

# Art and the Curriculum

AT SUMMERFIELD WALDORF SCHOOL & FARM

The developing child naturally has a beautiful quality of unfolding, of hopeful anticipation. Where is the place where this can be kindled, where the child is engaged with learning in such a way that they feel free to blow on the spark? What are the capacities and skills that young people need today to realize their gifts and shape the future? How can they have the experience of truly knowing, instead of just knowing about? Where is a space for individual development?

Children need a learning space where they are invited to participate, to articulate and craft their relationship to the world anew, to practice and, over time, to experience mastery. At Summerfield, here in Sonoma County, where we have a farm and the space outdoors to meet together, we have found it essential to engage with the earth, with the sense-based world. In farming, practical arts, fine arts and crafts, students learn directly from the world around them. They exercise the creativity muscles needed to find new forms, to think in new ways, and to experience natural beauty. We, as teachers, are striving in this time to cultivate agency, independence and self-knowledge in our students, as we all face the task of re-imagining culture in our communities.

We emphasize the importance of teaching in an artistic way to feed the imagination, to deepen empathy, and to develop freedom in thinking. We see that the practice of artistic work awakens our intelligence to the full experience of being human and is an essential way of being in the present moment, poised between past and future. New spaces can be developed through artistic experiences. New perceptions and new imagination can enter and develop in these spaces. The arts are asking us to stay open to the process, stay open to the moment in which the essence of something new reveals itself. The child learns to gently find what is important, what is essential, to develop trust in the new and trust in the unknown.

This activity and reaction in the soul is the foundational heart of our education. The Arts Calendar reminds us all of why we come to Waldorf Schools and what the interconnected and planned evolutionary span of the education from early childhood to twelfth grade means to our development as human beings.

Our intention here at Summerfield is that the arts create a foundation for all of our programs and offerings: from a full range of academics and practical arts, a strong festival life, a vibrant circus and movement program, to a working, certified Biodynamic farm on campus where food is grown and where children are a part of the annual cycle of sowing and reaping.

By being a part of this community from early childhood all the way through high school, students learn how to do work in the world, whether in farming, arts and crafts, in the science lab or serving others in the community. Through the arts, students discover how their hands can produce what their minds can imagine and their hearts can intuit as good, beautiful and true. When they apply these same principles to their science and humanities studies, their schoolwork has real meaning, feels connected and whole, and helps them to actualize their ideals in society as they go out in the world.

These aspects of Waldorf education shine through all the work of the students, and it is this that inspires us to share their art with you.

Thank you for your interest in our endeavor.

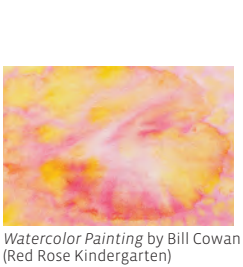
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**Top:** Self-Portrait by Farranika Barnum (Class Twelve)  
**Bottom:** Daffodil by Maddox Hallim (Class Five)  
**Front Cover:** Landscape by Lily Harper (Class Three)



**Top:** 'Forest' by Radha Birchard (Class Seven)  
**Bottom:** 'Still Life' by Song Held (Class Eleven)



Watercolor Painting by Bill Cowan (Red Rose Kindergarten)



Watercolor Painting by Annabelle Royes (Red Rose Kindergarten)



Sun by River Barnsten (Class One)



Color Play with Yellow and Red by Sovana Shick (Class One)



Crayon Drawing by Aria Rider (Class Two)



Color Study by Anna Reed (Class Two)



Flowers by Elsie Dakin (Class Three)



Tipi by Lily Harper (Class Three)



Christmas Tree by Noelle Alberigi (Class Three)



Color Study by Aspen Revallo (Class Three)



Raven by Bodhi Turkel Vose (Class Four)



'Meeting' by Parker Philp (Farm Classroom)

## EARLY CHILDHOOD

A mood of calm industry and a cocoon of warmth and rhythm characterize the early childhood classroom. Work comes naturally to young children, and the setting eases them into a love of working with their hands. Painting is a feast for the senses at this age. The wet-on-wet painting style provides a dreamy delving into primary colors, which holds the children in rapt silence. The youngest children learn experientially, through the free act of swirling and blending colors, how primary colors become secondary colors, and so on. In this way, a foundational artistic technique is introduced through joy and play.

## FIRST GRADE

Children cross the threshold into the grades with a first handshake with their teacher and set off on a journey during which they will not only learn many new skills but become aware of the strengths and treasures waiting to be discovered in themselves and in each other. Now imagination and story nourish the child's soul/psychological self and become seeds for free independent thinking to emerge in future years. Drawing in first grade often starts with the exploration of two basic forms: the straight line and the curved line. Children might draw in the air, on the floor, in the sand, on each other's back, and finally on paper. Working with lines that do not depict an object but meet the impulse for movement within the children develops their feeling for form and flow and thus prepares them for writing letters and numbers. Every form is introduced as a picture brought out of a story which children might hear in a rolling three-day rhythm: a story is introduced (often from nature or a fairy tale); on the next day the story is reviewed by acting it out or making a drawing; on the following day the teacher might lead the children to discover the shape of a letter in the drawing and to hear and 'taste' the sound of the letter. In weekly painting lessons, the children work on wet paper, which allows the color to move with ease. Through color stories, the children get to know the characters of the three primary colors and how they interact.

## SECOND GRADE

Second graders continue to live through imaginative pictures and story but begin to transition away from 'dreamy' early childhood. A shift occurs where the child no longer sees the world only in its wholeness but has a dawning awareness of life's dualities. Poised between his/her animal and angel natures, the second grader discovers deep truths through the contrasts of the curriculum which meets this stage of development with legends of the Saints on the one hand, and Fables on the other. The Saints bring pictures of human beings who experienced a transformation in their life after which they devoted themselves to serve the highest good. This is contrasted with the Fables, in which the children recognize their own shortcomings. Often they are shown, in a humorous way, the scale of justice with which Mother Nature balances her affairs. This sense of duality and a quest for balance between extremes is typically complemented by exercises involving symmetry and the drawing of mirror images. It is also a year in which children begin to add their own creative elements to compositions, rather than merely copying the teacher. Students continue to paint with the wet-on-wet technique, working in the realm of pure color, experiencing the living quality of each color as well as the colors' relationships to one another.

## THIRD GRADE

Third grade typically sees children undergo the Nine-Year-Change, a stage of development in which the child experiences a growing awareness of being separate from his or her surroundings. This awareness brings with it a sense of loss and loneliness but also the first conscious joy in solitude. This shift is sometimes referred to as the "Fall from Paradise," or an awakening of the individual. Through studies of shelter, measurement, building, farming, cooking, and fiber, third graders make a stronger connection to the earth. They hear the story of Adam and Eve who needed shelter and clothing to protect themselves. The Old Testament, with its laws and guidance in a time when the Hebrew people were wandering in search of a new home, typically provides the story material throughout the year, and this is often the inspiration for artistic work. It is also a year of physical work to help children make the shift from their spiritual origins to a more earthly being. In art, they often draw themes connected to their practical activities with tools, animals, clothing, food, farming and shelter construction. Form drawing also continues, typically with explorations of balanced forms and more complex symmetries.

## FOURTH GRADE

Rudolf Steiner compares the experience of the fourth grader with that of an orphan. This process of loosening the connection with the past (the parents) continues in the fourth grade year and is necessary for the child to meet his or her own path in life, to become a personality. The stories for fourth graders tell of a time when the spiritual world was withdrawing, no longer dwelling among humans or protecting and guiding them. It was now up to human heroes to develop in themselves courage and wisdom, thus the Finnish tales of the Kalevala and the Norse myths are often studied. Mapmaking introduces children to the relationship of objects to each other, and the birds-eye perspective comes in through the study of local geography. In the studies of the Human Being and the Animal Kingdom, contrasts and comparisons are made that deepen the child's understanding of how animals have specialized and how the qualities of the animal world are combined in the human being. Animals are studied in drawing and watercolor painting, with the form arising from the colors.

## The Practical Arts

In working with the crafts, we bear witness to the creativity of the human spirit carried out by our hands. In Waldorf schools, the education of the head, heart and hands has the specific purpose to develop the imagination and harmonize the unfolding will and feeling life. The enhancement of these faculties forms the basis for an active thinking life.

Rudolf Steiner said: *"The more we take into account ... that intellect develops from the movements of the limbs, from dexterity and skills, the better it will be."*

Our purpose therefore, in the practical arts, is not to train knitters, weavers, potters, etc., but rather for the students to practice such work and thereby be able to stand more securely in the world with a confidence for managing the affairs of life. The skills, although important, are secondary to the inner capacities being developed.

An underlying principle behind all the crafts is that students gain a real appreciation of the material, how it is transformed to create something new. Students produce objects that have a practical use with real value. This helps them understand that their work is important and brings an awareness that they have a place and responsibility in the world.

## HANDWORK

In their first craft classes, the children progress from the wonder and glee of discovering slipknots to making their own knitting needles. Knitting and sewing skills follow and, through the creation of simple but useful items such as washcloths and knitted cases for pentatonic flutes, they develop fine motor skills, laying the groundwork for the more artistic crafts to come. Purl stitch comes in second grade, the crochet hook in third. Working with fibers in third grade, students experience carding, spinning and dyeing.

Cross-stitch is introduced in fourth grade, with its mirroring picture designs. This exercise in symmetry parallels students' growing awareness of the two sides of the self. Cross-stitching also requires imaginative thinking as the children picture the needle underneath their work and move it to the proper place. In fifth grade, the year-long project of knitting socks with four needles is tackled. Creating stuffed animals is a sixth grade task in which planning the design and cutting out a pattern precedes the sewing, introducing cause-and-effect. In this project, students experience the process of turning inside-out, mirroring the developmental stage of externalizing their inner being for the first time.

In seventh grade, students engage in the ancient technique of felting. This tactile process is fun and fairly simple, relying on wool, water, soap, and will power. Slippers, hats, bags, balls, and even puppets, are made and later embellished with embroidery. The use of the sewing machine complements the study of the Industrial Revolution in eighth grade. Students master a straight stitch, make a handwork bag for a first grader from pattern-drafting to completion, move on to a pair of drawstring pants and, finally,



Soft Sculpture Animals (Class Six)

