WALDORF
SCHOOL OF BALTIMORE







READING

CHILDREN WHO LOVE TO READ, NOT JUST CHILDREN WHO CAN

GROWN, NOT RUSHED

When is a child ready to read? The honest answer is that it depends on the child.

At the Waldorf School of Baltimore, reading grows from a deep foundation of listening, speaking, movement and handwork. We build it with care, so children meet letters with confidence and real interest.

In the Children's Garden, our preschool and kindergarten, the groundwork is everywhere: stories told by heart, songs and verses, fingerplays and rhymes, beeswax modeling, finger crocheting and long mornings outdoors. Each one builds the vocabulary, attention, sound awareness and hand strength that reading depends on.

Formal literacy instruction begins in first grade. Consonants, vowels, sight words and word families come alive through fairy tales and nature stories, and each letter is drawn from a picture before it becomes a symbol. Children compose and read their own short verses, so some of the first words they read are words they wrote.

EARLY READER, OR NEEDS MORE TIME?

Children reach reading on different timelines, and our classrooms are built for that range. When a child needs more, our Reading Support teachers work with small groups during the school day.

WHAT, HOW & WHY?

Turn the page to see the skills that sit underneath early reading, and how the Children's Garden builds each one before first grade.


THE CLASS PLAY

> *Understanding the world takes knowing how to listen and to tell narratives, and to enter into another's cultural vocabulary. Waldorf education has been integral in enabling me to do this.*
>
> **Ruth Goldstein, Ph.D.**, WSB Class of 1993

"Educating and inspiring children to think, feel, and act with depth, imagination and purpose"

THE WALDORF APPROACH TO LITERACY

IN THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN · AGES 2½ TO 6 · BEFORE FIRST GRADE

Everything in this chart happens in our preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Through stories, music, movement, handwork and play, the Children's Garden builds literacy from the ground up, so letters come alive in first grade.

What?	How?	Why?
 **ORAL LANGUAGE & LISTENING**	• Stories told by heart, without pictures • Puppet plays and circle-time stories • Verses and poems learned by heart	• Builds a rich vocabulary • Follows the sequence of a story • Understands meaning beyond decoding
 **SOUND AWARENESS & PHONICS READINESS**	• Daily songs, rhymes and tongue twisters • Clapping and stepping rhythms • Call-and-response songs and games	• Hears and separates similar sounds • Breaks words into syllables • Connects spoken sounds to letters
 **VISUAL TRACKING & FORM**	• Wet-on-wet watercolor painting • Seasonal eurythmy and movement • Finger crocheting and handwork	• Tracks lines of text left to right • Tells letter shapes apart • Keeps their place on the page
 **HAND STRENGTH & PENCIL READINESS**	• Kneading bread, chopping soup vegetables • Beeswax modeling, block crayons • Finger knitting and sewing	• Holds a pencil with control • Forms letters clearly • Organizes writing on the page
 **COORDINATION & CROSSING THE MIDLINE**	• Circle games and fingerplays • Jump rope, balancing and climbing • Clapping games across the midline	• Coordinates both hands to hold a book and turn pages • Supports smooth left-to-right reading
 **ATTENTION & WORKING MEMORY**	• Seasonal verses repeated over weeks • Multi-step movement games • Long poems learned a little at a time	• Holds a sentence in mind while decoding • Recalls a paragraph's start by its end

READING & WRITING THROUGH THE GRADES

CHILDREN'S GARDEN
Stories, songs and verses every day. Vocabulary development and pre-literacy activities.

GRADE 1
Letters drawn from pictures. Consonants, vowels, sight words and word families through fairy tales.

GRADE 2
Fables, legends and stories of noble people around the world. Introduction to grammar, phonics rules and more independent writing.

GRADE 3
Grammar, spelling and cursive. Independent and group reading activities.

GRADES 4–5
Myths, ancient poetry, composition and report writing. Verb tenses taught through students' own writing.

GRADES 6–8
Biographies, history, research and creative writing. In Grade 8, a research paper or project for every unit.

Poetry in every grade, from the Children's Garden on · **Class plays** bring literature to life through memorized lines and clear speech

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