



## Transcript

*This transcript contains full quotations of the abbreviated versions used in the video.*

### What is school?

*When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life – John Lennon*

### So, what then is school?

#### Is it the filling of empty vessels?

*Nobody can make anybody else learn anything. You cannot make them. Any more than if you are a gardener you can make flowers grow, you don't make the flowers grow. You don't sit there and stick the petals on and put the leaves on and paint it. You don't do that. The flower grows itself. Your job, if you are any good at it, is to provide the optimum conditions for it to do that, to allow it to grow itself. – Ken Robinson*

*Waldorf education is the art of awakening what is actually there within the human being. – Rudolf Steiner*

#### Is it sitting still in straight rows?

*Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood. – Fred Rogers*

Waldorf education offers children a wonder-filled meander through childhood, while nurturing, protecting and developing their true intelligence.

#### Is it pushing children to learn?

*If you introduce a child to too formal a curriculum before they are ready for it then you are not taking into account where children are in terms of their learning and their capacity to develop. There is no research evidence that shows that early access to formal learning does children any good and quite a lot of good evidence to show that it actually can do some harm. – Gillian Pugh*

Early childhood education in Waldorf focuses on developing fine and gross motor skills, relatedness, self-confidence, well-being and a joy in learning.

#### Is it learning a lot of facts?

*Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all. – Aristotle*

Waldorf education engages the whole child: head, heart and hands, in preparation for the whole of life.

#### Is it learning to read and write?

*The newer and broader picture [of language development] suggests that the child emerges into literacy by actively speaking, reading and writing in the context of real life, not through filling out phonics worksheets or memorising words. – Thomas Armstrong*

In Waldorf education, literacy comes through hearing the fairy tales, legends and stories of the world. Children become deeply familiar with language before they learn to read and write.

#### Is it being cooped up indoors?

*The car plays a big part in children's lives, with more events reached by car than walking. The main reasons children go by car is to go on trips with parents, to go to other people's homes and to go to school. Whereas children tend to walk when they go out to play. This suggests that the shift from unstructured to structured activities for children is one of the causes of their decrease in walking and that letting children go out to play is one of the best things that parents can do for their children's health. Outdoor play uses as many calories as organised activities and is more likely to be associated with walking. – Roger Mackett*

Reverence for nature is at the core of Waldorf education and time spent outdoors is an essential part of the Waldorf experience for students of all ages.

#### Is it doing homework every day?

*There is no evidence of any academic benefit from homework in elementary school. Even if you were untroubled by the methodological concerns I've been describing, the fact is that after decades of research on the topic, there is no overall positive correlation between homework and achievement (by any measure) for students before middle school – or, in many cases, before high school. More precisely, there's virtually no research at all on the impact of homework in the primary grades – and therefore no data to support its use with young children – whereas research has been done with students in the upper elementary grades and it generally fails to find any benefit. – Alphonse Kohn*

Children learn from all their experiences. Homework at Waldorf schools is developmentally appropriate and does not start in earnest until Class 6.

#### Is it about wearing a uniform?

*Human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives. Control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement. – Daniel Pink*

Waldorf students do not wear uniforms. They are encouraged to be themselves without slogans, images or labels.

#### Is it survival of the smartest?

*All human beings are born with unique gifts. The healthy functioning of our community depends on its capacity to develop each gift. – Peter Senge*

Waldorf teachers stay with one class for up to eight years, allowing the teacher to become intimately familiar with the strengths and talents of each child.

#### Is it being tested and labelled?

*The grading that results from examinations corresponds little to the final useful work of people in life. – Jean Piaget*

Waldorf children do not write exams in primary school. The class teacher observes, assesses and makes relevant recommendations. No child fails during these years.

Waldorf teachers have a university degree, a post-graduate certificate of education and a 2-year certificate in Waldorf education. All Waldorf teachers are required to undergo ongoing training and mandatory biennial appraisals.

#### Is it rote memorisation of what's served?

*Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I'll understand. – Chinese Proverb*

Waldorf students don't use textbooks for the first five years of school. They make their own! In fact, they continue to make lesson books in which they record what they learn throughout their school years.

In the words of **Arthur Zajonc**:

*Waldorf education addresses the child as no other education does. Learning, whether in chemistry, mathematics, history or geography, is imbued with life and so with joy, which is the only true basis for later study. The textures and colours of nature, the accomplishments and struggles of humankind fill the Waldorf students' imaginations and the pages of their beautiful books. Education grows into a union with life that serves them for decades. By the time they reach us at the college and university level, these students are grounded broadly and deeply and have a remarkable enthusiasm for learning. Such students possess the eye of the discoverer, and the compassionate heart of the reformer which, when joined to a task, can change the planet.*

By creating their own lesson books, Waldorf students come to 'own' the information and ideas that they study.

The goal of Waldorf education is not to turn any student into a professional mathematician, historian or artist, but to awaken and educate capacities that every human being needs – contributing to the development of a well-balanced individual. As such, all students are taught a full complement of subjects throughout their high school years – giving them the benefit of a wide, comprehensive education regardless of ability or inclination. The aspiring scientist learns to appreciate the beauty of artistic endeavour while the budding artist discovers the inherent satisfaction of logic and reasoning.

*Waldorf excels at teaching the sciences in a way that most scientists only dream students will be taught – through an active process of experimenting and hypothesising which ultimately leads to a discovery that's just as novel and exciting for the student as any original discovery is for the world-class scientist. – Elizabeth Tanner*

#### Is it only academic?

*It's essential that the school of the future teach music. The passion of seeing progress, the hard work of practice, the joy and fear of public performance – these are critical skills for our future. It's a mistake to be penny-wise and cut music – which are capable of delivering so much value. But it's also a mistake to industrialise them. – Seth Godin*

Music and movement integrate the left and right sides of the brain, and are integral to the Waldorf curriculum.

Eurythmy – an expressive and harmonious movement art – is taught from nursery to high school at Waldorf schools across the world.

*Dance in education has a significant impact on students: increased self-confidence, group social development and creative thinking – specifically originality, fluency and flexibility. – James Catterall*

#### Are there opportunities for self-discovery?

*As astronauts and space travellers, children puzzle over the future; as dinosaurs and princesses they unearth the past. As weather reporters and restaurant workers they make sense of reality; as monsters and gremlins they make sense of the unreal. – Gretchen Owocki*

From the earliest years Waldorf children are encouraged to try on different roles and to test the boundaries of what they imagine themselves to be.

In Waldorf education, the arts are not considered luxuries, but fundamental to human growth and development.

*Pyramids, cathedrals, and rockets exist not because of geometry, theories of structures, or thermodynamics, but because they were first a picture – literally a vision – in the minds of those who built them. Society is where it is today because people had the perception; the images and the imagination; the creativity that the Arts provide, to make the world the place we live in today. – Eugene Ferguson*

#### Does technology play a role?

*It's in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough. It's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields the results that makes our heart sing – Steve Jobs*

There are no computers in Waldorf nursery or primary schools. Technology is introduced in the learning environment from Class 7 onwards.

#### Is it about winning?

Sport is an essential part of the Waldorf curriculum. Yet the approach to sport is fundamentally different from the way it is taught at conventional schools. There are no try-outs at Waldorf schools: any student wanting to participate is given an opportunity to practice, play and excel. There are no bench-warmers at games, either. All team members get to play. Contrary to what one would expect, Waldorf sports teams become powerful forces to be reckoned with – precisely because they are steeped in a spirit of generosity and inclusion.

Waldorf education sets the stage for deep and lasting friendships among students. Bullying is proactively dealt with and almost unheard of.

The Waldorf curriculum has no room for stereotyping of any kind and often challenges students' assumptions about themselves and others.

*Love is higher than opinion. If people love one another the most varied opinions can be reconciled – this is one of the most important tasks for humankind today and in the future is that we should learn to live together and understand one another. If this human fellowship is not achieved, all talk of development is empty. – Rudolf Steiner*

Waldorf education promotes multi-cultural awareness, diversity and inclusion.

#### Is it about 'me' or about 'us'?

*The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. – Mahatma Gandhi*

The Waldorf curriculum actively involves students in community development work – encouraging them to become compassionate and productive citizens.

Festivals strengthen community, celebrate humanity's connection to the rhythms of nature and speak deeply to children's imaginations ... leaving them with a rich store of memories.

This generous and diverse education awakens and educates capacities that give rise to well-balanced individuals who think independently – imparting purpose and direction to their own lives.

*We learn about self-reliance when we get lost in the mall, we learn about public speaking when we have to stand up and give a speech ... The act of actually figuring something out, of taking responsibility for finding an answer – this is at the heart of what it means to be educated ... – Seth Godin*

During their penultimate school year, Waldorf students explore, build or produce something that interests them deeply. They plan, research and bring their project to completion, record their experience in a hand-sewn, leather-bound book, and do a public presentation about their project.

For her project, Lisa curated an art exhibition entitled, The Face of Johannesburg.

Christopher's project culminated in him conducting the Rand Symphony Orchestra.

Athi built a go-kart.

Reabetswe isolated DNA from an onion and Danielle put together and performed a cabaret.

Julian designed and built a climbing wall on the school grounds.

Sebo studied the history and development of Zulu dancing and culture.

Luke bred four species of butterflies to demonstrate their life cycle.

The real-world endeavours of the Waldorf project year challenge students intellectually, emotionally, physically and artistically ... profoundly impacting their development and their futures.

Michael Mount matriculants write exams set by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB). The school has maintained a 100% pass rate since inception.

The majority of Waldorf graduates go on to university. Their studies are fairly evenly split between the humanities and the sciences. More than half go on to study beyond their first degree. Like graduates from any other school, Waldorf alumni work in diverse environments in every imaginable profession.

#### So, what then is the Waldorf difference?

*Quite simply, Waldorf students are taught to think for themselves. They are allowed to be themselves. They are not carbon copies. They are compassionate and resourceful self-starters. Capable of innovating and leading. Capable, really, of changing the world. – William Bester*

### Michael Mount Waldorf School

*Nurturing conscious, creative, independent thinkers*

Find out why this century-old educational philosophy is one of the fastest-growing independent education systems in the world, today.

Compiled by **Therésa Müller**, CEO, ZA Group – a Waldorf parent for 16 years

Project assistance by **Mandy Triaca**, Michael Mount Waldorf School Communications – a Waldorf parent for 20 years.

Photographs by **Premilla Mercott**, **Kevin Mark Pass**, parents, teachers and staff

Narrated by **Sheila McCallister** and **Paul Wright**

Video production and animation by **SP Studios**

Music:

Tomorrow's Child – **Tony Clarke**

Nocturne – **Magnus Opus**

Summer Breeze – **Stephen Porter**

Big Smiles – **Tony Clarke**

AmazingAir – **James C. Earl**

Giving Thanks – **Edward Grenga**, **Charles Lawry**, **Douglas Stevens**, **Michael McMahon**

Rolling Clarinets – **Mauritz Müller**, a former Michael Mount pupil

The beginning

© Michael Mount Waldorf School 2015