



Class Teacher Looping Policy

Whistler Waldorf School Place Based and Cultural Context

The classroom work of a Whistler Waldorf Class Teacher and Guardian, is predicated on relationship with the students, nurtured in daily practice and over time. The opportunity for teachers to know a student over a sustained arc of their development deepens this connection and what can flow from it.

Rudolf Steiner created a system of looping that an elementary grades teacher would carry a class from Grades 1 through to 7 or 8. During this time, families were composed differently than our modern age. Today the 7 year looping cycle is rarely if ever achieved.

Whistler itself, is a resort town, and thus the school experiences routine transience. Affordability is a concern for working teachers, and work visas run over two years. Whistler Waldorf itself, therefore, has never had a teacher who has fully carried a class for 7 years at our school.

Looping Policy

Place based education also being a tenet of Waldorf Education, Whistler Waldorf school has a looping policy that considers the benefits of looping but also includes the history, context, and foundation of our school.

Class Teachers and Guardians at Whistler Waldorf School are expected to loop with their classes for **three to four consecutive years**, with the exception if there is a K/1 loop and is dependent on the working agreement with administration at the time of hiring. If a Class Teacher is willing and has been approved to continue the foundation through the upper cycles, WWS will support them in doing so.

Dependent on class size and age of the cohort, looping may follow one of the following patterns:

Kindergarten – Grade 1; Grades 2-4; Grades 5-7

or

Grades 1-3 or 4; Grades 4 or 5-7

Approved: April 14, 2021

To be reviewed: March, 2023

Rationale

Looping was first formally proposed as an educational strategy by Rudolf Steiner, philosopher, and founder of Waldorf Schools in Germany, a hundred years ago. Looping is still practiced in many Waldorf schools today. Research first appeared in the 1990s. A few large-scale studies continue to be conducted currently, with a resurgence in interest in recent years. The following are the researched benefits and concerns regarding the practice. See References for source of this rationale.

Description of the Practice of Looping

- Looping is when a teacher advances to a higher grade along with the students.
- The practice is largely used in elementary and middle schools.
- Waldorf schools have teachers loop from 1-8 grade.
- There is evidence that Montessori schools and other private schools also utilize looping.
- Documentation suggests public schools use looping for as little as 2 years, sometimes extending from 1-8 grade.
- Looping during middle school years has been documented, as well.
- No evidence of looping in High School was found.
- Studies mention that teachers are often either given a choice to loop or have teacher teams that loop with a student group.

Benefits of Looping

- Improved relationship between students and between teacher and students.
- Deeper home/classroom connection.
- Many documented social-emotional gains, and parent involvement.
- More efficient instruction: a gain of almost a month of teaching time in second year, since time for getting acquainted is eliminated and less review is needed.
- Improved student discipline/classroom management.
- Higher attendance rates.
- Improved test scores particularly benefiting females and minorities.
- Teacher gains such as opportunities for innovation were also mentioned.
- Teacher enthusiasm for new material comes through in teaching.

Concerns Around Looping

- Possibility of difficulties between teachers and pupils, or among individual students or groups of students, and these difficulties becoming ongoing
- To be cognizant that looping provides a structure to allow for certain positive outcomes, but not the cause of positive outcomes.
- To be cognizant that looping thrives in the context of teacher buy-in and administrator support.

References

https://www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org/research-on-looping/?wpfb_file_sort=%3Cfile_display_name

