

## Seattle Waldorf School – Educational Support Program

### Fundamental Principles

*“One aim in Rudolf Steiner’s pioneering work in education was to establish the principle that education based on real insight would also serve to prevent disease. He recognized that the powers that enable young children to grow and to regenerate and build their bodies are gradually liberated as their physical development reaches completion and are then available for the active thinking required in the learning process. Every suggestion Rudolf Steiner made with regard to teaching methods and practice was designed to show teachers that in everything they do they must keep a careful eye on the physical development of their pupils. School age is not merely a time for learning but above all a time when children should be given every opportunity for unhindered healthy growth and development.*

*To assist teachers in this, Rudolf Steiner made sure, when the first Waldorf School opened in 1919, that its teachers soon had the support of a School Doctor, a special teacher, and a curative eurythmist. Cooperation between them was intended to provide deeper insight into the constitution of the child and guidance towards the best method of teaching in a given situation. Without this support teachers might not find enough orientation needed in the work to ensure the development of a healthy body for the child.”*

Foreword to the 1992 edition of “The Extra Lesson”  
by Audrey E. McAllen- Dr. Michaela Glockler

### SWS Commitment to Educational Support

The question and meaning of *learning differences* continues to be an on-going topic of research for educators, and Waldorf education is well poised to participate in the questioning of teaching methods in the search to best meet the learning needs of today’s children. Extensive research and experience developed through decades of practice in this field are available to us through the network of Waldorf schools worldwide, developed through decades of practice in this field. SWS Educational support is aligned with the philosophy that informs our pedagogical approach.

While Waldorf Education has proven its capacity to provide ways to support children with adequate and often remarkable therapeutic services, SWS educational support program is not currently sufficiently extensive to guarantee the most effective services to all students who need them. In such instances, we turn to the diagnostic and treatment tools developed in the public school system and other circles. In addition, SWS has developed an extensive network of practitioners in the fields of vision therapy, homeopathy, nutrition, and other modalities, for the purposes of consultation and referral.

Waldorf Educators are challenged to learn of the current research on the "minds of learners" and to maintain and deepen understanding of the intrinsic value of the Waldorf Approach to educating the youth of today. To guide and support their efforts, the Educational Support program of the Seattle Waldorf School offers three main areas of support:

#### Research

The various ways of conducting child study (fourfold, threefold, sevenfold or twelvefold) in the weekly full faculty study are placed in the context of current research and evolutions in educational support practices. For example, considering the title ‘The Seven Intelligences’, faculty asks the question: *"How is this reflected in the work of a Waldorf Educator?"*

#### Professional Development

The aim of SWS Educational Support professional development is to develop our faculty’s expertise in child study and child observation. The wisdom and healing nature of the Waldorf Curriculum are confirmed by current

research, and we continually strive to deepen our understanding and application of these methods for the benefit of our students through the internal deepening of the paradigms of thought advanced through an Anthroposophical understanding of healing. For example the study of constitutional types, temperaments, organ function, the foundational senses and their relationship to the higher social senses, understanding Anthroposophical medicine, Therapeutic Eurythmy, Chirophonetics, Therapeutic Speech, Painting Therapy, Clay Therapy are studied in weekly faculty meetings. Through this work, Individual teachers are identified for their particular talents and encouraged to seek further training in these areas. They in turn provide training for their fellow teachers in faculty meetings.

### **SWS Galen Group**

SWS Galen Group is composed of a group of teachers and professionals who voluntarily come together and commit to carrying the deeper aspects of the education, growth and well being of the students in our school. Members include school faculty, Educational Support teachers, the school doctor, supportive therapists, and any faculty or staff member who wish to contribute to the life of the school in this manner. Through study, shared observation and research, the Galen Group significantly supports the work of SWS Educational Support team.

The Galen Group forms the stable foundation upon which the school's educational services are established. In addition to the regular programs, the Galen Group holds the work of the Care Groups.

### **Care Groups**

A Care Group is a group of teachers and therapists selected for a specific period of time to assist teachers in deepening their understanding of a child's particular challenges. A Care Group may be convened for any student who encounters difficulties in the classroom, whether academic, behavioral or social. A serious physical illness may also warrant the convening of a care group.

Any teacher, class sponsor, student advisor, or administrator in the school can convene a care group. Before initiating a care group, its convener requests permission to the school Directors, who are jointly responsible for the work, the process, and the outcome of each care group. The convener keeps the directors informed of each step of the process.

### **Care Group Process**

1. Care Group convener requests written permission from the parents to establish a care group to address the needs of their child.
2. Once the parents grant a written permission, the convener of the Care Group suggests a selection of group members to the Galen Group. Members are chosen among teachers and therapists.
3. The Care Group establishes a schedule and plan for services, including chosen therapies, timeframe, and meeting times and dates.
4. The Care Group identifies and articulates the elements that interfere with the child's success at school.
5. The Care Group identifies the elements of the plan of educational support, following the SWS Plan of Education Support Form (*View on page 5*). The group utilizes any method conducive to further understanding the challenges presented to and by the child, including:
  - Child study in the college or division meeting
  - Case study in college or Galen group
  - Therapeutic exercises with educational support faculty
  - Behavior plan
  - Suggestions for home support

- Other programs of support that may be beneficial.
6. The Care Group determines if outside medical or educational services are needed. These requests or suggestions are included in the Plan of Educational Support that is communicated in person to the parents by the convener of the group and one of the Directors. This Plan of Educational Support includes a list of suggested resources (therapists, evaluators, doctors, etc.) as well as specific dates for future meetings with the parents.
  7. The Care Group may make a recommendation to the Pedagogical Director about whether the Seattle Waldorf School is adequately prepared to address the child's particular needs.
  8. The Care Group agrees to hold the child meditatively with a keen interest and love for the child, teachers, and family.
  9. The Care Group is dissolved when the needs of the child are addressed in a manner that is satisfactory to the teacher(s) and the child's family.

### **Program**

A team of professionals directs SWS Educational Support program, ensuring that the students in need of additional services are promptly identified, and that a program of educational support is defined for their individual needs. Supporting our full-time Educational Support staff member, a team of specialists including a school doctor, a curative Eurythmist, a grade school assistant, and a teacher trained in Spacial Dynamics, help to inspire the development of individually tailored programs aligned with Waldorf educational principles.

#### **Early Childhood**

Children attending preschool and kindergarten are continuously assessed by their teachers in the context of classroom work. Concerns regarding the development of a student are brought to the Early Childhood faculty by the teacher to obtain further understanding of the child and additional methodology. SWS does not offer educational support to students in preschool and kindergarten. Specialized educational support may be requested by the teacher, in which case parents are advised to obtain such services in the wider community.

A comprehensive assessment of students is done by the kindergarten teachers at the transition to First Grade, when all kindergarten students are presented by the kindergarten teachers to the grade school faculty. In this context, observations about students who have begun to present signs of additional needs are taken into consideration by the grade school faculty.

#### **Grades 1 – 8**

##### **Second Grade Assessment**

Our Educational Support teachers observe classes and individual students, and advise and train individual teachers. Each 2<sup>nd</sup> grade student receives a thorough assessment designed to assess each child's progress in achieving the developmental milestones appropriate for successful learning in school, as well as their acquisition of basic skills in the areas of writing, reading, and mathematics. The educational support teacher hold a parent conference for each of those children whose assessments indicate a need for educational support services, where an explanation of the results of the assessments and the child's individual educational support plan is shared with the parents. The Second grade teacher is trained in the particular exercises addressing the unique development needs of those students.

## Individual Plans

In addition to the systematic assessment of Second grade students, we provide services to students in all other grades as needed, either at the teachers' request, or from the recommendations of a Care Group. Students may need help on a *physical* level, as in movement, coordination, dexterity, and sensory integration, which we refer to as Educational Services. Students may also need support in building their reading, writing, spelling, and math skills, which we refer to as Tutoring. Our desired outcome is that these young students become comfortable in their bodies, gain self esteem and skills in the areas needing support, and reach a healthy level of integration in the social fabric of their class.

## High School

As the concluding chapter to a student's 12-plus-year experience of Waldorf Education, the High School is ultimately responsible to assure that each Seattle Waldorf School graduate is adequately prepared to meet a range of post-secondary educational opportunities. During the high school years we bring a concerted focus on the development of abstract thinking, with associated skills of analysis and expression. All students engage in a range of subjects, including higher mathematics and science, primary research and analytical writing. The demanding curriculum requires that students with specific learning challenges have effective one-on-one support. We offer such individual support at four levels:

- I. Teachers and advisors routinely meet with students individually outside of class on an as-needed basis, whenever there is difficulty -- be it with specific course material or more broadly with skills such as note taking, study skills, and organization.  
If this routine level of support does not prove to be adequate, the advisor will refer a student for more extensive tutoring support by speaking with the HS Director and/or Educational Support Team Leader. Additional support may be provided in one of the following ways:
- II. When a student's difficulties appear to be confined to one particular subject area, yet are extensive enough that the teacher of that subject is not able to supply adequate individual support, we may ask that parents engage an outside tutor. In this situation the tutor would not be expected to need a significant amount of information or ongoing coordination from the school. Funding for outside tutoring is the responsibility of the family.
- III. When it appears that the need for one-on-one skill development is in an area which relates across several subject areas (for example, written work in the Morning Lesson Book), and which will require the tutor to have a close understanding of the expectations and materials of the Waldorf curriculum as well as good coordination with the SWHS Faculty, educational support is provided by an SWHS Educational Support Team member. An individual plan for educational services is developed and agreed upon with the family, and may be established for a limited period of time, or for the entire school year. Such educational support plans may apply to both students who have particular difficulties in an area or to students whose capacities significantly exceed those of his or her peer group and deserve an increased level of individual attention to develop these capacities to the fullest extent possible. Funding of a high school plan for educational support is the responsibility of the family.
- IV. During the process of applying to the High School, the HS Admissions Director in conjunction with the HS Director and Educational Support Team Leader may determine that a particular student has substantial learning challenges which make it unlikely that the student would be able to meet the expectations of the program without accommodation and daily educational support. The student may be offered admission, but with the stipulation that the family pay for one-on-one support provided by the SWHS Educational Support team. This level of support typically includes: working closely with the student's teachers to understand assignments and expectations, in order to provide on-going support to the student; developing reasonable accommodations for testing and assignment completion; and periodic communication with the student's

parents regarding progress as well as any need for specific parental support for academic success. Level IV Educational Support funding is included in the student specific yearly Tuition Agreement.

### **SWS Commitment**

SWS is committed to maintaining an Educational Support program including:

- A full-time teacher (or equivalent) trained in Extra-lesson and/or Sensory Integration, and/or Art Therapy.
- The services of a school doctor
- A curative eurythmist
- A Spacial Dynamics trained teacher

### **Educational Support Funding**

#### **Grade school**

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> grade assessment is provided at no cost to the families of SWS.
- Each student referred to the educational support team by his or her class teacher receives a grade appropriate assessment specific to the child's developmental needs followed by either 12 sessions per school year of educational support, or 12 sessions of tutoring, or both. These sessions are offered at no additional cost to the family. Our Educational team sends a written report to the family following these twelve sessions, accompanied by a request for a meeting if needed. If additional sessions are needed beyond this point, of either Educational Support or tutoring, an educational plan is proposed to the families and the financial responsibility is that of the family.

#### **High School**

- I. Student advising is an integral part of our high school program, and funding is included in the regular Tuition Agreement
- II. Outside tutoring is a private arrangement and is the responsibility of the family.
- III. Educational support services offered by SWS are contracted by the family with SWS in addition to the high school regular Tuition Agreement.
- IV. Year-long educational support plans are included in a student specific Tuition Agreement.