

Reflections on Waldorf... from two Quest University grads

Why should there be Waldorf Schools?

The objective and broad answer is that society needs educational diversity in order to push the boundaries and concepts surrounding how we learn. But there are more subtle reasons that Waldorf schools are imperative. These subtleties lie in personalities, in sociability, in kindness, and in deep thinking. Waldorf promotes using the head, hands, and heart in everything that a student does. These qualities sound quite traditional, but with the global challenges that upcoming generations will face, the thoughtfulness that Waldorf education teaches is direly necessary for the modern world to thrive.

I attended three different Waldorf schools from kindergarten to grade 12. I went to school in both England and Canada. Now, as a 22-year-old university graduate, I think back on my time at Waldorf with a smile. Some of my greatest friends today I made in the first grade. After Waldorf, I continued on to university where I achieved academic awards on my final thesis paper. Throughout my undergraduate degree I maintained a GPA within the top 10% of my year. I also played varsity sports and received large scholarships.

One of the greatest misconceptions about Waldorf is the be-

lief that they are exclusively art schools. This is simply incorrect. The Toronto Waldorf high school prepared me well for a bachelor of arts and sciences. By the end of high school, I felt confident in a variety of faculties, including physics, literature, and biology. Arts are integrated into a Waldorf education because activities such as playing music or drawing are invaluable; they activate neurons

...we need beings who have sharp minds, practical solutions, and a care for all of humanity. These qualities are the subtleties of character that Waldorf promotes. These qualities ripple out and expand into the world, like a rock thrown into a lake. These qualities are needed to slowly engrain changes into society.

- Michael Powell

in less used parts of the brain, and help to foster a certain mentality—a mentality of care and precision.

Waldorf schools, like many universities, are closely tied to the seven liberal arts of antiquity. These include: Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music (Art), and Astronomy. By drawing from the values and morals of the ancient Greeks, Waldorf developed my passion to be a

“Renaissance man”—to do the best job I can at whatever I set my mind to. With the myriad of problems coming our way (natural disasters, sea level rise, agricultural shortages, economic disparity, over-population...the list goes on) we need beings who have sharp minds, practical solutions, and a care for all of humanity. These qualities are the subtleties of character that Waldorf promotes. These qualities ripple out and expand into the world, like a rock thrown into a lake. These qualities are needed to slowly engrain changes into society.

I truly loved my Waldorf education. I am still close to old teachers and I have learnt innumerable skills that carry into my daily and academic life. If I am blessed enough to have children, I hope to send them to Waldorf schools so they develop the use of their head, hands, and heart.

But we should let Rudolf Steiner speak for himself on the value of the education he designed:

“Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives. The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility—these three forces are the very nerve of education.”

-Michael Powell, Quest University graduate, and Waldorf alumnus

Reflections on Waldorf... from two Quest University grads (cont.)

I am forever grateful for my Waldorf education – only gaining a deeper appreciation for the education I received as I entered adulthood and attended university. There are specific and general aspects of my Waldorf education that supported my success in an academically rigorous setting, while still maintaining an active role within the community throughout my four-year undergraduate studies.

The breadth of my Waldorf education truly became apparent throughout my final years in high school. At this point the full cycle of the education was evident. This occurred through the culmination of my education in specific courses in eleventh and twelfth grade, particularly Projective Geometry, Calculus, Parsifal, and Faust. Projective Geometry brought forward new concepts that challenged and built upon the Euclidean geometry learned in early years, bringing forward the study of geometry projected in space and concepts of infinity; any two parallel lines meet at a single point at infinity. I found this way of thinking applied to other aspects of my life when I was forced to question ideas from other perspectives that I had previously accepted as truths.

I still vividly remember the in depth exploration of morals within the context of Goethe's Faust. This exploration corre-

sponded to my own development of morals and provided an avenue for inner reflection and solidification of moral values before they could truly be pressured by life after high school.

In university, my Waldorf education still glimmers through in the diverse aspects of my life, from academics to varsity athletics and involvement in the student representative council. The creation of main lesson

...the future holds endless possibilities, as Waldorf education does not just prepare you for post secondary success, but prepares you for life long success in any path you choose to follow. For this I will be forever grateful.

—Kyle Kirkegaard

books and a sense of ownership of my work fostered at Waldorf continued to serve me in a university academic setting. It caused me to complete projects and assignments to the best of my ability and until I was truly proud of the finished product, rather than just until it reached the lowest standard to receive a check mark in the box. I also found myself fully engage in my work. This served me greatly and did not go unnoticed by my professors, manifesting in a paid research position with a professor in my second year. The curiosity cultivated

throughout Waldorf continued into my own personal research focus at university in the study of limnology (inland waters). My personal research project investigated the hydrodynamics of a reservoir in the Southwestern United States using a two-dimensional computer model to better understand how circulation patterns in the reservoir affected water quality down stream.

As Vice President of Quest University Students' Representative Council in my fourth year, my desire to be an active community member and to be of service to others was fulfilled. I believe the desire for such involvement came from volunteering at school events and doing service work on class trips throughout Waldorf. These are only a few ways I benefitted from my Waldorf education during university and I am excited to see how they relate to life post undergraduate studies.

From my experience after attending a Waldorf school for early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence the future holds endless possibilities, as Waldorf education does not just prepare you for post secondary success, but prepares you for life long success in any path you choose to follow. For this I will be forever grateful.

—Kyle Kirkegaard, Quest University graduate, Vice President Students Representative Council, and Waldorf alumnus