

Waldorf Education Your Questions Answered

The Main Lesson in Waldorf Education

To truly acquire knowledge, and not simply memorize it for an upcoming test, a student of any age needs time for that seed of knowledge to take root and grow. Waldorf education uses the block structure of learning to make sure that students have the time they need to experience true learning and find relevancy and interest in the topic at hand. We call this academic learning block Main Lesson.

Teachers typically present new concepts in a three or four week blocks to provide an in-depth learning experience of a single subject. In a block system, students are immersed in one subject at a time in order to fully focus on the content area and gain a complete understanding before moving on to the next course of study.

This method helps teachers use a multi-sensory and multi-activity learning approach because the time allotted allows them to engage the children with a wide variety of activities to help increase student motivation and interest in the topic at hand.

Each day's lesson is structured to contain activities that typically begin with recitation, music, movement, and recall of the previous day's lessons. New material is often presented on a three-day cycle that begins with a focus on engaging storytelling and discussion. The following day focuses on recall of the previous day's material and a deep dive into practical application of the topic, which is often done through hands-on activity. And finally, on the final day of a topic, the student practices recall again and composes and summarizes the material learned into their Main Lesson book.

The Main Lesson book is created by the student. The student often writes and illustrates the lesson's content into their books. This content consists of relevant illustrations, stories, notes, and summaries all written by hand. In the early classes, the students imitate the teacher in the creation of their main lesson book. In classes 3-5, the students help create the content of the main lesson book, as a class, with the teacher's guidance. In classes 6-9, the students will often write their own content which is then checked by the teacher, the students are given more freedom within the creation of their books because the writing is their own along with the illustrations. This brings personalization, beauty, joy, and relevancy to lessons.

Main Lesson, and the block style of learning, is a process-based learning method, used in many schools and universities throughout the world today. It is a meaningful alternative to results-based teaching that focuses on test results. Rudolf Steiner was an early adopter of the block and process method and believed this style of teaching gave students the time and space they needed to find meaning and purpose in their education. He also wanted to be sure each teacher had the time to engage a student's head, heart, and hands, so that they could learn, and be inspired by, the material for a lifetime.