



The Denver Waldorf School Program Handbook

High School 2015-2016

Founded on Rudolf Steiner's humanitarian curriculum,
The Denver Waldorf School awakens and inspires students' critical thinking,
emotional intelligence and artistic expression,
preparing them to bring relevant contributions to the world.

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High School Mission Statement

The Denver Waldorf High School provides a liberal arts education consciously aimed to nurture and encourage adolescent ideals and to balance the students' academic needs with their longing to find meaning in the world.

The Denver Waldorf High School curriculum is based on an age-appropriate approach, often revisiting themes and subjects first introduced in the lower grades. The aim is to engage the students more deeply and to further cultivate their ability to think critically, organize ideas and information, and present their thoughts clearly. The curriculum is academically challenging with a rich mix of math, English, humanities, physics, biology, chemistry, world language, practical and fine arts, chorus, orchestra, drama, physical education, service learning and community service.

Community service and service learning projects are expanding programs. Students engage in service during class trips as well as independently outside of school. Students also have the opportunity to participate in service learning throughout the year through an elective course focused on local, national and global peace building.

The high school faculty may make accommodations for students in need of additional language, mathematical, or scientific support on a case-by-case basis to help improve their academic experience. Accommodations can range from identifying strong tutors to providing varying course materials to offering alternative subjects.

Extra-curricular activities include girls' volleyball, coed cross country, and boys' and girls' basketball. Interested students may also participate in other sports at local public high schools.

Grade 9

As the freshmen plunge into high school, they are also plunging into puberty and the development of abstract thinking. There is tension in this transition, a struggle between opposites, sometimes revolt. The 9th grade curriculum strives to meet the students in the midst of these developmental changes. It allows students to see their inner experience reflected back to them in outer phenomena. In physics, for instance, students study the opposition of heat and cold; in chemistry, the expansion and contraction of gases; in history, revolutions and multi-cultural history; in humanities, comedy and tragedy; and, in geology, the continental collisions of plate tectonics.

Through the chaos of their struggles, students exercise powers of exact observation. In the sciences, students describe and draw precisely what happened in lab experiments and demonstrations; in the humanities, they must recount clearly a sequence of events or the nature of a character without getting lost in the confusion of details; in history, they track the evolution of consciousness through art; in mathematics, students identify order in chance.

Grade 10

From the turmoil of 9th grade, the sophomore begins to discover a certain balance in the violent collision of opposites. They begin to seek a certain order in the confusion. The curriculum responds to this search with subjects that incorporate balance. In chemistry, for example, students study acids and bases; in physics, the principles of mechanics; in

physiology, the interaction of masculine and feminine influences; in English, the application of reason in research writing and public speaking; in mathematics, the use of ratio and proportion to develop trigonometry; in humanities, the movement of civilization in ancient times, the struggles of the U.S. Civil War, and the origins of the Constitution.

Through the study of balance in natural and human phenomena, students begin to find their own fulcrums. In so doing, they are called to exercise the powers of comparison, weighing contrary phenomena to determine their value and significance, as well as their origin. In addition to regular community service, students spend a week working at a biodynamic farm.

Grade 11

As adolescents enter the second half of their high school career, deeper, more individualized questions may begin to burn. Students may feel the urge to follow the inner voice, which urges, “Leave behind what you have been given and get on with your own journey!” The curriculum addresses this need, namely, by taking up themes of invisibility. The students study subjects that draw them into areas not accessible to our sense. Such a journey requires new types of abstract thinking and intuition as well as the confidence that this type of thinking will not lead them astray. In literature, students study the Grail legend of the knight Parzival; in humanities, civics of society and government and medieval history; in chemistry, the invisible realm of the atom; in embryology, the origin of human existence; in physics, the world of electricity and magnetism; in projective geometry, parallel lines extended to a point which can be thought but not seen; in astronomy, the elements and forces of the cosmos.

After coming through the polarities of 9th grade and the challenging mood of 10th grade, the 11th grader is ready to re-approach a striving for “the ideal”.

Grade 12

The senior year is intended, on the one hand, to be the gradual synthesis of all prior education and, on the other hand, the fully conscious placement of oneself in the center of all that has been learned. The curriculum serves both purposes by offering subjects that synthesize many themes, world history, architecture, and *Faust* for example, and that also relate these themes to the centrality of the human being. In zoology, students study their relationship to the various animal phyla; in transcendentalism, they study the great thinkers who have wrestled with the question of our place in the world; in math, students use all that they have already learned to work problems involving new ideas that they meet in calculus; in chemistry, they tie together previous studies, developing a biological application through the world of proteins, lipids, and DNA. Students complete a senior project equivalent to one block worth of independent work in a topic that stretches their personal limits.

Assignments increasingly call upon the students to pull together, to synthesize disparate disciplines in an attempt to address the central question of the curriculum: Who? Who am I? Who is the human being? What or who stands behind the outer play of events and natural phenomena? In this sense, the 12th grade curriculum not only re-capitulates the themes of the four years of high school but also returns to the place where Waldorf curriculum started in 1st grade: with the image of the whole.

Language Arts

Ninth grade lessons focus on a deep reading of a novel and on the story of drama, where students learn the history of drama and explore the various forms of drama through reading and acting. The emphasis in 9th grade classes is on descriptive writing and summary, in particular learning the basics of essay writing. Track classes include two composition classes and two novel courses.

Tenth graders have main lessons on Bible as literature, where they investigate the stories of the Bible and how they can be translated into modern literature, and poetry. In the poetry block, students study many different forms of poetry with time spent on recitation in class as well as on writing their own poetry in the various styles. In their track classes students read an American text closely. In recent years this text has been *Grapes of Wrath*. Tenth graders also work to build skills in speech writing and recitation, deepen their research writing skills, and explore their creative writing skills in a short story class.

Eleventh grade main lessons include a block on Shakespeare in which several plays are read aloud as reader's theater, culminating in the performance of scenes from a variety of plays. Eleventh grade students often perform a complete work of Shakespeare for their annual drama block. As 11th grade students struggle on their personal journeys, they are happy to study the classic tale of quest in their *Parzival* main lesson block. Track classes include a deepening of their speech work as they now explore debating, an exploration into the world of journalism and reporting current events, and of their poetry as they focus on the poetry of the Romantics.

As seniors struggle to find their personal identity—who they are in a world of other individuals—they wrestle with *Faust* and his struggle to find meaning in his life. Their exposure to Russian literature, particularly *The Brothers Karamazov* continues their investigations into good and evil and where they stand as individuals within these complex questions. Their studies in track classes on Transcendentalism continue their work with these life questions. Finally, they focus on analytical writing with a writing workshop. The senior play is a capstone experience of 12th grade where students perform a modern play. Seniors also make an oral presentation of their Senior Project to the school community towards the end of the year. The project and play are well-attended as the entire school community joins in celebrating the accomplishments of the seniors.

Mathematics

In 9th through 12th grade, the math program has two major components. One is the main lesson, in which key concepts are introduced in a developmentally appropriate and imaginative way, and where the topics are explored in great depth with connections to other areas of math and other subjects. The math main lesson is a four-week intensive course that meets every morning for an hour and a half. Textbooks are not used, and the lessons are given orally. High school math main lessons include: conic sections, combinatorics and probability in 9th grade; sequences and series and trigonometry in 10th grade; projective geometry and functions and analytic geometry in 11th grade; and calculus I and calculus II in 12th grade.

The other component is the track class, in which new topics are also introduced, but improving students' skills is the major focus. This includes constant review, especially for upcoming math, physics, or other science main lessons. The skills classes meet daily for one hour, again in four-week blocks. High school math track classes include: linear equations and quadratic equations in 9th grade; exponents & logarithms and periodic functions in 10th grade; linear algebra and complex numbers in 11th grade; and polynomials & rational functions, personal finance & business math, statistics, and chaos theory in 12th grade.

Science

In contrast to the survey science courses of the grades, high school courses are designed to provide a fundamental literacy in each subject. The courses are divided by content topic area, and more concepts are drawn from fewer experiences. Students are encouraged to come to their own conclusions, through carefully facilitated discussions by the teacher. In the high school, there is also a conscious effort made to provide a combination of kinesthetic and visual experiences (laboratories, field trips, experiments) to complement the discussions and lectures. Science classes are taught in the hour-and-a-half main lesson classes and in the hour-long track classes.

In 9th grade, students have main lessons in geology, organic chemistry, and thermodynamics and a track class in health. For organic chemistry, the focus is on discovering the world of chemistry, specifically organic, and becoming familiar with the lab. Students begin their four-year study of chemistry with a look at basic principles. For thermodynamics, students question: What are heat, temperature, heat capacity, and latent heat? The responses of materials to heating, the interactions of objects in contact, and the connection between heating/cooling and changes in state are addressed. Emphasis is on developing keen powers of observation and on summarizing clearly the experiments and discussions. The skeleton and muscles of the human body are introduced in an anatomy track class in 9th grade.

The tenth grader, having grown some intellectual muscle, now wants to exercise it by measuring things up to one another. The 10th grade physics course is devoted to developing the concepts of classical mechanics. In chemistry, students combine the unique experience of a farm with the science behind agriculture. Students use their chemical knowledge to extract information on soil science and relate this to acid base chemistry. Soil science incorporates inorganic chemistry through the process of analyzing various nutrient levels in the soil and determines how "healthy" a particular soil is. Looking into the various types of soils, based on grain size, also gives a better understanding of what goes on within the soil on the farm. Students also work on the farm to gain experience on agricultural techniques and strategies. Topics covered in the study of acids, bases, and salts include an introduction to the Periodic Table, Avogadro's number, concentration in the form of molarity, acid and base reactions, and ideas on pH, balanced equations, and salts. Tenth graders also have a class on physiology, getting beyond the skeletal structure to look at how the organs work together and separately.

In 11th grade students are asked to bring considerable powers of thinking to bear on phenomena that are beyond the sense-perceptible. Eleventh graders approach the

electrostatic phenomena, circuits, wireless transmission, and the electromagnetic spectrum in physics. Students explore how magnetic forces exert importance on future methods of transportation, power sources, and explanations to electric current power, and in so doing they discover the very basics of electricity and magnetism. Students explore circuits, in parallel and in series, using fruit and the current created in a chemically acidic environment. A study of Kirchhoff's rule touches on the last of the electric fields and move into magnetic fields with a look at electromagnetic forces and Ampere's Law. Students continue with the curriculum to study atomic theory-based chemistry, looking into the atomic orbital theories that have been theorized and proved, which provide a foundational framework for how electrons behave in atomic orbitals. A classical quantum chemistry lab is also included. Students also explore how the human embryo develops. During their science track classes students move from the minute, studying cell structure in the human immunology and in the plant during botany, to the vast world beyond of the stars and cosmos, studying astronomy.

Science in the senior year builds on the analytical nature of the previous years by introducing a synthetic element. A seminar approach is emphasized where students should be capable of serious discussions and be able to take up thought-provoking issues. In physics the topic is light, and we approach this by carefully discussing its properties and the implied paradoxes. The idea of light moves students to think in abstract thoughts and unfolds to questions such as, "What is color?" or "Can light truly bend?" In this class, the idea of light and optics phenomena is explored in the classroom with several labs. In the 12th grade track class on cell structure, the goal is to include an introduction into the function of the cell and the particular organelles. The class not only looks at different cells, but also the function of cellular parts (organelles) and the scientific study of them. One specific goal is to identify the difference between eukaryotic and prokaryotic cells, exploring how these simple forms of life relate to us and the unique features of plant cells and how evolution shaped cellular function. Students also have a main lesson on zoology and a track class on the planet Earth.

Social Sciences

In 9th grade, the theme is polarities. History is examined through various forms of revolution, including the Industrial Revolution of Europe and the Cultural Revolution in China as well as the French and Russian Revolutions. Students also travel through time from the perspective of the changing forms of art in their History through Art main lesson block, observing how different cultures in different times found different ways to express and reflect what was happening. As they deepen their understanding of worldwide diversity, they study multicultural history. As students grapple with the cultural mores and ethics across the globe and over time, they also look at health and ethics issues that apply to them now.

In 10th grade, the students continue this investigation of others through their Geography of Peoples main lesson and track class. They also step back in time to look at ancient history, which is a recapitulation of what they learned in 5th grade, with a more analytical and critical experience in high school. They balance this outward look at the world with a study of the American Constitution and the Civil War. They are given a chance to compare and contrast what is happening globally over time and what occurred

in their own country. Study of the Civil Rights movement compares the situation of black Americans in both centuries. The similarities and differences are investigated more deeply as the biographies of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. are examined.

In the 11th grade History through Music class, students explore music much in the same way as they did art, looking at how society's changes influenced the sound of music, including a study of musical instruments, notation, theory, and composers, spanning ancient to modern times. Recorded and live music presentations are made throughout the block. The social and religious climate of each period of music is related to the style of the music and the lives of the composers. In the Medieval block, students study the rise of Christianity and Islam, cultural achievements of the times, philosophers and theologians, political history, and knighthood and chivalry. This is a recapitulation from their 7th grade studies and a preview for the study of *Parzival*. Students also have a class in civics.

In 12th grade the students are prepared to synthesize the earlier topics of study and see their relation to the magnificent sweep of the 20th and 21st Century history. Students learn about modern art, the eras before, during and after World War I, World War II, Viet Nam, and the period of their own lifetimes. Topics include the areas of science, philosophy, politics, economic systems, cultural upheaval, race relations, military weapons and tactics, world peace efforts, and more. Another main lesson block provides students with the History of Architecture, beginning with the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt and ending with modern architecture. After this historical overview, students complete a design project that includes building or drawing a scale model of their own structure. Included in this historical sweep are two elective main lessons. One is the History of Religions, focusing on Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and delving into Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, with a brief look at cult religions. The other is a course in Psychology.

College Counseling Program

The Director of Student Services oversees our College Counseling Program and is supported by additional outside consultants. In 9th grade, the Director of Student Services speaks to the students about transcripts, grade point averages, and the college counseling program. He also goes to a parent evening to explain the college counseling timeline and what services are available.

In 10th and 11th grade, our students are encouraged to take the PSAT standardized test. This test is administered at DWS. Waldorf students are generally not familiar with the format of standardized testing, so we want to give them this extra practice before the “real” SAT and ACT tests taken in the spring of 11th grade and fall of 12th grade. Students wanting to sign up for additional classes to prepare for these tests are encouraged to reach out to the Director of Student Services and should be aware these extra classes are offered at a fee.

An optional college counseling class taught by The Director of Students Services is offered for two blocks during the year. Juniors are highly encouraged to select this course. During the class, students engage in a variety of activities: students are surveyed

as to their interests for post-high school activities, including college; they discuss their plans for which test to take and when; they have guest speakers who are deans of admissions or admissions representatives from many national and local colleges; they talk about using college catalogs and the Internet for college searches; and they talk about any concerns that may come up. In the spring, 11th grade students schedule individual appointment with the director. Sometimes parents also request appointments.

In 12th grade, the counseling is completely individualized. The year begins with a counseling session with each student and his/her parents. Further assistance is available all year from the Director of Student Services and the English teachers, who are available to review essays. All high school faculty members are available for recommendation letters and cooperate in this endeavor.

A further resource that is helpful throughout the four years of high school is The Denver Waldorf School College Handbook. It is available on the website or by request through the Director of Student Services.

DWS students have been accepted to all types of colleges (see our list of College Acceptances on our website). They have also gone on to employment, service work, travel, and apprenticeships. More than 85 percent of the graduating classes attend college within one year of graduation.

Dramatic and Performing Arts

The Denver Waldorf School offers drama in 1st through 12th grade; with this wealth of theater the students are able to develop a well-rounded theatrical life so that students can take in the human and technical parts of the world they live in and begin to see how they fit.

In the high school, as the individual student emerges, the dramas begin the investigation of individuals within the context of a complex theme. In 9th grade, we take on short, one-act plays. The character development will be short, but the student will begin to understand individual characteristics of the human being. Tenth through twelfth grade students will take on dramas that offer characters that will give them the chance to wrestle with their opposite, highlight themselves, or in a perfect situation, offer them the chance to gaze into their own souls. Seniors perform in a local theater at the end of the school year and the whole school community celebrates their accomplishments. Students meet in a chorus class twice weekly with school performances throughout the year. They are also invited to join a high school orchestra that also performs throughout the year. Both music groups culminate their school performances in a spring show and in celebration of the seniors at graduation.

Fine, Practical and Industrial Arts

Art classes in the high school meet one hour every afternoon in four-week blocks and follow the developmental needs of the student at each grade level.

Fine arts classes each year are selected by the Arts Director and could include Black and White Drawing, Pastel Drawing, Printmaking, and Etching in 9th grade; Casting Light and Shadow, Black and White Design, Drawing and Portraiture with Oil Pastels, Watercolor Painting, and Black and White Photography in Grade 10; Expressive Portraiture in 11th grade; and Expressive Portraiture, Oil Painting, and Veil Painting in 12th grade.

Practical Arts include Relief Clay Sculpting, Clay Modeling, Basketry, Blacksmithing, Stone carving, Mixed Media, Calligraphy, Stained Glass, Bookbinding, Copper Work, and Woodwork.

The 2015-2016 school year will see the launch of the DWHS industrial arts program with the intent of providing hands-on training in the manual arts. The program aims to help students learn technical skills and to provide experiences in the practical application of concepts learned in science and math courses at DWS and in other building projects. Training will begin with one course initially and in years following will expand with more offerings. Students will learn to safely use basic hand tools, power tools, and bench-mounted tools in working with metals, plastics, wood and other materials. Training in various fabrication techniques will be taught to enable students to build useful items for the campus and in building projects to deepen learning from physics, math, chemistry and life sciences classes. Wherever possible, the industrial arts program will aim to coordinate our science and math courses with a specific focus on the topic of energy in all its aspects.

Optional Courses

A variety of movement, music, fine art, technical art, academic, and skill-building optional classes are offered each year. Options may include courses, such as gardening, reading workshop, math workshop, poetry, set design, batik, mural painting, guitar, a cappella, yoga, ultimate Frisbee, basketball and chess.

Athletics

DWS is a member of the Colorado High School Activities Association (CHSAA), and participates in inter-scholastic competition on a 1-A level. Boys and Girls Cross Country, Girls Volleyball and Basketball, Boys Basketball, and Co-Ed Ultimate Frisbee are offered.

Religious Studies

Through offerings in the humanities, the students are re-exposed to the major religious traditions and disciplines in the world and also deal with questions directly regarding spirituality and its application in the modern world. Sometimes religion is the focus of study, in such courses as History of Religion, Bible as Literature, and Transcendentalism. Other times students gain different perspectives on different religions while learning about past eras, people and cultures, such as Medieval History or the History of Revolutions, and sometimes students learn about religion while looking at other topics such as History through Art, History through Music, Parzival, 20th Century History, Russian Literature, and Faust. The integrative nature of the curriculum allows religion to be explored from many angles.

Spanish Program

Advanced level classes focus on reading original texts and excerpts in Spanish with classroom discussion also in Spanish. Students work on discerning and articulating in a foreign language, the beauty of the written language, the poetry of the culture, and the historical evolution of the literature. Even after four years of a language, it is rare for a student to be fluent. Most students require an immersion in the language for true fluency. Even most students who have had college-level language classes are not fluent until they have had an immersion experience. Our program lays a strong foundation for fluency in an immersion experience.

Beginning and intermediate level classes focus on grammar, drills, review, and exercises. Spanish courses on these two levels work with a rhythm that involves:

- Presentation of new information
- Homework exercises and drills focused on this new material
- Quick review followed by presentation of new information
- Homework exercises and drills focused on this new material
- Quick review followed by presentation of new information, etc.

Student Activities and Organizations

Cultural Exchange Program

Students have the opportunity to participate in an exchange program with other Waldorf schools internationally. We have sent our students to, or received students from, Germany, Switzerland, Brussels, Brazil, South Africa, Korea, Australia, Vietnam, Peru, Colombia, Spain, Argentina and France. Please see the exchange program handbook on our website for more information on this program.

Math Contest

Each year, high school students are invited to enter a math contest sponsored by the Mathematical Association of America. Typically, a number of students participate in this annual event. Interested students may also meet weekly as a math club to work on contest problems or other math questions.

Senior Projects

As twelfth graders stand on the edge of adulthood, they long for independence and yet are still unsure of their place in the world. The Senior Project is designed to help students begin to bridge this gap, preparing them for college studies and professional work in the world. Students must design a project that forces them to pursue a new area of interest or something that will stretch their abilities, mentally, physically, and/or emotionally. The individual projects are approved by the high school faculty and supported by an adult mentor who is an expert in the chosen field of endeavor and preferably someone outside of the familiar school community. The project scope is equivalent to one main lesson block, or about eighty hours of work, and typically extends over many months of the school year. The project culminates in a formal presentation of learning to the community.

Service Learning/ Community Service Program

The Denver Waldorf School faculty believes that young people today want to be respected as valuable members of their community. Additionally, schools, colleges, and universities recognize that service helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others and that service is an essential part of today's education. Therefore, either individually or as a group, students are expected to participate in activities that serve the community.

Service Learning

Students participate in a class trip with a service-learning component. The following are the broader intentions encompassed in each trip:

- o Freshman Class: Students go on curriculum-relevant day trips throughout the year to support a variety of topics brought in the 9th grade and to introduce students to the broader Denver community. When at all possible, students take public transportation with their teacher to further their exploration of the city. The freshman year culminates in a week-long commitment to a local community initiative where the students have the opportunity to be involved in its day-to-day workings.
- o Sophomore Class: Students spend a week on an overnight trip to a biodynamic farm to further support their sophomore science curriculum and to learn how to be a part of the farm's day-to-day workings.
- Junior Class: Students spend a week on an overnight trip with a local organization that focuses on supporting demographically diverse populations to further their junior curriculum in human development.
- Senior Class: Viewed as the culmination of their education, students spend two weeks on an overnight trip that strives to further support the entire high school curriculum in art, history, music, experience in a different culture and community service. Previous Senior Trips have involved all of these components in both in the United States and abroad.
- All-High School Camping Trip: The high school starts each school year with a camping trip at a Colorado State Park where students and teachers join together to work on restoration efforts through Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado. This trip aims to start each school year off with community building, play and shared work toward the betterment of the natural world around us all.

Community Service

Each student is encouraged to complete 30 hours of community service throughout the year. At least 20 of the 30 community service hours are required to be done outside of the school community. Students, with support from their parents, are responsible for creating these opportunities.