Eighth Grade

General Curriculum:
Revolutions, American History, Modern History, World Geography to Current Events, Organic Chemistry, Physics (hydraulics), Physiology, Meteorology, American Literature (short story), Geometry (Platonic Solids), Algebra

A key question asked by Waldorf educators is, “What can be taught to the child that will support, strengthen, and actively engage him?” The question is not, “When will he understand a given topic?” but rather, “When will a particular topic be the most relevant; making use of, and strengthening, developing capacities?”

The eighth grade curriculum is designed to help the students know the modern world: from history to science to literature; the aim is to help the 13 and 14 year old students feel at home in the present world, with their own emerging individualities. They become familiar with the world through history, literature, geography, and science, and have achieved a level of expertise in various skills that allows them to walk through the world with confidence. They will usually have regained the emotional balance they had lost in the sixth or seventh grade, and will end the eighth grade year filled with gratitude for the past eight years and enthusiasm for the coming challenges of high school.

Eighth grade projects are often incorporated into the curriculum. Students spend time with professionals in the local community, to learn about fields in which they have an interest. This is a year-long project that usually consists of three additional parts: a written research paper, an oral presentation in front of a community, and the creation of a physical "product." Eighth grade students also participate in a project within the community which presents an artistic and meaningful gift to that community.

Eighth grade students are also actively involved in their school community, mentoring incoming first grade students.

At the end of their eight years with each other, eighth grade classes embark upon a last journey together. In preparation for the eighth grade class trip, students are also often involved in fund-raising activities. The eighth grade trip is intended to be an experience that challenges the students as individuals, as well as calls upon them to work together in a team. Service is often a trip component, as well as cultural diversity.

Specialty Subject and Additional Classes

After the two hour main lesson, the rest of the school day is devoted to ongoing studies in regularly scheduled specialty classes.

In addition to supplementary math and language arts classes taught by the class teacher, there is a range of other specialty classes offered. These classes are often taught by a teacher particularly skilled and trained in this subject area.

Foreign Language

Spanish is taught from Kindergarten through Eighth grade, by a language teacher who specializes in this subject. Students learn the language, customs, cultural aspects, and geography associated with the Spanish speaking world through an engaging and lively curriculum. Most students graduate from our school to enter Spanish 2 in high school.

Spanish language instruction in the first few years is purely oral, consisting mostly of Spanish songs and stories; reading and writing of Spanish is introduced toward the end of third grade. Spanish language teaching in the first three or four years aims to give the students a sense of a greater belonging and understanding of the other and to attune the ear to the language. The Spanish classes increase in academic content and rigor as the students' progress through the grades.

Handwork

In handwork classes, students learn to knit, crochet, sew by hand, machine sew, cross stitch, wet felt, embroider and weave. They study form and create items from patterns they, themselves, have drawn. They work with color, shape and textile variation to create beautiful and functional products, from start to finish.

Current research shows a connection between fine motor skills and brain development. Activities such as knitting or crocheting also involve using both sides of the brain. Other skills reinforced by handwork are as basic as eye tracking and numeracy.

Eurythmy

As part of an interdisciplinary approach that appeals to multiple intelligences, Waldorf education has some unique aspects to its curriculum. Better known in European countries, Eurythmy is the art of movement, that attempts to make visible the tone and feeling of music and speech. Eurythmy helps to develop concentration, self-discipline, spatial awareness and a sense of beauty. This training of moving artistically within a group stimulates awareness of others, as well as individual mastery. Eurythmy lessons follow the themes of the curriculum; exploring rhyme, meter, story, and geometric forms.

Orchestra and Music

Music is a recognized as an important part of education within the Waldorf curriculum. Every student learns to sing chorally in rounds and parts, learns how to play the pentatonic and diatonic recorder, and plays a stringed instrument in the school orchestra. From first to third grade music is taught by ear, and direct instruction in reading music begins in third grade.

The violin is introduced in fourth grade. When students enter fifth grade, they are able to choose between the violin, viola or cello. In their orchestra class, students continue to learn how to read music, timing, and to play intricate parts for various songs from modern to classical genres. Students have regular opportunities to perform for their school and wider community.

Many students become life-long musicians and go on to play other instruments, sing in choirs, teach music to others, and enjoy participating in various musical groups outside of their school careers.

Woodworking

Woodworking takes skill, creativity, patience, the application of practical mathematics and an artful eye. There are many lessons to be learned from working with your hands and using tools to create something out of raw wood. Waldorf students from fifth to eighth grade, learn to carve, sand, and finish projects; utilizing various basic tools, during this class. Students learn how common items such as chairs and stools are formed. They apply physics and math as they create beautiful and functional pieces.

Advanced Mathematics

Eighth grade students with an aptitude for mathematics may be a part of an advanced mathematics class. This provides a group of students with the opportunity to solve problems creatively and collaboratively at their own pace. They are under the direction of a teacher whose specialty and passion is mathematics.

Physical Education and Games classes

Along with the need for opportunities to express and move freely is the need to learn discipline and control within that movement. Purposeful movement helps the student find the boundary between him and another; to start and stop when necessary, to develop a sense of where he is and what is around him; in front, to the side and also behind. Folk and circle dances increase a sense of community as we need to keep in time with each other, have a gentle hand and switch to many partners within a dance. Team sports enable students to work collaboratively and supportively with each other as they strive to achieve a common goal and extend themselves to their potential. As well as traditional sports and

games, Waldorf schools incorporate many other less traditional opportunities to learn through movement.

Some of the forms movement instruction takes in early grades classes are; movement games, folk dances, rod exercises, jumping rope, games, pogo sticks, stilts, ball games, math in movement, gardening and other practical physical activities. Students work on balance, coordination, strength, stamina, speed and spatial awareness through games classes and morning circle activities.

As classes progress through the grades, sports skills are taught and team sports are played. Students learn how to throw a javelin and a discus, and participate in long jump, relay and wrestling in the fifth grade. They learn archery in the sixth grade. In the seventh and eighth grades, they compete against other local Waldorf schools in track meets; which include events such as running, shot put, high jump, javelin and discus.