



Young School's Guide 2018

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Introduction

This guide has been written to support the healthy growth of Waldorf Schools and initiatives. This edition represents a next step in the process that involves a closer collaboration between young schools and the consultants and AWSNA representatives who have assisted them over the years. It is written to be a living document, open to frequent revision and additions.

The format for this guide is one that uses questions as a basis for self-examination. The goal is that each school and all consultants will look at operations in light of this guide without falling into the thought that there is only one “right answer.” Rather, the goal is to provide tools with which to ask why the school is choosing certain procedures, identifying practices objectively, and finding ways to support and articulate the choices schools make. The aim here is to develop healthy schools!

At the same time, a number of dangers lurk in corners with an enterprise such as This. These are:

- First, the guide works to avoid being prescriptive; however, there is always that danger. The keyword is self-determination at the local school level. Every school must consider carefully what is written in this guide for each developmental step. But each step will also need to reflect the specific needs of each local, individual community, the colleagues, and, most importantly, the children entrusted to the care of each teacher and each school.
- Similarly, there is a danger that this guide will describe forms that arise only from the past and will put a damper on innovation and the search for truly new solutions. Therefore every question and suggestion here must be taken as only one possible way of working. Working with these principles and ideas to develop further insight and effective practices is the reason for the document.
- Lastly, a young school might look at all this and become dismayed by the immensity of the task of working with it. It’s a somewhat daunting enterprise outlined here. Before becoming overwhelmed, however, take a look at the section on “How to use this guide.”

This guide is also designed to help schools develop skills and capacities in the realm of self-study and successful Accreditation.

How to Use this Guide

The three guiding stars for using this guide are:

1. Divide responsibilities
2. Set realistic goals and set priorities
3. Seek professional help
 1. Success as a school depends on the ability to inspire many to do work for the cause. Every section of this guide can be given to one group or person as the responsible

organizer. This person or group need not be expected to do the work, necessarily, but to see that it stays conscious and moves forward.

2. Each responsible group or person then sets realistic goals, with timelines, for the section given and then identified its level of priority in relationship to the whole organization of the school. Resist the temptation to commit to more than can be accomplished within the realistic time frames set. A school is a long-term project!
3. When knowledge and experience are needed, find a way to engage people who can provide them. Whether AWSNA staff, consultants, parents with expertise, or professionals in the school's immediate community, there is no substitute for good advice about the real needs facing a school. Time, energy, and money can be saved if community needs are clearly articulated and the right people are brought in to address them.

The purpose of this guide is to help communities identify the most pressing needs and goals and to direct schools to the resources that will help fulfill those needs and goals.

Establishing a Community

The link between Waldorf education and anthroposophy as a method of inquiry is inextricable. As such, a healthy Waldorf inspired school needs to be very clear that it has taken on a task to cultivate a deep and conscious relationship to the wellsprings of Waldorf education. The principles that form the basis for AWSNA member schools are the AWSNA Principles for Waldorf Schools. The teacher is not to teach anthroposophy to the children. But the teacher is required to use anthroposophy *as a method of investigation and of inquiry* in order to properly meet the children. In several places Rudolf Steiner states that anthroposophy is the method in the Waldorf school.

Below are some of the topics that help lead a community to having a healthy Waldorf school.

- Which books from Rudolf Steiner and his students are most appropriate and will be used in group study?
- Will the study group include both teachers and non-teachers?
- What form will the study take to most engage individual thoughts and perceptions?
- Are there approaches used to work through the assigned sections in a systematic way?
- How will the arts be woven into the study as an important means of learning?
- Rudolf Steiner provided a strong foundation for an understanding of anthroposophy (and therefore Waldorf education) in the so-called basic books: *Philosophy of Freedom*; *Thinking as an Intuitive Path*, *Theosophy*, *How to Attain Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, *Occult Science: An Outline of Esoteric Science*, and. Are there plans to study any of these books or have plans been made to do so?

AWSNA Principles for Waldorf Schools

1. The image of the human being as a spiritual being informs every aspect of the school.

Waldorf schools work actively with insights from Rudolf Steiner about the incarnating human being. One core insight is that the human being is a threefold being of body, soul, and spirit. Waldorf Education enlivens the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, artistic, and spiritual capacities of the human being as the individual moves through the phases of this life.

2. Waldorf schools foster social renewal by cultivating human capacities in service to the individual and society.

Waldorf schools foster development so that, throughout life, individuals are motivated to serve humanity with strength of will, depth of feeling, clarity of thought, and the ability to work with others. The educational program is designed to strengthen these fundamental human capacities in our students.

3. Anthroposophical understanding of child development guides the educational program.

Waldorf schools work with the gradual development of the human being from child to adult. This development follows an archetypal sequence of three seven-year phases. During this time, the soul and spirit progressively take hold of the physical body. Each child's development is a unique expression of the human archetype. Each phase has characteristic physical, emotional, and intellectual dimensions.

The educational program is developed out of this understanding. Core components of the educational program include the student-teacher relationship; the artistic approach; working from experience to concept; working from whole to parts; use of rhythm and repetition; and observation as the foundation for assessment. Each approach is tailored to meet the students in each phase of child development.

Thus it is essential that teachers have formal preparation in Waldorf pedagogy or are engaged in such preparation.

4. Waldorf schools support freedom in teaching within the context of the school's shared agreements.

The educational program of each Waldorf school is founded on Rudolf Steiner's insights about the growing child, informed by the teachers' ongoing study of anthroposophy and their professional development in Waldorf Education.

The faculty of the school works collaboratively and cooperatively to develop, refine, and periodically review the educational program. Individual teachers work creatively with curricular, pedagogical, and assessment components of the program out of freedom and in a way that serves their individual students, the class as a whole, and the school community. This work reflects and respects the shared educational understandings and agreements of the faculty.

5. The conscious development of human relationships fosters individual and community health.

Enduring human relationships between students and their teachers and among the children themselves are at the heart of Waldorf Education. The teacher's task is to work with the developing individuality of each student and with each class as a whole within the context of the entire school. These relationships gain in depth and stability when they are cultivated over multiple years.

Healthy human relationships with and among parents and colleagues are essential to the well-being of the school. Members of the community are invited to join in developing meaningful, collaborative, transparent forms for working together. Each individual's self-development is encouraged since it is key to the well-being of the whole.

6. Spiritual development in support of professional growth is an ongoing activity for the faculty, staff, and board.

Members of the faculty, staff, and board work in an ongoing way to cultivate their spiritual development with the help of anthroposophical and other study. Waldorf schools create opportunities for shared educational study, artistic activity, mentoring, and research to further this growth and development in service to the students.

7. Collaboration and shared responsibility provide the foundations of school leadership and governance.

Waldorf schools are self-administered. This work is strengthened by cultivating a shared anthroposophical understanding of social interaction. Faculty, staff, and the board share responsibility for guiding and leading the school in the following manner:

- a) The educational program is developed by the faculty under the guidance of the pedagogical leadership of the school.
- b) Administrative activities further the educational program.
- c) The board works strategically to enable legal and financial health in order to realize the mission and vision of the school.

Governance of the school is structured and implemented in a manner that both cultivates collaboration and is effective.

AWSNA Policies & Practices

- 1) Independence. The school is established as a ‘not for profit’ entity, or equivalent in Mexico, with an organizational structure that safeguards the integrity of its independence. Decisions to establish relationships with outside entities that affect the school’s purpose, programs, governance, personnel, and community are made only after fully conscious discussion with appropriate members of the school community.
- 2) Responsible Self Reflection. The school is committed to a seven-year¹ cycle of self-study and peer review. It is also committed to implementing the self-identified priorities for growth and change that emerge during the self-study process and the recommendations made by the visiting team.
- 3) Support for Students and Families. The school is committed to supporting students and their families and establishes and implements documented policies and practices that demonstrate this in the following areas:
 - a) Application and acceptance
 - b) Assessment, support, supervision
 - c) Graduation requirements, as applicable
 - d) Behavioral agreements and expectations, for students and families/adults, including communication protocol
 - e) Contracts, including refund policy
 - f) Tuition and tuition assistance, and as appropriate, financial accessibility
 - g) Family/adult commitments, including volunteerism and parent education
 - h) Record-keeping
 - i) Suspension, dismissal
 - j) Grievances, for students and families/adults
 - k) Conflict resolution, for students and families/adults
- 4) Support for Faculty and Staff. The school is committed to supporting faculty and staff and establishes and implements documented policies and practices to demonstrate this in the following areas:
 - a) Recruitment, hiring, and orientation
 - b) Mentoring, professional development, and assessment
 - c) Compensation, including benefits
 - d) Professional behavior and expectations, including communication protocol
 - e) Record-keeping
 - f) Dismissal
 - g) Grievances
 - h) Conflict resolution
- 5) Engaged Community. The school is committed to developing a healthy vibrant community in service of the school’s mission. The school consciously builds relationships with current and alumni/ae members of its community, as well as the community beyond the school. It

¹ The length may vary depending on joint accreditation. AWSNA will work to be in alignment with any joint agencies process.

also identifies its commitment to diversity in the school community. The school establishes and implements documented policies and procedures in the following areas:

- a) Friend and fundraising
 - b) Community events
 - c) Alumni/ae
 - d) Diversity statement
- 6) Articulated Educational Program. The school is committed to consciously creating a clearly described educational program. It establishes and implements documented policies and procedures to create and review the following areas:
- a) Annual programming schedule
 - b) Curriculum
 - c) Methodology
 - d) Assessment methods
 - e) Supplementary programs
- 7) Articulated Decision Making. The school is committed to establishing and implementing a documented governance structure that defines and delineates responsibilities for each leadership position and group. The documentation includes a clear description of how these groups collaborate, communicate, and make decisions. Policies and procedures address the following areas:
- a) Governance structure, including major areas of responsibility, authority, and accountability
 - b) Strategic planning
 - c) Crisis and risk management
 - d) Conflict of interest
- 8) Sufficient Resources. The school is committed to ensuring there are sufficient financial, human, and material resources to support the stated mission of the school. The school establishes and implements documented policies and procedures in the following areas:
- a) Financial, facilities, and material management
 - b) Budgeting, including three to five year planning
 - c) Annual audit reviews
 - d) A full audit, occurring within two years prior to the accreditation site visit
- 9) Prioritized Health and Safety Considerations. The school is committed to the health and safety of students, colleagues, community members, and other individuals on campus. It establishes and implements documented policies and practices to ensure health and safety in the following area:
- a) Student safety and protection, including abuse reporting
 - b) Harassment prevention
 - c) Emergency preparedness, including natural or human-caused emergencies
 - d) Field trips
 - e) Medication management, including first aid
 - f) Allergy management
 - g) Public health notices

h) Visitor and volunteer screening

10) Prioritized Legal Compliance. The school is committed to being aware of and meeting all legal requirements, and adopting policies and practices that are applied equally. It establishes and implements documented policies and practices to ensure legal compliance in the following area:

- a) Federal regulations
- b) State/provincial regulations
- c) Local regulations

Establishing a Healthy School in Light of AWSNA Principles

This guide is structured in such a way to support the community in an initiative to work as consciously and self-reflectively as possible, recognizing the challenges associated with the day to day activity of starting and continuing a school. The major policy areas for any independent school are identified below. The suggestion is to keep the AWSNA Principles as the foundational values impulse for establishing agreements in how the school functions. The guide is structured so that initiatives are asked to think consciously about what and how they are engaging in specific school activities, with the principles as the basis of why they have made these agreements, with the expectation that these agreements need to be reviewed on a regularly basis, especially for a young school. Rather than incorporate all available resources here, this guide identifies various resources that may be helpful in making specific types of agreements.

Independence and Self Reflection

See AWSNA Policies & Practices 1 & 2, AWSNA Principle 2. It is important for an initiative to identify its intentions. What is the purpose of this endeavor? How will it be structured; will it be public or independent? How will it start? Many initiatives start as study groups, then become play groups, then early childhood programs, and then eventually add grades and a high school.

Because initiatives change rapidly, due to growth, change in community, and/or other reasons, it can be supportive to have a plan to review agreements regularly. It may make sense to review them all annually, either all at once or by a rotating schedule of reviewing a particular area or two every (other) month.

Articulated Decision-Making

See AWSNA Policies & Practices 7, AWSNA Principle 4, 5, 7. Determine who (individuals or groups) will be making decisions in different realms of the initiative and who provides input for those decisions without having decision making authority or responsibility. This will very likely change over time and will vary depending on the size of the initiative.

Support for Faculty & Staff

See AWSNA Policies & Practices 4, AWSNA Principles 1, 5, 6. There are several key considerations to keep in mind. At the heart of any educational experience is the relationship between the teacher and the student, and the capacity of the teacher. From the foundation schools will want to keep in mind employing trained teachers and be sure to invest in teacher preparation and continued professional development for all employees. This requires a significant financial commitment to accomplish. Appropriate training and experience is also critical for administrative staff.

Articulated Educational Program

See AWSNA Policies & Practices 6, AWSNA Principles 3, 4. Rudolf Steiner provided invaluable insights into the developing human being which are the basis for the educational program. He also gave relevant indications for the whole educational program: the curriculum, pedagogical practices, and assessment methods, emphasizing that these thoughts are indications based on geography, the times, and the children. In other words, the indications are not meant to be a prescriptive standard of an educational program in a Waldorf school. Schools may articulate a high level or detailed set of agreements regarding the educational program that includes the extent of freedom teachers have in relation to these agreements.

Support for Students & Families and Engaged Community

See AWSNA Policies & Practices 3, 5, AWSNA Principles 1, 2, 5. Expectations and agreements relating to the students, parents, and families strengthen the school community, especially in small initiatives where individuals have many roles.

Prioritized Health & Safety Considerations and Prioritized Legal Compliance

See AWSNA Policies & Practices 9, 10, AWSNA Principles 1, 7. It is critical, even when just starting, to know and uphold legal expectations and ensure the physical safety of the students, faculty, and those on campus.

Sufficient Resources

See AWSNA Policies & Practices 8, AWSNA Principles 1, 2, 5. What we are trying to do can seem impossible, and like a miracle when it does happen. Often a school's success happens because of the incredible will of the entire community. Recognizing that it really is a determined community that makes initiatives flourish, it is important to ensure that the school activities align and grow based on appropriate human and financial resources being available.

Self-Study

AWSNA member schools engage in a self-study and peer review process throughout their membership. The process is scaled in depth and breadth depending on the maturity of the school, with the intention of expanding the scope with each subsequent self-study. It may be helpful to a young school or initiative to review the self-study process for associate members.

Note, this process of self-study is focused on strengthening organizational development. This is somewhat different than a strategic plan, which is often focused on growth.

For details see the abridged version of the Associate Self-Study Support document.