



Wasatch charter school

BACK TO SCHOOL 2026 | ISSUE 5

“Meaningful academic growth is deeply rooted in child development and requires a holistic approach. It unfolds through rhythm, relationship, and careful attention to what is ready to emerge in each unique child.”

—Heather Campbell, Executive Director

Photo by Shannon D’Amico





CURRICULUM SPOTLIGHT: WALDORF GRADES 5-8

BY ANGELA MAAR
PEDAGOGICAL DIRECTOR GRADES 5-8

Every child moves through a remarkable inner journey during their middle school years. Understanding what your youth is experiencing developmentally can transform the way you see their behavior, their skepticism, and their rapid growth.

The second half of your child's experience at our school is a dramatic journey from beautiful harmony into the heavy realities of the material world. Grades five through eight in the Waldorf school mark profound milestones in a child's incarnation into the physical world. It begins around age eleven, a time when the harmonious equilibrium of childhood peaks, and transitions into the stormy, gravity-bound landscape of puberty. It culminates in the eighth grade, where students stand on the precipice of high school, possessing a newly awakened capacity for abstract intellect and independent judgment.

While there are many ways to understand this four-year journey, we can look at it through the lens of the child's changing relationship with weight, gravity, and causal logic. If the early grades are about "breathing in" the world through imagination, the middle school years are about "anchoring" the feet firmly upon the earth. The metaphorical "expulsion from the garden" that began around age nine matures here into a literal confrontation with the physical laws of the universe. The skeletal system hardens, limbs grow long and heavy, and children suddenly feel the weight of their own bodies and emotions.

"The second half of your child's experience at the Waldorf school is a dramatic journey into the heavy realities of the material world."

In the fifth grade, students occupy a golden age of balance, mirroring their study of ancient Greece. However, by sixth grade, a weightiness takes hold. The world is no longer magic; it is mechanical. To meet this developmental shift, the curriculum introduces rigorous, phenomenon-based physics and mechanics. Students look at the lever and the pulley, experiencing how forces operate in the physical world. They also study the Roman Empire, learning about rigid law, conquest, and societal structure, reflecting their own need for firm boundaries and order.



“...meeting the critical intellect with beauty and truth gets at the very essence of community—forming in our time.”

As they enter seventh and eighth grade, their inner emotional world can mirror the explosive discoveries of the Renaissance and the Age of Exploration. They are ready to look outward at the vast world, yet they often feel completely isolated within themselves. We introduce chemistry, meteorology, and anatomy not as dry textbook facts, but as living processes of expansion, contraction, combustion, and balance. By studying the starry cosmos and the depths of the earth, the adolescent learns that the same laws governing the universe also govern their own changing bodies and minds.

Here in 2026, we see the challenges that arise when adolescents struggle to find their footing in a complex, digital world. As teachers, we work with this every day by guiding their burgeoning intellect away from cynicism and toward constructive criticism. Through historical biographies of revolutionaries, precise geometric proofing, and collaborative drama productions, we help them channel their intense inner fires outward. Through this deliberate work, the adolescent “I” can cross the turbulent bridge of puberty, ultimately finding its way toward meaningful, conscious citizenship in the world around them.

The middle school years bring a distinct wave of developmental friction. When parents share their concerns about these sudden behavioral shifts, they often describe identical patterns: a loss of childhood grace, a rise in critical skepticism, and deep emotional volatility. In the Waldorf curriculum, we do not view these challenges as behavior to be corrected, but as vital developmental forces seeking an outlet.

Here is how our grades 5 through 8 curriculum directly meets the three most common developmental challenges of this age group:

- Physical clumsiness: Growth spurts leave adolescents feeling disconnected from their changing bodies. We meet this in sixth-grade mechanics and woodworking, where students learn to consciously direct physical force against resistance. In math and games precise geometric movement and geometries require exact spatial awareness.
- Cynical skepticism: The child's mind begins to question authority and demand proof. We meet this through phenomenon-based physics, asking students to rely on objective observation rather than blind faith.
- Emotional volatility: Internal storms can cause adolescents to withdraw or lash out. We meet this through biographies, showing them how historical figures channeled intense inner turmoil into world-changing artistic and scientific achievements.

EURYTHMY IN SCHOOL:

BY PHILIP AND MELISSA GOLDSMITH
PAC MEMBER AND EURYTHMY TEACHERS

Eurythmy is a movement art that strives to make visible what occurs in the mind, body, and soul of the speaking or singing human being. This can be made visible through very specific gestures connected to the sounds of speech, to grammar, to the life of feeling, and to all of the elements of musical composition. In addition to the gestures of the human body, the movement of a person or groups of people through space are given precise forms that may vary from simple straight and curved lines to complex geometrical figures.

Rudolf Steiner inaugurated this new art form in 1912, just seven years before the opening of the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Germany. In its origination, eurythmy was first and foremost a performing art. In the years that followed, other applications for eurythmy were developed including: pedagogical eurythmy and therapeutic eurythmy. For the sake of this article, we will focus on pedagogical eurythmy.

Why was eurythmy established as a regularly occurring and obligatory specialty class for all children from first to twelfth grade at the opening of the first Waldorf School in 1919? In Waldorf education, we are concerned with the initiative and development of the will. Eurythmy can be especially powerful in this regard because of its connection to the whole human being in mind, body and soul. To maintain a wholeness, rather than cultivate children one-sidedly, is our striving. Carrying out specific, intentional movements in relation to space and time calls upon one's concentration as well as spatial awareness. Executing the movements in the way that is intended, requires coordination, dexterity, and a degree of mastery over one's own body.

It is important that these movements not be mechanical or automatic. On the contrary, they are most "eurythmic" when carried out with the full participation of one's "life of feeling" and sense for beauty. Beauty here is meant to encompass all that exemplifies harmony. In addition to these things, eurythmy has a significant social element. In order to move around the room in simple or complex formations harmoniously, we have to be very aware of the people around us. Sometimes one is called to lead the group and sometimes to follow attentively. The harmony of eurythmy can only be achieved when the separate individuals moving together raise their conscious awareness, at least to some extent, to encompass the whole group.

Throughout the grades, eurythmy lessons change and evolve in terms of content and exercises, while the overarching essence of the art is always present. There will often be parallels between what the children are learning in main lesson and what they experience in eurythmy. Fairytales and musical dexterity exercises abound in first grade while in eighth grade the children may work directly with sheet music for a piece of classical music to create a eurythmy performance. Over the course of the grades, more gestures, forms, grammar, music theory, rod/ball exercises, poetics, and so forth become integral parts of the eurythmy lessons.





“If someone momentarily disregards its artistic side, they could describe eurythmy as gymnastics enlivened by the soul and permeated by the spirit.”

—Rudolf Steiner, translated from original German by author.

Middle schoolers find artistic precision in Mr. Goldsmith's Eurythmy class.

THE PARENTING PAUSE

TO BE SEEN, OR NOT TO BE SEEN, THAT IS THE QUESTION

BY HEATHER ALLRED
WILLOW CLASS TEACHER

To be seen and understood is a gift Waldorf teachers strive to give each student. We observe the children to meet them in their education. We observe ourselves to bring our highest and best when we stand in front of the children. We observe the world to help the children navigate it long after their time with us. It is a great honor and privilege to do this work rooted in observation. In modern terms I guess you could say we are in the business of seeing and being seen. We pay attention and stretch toward what we see. This is my life's work.

There is another business of seeing and being seen that is getting in the way of my destiny. I have this little device I can hold in my hand and take with me everywhere I go. It sees my face, recognizes my features, responds to my slightest touch. It keeps my schedule, connects me with others, tracks how long my eyes linger on images and adjusts what it shows me to keep me engaged. It knows when I sleep, what route I take to work, what music I like, where I dine, and what destination I am most likely to select on a Saturday morning. I know where it is at all times, and when I don't, I stop what I am doing and find it. It's paying attention, and I'm giving it mine.

The discomfort of this statement is easy to dismiss for the sake of convenience and adulting, until I realize...It's paying attention to my children, and I'm giving it mine.



It's so easy to lose our attention to a ping and then find time has gone by and we are still looking at our screens, sidetracked and disconnected.

Heather's reflection is a personal one, but it speaks directly to something we hold as a community value at Wasatch Charter School. Our educational philosophy is rooted in the belief that children learn best through movement, direct experience, creative play, and imagination. That kind of learning requires attention—something we must actively protect and cultivate.

A few ways to protect attention in your home this week:

- Follow the Sunday-evening-through-Friday screen-free commitment as a family.
- Charge phones outside the bedroom so mornings start without them.
- Notice what your child reaches for when screens are not available.
- Try being fully present for one routine moment each day; a meal, a car ride, bedtime.

We strongly request no screen viewing from Sunday evening through Friday after school, and ask that weekend viewing be closely monitored. If this feels like a stretch, you are not alone. Start small. One screen-free evening. One phone left in another room. Notice what opens up in that space for your child and for you.

The following books informed our media philosophy; they are worth reading:

- *Endangered Minds* by Jane Healy
- *The Plug-In Drug* by Marie Winn
- *What To Do After You Turn Off the TV* by Frances Moore Lappé



Festival of Courage dragon, Willow and Aspen classes, 2025. Photo by Eric Larsen

FESTIVALS AND THE LIFE OF OUR SCHOOL: MICHAELMAS

BY MICHELLE SIMMONS
AMETHYST CLASS TEACHER,
FESTIVAL COMMITTEE CHAIR

Each September, we hold a school-wide celebration for students only during the school day. In the spirit of Michaelmas, also known as the Festival of Courage, stories are shared about taming or slaying dragons. Students also enjoy an obstacle course, picnic, singing and dragon-themed crafts, art, and “dragon bread.” Students and faculty all wear red and reflect on the mood of the changing seasons and the areas in their lives that demand courage and fortitude. These activities blend the gifts of harvest with the courage needed to face life’s obstacles. Kindergarten students have their own version of this celebration at the KinderHouse.



Eating, and sometimes even cooking, “dragon bread” is an anticipated tradition during the day’s festivities. Photo by Eric Larsen

“...We live in a time of hard tests for humanity, of hard tests which must become still harder. We live in a time in which a whole host of old forms of civilization to which men still erroneously cling, are sinking into the abyss, a time in which the claim insistently arises that man must find his way to something new.”

– Rudolf Steiner

Michaelmas is the acknowledgement of the coming of winter and the need to gather resources and strength. The stories of dragons give us strength and courage to face the dragons of our modern age, such as materialism and egoism. The autumn equinox is traditionally a time of mixed feelings, matching the changing of the seasons. It has long been an occasion for gratitude for the harvest’s bounty but also a time of concern about the more challenging days ahead. When winter fades, spring will bring its own outward push, but for now, as these days grow shorter and summer cedes to fall, it is a time to look inward and find one’s own strength and courage.

Not only is courage needed to deal with the outer cold and darkness, but also within ourselves. When we look within ourselves, who knows what dragons we will find? Courage is called for to shine light on those personal challenges we face as socially and morally-maturing human beings.

MAKING SPACE FOR THE FUTURE TO UNFOLD: BUILDING EXPANSION UPDATE

BY HEATHER CAMPBELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year our school may feel a little tighter than usual and you will see the changes as you drop off and pick up your children. With our growing community and plans for a building expansion underway, we are asking ourselves to be patient, creative, and flexible as we make room, literally and figuratively, for what comes next.

In Waldorf education, we understand that meaningful academic growth is deeply rooted in child development and requires a holistic approach. It unfolds through rhythm, relationship, and careful attention to what is ready to emerge in each unique child. Our building expansion is much the same.

The spaces we are creating will allow us to welcome more students into a public Waldorf education while giving our current community room to flourish. New classrooms, expanded gathering and movement spaces, and thoughtful renovations will help our physical environment better reflect the richness of the education taking place within it.

So, if this year occasionally feels a little cozy, we invite you to see it as part of the unfolding. We are temporarily making do so that, together, we can make more possible.

We have a dedicated page on our website to share ongoing information about the project, including timelines, plans, and construction updates. We hope this will be a useful place for our community to follow the process and share the excitement as the vision takes shape.

As I enter my second year as executive director, I am especially grateful to be part of this moment in our school's story with all of you. There is something fascinating about watching a vision move from conversations five-plus years ago, to plans, to reality, and knowing that what we are building today will serve children and families for years to come.



The first day of school looked a little different this year as our grounds have been prepped for change.

LOOKING AHEAD

Subscribe to WCS Google calendar for up-to-date info. Calendar can be found on the website under the resources tab.

8/21-9/25 Friday Morning Coffee and Tea with the Executive Director at the Outdoor Classroom

9/7 Labor Day No School

9/8 Family Council Meeting

9/23 Board Meeting

9/24 Festival of Courage
(in-school only)

10/10 Harvest Festival
(second Saturday)



Would you like to view the latest building renderings? Snap the QR code on the left to view.



GET IN TOUCH

Is there something you would like to learn more about? Contact us by snapping the QR code.