

Curriculum Overview

MOVEMENT IN GRADE 1

Geometry is a remarkably different aspect of the Waldorf curriculum. We see it in 1st grade in Form Drawing (é.g., straight line and curve) and Mathematics (e.g., the quality of numbers; 1 = the circle/ all/ everything/ the all inclusive whole), but also handwork, music, eurythmy, and, of course, in movement. We will characterize this movement journey through the grades by imagining a circle with one focal point where the children's gazes meet as they share that single focal point. As they hold hands and move the circle their hearts face the center.

Movement in 1st grade has a womb-like quality. The teacher forms the class into a social unit, a social organism. As you can see in the Magic Pool Game, the teacher forms and holds the children in the circle archetype and engages the children's imaginations. Some of the strongest pictures emerge from the fairy tales where we see kings and queens, dragons and giants. The children are invited to climb into the picture and be part of it. Imitation is translated movement. Once the child begins to form independent pictures the child uses imitation but acts out her own inner picture of the task. They take hold of the space with their etheric bodies and engage in delicious play. Through Circle Games (such as Duck, Duck, Goose), Singing Games (such as A Tisket, A Tasket), Body Geography (such as Simon Says), Imitation Games (such as Magic Pool), Nature Games (such as Farmer Brown), Story Games (In the Grotto), Tumbling Games (Rolli Polli), and others the social fabric is strengthened, the etheric space is enlivened, and the children come to greater spatial awareness of themselves.

MOVEMENT IN GRADE 2

The movement sequence continues from 1st grade with the use of the circle but it has less of the safety and security of the one experienced in 1st grade. The circle undulates in a wavy, scalloped form that indicates an ebb and flow, and a loosening of the borders at the outer edge of the circle. In addition, there is a mood of suspenseful anticipation and lots of contrast. What happens occurs inside and outside of the circle. Children chase in, out, around, and through and are able to hold on to the form of the circle more as they weave in and out of the invisible edge of the circle. The movement dynamic here is one of expansion and contraction as well as the higher and the lower. Singing games, imagination, clapping, movement to the spoken word as the group moves right and left, front and back, up and down, above and below. Group movements can be arranged along the lines of animal themes and the nobility of the human being.

MOVEMENT IN GRADE 3

The movement gesture here is one of breaking the circle and reforming that includes explosive movement away from the center. There is a breaking out of the circle of childhood with the birth of duality, of self and other, that results in the birth of the inner life and a new sense of give and take. The children play in an enclosed container (a rectangle) as well and they live in the space in between the parallel lines, in the middle region. Two pictures emerge. One of explosive movement coming out of a center point and the other of an enclosed area and activity taking place in the space between. The movement curriculum suggests that children imitate work and practical activities in occupation games, roundelays out of stories such as Jaimen's Lumberjack one or Maureen's House Roundelay or

the Bell Ringing Bothmer one, nature walks leading to nature activities, games of leaping and running, building obstacle courses and overcoming them, games of hiding and seeking, that call forth courage ("Call It Courage"), games of enchanting and disenchanting, games inside and outside of the circle ("Good Morning, Mr./Mrs. Neighbor), gymnastic exercises that build I--- We---The Other. This is a wonderful time for word play between students, the use of riddles, and scripted conversations. All of these have a stimulating effect.

MOVEMENT IN GRADE 4

This stage of the progression can be pictured as a space between two parallel lines, one red and one blue. The activity of the games goes beyond one team's line into the other's territory and this is true for the opposite side as well.

The developmental picture is one of the children coming to a new relationship with their breath, that is, slowing down to a 1:4 ratio of breath to heartbeat, one that comes closer to an adult's breathing. This breathing translates into a rhythm.

The picture here is one of going through the other's territory and then returning. The image I have of this involves the Native American ritual challenge of "counting coup." Members of one tribe would sneak into the territory of the neighboring tribe in a stealthy, unseen manner and surprise the other, letting their presence be known by touching them (or taking a horse or something else of value) and then escaping back into the tribe's own territory without being captured. So the type of game that illustrates this archetype is "Capture the Flag" or "Sky Ball" or better yet "Lifeline." These are territory games that feature venturing out into the other's territory and returning. One can also use area games with hiding and seeking, connecting and separating.

Rhythmical directed activities such as romping and roundelays, games involving human beings and animals and newer more sophisticated animal walks, as well as games that feature Universal Human Deeds and games of Good and Evil featuring differentiation have the appropriate content. Folk dances that feature rhythm and levity are excellent.

MOVEMENT IN GRADE 5

The picture at this stage of the movement progression is one of a human being standing on the earth with arms outstretched. The person forms a cross with the body and represents balanced individual with feet firmly planted on the earth.

Developmentally the child is changing not just in the breathing ratio but also in the blood circulation. We call this time of 4th and 5th grade "the heart of childhood." The rhythmical quality engendered by the respiration and circulatory systems creates a balance between levity and gravity. Running is the epitome of this picture of the system regulated by the blood's circulation whereby oxygen courses through the blood and brings its life rhythm to every part of the body.

Thus, the Olympic Pentathlon and the Greek Exercises associated with it are prime examples of movement at this age: running (balance between heaven and earth, levity and gravity) is the archetype, and instills the virtue of harmony. The challenge for leaping and jumping (which entails exploding off

the launch pad and then landing with poise, thus the virtue of moderation). Wrestling involves upper and lower body coordination and a dialogue that results in greater self-confidence. Discus throwing demonstrates integrated beauty arising out of the rhythmic system. Lastly, javelin aims at the development leading to the virtue of a sense of justice. Also effective are games involving transformation (introduced through imaginations). Activities that build courage with prudence such as challenge courses work well. Finding the middle in gymnastics activities is also important. Initiative games done in a cooperative mode can be effective. Folk dancing needs an annual place in the curriculum. Swimming may also be introduced at this time.

MOVEMENT IN GRADE 6

Here we see a picture of inter-penetrating triangles, one is a light triangle and the other is a heavy one. Where they intersect a rhombus is formed in the lower portion of the torso. The theme at this stage of the progression is Uprightness overcomes gravity. This is a time for more formal Bothmer exercises, and an opportunity to deal with the teaching of technique directly.

One needs to begin establishing a sense of boundaries between one another. Personal space needs to be developed and brought to consciousness through games for example, Space ball. Movement exercises, gymnastics, acrobatics need orchestration. The Medieval Games, like the Pentathlon, captures a movement theme and serves as an excellent setting for meeting other schools to celebrate history, literature, drama, costumes, as well as the skills involved in learning archery, rod work, fencing, stilt walking, pillow jousting, moat jumping, and juggling. This is an important time to continue the development of circus arts skills as well as gymnastics and acrobatics.

MOVEMENT IN GRADE 7

At this stage we have picture of the individual venturing out, exploring the world and returning by coming back to that individual's center. As if to say: "I am here; I gather my forces into the middle or center; I find myself in space." A pulsing occurs around moving inside to outside and returning from the outside to inside (e.g., rod fencing--- strike and recoil, attack and parry). Here it is important to be able to have the ability to defend the middle, hold one's own position, and know where one is in space. This quality is important for playing team sports such as basketball (for example, one plays on offense and then retreats into a zone defense) or in volleyball (one sets the ball for a slam, then resets to defend the team's zone). There is a pulsing quality here of moving out into the fracas and returning in the middle or home position. There is a need to develop a greater coordination of body work and soul work, courtesy, tact, an artistic sense, and teamwork. Team games such as ultimate Frisbee, touch or flag football, basketball, volleyball, softball, and relays work wonders with the students. It is a good time for conditioning that builds endurance in running distances and speed in sprinting distances. Another great event among other schools is a track meet featuring track and field events. Other activities for this stage include vaulting, tumbling, gymnastics, and acrobatics. Give students a sense of the dramatic through the performance of activities requiring rhythm and precision such as Morris Dancing.

MOVEMENT IN GRADE 8

The geometric signature of 8th grade in this sequential movement progression is a donut or torus with a middle circle representing the individual and the outer circle representing the world. Arrows point inward as well as outward. The world is moving toward the individual (outer to inner arrows) and the individual is going out to meet the world (inner to outer arrows). The 8th grader is creating a negative space in the center that carries ego potential for the future.

The 8th grader is perched on a ridge that has a vista in front that symbolizes the first eight grades and a series of mountains behind that stand for the challenging obstacles that still lay ahead. The individual is upright at this vista point as he or she takes in this big view. Each looks to find one's self as well as to discover a meaningful relationship to the environment. Perhaps this is through a team. Each one wants to acquire skills for this pursuit. Through interaction with the other, self-discovery is made and this self-discovery is an evolving process.

Students feel their bones and the full weight of their physical bodies. Their sense of movement penetrates to the skeletal structure. (They have probably drawn themselves as a skeleton performing their favorite activity during the Anatomy block). They feel burdened by their weight and enlivened by their new strength. They need the opportunity to explore this combination. Emphasis should be more on gross motor movement than on finely honed technique. This age marks the end of childhood.

Outdoor pursuits can be introduced such as rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, mountaineering, skiing, etc. Each activity provides a new challenge depending on what is available locally. Importance is placed on self-reliance, survival, and the relationship to the natural environment. Students need to see that outdoor pursuits should enhance our connection to nature and that we never degrade the environment through our pursuits. Students need to feel they are working with and in nature, not viewing it as an obstacle.

At this age we need to respect and be sensitive to gender differences. First and foremost differences in size and strength and contact need to be acknowledged. Sometimes separating the genders can have a good effect on skill development as well. One needs to balance integrated and separate activities. The boys need to explore the limits of their power and strength, the girls need protection in the bodily intimacy of many gymnastic exercises that involve exposed positions where they need spotting. The role of competition needs to be measured as an important pedagogical instrument. It should be controlled by the teacher and used to cultivate teamwork, for stimulating engagement, for drawing individual potential, and for pushing certain individuals to new levels of achievement. Greatest emphasis should be placed on a secure, trusting environment where emotional and safety nets are available when needed. 8th graders show more caution and concern than 7th graders.

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