Developmental Curriculum: *The curriculum is created to meet and support the phase of development of the individual and the class. From birth to age 7 the guiding principle is that of imitation; from 7 to 14 the guiding principle is that of following the teacher's guidance; during the high school years the guiding principle is idealism and the development of independent judgment.*

The Grade School Years

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As a child steps across the threshold from the nurturing routines of an early childhood space into the world of school, something new is now possible. It is at this time that the growth forces which had formed the young child are freed in some degree for use in a new way. At around age seven, those forces have completed a crucial phase of building the child's physical body and its organs. It is a foundational principle of child development and anthroposophically-informed education that these forces should not be called on prematurely for intellectual pursuits before this cycle of growth is complete. The aim is to ensure that a strong, healthy physical body will be there as a foundation for the child's entire life before these growth forces begin to be redirected in service of focused cognitive activity.

Working with these freed-up forces, the class teacher now gradually weans the child from pure imitative learning. In its place, the child delves into the world of images, where the imagination leads over into understanding. The children hear a beautifully told story or see a chalk drawing on the board and begin to separate themselves from these inner and outer pictures, becoming independent observers. They should love what they see, but now with more distance than the kindergarten child. At this age, the child can begin to put those pictures into a context, or what we call "understanding." This understanding, however, is more than abstract intellectual knowledge. Instead, it is understanding saturated with rich feelings that run the gamut from excitement to sadness and joy. In this way, the learning during the years of the elementary school should never become dried out and dead. The gradual separation of "self" from "world" must not make the child feel isolated from the world. Instead, at the end of a lesson, the child should be left with the enthusiastic feeling, "That was so interesting and exciting! I want to learn more!"

Developmentally appropriate learning during this second seven-year period depends upon loving one's teacher, loving to learn, and finding beauty in every situation. It is up to the teacher to provide guidance as artist, scientist, and beloved guide. These qualities in the teacher cultivate in the child a feeling life that in turn develops a trust in his or her own heart-borne judgment. This is one of the imponderables that grows imperceptibly during these elementary years. It leads the children to know that their own heart is able to give them a hint as to the right way to act in a given situation. This is a matter of cultivating authentic sensibilities; feelings that will help children develop a moral compass rather than maudlin sentimentality. It is the teacher who guides this development through his or her relationship to the individual child and the class as a whole, ideally over a span of eight school years.

During the initial phase of this seven-year period, for instance in the first grade, the teacher may tell a story of four animals who decide to unite in seeking a new life for themselves in the town of Bremen. The child can see that each animal has its one-sidedness, in that the donkey is good at one thing and the cat at something else. But when the animals join forces, the child sees how their collaboration leads them to succeed where they would have failed on their own.

Once the story has been told, and the children have been able to sleep on it, they re-create it by retelling it out of their own internal, imaginative pictures. Then, in a completely non-didactic way, a conversation ensues based on their simple observations about how one of the characters acted or the way things worked out in the end. Inherent in such a story is also a living picture of how the human being combines many of these traits to become truly human. Yet such a concept would not be spoken. Rather it would stand there, ready for the children to draw upon it then or at some later time.

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The middle years of the elementary school time provide still more illustrations of this developmental approach. One of these arises in arithmetic when working with common fractions. By their very nature, numbers are abstractions in that they take the child from a consideration of objects (e.g., apples) to "counters" that stand for the objects (e.g., fingers, strokes on a page, etc.) and finally to symbols (4 or 57 or 2398). Imagine, then: How does a ten-year-old in fourth grade make sense of a fractional (broken) number which has a 3 over a 4 (3/4) or a 5 over a 16 (5/16)? And then how does the child make sense of a concept that the "4," in the first example, is a bigger number than the "16" in the second one?

Here the sure-handed teacher leads the children through all sorts of cutting-out exercises and practices with regular paper shapes or blocks of wood or slices of pizza. We take them apart and put them together; we try to combine equal and then different "sizes" (denominators) and different quantities ("numerators") of the fractions (3 fourths and 1 fourth; then 3 eighths and 5 eighths; then 1 fourth and 1 eighth, etc.). Stories are invented to illustrate the use of these pieces in addition to games that require putting together or taking apart these pieces to make mixed numbers and/or find common denominators. Only then can the abstraction of number have a sufficient foundation in experience to allow the child to feel comfort and success in working with these abstractions and in further computations with them.

Towards the end of the elementary years, the subject of modern history provides the teacher with yet another opportunity to give the children a chance to experience themselves as stepping into the stream of human society. Biographies of larger-than-life personalities such as Gandhi, Mother Theresa, and Martin Luther King are joined by those of little-known heroes such as "Wild Bill Cody" (who survived the Nazi concentration camps) or the Japanese engineer who in 2013 led his workers out of the horror and sure death of the tsunami-stricken Fukushima nuclear power plant. Inventors, natural scientists, astronomers—individuals in virtually every walk of life—can provide examples of what it means to learn about oneself and the world so as to rise to one's true humanity.

In these upper-elementary history classes, the students widen their focus from their own (often egotistical) concerns at this age to their place in the world. The teacher uses the subject matter to awaken them to humanity's charge to become part of the solution to what ails us in society today. They have experienced the range of gifts and challenges embodied in their long-time classmates as well as their own communities. Out

of this, they are coming to feel their individual responsibility to take initiative and help others in their community. They also come to see their enhanced effectiveness when working together with a healthy group of peers.

Again, the aim is to teach so that these older children are moved to want to do something out of their own initiative, even if they haven't yet developed the analytical ability to stand back, see, and then understand what is called for out of the whole context. That awareness will come in high school. Here, the task of the class and subject teachers is to keep them inspired and working to develop their own knowledge of self and world. The point is that they come to feel more inspired to want to learn and to work for positive change in themselves and the world. The curriculum and the love and respect of the children for their teachers provide the means to educate the growing human being at this stage of development.