the early 20th century
- human, according to Steiner, is a complex of three worlds (body, soul, spirit) these are represented by three body types: physical, etheric, astral and fourth type - „me“
- it is related to the division of childhood into three stages and the seven-year development periods, to which the educational content is adapted (personal experience from Katie: colour of classrooms, subject content adjusted to age, plays & performances, „Morgenspruch“ & rhythm games)



Human development in terms of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education

- up to 7 years - development physical body
- important is example and imitation, the greatest freedom possible; it is not practical explanation or influence on the rational side

- up to 14 years - development of etheric body
- importance of the natural authority of a teacher as a model, influence through parable and moral examples; the will is formed, development of memory; importance of music and art

- from 14 years - development of astral body
- aesthetic, moral and religious sectors are preferred; are generated out of authentic courts and judgments about things and phenomena memorial and emotional contents

- around 21 years - birth of a free, creative and independent human



Three of the objectives followed in Waldorf schools (Trostli)

- ❑ to develop the ability to think clearly, logically and creatively, to lead children to self-knowledge
- ❑ to discover and develop skills of deep feeling, sensitivity to the beauty, the joys and the sorrows of this world, to others
- ❑ Cultivate the strength and willingness to do what has to be done, to work not only for ourselves but for the benefit of all human kind and the Earth



Structuring, organization and management of the Waldorf School

- Kindergarten - preschool degree
- Twelve years of school - classes team remains unchanged
- 1st - 8th year – lower level (elementary school)
- class teacher teaches almost all the subjects
- 9th - 12th year - is higher (upper) level (high school)
- different teachers for vocational subjects
- 13th year with maturity (final) exam
- Headmaster is not responsible for the school management but The entire staff in cooperation with the association of parents, teachers and friends of the Waldorf School. (personal experience from Katie: How a Waldorf school in Berne, Switzerland is managed by the staff and the impression of it)

Internal organization of teaching

- the division of subjects on the main and training (vocational)
- main teaching - didactic form EPOCH (combined two or three lessons, discusses the same subject for three to six weeks, epochs are repeated about every six months)
mother tongue, mathematics, geography, history, science education, physics, chemistry and others.
- training (vocational) classes - takes place in normal lessons (45 min), focus on subjects that require constant exercise
foreign languages, practical work, religion, eurythmy
- daily class schedule includes theoretical, artistic and practical subjects
- during the school year - monthly festivals, holidays, class games, excursions, trips
(personal experience from Katie: 12th class theatre play, concert at Goetheanum in Dornach)

School Day at the Waldorf School

- rhythmic alternation of the main teaching (epochal) and training - in accordance with the basic life-rhythms and hygiene requirements
- initiation of a day - 15 to 30 minutes simple art activities
- the main subject - two-hour block called epoch
- training subjects for 45 min. (or another two-hour block)
- 5th, 6th class - afternoon classes (practical, artistic courses and physical activities)
- daily class schedule includes theoretical, artistic and practical subjects
- during the school year - monthly festivals, holidays, class games, excursions, trips



The Curriculum

- They do not have a precise and uniform curriculum framework plans but these are adapted to the needs of every school
- anthropocentric
- trying to reconcile science, art and religion

Epochs

- ❑ monothematic two-hour block of teaching
- ❑ always at the beginning of day
- ❑ a teacher develops a given topic (eg. maths, house building, the history of Greece)
- ❑ emphasis on the aesthetic and working subjects and foreign languages
- ❑ one main subject, usually for 3-6 weeks continuously, then begins another the main subject of the next epoch
- ❑ epochs are usually taught by one classroom teacher
- ❑ divides the rhythm, teaching and narrative section
- ❑ advantage of epochs – undistributed pupil s attention for many subjects

- ❑ subject which appears only on Waldorf School **eurythmy** - art to express the idea of movement, music or your own experience
- ❑ **personal experience from Katie: examples of epochs**

Evaluation

- ❑ students are not graded
- ❑ valued by characteristics that always relate to the abilities of each child
- ❑ are not compared with other pupils
- ❑ receive recommendations for pupils further development
- ❑ pupil shall not be forfeited, pupils usually stay together as a group throughout the whole course of schooling
- ❑ personal experience from Katie: critics and „dark side“ of this kind of evaluation

Methods

- They use image, rhythm and movement
- Three phases of each individual procedure - recognizing, understanding and creation of skills:
 1. observation, experience, experimentation
 2. remembering, describing, drawing, verbalizing
 3. processing, analysis, abstraction, generalization, formation theories
- Includes a range of physical activities
- The pupils learns to catch himself, record, describe and document all learning material by himself in an epoch workbook

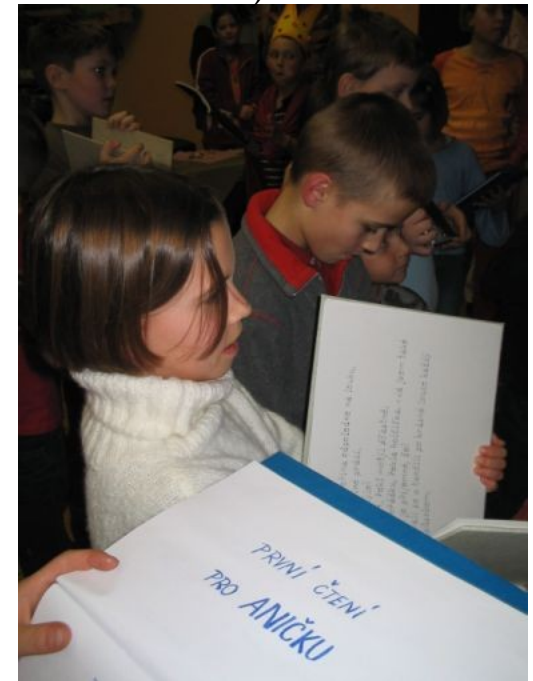


Aids at the Waldorf School I.

- *materials*, that the teacher creates himself or in cooperation with other colleagues
- *books* - can be complementary (eg. exercise books and atlases), rather than the main means of teaching
- *pupil s workbooks and notebooks for the epochs*

Aids at the Waldorf School II.

- ❑ traditional type of textbooks are considered to be a secondary sources and "passive" learning resources – limited use
- ❑ the basis aids are "active" learning resources (collections of texts, original documents, statistics, encyclopedias, manuals, which creates a teacher)
- ❑ pupils recording the curriculum in the epoch notebooks (teacher checks requires corrections and additions)
- ❑ media are not used in teaching
- ❑ personal experience from Katie: pros and cons of typical Waldorf aids, e.g. old fashioned school books and media)



Negative Pages of Waldorf School

- ❑ small continuity eg. primary schools to regular secondary schools
- ❑ some students can develop feelings of frustration eg. the fact that at the they school learned nothing systematic, that they will not be able to cope graduates from other schools
- ❑ excessive pupil s freedom at these alternative schools leads to a lower level of educational attainment
- ❑ education often provide young teachers, who usually have little experience
- ❑ does not put enough emphasis on the standard pedagogical university education (class teacher from first to eighth year teaches almost all subjects, as a prerequisite serves graduation and completion of education workshops for teachers of Waldorf education)
- ❑ opinion that it imposes pupils certain (almost dogmatic) style education, not open to scientific criticism or confrontation with other alternative schools

Waldorf Schools in the Czech republic

- Brno, České Budějovice, Hradec Králové, Jeseník, Karlovy Vary, Olomouc, Ostrava, Pardubice, Písek, Praha, Příbram, Semily
- Currently, the most common type of alternative schools (over 900 Waldorf Schools worldwide 35 in Czech republic)



Overview of Waldorf Schools

□ Kindergarten

Beroun, Boseň, Brno, České Budějovice, Karlovy Vary, Klatovy, Olomouc, Písek, Praha 3, Praha 6, Příbram, Rovensko pod Troskami, Sedlčany, Staré Ždánice, Semily, Strakonice, Turnov, Žďár n. Sázavou

□ Primary (Elementary) School

Brno, Olomouc, Ostrava, Pardubice, Písek, Praha 5, Praha 6, Příbram, Semily

□ Secondary School

Ostrava, Praha, Příbram, Semily

□ Special School

Praha

Samples of some types of Waldorf Schools



- **Waldorf class** - special color tones (different in each class, corresponding to the psyche of each age), flowers, artwork and amount of students paintings and products
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- ❑ learning by experience
 - ❑ emphasis on artistic and creative aspect of teaching
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- ❑ handicrafts
- ❑ foreign language teaching



Demonstration of a physical activity during the maths lessons - 4th grade



Sample of English language teaching

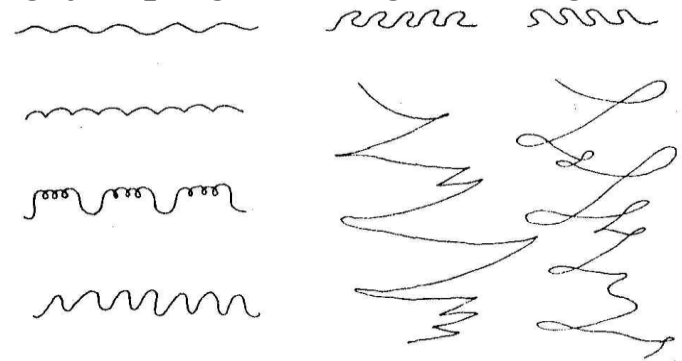
- Letters deduction:
- every letter has a story, characteristic and color

- example, the letter „W“
 - teacher tells a story, which plays an important role in the water, the sea (eg. The Little Mermaid), will focus on colorful description of waves
 - children along with teachers demonstrate the movement of hands and whole body and say, "wave after wave of swirling wind, high water sprayed upward."
 - the next day everything is repeated and pupils paint pictures of the stormy sea
 - with the teacher s help in the middle of waves appears the letter „w“ in blue colour



Samples of drawing forms

- it is a specific subject, it is dynamic drawing that expresses feelings, rhythm and movement
- by drawing patterns children find out the world around them, they will explore geometric shapes (sun, conch, spiral etc.).
- the picture show depicting of the rhythm of walking, jumping, dancing, blowing wind, a stream of water, waves, flight
- with drawing forms writing teaching is also linked to
- exercise fine motor skills



Samples of drawing forms – 4th grade



The first school in the Czech Republic, which began work on the principles of Waldorf education – *ZŠ Svobodná v Písku (od 1990/91)*





Steiner School Bern

<http://www.steinerschule-bern.ch>