



Welcome to our first newsletter!

September 6, 2023

You are receiving this letter if you are a subscriber to the Teaching Through The Ages website, if you rented a video course or bought a play. It has been wonderful hearing feedback from so many of you, especially after the initial release of the first three grades. I definitely integrated your thoughts into the videos when preparing grades four and five. This newsletter is a place to let you know what I'm working on and, in the future, to respond to input from all of you. I'm including a couple of favorite poems and an [article I wrote](#) for Waldorf Today towards the end of the pandemic. The subject of community connection and service is important enough to bear repeating.

Here's a poem for first, second or even third grade...

When the pumpkins are so yellow, and the vines with grapes abound

When the melons are so mellow, and the nuts fall to the ground

When persimmons lose their bitters, and the apples are so red

When we love to eat corn fritters, since the roasting ears have fled

When orange pumpkins fill the fields, their jolly stems so green

While pears hang heavy on the trees, shining with a golden sheen

Tis Autumn, Queen of the Year, who strides along the forests and fields,

Plumping the harvests and increasing the season's yields.



Playhouse project in third grade

Trends and Questions

Based on my work as a mentor and visiting teacher I am hearing questions from new teachers and concerns from more experienced teachers about some of the changes occurring in our movement. I'll look at one trend in each of these newsletters, so please feel welcome to send me some of your thoughts.

One of the biggest changes right now has to do with an enhanced focus on reading in the first three grades; a push for early literacy is being adopted at many

schools. As someone who taught five classes to read and mentored many

teachers over the years, I can say with great certainty that every child learns to read. Some children with learning challenges learn with extra help, but everyone learns to read. One of the wonderful things about Waldorf education in relation to the language arts curriculum was the understanding that the students in the first two or even three grades could be quite successful students in English without being pushed to read earlier than they were ready.

Our immersion in language is broad, including recitation of poetry, development of strong comprehension skills through the daily recall conversation, development of writing and spelling skills, using imaginative images, an understanding of proper grammar through the modeling done by the teachers' speech, and development of a love of language through the many verbal exercises done each day. Reading is only one component of a language arts curriculum and we have the time in our curriculum to help the students build a strong foundation upon which their reading skills develop.

All experienced teachers have worked with students that were slower to embrace reading, but who were excellent in all other areas of the language curriculum. Usually when those students became fluent readers their comprehension and writing skills were on par or more advanced than those of their classmates who might have become proficient readers earlier. The students with special issues need to have them addressed by the professionals working in each school, but the

child who is developing more slowly in one area of language arts has the possibility to fully participate in other parts of the curriculum.

A combination of phonics and whole language has been used together to build a foundation for reading for the many years I have been a teacher and it has been a very effective combination. As the public schools have swung between emphasizing one way of teaching reading to the other (a recent New York Times article spoke about a return to phonics being needed to help children learn to read), Waldorf education has remained true to our successful curriculum which used both methods to meet the needs of different learners.

If a school is going to promote an accelerated language curriculum, I think it is very important for teachers to be involved in a study about what is lost and what is gained for the children when reading becomes a focus in the first and second grade classrooms.



A lovely verse for third or fourth grade...

Waffles Give Me Sniffles

*Waffles give me sniffles, chicken makes me itch,
Toffee gives me toothaches, tacos make me twitch.
Hot dogs give me fevers, ice-cream gives me chills,
If I nibble candy bars, I'm green around the gills.*

*Pancakes make me queasy, spaghetti makes me sneeze,
As soon as I eat pizza, I get a strange disease.*

*Peanuts give me pimples, popcorn hurts my throat,
One taste of macaroni, my body
starts to bloat.*

*Raisins give me rashes, bananas
make me shake,*

*If I bite a juicy burger, I get a
bellyache.*

*The moment I try chocolate, I lose a
little hair -*

Broccoli, however, has no effect,

It's thoroughly unfair!



Speech exercises for fifth grade botany

A flea flew by a bee. The bee,

To flee the flea, flew by a fly.

The fly flew high to flee the bee,

Who flew to flee the flea, who flew

To flee the fly, who now flew by.

The bee flew by the fly. The fly,

To flee the bee, flew by the flea,

The flea flew high to flee the fly,

Who flew to flee the bee who flew

To flee the flea who now flew by.

The fly flew by the flea. The flea,

To flee the fly, flew by the bee.

The bee flew high to flee the flea,

Who flew to flee the fly who flew

To flee the bee, who now flew by!



There have been some requests for a sixth grade video series. It is a wonderful and complex curriculum and includes some of my favorite blocks. I would be excited to create a course if I have ten teachers or schools committed to purchasing one, so please spread the word and have interested people contact me before December.

If you have been inspired by the courses or pleased with the plays you staged, I would ask that you spread the word about the website and the reasons for your enthusiasm.

I invite you to share this link: <https://www.teachingthroughtheages.com>

I look forward to receiving feedback and ideas before the winter newsletter!

“The most important thing is to establish an education through which human beings learn, once again, to live with one another.”

Rudolf Steiner