Place-Based Curriculum Design for a South Florida Waldorf School

by

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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 4  
Introduction ..................................................................................................................................... 5  
Literature Review ............................................................................................................................ 6  
   Why Place-Based Pedagogy? ...................................................................................................... 6  
      Place and People ...................................................................................................................... 9  
   Critical Pedagogy and Place-Based Pedagogy ....................................................................... 11  
   Waldorf Education .................................................................................................................... 12  
      History of Waldorf Education ............................................................................................... 12  
      Waldorf Education and Place-based Learning .................................................................... 13  
   The Goal and the Practical Work .............................................................................................. 15  
   Research Method ....................................................................................................................... 16  
   Summary of Literature Review ................................................................................................. 17  
Inquiry ........................................................................................................................................... 17  
Curriculum Design and Mapping ................................................................................................. 18  
   Curriculum Content ................................................................................................................... 18  
   Curriculum Design .................................................................................................................... 19  
      Place-based Approach ............................................................................................................ 19  
      Alignment with Waldorf Philosophy – Educating the Head, Heart, and Hands ................ 19  
         Art and Artistic Teaching in Waldorf Education ............................................................... 20  
         Stories in the Waldorf Classroom ...................................................................................... 21  
   Waldorf School of Palm Beach Standards ............................................................................. 21  
   Best Practices ........................................................................................................................... 22  
   Florida Standards ..................................................................................................................... 23  
The Curriculum ............................................................................................................................... 24  
      Sample Lesson Plan: Day 2 of the block ........................................................................... 35  
Outcomes ....................................................................................................................................... 37  
Assessments ................................................................................................................................. 38  
Activities ....................................................................................................................................... 39  
Essential Questions ....................................................................................................................... 39  
Resources ....................................................................................................................................... 39
Abstract

While there is a tendency to standardize curriculum to make it easier to assess progress and plan intervention, a more localized approach is better suited for reaching the educational goals that societies need. Place-based learning is essential for connecting students’ education to their natural environment, personal experiences, and the societal struggles of their place of living. By being independent of centrally mandated standards, Waldorf schools are excellent candidates for developing and implementing educational programs that make learning meaningful and relevant to the students’ lives and communities.

This paper includes research into the theory of place-based education, a list of best practices, and finally, a place-based 6th-grade history curriculum piece.

As I started to apply the concepts of this work, I learned that there is no grade level or academic subject that does not lend itself to a place-based approach. It is only a matter of time and effort to understand what local means and how it connects to learning goals. The positive feedback from my students and their increased level of engagement have confirmed the validity of this approach.
Introduction

Cost-efficiency and the need for oversight push schools to become more standardized and centralized. Teachers must dedicate large chunks of time to testing so that the results can be later compared and analyzed for funding and intervention purposes. Standardized testing promotes further standardization in teaching so that apples can be compared to apples. Mandated curriculum standards leave little room for personalization and teacher creativity, and they require that valuable teaching time be given over to testing. There is also little room for connecting with local history, local societal struggles, and the immediate natural environment when the teaching material is uniform. Can students receive personally meaningful, holistic education in this manner?

Waldorf schools and many other independent schools have much more freedom than their public-school counterparts to choose how they teach and what they teach. However, this freedom comes with great responsibility: to make education rigorous, fulfilling, challenging, thought-provoking, and relevant for the time and place.

This project aims to introduce a place-based approach to improving and refining the curriculum of a South Florida Waldorf school, one of over 2,000 Waldorf schools around the globe.

The following literature review summarizes the ideas that guided the research into creating a place-based curriculum segment for a South Florida Waldorf school. First, it outlines the theory behind place-based pedagogy and attempts to answer the question: why is it essential that students receive a place-based education? It also examines philosophies that can guide curriculum development at a macro level. Next, it defines place-based learning versus
"placeless" learning (Gruenewald 2016) and establishes its relationship to critical pedagogy. Next, it substantiates that critical pedagogy is a proper approach for this curriculum project. Finally, the literature review outlines the specifics of how critical pedagogy is an appropriate lens for this type of inquiry. Additionally, it includes some criticism of this approach and its limitations. It concludes with my opinion of how to use it to the advantage of this project while ignoring some outdated aspects.

Next, it provides a brief introduction to Waldorf Education and establishes why this form of education is well-suited for a place-based learning initiative. It identifies the goals of creating such a program and the practical questions that guide it.

The last chapter of the literature review provides supporting information for gathering best practices. It explains why I chose qualitative research for this phase of my work and how I accomplished it. The literature review is followed by the actual curriculum piece developed based on the research findings.

**Literature Review**

**Why Place-Based Pedagogy?**

In an era when the curriculum is increasingly standardized and centralized, and teacher and student performance are constantly measured and analyzed, place-based education initiatives offer educators a fresh breath of air. Such initiatives can invigorate the work of those educators who want to impact their immediate social and ecological environment and feel the calling to reflect on their educational practices. The mainstream curriculum seems to have become "placeless," one that substitutes meaningful exploration with "abstractions and simulations" carried out in the classroom (Gruenewald, 2016). It relies solely on textbooks, pictures, and
descriptions by teachers that have been "pre-digested" rather than involving the students in first-hand experiences. Gruenewald claims that "it limits, devalues, and distorts local geographical experience." On the other hand, place-based pedagogy respects and honors indigenous cultures, the natural environment, students’ connection to their community, and the historical and societal context of the place.

Teachers are discovering the great value in connecting virtually every subject to the place where they teach it. It can be immensely motivating for students to see, touch, or in other ways experience their environment as they draw conclusions from first-person experiences. Math teachers found that such an approach helped their students become more motivated to learn, for instance, by using activities in the woods surrounding the school (Howley, 2011). In art classes, explorations of color and symbols, the work of local artists, and discussions about personal experiences with one's surroundings deepen cultural understanding (Graham, 2015). Images are a medium of communication that form a personal and collective identity. For younger children, images in picture books that resemble their natural environment make the story more understandable and personally meaningful (Wason-Ellam, 2010). In a world permeated by digital images, stories of distant or artificial lands lack the local sentiment and the connection to children's real-life experiences.

From the perspective of engagement, another strong argument for place-based learning is the positive effect of engaging the entire physical body in the learning (such as kayaking in the wetlands of South Florida) or connecting with local establishments for a genuinely personal experience (Johnson, 2016). Geography comes alive when students travel, and scientific phenomena gain new meaning when students experience them rather than hear about them from their teacher. Physics becomes real when communicating vessels are taught in the context of
local aquifers, water towers, and our drinking water. Interacting with the community hones students’ communication and research skills as well (Santelmann, 2011).

Place-based learning has two commonly identified purposes in US education: *reinhabitation* and *decolonization*, although there is much more in store for those willing to embark on this journey.

An example of *reinhabitation* is a park restoration project involving students in science classes in urban high schools (Dimick’s 2016). The students not only restored an environmentally-degraded park, but they also learned to work through complex issues, appreciate place-based knowledge, recognize social injustice, and drive change for a more sustainable future.

An example of *decolonization* efforts in teacher training is when pre-service teachers were asked to reflect on stories they had heard about their families, communities, and nation. Through this exercise, they came to a deeper understanding of their heritage (Hampton and DeMartini, 2017). They "confront[ed] the tensions, discomfort, and difficult truths" of linear colonial history. Participants in the study experienced shifts in their consciousness, which allowed them to question old narratives and prepare them to tell new stories. This process is part of the *decolonization* of history.

It takes openness and courage for teachers to question old perspectives and potentially develop new ones if the old ones no longer ring to be true. One example of this is how the story of Christopher Columbus has been taught in schools for decades, if not centuries. Depending on the point of view, Columbus is an explorer and discoverer. From another perspective, he invaded the Americas, and his arrival eventually led to the decimation of natives, loss of cultures and
languages, and the oppression of the surviving indigenous population. There are multiple
narratives to this story, each with its point of view and its unique perspective on "how power is
exercised within and between cultural communities and at particular historical moments"
(Bothelo, Young, Nappi, 2014). Such ideas highlight the great responsibility teachers have when
choosing literature for classroom use. Of course, the teacher's choice will encourage certain
views, or it may distort them. However, if the teacher approaches each group they teach about
with respect, the students will learn to value each for their way of life and contribution to the
world.

Elevating indigenous knowledge in a world dominated by Western science and Euro-
centric thinking levels the playing field for place-based knowledge (Johnson, 2012). It allows for
seeing what has been hidden, reflecting on multiple views, and eventually, transforming thought.
It is only after understanding our own beliefs and preconceptions that we can speak to our
students without discomfort about, for instance, colonization, racial and societal issues, and other
complex subjects.

Place and People

The name 'place-based education' is indeed a summary of many ideas. It encompasses
way more than a physical location, its history, and its heritage. It also represents the people who
live here now, who make up society today. In the case of a school, it includes the teachers, the
students, their families, and their extended community. In Palm Beach County, where I live, our
community is very diverse. For instance, 38 percent of the 25 to 44-year-old population is
foreign-born (McHugh & Morawski, 2016). This age group represents most of the parents at an
elementary school.
As a consequence, the children speak many different languages and form a very diverse society. Then, add a mix of teachers who are transplants and bring with them their own cultural and linguistic heritage. The cultural richness presents challenges, but more importantly, understanding this diversity offers opportunities for teachers.

My personal experience has led me to believe that the teacher's heritage and life experience also significantly impact the students' thinking. When the teacher is authentic in their presentation, the students are inspired. When I speak to my students about my upbringing and the traditions in my home, they feel that what I am sharing is real. For instance, when I teach about the fall of Rome through the example of the migrating Hungarian tribes (which is my heritage), my students become fascinated by the intricacies of the two worlds colliding. Questions bubble up in students, and the lesson becomes alive with history. Such examples are evidence that teachers should search for personal connections in everything they teach. It requires reflection, and we must free ourselves of biases first, however.

Another key idea is culturally responsive teaching. As defined by Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching is “using the heritages, experiences, and perspectives of different ethnic and racial groups to teach students who are members of them more effectively." Teachers, neighbors, extended family are all part of this group. As teachers, it is our job to learn who our community is while respecting those who formed the place before us. As Sobel et al. (2011) put it, “Teachers who make themselves aware of the learners’ backgrounds and life experiences are better prepared to adapt instruction in responsive ways.”
Critical Pedagogy and Place-Based Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education that encourages educators to question social structures. Through their enlightenment, teachers inspire their students to challenge power structures, oppressive practices, and inequalities.

Place-based pedagogy uses the critical pedagogy lens to explore how local problems, experiences, histories, geography, and language shape a community's identity. Furthermore, it requires teachers to become agents of change to transform oppressive practices into ones that best serve the local community and create a sustainable future (McLaren & Giroux, 1990, p. 263). In this sense, place-based pedagogy and critical pedagogy are complementary traditions. Gruenewald (2016) took the idea one step further and coined a new term when he said a "conscious synthesis that blends the two discourses into a critical pedagogy of place." While many environment and science teachers and philosophers agree with this notion, Bowers (2008) calls the synthesis of the two an oxymoron.

Bowers points out that the founders of critical pedagogy (Paulo Freire and John Dewey) assumed that change is inherently progressive, and they had no concern for its impact on the environment. They also made references to indigenous people as being less evolved in their consciousness. Hence, he finds that critical pedagogy cannot complement place-based pedagogy, which promotes environmental awareness and the respect of old and new cultures. Bowers (2008) finds that even the current generation of critical pedagogy theorists (Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and David Gruenewald) draw so much from the original philosophy that "the silences and prejudices" of the forefathers prevent the synthesis of the two schools of thought.

Despite Bower's well-researched and logical train of thought, I believe that place-based pedagogy benefits from the critical pedagogy approach because its foundational notion to
question and critique existing systems and curricula helps explore the concept of place-based learning. It is a tool to help form questions that will lead to new explorations and a new understanding of our society and local ecology. Philosophies are only helpful as long as they advance us or help us better understand the world around us. Certain aspects of philosophies have to be reviewed and replaced from time to time -- this is a natural evolution of thought.

**Waldorf Education**

**History of Waldorf Education**

Waldorf education is based on the insights of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), a world-renowned philosopher, scientist, teacher, and artist. His hundreds of recorded and transcribed lectures, along with his books and letters, form the basis of what we understand as anthroposophy today. In his own words, anthroposophy is “a path of knowledge, to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe” (Steiner & Adams, 1973). Such descriptions often leave people confused, yet through careful study, generations of educators have gained a deep understanding of the human being from his work. This knowledge of human development informs teachers about the needs of the growing child. (https://www.waldorfeducation.org/waldorf-education). A basic premise of Waldorf education is that children should receive an education that supports their physical, emotional, and intellectual development holistically.

The first Waldorf school opened its doors in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919, under Steiner's guidance. Emil Molt, the owner of the Waldorf cigarette factory, was an enthusiastic follower of Steiner, and the school was created for his workers' children. After over 100 years, the pedagogy is still alive. Today there are about 2,000 Waldorf schools across the globe. Waldorf pedagogy’s
ability to spread across cultures and stay relevant over such an extended period speaks of the depth and adaptability of this form of education.

Waldorf Education and Place-based Learning

The drive to localize the Waldorf School of Palm Beach curriculum in Boca Raton, Florida, fueled this research into place-based pedagogy. Waldorf education lends itself naturally to such initiative. As described by AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools of North America), "It upholds the principles of freedom in education and engages independent administration locally, continentally and internationally" (https://www.waldorfeducation.org). Each Waldorf school develops its scope and sequence for the curriculum it wishes to cover, and there is no centrally mandated program to follow. Moreover, the Waldorf approach promotes "intellectual flexibility, creative thinking, independent judgment, moral discernment, refined written and oral communication skills, and the ability to collaborate effectively" (https://www.waldorfeducation.org) -- all of which are necessary to fulfill the goals of place-based pedagogy, namely to "have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit" (Gruenewald, 2016).

In 2015 and 2016, The International Forum for Steiner Waldorf Education revised its guidance for the worldwide Waldorf school movement and included elements that support and encourage the localizing of education. They state that "… the use of Rudolf Steiner's specifications for lessons which relate, for example, more to Western cultural values could be supplemented or replaced by cultural content of corresponding value as long as the educational effect is maintained” (Key characteristics of Waldorf Education, 2016). It recognizes the various cultural, geographical, and political spaces that these schools operate in and that “Every region
and country have their own access to world history which is the result of its unique history and also affects the curriculum.”

Waldorf schools are prime candidates for implementing place-based pedagogy because they have the freedom to adapt their curriculum for local needs and have the tools to do this work. Such tools include experiential learning and their unique schedule that allows ample time for students to wrestle with new concepts. The day begins with Morning Lesson, which is about 1.5 to 2 hours long. It includes a variety of activities centered around the same topic. Topics or subjects rotate every 3 or 4 weeks (or blocks). After the Morning Lesson, the students have subject classes that often include two foreign languages, handwork, music, orchestra, painting, math, language arts practice, woodworking, and Eurythmy.

In Waldorf schools, teachers “...devote time in the curriculum for students to wonder and then discover”, and they incorporate play and imagination into learning because these elements allow children to process, transform, create, and learn to take risks (Nordlund, 2013). This allows for more freedom in transformative thinking.

Teachers not only value reflection but accept art as a form of reflection or assessment. Instead of evaluating progress solely through written tests and assignments, students may be asked to paint, draw, sing, act, dance, or debate. These reflections allow the students to process, synthesize, and then share their new impressions and discoveries. The "products" of these reflections provide feedback to the teacher about learning outcomes.
The Goal and the Practical Work

The theoretical research has established the need for place-based learning and that Waldorf schools can be a fertile ground for such. We now arrive at the need for guidance for implementing such ideas in practice. It is helpful to begin by recognizing that education has both micro and macro-objectives (McLaren, 2017). Micro objectives take us on a "content-bound path of inquiry," whereas macro-objectives connect students with society. By combining the two, we can deliver true education. To help achieve both objectives, I used an evaluation rubric when planning the curriculum piece. This rubric is in the Evaluation chapter (page 40) of this paper.

Another piece of advice comes from Giroux (2019) in the form of a question for teachers to ponder: “What kind of agents are we going to produce and what kind of narratives that students can understand that enlarge their perspective of the world?” This was a question that I returned to repeatedly as I gathered and sorted through stories and activities while I planned the block curriculum. Fortunately, other Waldorf schools provided excellent examples.

Educators at the Honolulu Waldorf School set out to explore the notion of place-based learning in their school. Boland and Demirbag (2017) published a paper on their action research that involved engaging with local communities, facilitating discussion groups within faculty, inviting teachers to conferences on the topic, creating artistic responses and practical projects, and conducting theoretical research. This ongoing work has already resulted in a deeper understanding of Hawai‘i’s values and culture among teachers. In addition, they showed an increased ability to connect with the land and gained motivation to incorporate this connection into their teaching while breaking with eurocentrism.
There are efforts underway in other US Waldorf schools as well. Waldorf School at Moraine Farm (waldorfmoraine.org) and Green Meadow Waldorf School (www.gmws.org) mention place-based learning on their websites as a feature of their program.

Research Method

The research included two parts: first, learning about how Waldorf schools have developed and implemented a place-based curriculum, and second, developing a place-based curriculum segment for South Florida. The most straightforward way to learn about what schools have done so far involves qualitative research. Qualitative methods explore a phenomenon and have flexibility in eliciting information and opinions (Mack et al., 2005, Table 1, p. 3). Therefore, they provide a wealth of information and ideas to be categorized and sorted to identify the commonalities and the unusual approaches. In-depth interviews provided the necessary information to gather best practices in Waldorf Schools. "The term “best practice” implies that it is best when compared to any alternative course of action and that it is a practice designed to achieve some deliberative end.” (Bretschneider et al., 2005),

I have interviewed experienced Waldorf teachers about their practice of applying place-based learning theories in their work. In Gall, Gall & Borg's (2015, chapter 15) view, this type of research would fall mostly under Narrative Research, although some might consider Best Practices Research its domain.

The interview questions uncovered specific practices and guiding questions that helped those schools create and teach place-based curricula. There were many similar ideas and some unique, creative ones. Their list is in the Design section of this paper under Best Practices (page 22).
Summary of Literature Review

The literature review demonstrates the efficacy and benefits of place-based education. It helps students learn about the history, infrastructure, and natural environment of their place of living and makes the entire learning process more enjoyable and more meaningful.

Extensive research supports place-based education both in the theoretical realm of critical pedagogy and place-based pedagogy and in the practical realm reflected in case studies of successful applications. Waldorf schools are excellent candidates for such an initiative. Finally, the literature review lays out a plan for gathering best practices of place-based teaching and developing a place-based curriculum piece for South Florida.

Inquiry

I have created a curriculum piece for a 6th-grade class in a Waldorf school. I used a place-based approach to make the learning meaningful and engaging for students living in South Florida today. This approach will strengthen my students’ “sense of place”, connect them to their local community and history, their family heritage, their natural environment, and it will include the people who lived here before us.

I wanted to work on a topic that posed a true challenge for teachers who wanted to localize their curriculum. I chose Medieval History because this period is remote both in time and space (as it centers around Europe), and it seemingly offers little connection to our lives today. Additionally, Waldorf schools’ curriculums are often criticized as strongly Eurocentric, and this particular block can be easily seen as proof that teaching follows a European perspective on history. One could even argue that teaching Medieval history to students growing up outside
of Europe may be redundant altogether. Later, in the Design segment of this paper, I summarize the pedagogical reasons why this module is a necessary building block of a child's education regardless of what continent they call home.

This curriculum piece is intended for Waldorf schools, so key elements of the Waldorf teaching philosophy and methodology permeate the design and the delivery. Moreover, I aligned the outcomes with the Scope and Sequence document of the Waldorf School of Palm Beach. The Waldorf School of Palm Beach is an independent school. It is independent because it has a unique mission, is managed by an independent board of trustees, and does not receive government funding. This level of independence allows for great freedom in teaching from the perspective of curriculum materials, pace, teaching staff, and even educational goals.

**Curriculum Design and Mapping**

**Curriculum Content**

The curriculum addresses the main aspects of life in feudal Europe and other parts of the world between the 5th century and the end of the 15th century. This period is significant in human history as it is a resting point between the fall of the Roman empire and the beginning of the renaissance. It leads to the development of the cultural, scientific, economic, and social structures that we live in today. The content is interdisciplinary because it includes historical facts, visual arts, music, and literature.

In order to connect with the Indigenous roots of the place and our natural environment, I included a segment on local Florida history dating back to about 1,000 years ago.
Curriculum Design

Place-based Approach

Our geographic location shapes who we are, how we live, and how we raise our children.

This curriculum incorporates multiple elements of place-based pedagogy. The stories reflect the rich cultural background of the student and teacher population at the Waldorf School of Palm Beach. Very few of the students or the current faculty were born in Florida, so transplants and immigrants (mainly from Latin America) make up most of the school community. Mixing of cultures, traditions, and languages is characteristic of the school and the broader community. We live in a subtropical climate, and our very urban living space is bordered by the ocean on one side and the Everglades on the other.

I carefully selected locations that represent a colorful variety of religious and cultural themes for field trip destinations. My choice fell on a local mosque and an 11th-century Spanish monastery (originally built in Spain, taken apart, shipped to the US, and re-assembled in Miami). If time allows, I recommend additional field trips to one or more of the following destinations: a glass blowing shop, a blacksmithing demonstration, a Native American Museum.

Alignment with Waldorf Philosophy – Educating the Head, Heart, and Hands

The design incorporates Rudolf Steiner’s educational insights. Steiner stated that children should not be “educated only in an intellectual way” (Steiner, 2003a). Instead, teachers must appeal to their students’ feelings, instincts, and moral impulses. Waldorf Education is often described as the education of the “head, heart and hands” because Waldorf teachers consciously engage and balance thinking, feeling, and doing in the classroom.
Around grade 6 or 7, there is a gradual transition to "less pictorial" teaching and relying more on the child’s intellect. According to Steiner (2003b, p. 143), it is only after age twelve that children are truly ready to learn history because this is when, for the first time, they can recognize cause and effect. Nevertheless, Steiner warns of the detrimental effects of switching to a purely intellectual, fact-based way of teaching at this age. He says that students “must be able to experience a personal relationship with historical individuals and ways of life in the various eras” (Steiner, 2003b, p. 144-145). It is a delicate balance of engaging the "head, heart, and hands."

*Art and Artistic Teaching in Waldorf Education*

Art is integral to Waldorf Education in multiple ways. First, art requires active participation. It brings joy and creates a sense of accomplishment. Students create things out of their experience with the new ideas that they have been learning. As a Waldorf alumna put it, "art and creativity were at the center of bringing joy and happiness to the learning process. When children feel joy, they connect better and learn better." (Renwick, 2019)

This particular block includes vocal and instrumental music, drawing, painting, and printmaking. Photos of the art projects I developed are listed in Appendix B.

Secondly, Rudolf Steiner often spoke about art in the context of education, but it was not always teaching arts. He described “the Waldorf art of education” (Steiner, 2003b) in several lectures. He argued that “art is not a mere discovery of the human, but a domain that reveals the secrets of nature at a different level than that of ordinary intelligence” (Steiner, 2003b, p. 171). One can not gain real knowledge unless the process of learning involves art. Therefore, he inspired teachers to teach artistically, evoking their creativity in their work. This aspect of Waldorf education is desirable to teachers and makes them want to teach in a Waldorf school.
Stories in the Waldorf Classroom

The Waldorf curriculum is a story curriculum – teachers present ideas through carefully selected, developmentally appropriate stories that mirror the evolution of human consciousness. They range from fairy tales and folk tales in the early grades, through fables, myths, and legends, to biographies and descriptions of historical events in the higher ones.

Rudolf Steiner inspired teachers to gain “a thorough knowledge of the human being” (Steiner, 2003a) and child development. This knowledge then informs the teacher’s choice of curriculum materials and methods of teaching.

In a lecture on April 19, 1923, Steiner described how a curriculum could best serve the growing child’s physical, emotional and intellectual needs. He stated that in grade 6, the teacher “can begin to appeal to a sense of causality in history” (Steiner, 1996). In selecting stories, he says, "it is wise for teachers to present graphic descriptions of historical personages whose actions, due to their goodness, truth, and other qualities of greatness, will stimulate sympathy or, in the case of negative qualities, antipathy in the souls of children.”

In addition to the teachers telling stories, the students receive reading assignments in this curriculum piece.

I gathered and organized the stories to be used in this block with the above ideas in mind. The online and print sources of these materials can be found in Appendix A.

Waldorf School of Palm Beach Standards

Appendix C lists the standards for teaching grade 6 in the Waldorf School of Palm Beach (WSPB). The stories and topics included in this document guided the research and helped identify the breadth of the project.
Best Practices

Through interviews with Waldorf teachers, I gathered best practices for developing a place-based curriculum. As a result, I found the following best practices, guiding questions, and additional, unique ideas:

1. The teacher should learn about the local ecology, geography, natural history, and human history of the place they teach. Pay special attention to the history of various ethnic and religious groups that have lived in the area and ones living there now. Ask the question: “What challenges are people facing here that are unique to this place?”

2. Learn about the make-up of the class. What language(s) do the students speak at home? What is their heritage? Learn about their family and cultural traditions.

3. Research local establishments: museums, historic places, buildings of significance, nature centers, art exhibits, musical performances, and shows. Do any of them have a connection to the curriculum?

4. Look for artists or other professionals who may be able to contribute to the curriculum through their personal experience by sharing about their lives or work. Are there parents who could bring their experience to the classroom?

5. Develop goals for the block. Think about how these goals can be best achieved by connecting the students to their place of living. How will the students benefit from what I am about to teach? How is it meaningful to them?

6. Ask the question: What will my students find interesting in this curriculum, and what will capture their attention?

7. Is there a theme that the curriculum can be built around that is local? For instance, for an 8th-grade Physics block, the curriculum can revolve around the question: "How does our
city work?” Water towers are a great example of communicating vessels. Transportation systems, power plants, water treatment facilities, electric stations all carry practical examples of physics phenomena.

Florida Standards

One well-known set of standards is the Common Core which was developed as guidelines for states to create teaching standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. It consists of a set of “destinations” that allows schools to develop their own “roadmap” to get there (Innovative Public Schools, 2018). Florida adopted the Common Core in 2010 and eliminated it on February 7, 2020, at the direction of Governor Ron DeSantis. Instead, as of the 2021-2022 school year, a new set of standards called B.E.S.T. (Benchmark for Excellent Student Thinking) (Florida's B.E.S.T Standards, English Language Arts, fldoe.org) is the roadmap to be followed by Florida public schools.

Although the Waldorf School of Palm Beach, like most Waldorf schools, is an independent school, it was helpful in my research to connect it to the broader educational system by identifying standards from outside its domain. For example, sometimes, due to life circumstances or a change in parental wishes, students must transfer from a Waldorf school to a public school or a different private school. In these situations, it is helpful for the Waldorf class teacher to educate themselves in advance about the expectations or standards of the new school so that the student can be prepared to enter the new system. I also found the standards helpful because they pointed to gaps, such as skills that should be practiced more.
The Curriculum

The following detailed block curriculum plan lists the topics and stories for each day, the related activities, homework assignments, teaching materials, and codes for the applicable Florida state standards (Florida's B.E.S.T Standards, English Language Arts, fdoe.org).

The block curriculum plan is followed by a Sample Lesson Plan for Day 2.

**Day 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Nomadic tribes; interaction with Rome; Diocletian and Constantine’s vision for Europe; Descent and fall of Rome.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>Identify the continents on a map of the world; find Greece, Rome, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Mecca; basic geography of Europe, the steppes to the east, and North Africa. Group religions students are familiar with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Find out what year you were born, your parents were born, your grandparents were born (more generations if possible) - approximate year will do if the exact year cannot be found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Map of the world or atlases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Hungarian legend of the Wondrous Stag. The Barbarians Hungarian tribes settling in Europe; conflicts with Western settled nations. Religion, lifestyle, societal relations, food, and livelihood of the nomads. Traditions that are alive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Put time into perspective. Use information from HW to identify one generation, one century, a millennium; Create a visual timeline around the room - group work. Mark on timeline: students' birth year, parents, grandparents, the birth of Christ, fall of Rome, other known events.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Materials: | Map of Europe and Asia.  
Photobooks of Hungary. |

### Day 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Invaders/Nomadic tribes settling in Europe; Pagan tribes accepting/forced into Christianity; New traditions. Story of Stephen I.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Activities:      | Review the previous days’ topics  
Draw elk with large antlers. (Main lesson book)  
Check out pictures of the stag in historical buildings around Hungary. |
| Homework:        | Start reader: *Son of Charlemagne* (Willard & Weiss, 1998)  
Materials:        | Color pencils, drawing paper, or main lesson books.  
## Day 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Finish elk drawing. Add new information to timeline Start learning to sing a Medieval chant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Continue reader: <em>Son of Charlemagne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Music sheets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Day 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Recount favorite stories from the week. Biography of Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Structure of feudal society; create a diagram (pyramid) and decorate with symbols (ML book). Alternatively, make a diorama representing the structure. Practice the chant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Continue reader: <em>Son of Charlemagne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Color pencils, cardboard, paper, glue, paint.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Day 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>From wooden forts to castles. The role of kings, lords, and their relationship to the Vatican. Life in a monastery. Heritage in language: words coined in the Middle Ages.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Develop summaries from today and the previous day - composition draft: Describe feudalism in Europe. Practice singing the chant Continue adding to the timeline on the wall as events are mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Finish reader: <em>Son of Charlemagne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Day 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Discussion about the reader: <em>Son of Charlemagne</em> Chivalry.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Finish composition and copy into ML book, include castle-themed illustration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Create a castle-themed illustration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Pencils.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Life in a monastery.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Field trip to 11th century Spanish Monastery in Miami.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sing chant in the monastery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Write a letter to a friend or family member as if you lived in the 11th century and you had just moved into the monastery. Write about your first day there, describe the building, the food, the daily schedule, clothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Notebook for the field trip.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Day 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Islam art --Radial symmetry printing. Start learning how to draw patterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Day 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Africa and Islam. Medicine, science, art, architecture, philosophy, mathematics. From Roman numerals to Arabic numbers. Story from 1001 Nights: Sinbad’s Travels (Conners, 2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Continue designing patterns. Summarize Islam so far. Play mancala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Work on research project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Mancala board and gems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Day 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Field trip to a mosque. Story from 1001 nights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

---

**Homework:** Choose a research project to work on over the next week. Options: make a 12”x12” castle, design a shield; create a presentation about the plague, medieval fashion, or food and eating habits in the Middle Ages.

**Materials:** Pencils, drawing paper, compass, rulers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities:</th>
<th>Walk to the nearby mosque. Observe decoration, the layout of the building, architecture. How is it different from a church or temple? Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Start new reader: <em>Catherine, Called Birdy</em> (Cushman, 2019). Work on research project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Notebook for taking notes during the field trip.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Summary of Islam. The Crusades <em>Story from 1001 nights</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Make a plate for a first print. Complete prints, and if time allows, try printing with them. Observe Islamic color selections. Summarize Islam so far. Check in about the progress of HW projects. Play mancala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Continue reader: <em>Catherine, Called Birdy</em>. Work on research project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Mancala board and pebbles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Day 13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Back to Europe - Development of cities; guilds; professions; family names with medieval roots such as Smith, Bailey, and others. The Black Death.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Discussion. Compare Europe to the Islamic world at the same time. Paint mosque in the sunset. A couple of students present their research projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Research one of the following medieval family names: Baker, Butler, Carver, Conner, Cooper, Miller, Smith, Taylor, Wartner, and other names; Plus, find out what your name means and where it comes from. Continue reader: <em>Catherine, Called Birdy</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Eleanore of Aquitaine.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>More research project presentations. “Knights and Castles” project: make a catapult and test it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Homework:**  Continue reader: *Catherine Called Birdy.*


### Day 15

**Topic and story:** Outlook to Asia.

- Medicine, inventions (paper, money, gunpowder), art (porcelain).

- OR

- Discuss Reader

**Activities:** Play capture the flag.

**Homework:** -

**Materials:** Flags for the game.

**Florida Standards:** ELA.6. R.2.2.

### Day 16

**Topic and story:** Monks; the life of St Patrick

- Secret societies in the Middle Ages.

**Activities:** Take notes.

- Make a sketch depicting a medieval person.
### Day 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>More about medieval crafts or Native Americans.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Visit a blacksmith, a glass blowing demonstration, or the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Finish reader: <em>Catherine Called Birdy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Standards:</td>
<td>ELA.6.V.1.1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Day 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Native Americans in Florida before written records. Shelter, food, traditions, clothing. <em>Catherine Called Birdy</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Explore pictures in a variety of books about Native Americans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss Catherine Called Birdy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Write a summary of yesterday's field trip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Books about Native Americans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 19**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Summary and comparison. Life in different places in medieval times.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask the question: “Were these Dark Ages?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Discussion: Where would you want to live if you could travel in time and arrive in the year 1,000?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write the draft of an essay about life 1,000 years ago in your chosen place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework:</td>
<td>Finish the essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 20**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic and story:</th>
<th>Native American story from Florida. Or St Francis of Assisi: A Simple Prayer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Or History of music - medieval times. Instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
<td>Learn another Gregorian Chant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Block review.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Lesson Plan: Day 2 of the block

1. **Warm-up:**

   I start the class by telling the students that today they will hear about the great migration of the nomadic tribes around the fall of Rome. I will specifically talk about the Hungarian tribes, and I will share with them that growing up in Hungary, I heard many stories about the history and life of these people.

2. **Assess prior knowledge and introduce the topic:**

   Next, I assess the students’ prior knowledge of geography as we together locate the steppes west of the Ural Mountains, the Alps, and the Danube River on a map. This activity will generate interest in the new topic and link the new information to things the students learned earlier.

3. **Presentation and story:**

   I describe the steppes, with their tall grasses waving in the wind, hills and rivers, and wandering herds of elk. Then, I go into the description of the life of the nomad. They lived in yurts that could be broken down and moved if the hunting was not good anymore at a particular location or if the seasonal migration of wildlife required it. These tribes were very skilled with the bow and arrow, and they were great horsemen. According to some legends, the boys learned to ride a horse before they could walk. The women cooked their food over an open fire. The men
took several wives. They worshiped the sun, the moon, and the wind. Their spiritual leader was
the shaman. They were fierce fighters, and for this, they were feared in Europe. Unlike in the
kingdoms of Europe, where the heir to the throne was usually the king's oldest child, the
Hungarians chose the oldest next of kin, often a brother, when a tribal leader died.

Following this description, I share the legend of The Wondrous Stag, the story of the
Hungarian tribes entering the Carpathian Basin and making it their home.

4. Discussion, compare, and contrast, connecting material to students' lives:

By now, the students have gathered lots of information about the life of the barbarian tribes.
The next step is to ask them to compare it to the settled lifestyle we live today. Compare known
religions, the food we eat, living in one place, our family structures, and so on, to that of the
Hungarian over a thousand years ago. The students will most likely find that our lives are better
or more comfortable in many ways. However, they might find some aspects of nomad life
enticing. I expect this discussion to conclude with a degree of acceptance of a different lifestyle
from ours. It is not inferior or superior to ours, just different. It is a lifestyle that serves the needs
of the people at a particular location at a specific time in history. Some students might consider it
unfair or wrong that men had multiple wives, which could spark a new conversation.

At this point, I share with the students some photos of Hungarian horsemen, shepherd dogs,
plains, mountains, and rivers of Hungary. Most importantly, I tell them stories of still alive
traditions with roots in distant history and back to tribal life. These stories make learning truly
meaningful because they connect to the past through the lives of people who are alive today. I
encourage questions, and I expect students to share some of their family traditions and traditions
from when their families come from.
5. Put time into perspective.

For today's class, the students' homework assignment was to find out what year they were born, and when their parents, grandparents, great grandparents were born. Using this information, we identify one generation, one century, a millennium. Next, we create a visual timeline around the room. The students work as one big group, or they may break into smaller groups. Mark on timeline: students’ birth year, parents, grandparents, the birth of Christ, fall of Rome, Hungarians migrating to Europe, and other known events.

The students now have a perspective on how long ago all the stories I talked about originated.

6. Closing

We close the class with a summary and highlights of today’s new ideas.

Outcomes

After completing the Medieval History block, the 6th-grade students

1. Will have a thorough understanding of how the cultural, political, economic, and religious landscape of Europe was transformed after the fall of the Roman empire and what new structures developed and prevailed in the millennium that followed.

2. Will be able to describe the social hierarchies and driving philosophies of medieval times.

3. Will recognize the key characteristics of life in the Arab world, Asia, and locally, in South Florida at the same time.

4. Will be able to compare and contrast some aspects of these different societies.

5. Will understand that these differences are not a matter of superiority or inferiority.
6. Will have created artistic representations of certain cultural elements from around the world that date back to the Middle Ages.

7. Will have composed objective and subjective essays on various topics related to the curriculum.

8. Will understand the feudal system's essential elements and will be able to describe them in their own words using appropriate vocabulary.

9. Will be able to describe the freedoms and obligations that various classes had in the feudal system.

10. Will have exercised their developing skill of recognizing cause and effect.

11. Will recognize that history is constantly evolving and that beliefs and value systems change.

12. Will have created Arabic geometric prints and drawn a castle or other building in pencil.

13. Will play at least one medieval song on a soprano or alto recorder and sing a chant.

14. Will have gained an understanding of the ideals of the time and how these ideals contrast and compare to the ideals and struggles of today.

Assessments

Students’ progress and understanding and integration of new concepts will be assessed in several ways. 1) Written assignments, such as objective summaries (e.g., a composition about the key elements of the feudal system) and personal essays (e.g., a letter sent home from the Crusades). 2) Artistic interpretations that represent key ideas learned in the block. 3) Participation in class discussions. 3) Producing chamber music. 4) Spelling tests for key vocabulary.
Activities

The activities of each day are intentionally varied throughout each day and from day to day. They alternate between engaging the intellect, the “feeling sense”, and active creation with the hands. Some activities are sedentary, like listening to a story or writing, while others involve movement or art.

Essential Questions

These are questions that point to the essence of Medieval history. Students should ponder over these questions and formulate an answer as we near the end of the block.

- Were the Middle Ages truly Dark Ages?
- What would your life (as a teenager) have been in the Middle Ages?
- What do the following mean to you: courage, chivalry, loyalty, courtesy, justice, generosity, and integrity?

Resources

Appendix A lists the books and websites that were used for gathering teaching materials for this block.

Time Requirement

The scope of this project is a 4-week-long history block. During these four weeks, the students have a 90-minute period dedicated to learning about the Middle Ages each day. This happens during the Morning Lesson, which is the first lesson in a Waldorf school. Later in the day, the students have art classes to deepen their experience. Once or twice per week, the students play medieval music on a recorder and practice choral music during their music classes. In the twice-per-week visual art class, the students create pencil drawings of castles, learn to
design geometric patterns, develop color palettes for their artwork and learn to make prints.

Some artistic work may begin in the Morning Lesson or stretch into the Morning Lesson of the following day(s).

At least three times during these four weeks, the students go on a field trip which may take up a whole school day or just a couple of hours.

Evaluation

The curriculum inventory from the Ohio Aspire e-Guide (Ohio Aspire Professional Development Network — Spring 2014 Teacher Academy, Handout) and a Social Studies Curriculum Review Guide from Maine.gov served as guides for developing the following evaluation rubric. By checking these components, I made sure that the curriculum met curriculum development standards and the educational goals it had set out to accomplish. This inventory can also serve as a tool for reflecting on the curriculum after it has been taught.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of curriculum</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alignment to standards</td>
<td>Addresses the principles of Waldorf Education</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Address the ideas of Critical Pedagogy of Place</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meets multiple Florida state standards</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Address Waldorf School of Palm Beach Scope and Sequence</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner outcomes</td>
<td>Specify how learning will be demonstrated</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involve “doing” and “creating”</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Address appropriate learning levels</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritizes collaborative learning strategies</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Include combinations of large group, small group, and individual instruction</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deepen the understanding of an era from multiple perspectives</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage the students through connecting with prior knowledge or lived experiences</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spark discussion about the topic after the class is over</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support students and teachers in engaging with complex topics and participating in culturally sensitive learning activities</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage student perspective-taking and empathy toward people from backgrounds, cultures, and contexts different from their own</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prompt students to question and critique dominant narratives in the past and present</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire students to solve real-world problems in response to the compelling questions of the curriculum</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow for choice and flexibility</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist students to develop skills through application for meaningful, authentic uses</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include extended artistic activities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require students to conduct independent research and present their findings</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include reflection on personal strengths and challenges</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and Classroom Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are screened for accuracy and authenticity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are relevant to the curriculum</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are rich, varied, and derived from multiple sources</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include resources and materials that are genuinely local</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are age- and skill-level appropriate</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are free of racial and gender bias</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present the achievements and contributions of diverse individuals and communities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Represent historically marginalized people and communities through their strengths, skills, and knowledge rather than perceived flaws and deficits

Represent historically marginalized people’s perspectives and expertise on a wide range of subjects in the social sciences

Represent the people who lived here before us

Include a process to update sources in response to feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formative assessments are embedded throughout the unit to evaluate student learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform teaching strategies and learning activities</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow the students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in various ways</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use specific, observable look-fors that demonstrate understanding</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor and document student achievement</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supplementary questions to ask once the curriculum is used in a school:

- Ask for student feedback weekly. “Did you learn something new this week about the area where you live?”, “Did you find it interesting?”
- Evaluate the quality of the materials presented in class. Ask questions such as
  - Were the topics truly interesting to the students?
  - Did the students connect the material to their own lives?
  - Did it spark discussions about the topic after the class was over?
Conclusion

Waldorf schools can be excellent candidates for incorporating the principles of place-based education into their programs. Their experiential learning practices, artistic approach to teaching, and flexibility in the curriculum support the learning objectives of place-based education.

This 6th grade Medieval History curriculum meets all the basic requirements of a place-based program. It connects the students to their own and their teachers’ heritage, the Native Americans who lived here before us, their immediate society, and their ecological environment. It promotes respect for other cultures and encourages students to look at historical events from multiple perspectives.

Ultimately, creating such a curriculum aims to sow the seeds of a broader initiative to localize the curriculum across all grades and subjects in a school. In addition, this project serves as an example and guidance for any school community that wishes to shift to employing place-based pedagogy. Over the course of this research, it became clear that any subject or grade can readily lend itself to localization if adequate thought is given to the question.
References


*How We Teach.* (2020, July 13). Retrieved from https://waldorfmoraine.org/how-we-teach/


Innovative Public Schools (2018, April 4). *Parent Guide: What is the Common Core,* Innovate Public Schools, Retrieved November 27, 2021, from https://innovateschools.org/parent-guide/parent-guide-what-is-the-common-core/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAy4eNBhCaARIsAFDVtI1zHR6ZKvxzcY9sPnqxeuxim1WcWHIILW5AD5aeGFUlln0VmwJxyLcaAo2zEALw_wcB.


doi:http://dx.doi.org.library.esc.edu/10.1007/s10708-010-9379-1.

*Key characteristics of Waldorf Education.* (2016, May). Retrieved November 22, 2021, from


https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620903549771


Appendices

Appendix A: Online and Print Curriculum Resources


Appendix B: Samples of Art Projects Developed for the Curriculum

Figure 1: Wondrous Elk, pencil drawing

Figure 2: Mosque in sunset, watercolor

Figure 3: Islamic art inspired by tiles in the Hagia Sophia, plates and prints
Appendix C: Waldorf School of Palm Beach Scope and Sequence (Grade 6 Standards)

School year 2020-21

Overview

Sixth grade is a year of transition from childhood to adolescence. Rapid physical growth is accompanied by corresponding brain development, which quickens the unfolding of abstract thinking.

The sixth-grade curriculum offers students the opportunity to use their developing understanding of causal relationships and to sharpen skills already developed in previous grades. Physics is introduced, a first experience with experimental Science. Experiments provide students with a direct experience of the phenomena studied. The sixth graders are then challenged to exercise objectivity in recording their observations. They discover for themselves the natural laws underlying their observations. Often this first understanding of the natural world is accompanied by a renewed sense of wonder. Sixth grade Physics includes an introduction to acoustics, optics, and heat. Some sixth-grade classes may also begin studies of magnetism and electricity. Earth Science is introduced through studies of mineralogy and geology.

In the flux of change that accompanies the onset of puberty, sixth graders can appreciate the law and order of early Rome, an order that was ultimately only as solid as the people who were willing to work and sacrifice to support it. History lessons continue with the fall of the Roman Empire and the movement of folk populations across Asia and Europe. In medieval Europe, order is regained for a time through the feudal system and the emergence of monastic life. The year ends with a picture of the impending dissolution of feudalism through the meeting
and clashing of cultures during the Crusades and the formation of towns, where tradespeople organized themselves into guilds.

In Mathematics, students are introduced to percentages and use their emerging understanding of this in Business Math. Percents, increase, and decrease are relevant to sales and profits as well as to problems of interest and money lending. Various economic systems may be introduced and discussed.

Geometry is introduced in Sixth Grade. Drawings previously developed freehand are now implemented with a compass and straightedge. Precision required in the execution of geometric constructions and shading patterns often inspires an incremental leap in the quality of sixth grade Morning Lesson books in general, as more attention is paid to shading, borders, illustration, and handwriting. Geometry classes familiarize students with the language and concepts of angles, polygons, and circles.

Sixth graders continue to improve their writing as they more consciously grasp the structure of language. They can organize ideas sequentially. Morning lessons in Science challenge them to write accurate descriptions of what they observe while in their History blocks, they have the opportunity to enter imaginatively into an event from the past.

Sixth graders gradually work toward a new relationship with teachers, one that is based on mutual interest in the subject matter. As the authority of the teacher becomes more grounded in his mastery of lesson content, students are more motivated to be more self-aware and self-responsible. This is the time to reinforce good study habits: organization of materials and assignments, time management, preparation and attention in classes are critical. While social
issues become more complex, Sixth Grade classmates know each other quite well. Students have the potential to work cooperatively while expanding their capacities for independent thought and achievement.

**Work Habits and Attitude:**

- Assume responsibility for self and work

- Complete homework assignments in timely fashion

- Work independently and quietly with focus on a task for up to 45 minutes

- Work collaboratively and do their fair share of the task

- Work independently and collaboratively with minimum adult intervention

- Work neatly with a desire to do best work

- Respect teachers, classmates, property, and materials

- Keep personal and school belongings well-organized

- Have appropriate materials needed for class

- Be prepared and ready for class on time

- Maintain a positive attitude

- Work constructively with feedback from teachers and classmates

- Support classmates individually and within the group
• Practice social inclusion and be included in social activities

• Use group process and discussion to work through social issues and class projects

• Participate in class discussion

• Participate in choral recitation and singing

**Language Arts:**

In grade six, students should be able to:

• Show acquisition of verbally presented material through artistic rendering, daily recall, self-generated reports and essays written for main lesson books

• Continued growth of increasingly complex vocabulary

• Recite poetry, read prose both individually and in group

• Speak clearly with good diction, proper inflection, fluency

• Develop the confidence needed to stand before classmates in oral presentation of reports

• Read for information

• Decipher new words using stable vocabulary base and contextual cues

• Achieve fluency in oral reading—read with inflection and attention to punctuation cues and sentence structure

• Read for a sustained length of time
• Demonstrate good comprehension and recall of what has been read

• Use well-formed handwriting (could be cursive, calligraphy, or print), and organize layout of writing on the page

• Develop simple outlines that bring out the main idea and its supporting details

• Use appropriate sentence construction, sequential paragraphs, and good structure (initial sentence, supporting material, transitions, and closure) in independent writing assignments

• Consistently use rules for capitalization and punctuation

• Use parts of speech correctly

• Use complex sentence structure using adjective phrases and clauses, subordinate conjunctions, etc.

• Begin to diagram sentences

• Continue building spelling skills, practicing rules, taking dictations

• Edit for spelling and grammar mistakes, clarity, and regrouping of sentences for efficiency—working through several drafts to final copy

• Correctly identify parts of the sentence: subject, predicate, direct object, prepositional phrases

• Use apostrophes for contractions and possessives

• Construct sentences that avoid run-ons and sentence fragments
• Identify and construct simple, compound, and complex sentences

• Free-write in journal

• Written and oral book reports

Note: There is some overlap of language standards in the grades 6-8. This is because some topics are worked on in all 3 grades.

**Mathematics:**

By the end of grade six, students should demonstrate proficiency in the following areas:

• Division, long and short, rounding and estimating

• Fractions: use all four processes, expansion/reduction of fractions, conversion between mixed numbers and improper fractions

• Decimals: use all four processes

• Fraction/decimal/percent, equivalents, conversions

• Percents: determining a certain percent of a given number

• Percent increase and decrease

• Use of fraction and decimal method to determine a percentage

• Quick simple calculation of percent (10%, 20%, 50%, 75%, 100%, 200%)
• Word problems: analyze each problem to determine the use of appropriate operation

• Introduce Statistics: calculating mean, average, median, and mode for sets of data; analyzing line and bar graphs

• Introduce Business Math: credit, interest, tax, profit

• Estimating and checking their written work

• Familiarity with prime numbers, square numbers and square roots

• Problem solving through mathematical reasoning using mental math, speed sheets, short cuts, logical problems, and word problems

• Application of proportional relationships

• Test-taking skills, test preparation, and self-correction

• Geometry is introduced:
  o Precise construction with ruler and compass
  o Bisection of a line segment, angle, arc
  o Division of a circle
  o Parts of a circle: radius, diameter, secant, tangent etc.
  o Angles: obtuse, acute, straight, right
o Triangles: scalene, right, isosceles, equilateral

o Terminology for quadrilaterals and other polygons

o Area and perimeter of rectangle, square, and right triangle

Science:

In grade six, students are expected to achieve a working knowledge of the following:

Geology:

• Continents and plate tectonics

• Volcanoes

• Rock cycle (igneous, sedimentary, metamorphic rocks)

• Minerals, crystals, gems, and metals

Physics:

• Acoustics: the relationship of pitch to size and volume, conduction of sound through various media, etc.

• Optics: nature of light, color/prisms, afterimages

• Thermodynamics: expansion/contraction, conductivity, transference of heat (conduction, convection, radiation), Fahrenheit and Centigrade, friction, changes in volume (solid, liquid, gas)
• Magnetism: lodestone, positive /negative poles, attraction/repulsion, magnetic fields (of Earth), movement of magnetic force through various substances

**History:**

In grade six, students are expected to achieve a working knowledge of the following:

- Roman history, the founding of Rome, the growth of the empire, the Pax Romana, everyday life in Roman Times

- History through biographies, for example: Julius Caesar, Jesus, Mohammed, Eleanor of Aquitaine, etc.

- Life in the Middle Ages: feudal system, monastic life, building of cathedrals, trades and guilds

- Understand the gradual development of connections and interactions between cultures of the globe moving from Europe, the Middle East, and Africa into Asia

- Develop an understanding of the myriad social, cultural, religious, and economic components of the Crusades- the impetus for the journeys and consequences of social exchange, which would largely influence the Renaissance and the Age of Exploration which will be examined in Seventh grade.

**Geography:**

In grade six, students will:
• Explore the physical geography of Europe

• Know physical and political boundaries, countries, and cultures

• Have some understanding for culture and livelihood of the people in relation to the physical attributes of the land.

* Please note: these are the current standards for the Waldorf School of Palm Beach. Faculty will strive to maintain these standards and will review them on an annual basis. As our program continues to develop, and as our resources may vary, these standards are subject to change.