

Waldorf Education Your Questions Answered

Why do we teach children to knit?



“Although the origins of knitting are obscure, old woodcuts and medieval illuminations place its ascendance in Europe at about the same time that the game of chess and the mathematical approach of algebra became known to Westerners. Indeed, among the earliest knitted textiles discovered in Europe are two Islamic-inspired knitted cushions, one of whose patterns suggests castles on a chessboard.¹ It is significant that the most intellectual of games and the most cognitive approach to numerical problems accompanied the development of knitting. It was as though a new degree of adeptness in the hand had to go side by side with newly discovered capacities in the head.”

Excerpt from The Role of Handwork in the Waldorf Curriculum by Eugene Schwartz

Knitting and handwork is an important element of the Waldorf curriculum. It requires counting, sequencing, fine motor skills, hand eye coordination, spatial awareness and multilateral thinking. It strengthens neurological pathways and through repeated activity, the brain's capacity to repeat and remember an activity is enhanced. This in turn can also be related to the development of other intellectual capacities eg reading, writing, maths. This rhythmic work has a therapeutic quality that can quieten busy overstimulated minds and engages the child's concentration and will.



During this whole process children are visualising their project, choosing material, colour, size, shape and so forth knowing that you are making something useful and meaningful in the world. Through this activity the hand and eye create something that the mind can joyfully reflect upon, and which ends up in a beautiful and functional form. Something the children can be proud of!

Knitting like the other crafts are planned in carefully to the Waldorf curriculum working with the child's changing consciousness. The activities are age appropriate in their skill level demand and engage the children's curiosity and interest. In so doing knitting can develop hands that are skilful, sensitive and strong, hands that can accomplish wonderful deeds.

Knitting is not just good for children, as adults we can also receive great benefits from pursuing such a hobby so if you don't know how to knit why don't you join in with your child's journey and role model good active learning.

