

## **PLEASE NOTE**

We are posting this on the web site because we want to make as much information available as possible. We want to make sure you understand that:

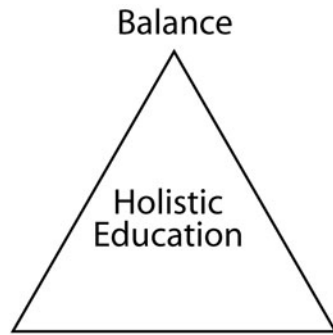
- **This document is a draft** and still being revised.
- The intended audience for this document is teachers and so it may be more technical than the other materials on the web site.

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## **2. THE HOLISTIC CURRICULUM**

According to Jack Miller in *The Holistic Curriculum*, holistic education is founded on three principles: balance, inclusion, and connection. Our curriculum is founded on these three overarching principles.



**Figure 1 - Three Overarching Principles**

### **BALANCE**

The philosophical roots for balance come from the Tao and the concepts of *yin* and *yang*, which are seen as complementary and interconnected energies. The yin and yang need each other for there to be health in the cosmos, the earth, cultures, institutions, and the individual. Some examples of yin and yang in the classroom are the following:

#### **Yin**

Group  
Process

Imagination  
Qualitative Assessment  
assessment  
Instruction/learning  
Program  
Vision



#### **Yang**

Individual  
Content

Knowledge  
Quantitative  
Assessment/evaluation  
Technology  
Techniques/strategies

We continuously revisit the balance between these yin and yang elements in the classroom. For example, in the early years a greater emphasis may be placed on cooperative learning rather than individual achievement and competition. In this context, the teacher may decide that qualitative assessment in the form of portfolios is more effective than marks and testing. However, at a later date the teacher may decide to assess

the students through a test.

## INCLUSION

Another way to look at holistic education is to link together various educational orientations. The three educational orientations are: *transmission*, *transaction*, and *transformation*. At WCS we aim to teach mainly from a transformation position.

### Transmission

In transmission learning the student acquires and accumulates knowledge and skills. Knowledge is seen as fixed rather than a process, and is usually broken down into smaller units so that students can master the material. Transmission learning is common when we begin to learn a particular skill. The relationship between the curriculum and child is illustrated in the following diagram:

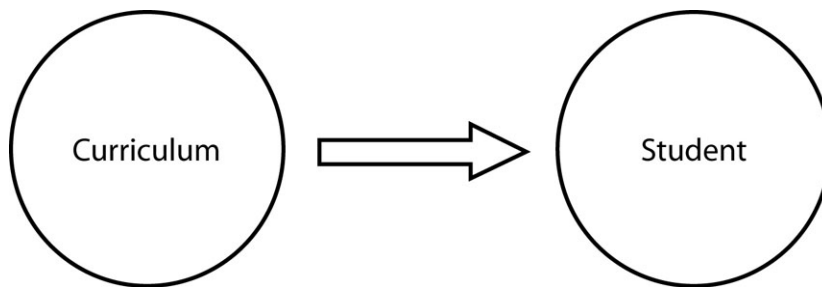


Figure 2 - Transmission

### Transaction Position

Transactional learning is more interactive, although the interaction is mainly cognitive. The transaction position can be characterized by an emphasis on dialogue between the teacher and the student. However, this dialogue stresses cognitive interactions since analysis is stressed more than synthesis and thinking more than feeling. Teaching models that are based in the transaction position usually have some set of procedures for inquiry and problem solving.

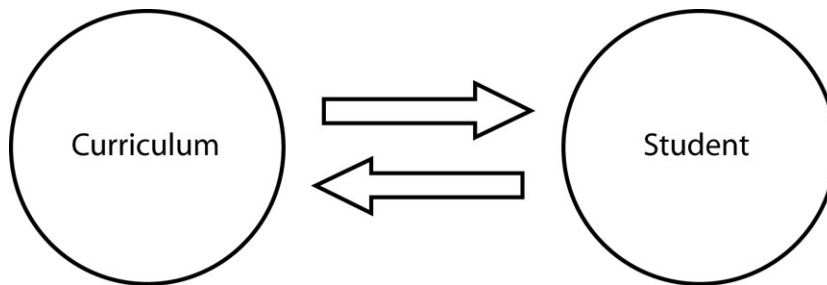


Figure 3 - Transaction

### Transformation Position

Transformational learning acknowledges the wholeness of the child. The curriculum and the child are no longer seen as separate but as connected. The teacher working from this position will use strategies such as creative problem solving, cooperative learning, and the arts, which encourage students to make various types of connections. These connections make learning personally and socially meaningful to the student.

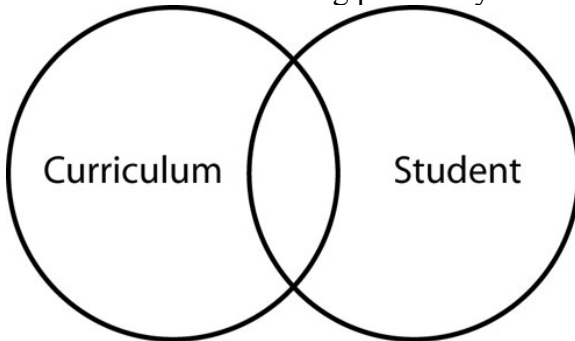


Figure 4 - Transformation

In the transformation position we are also concerned about the links with the other forms of learning as shown in the following diagram. Here the transmission position is the smallest while the transformation position is the most inclusive.

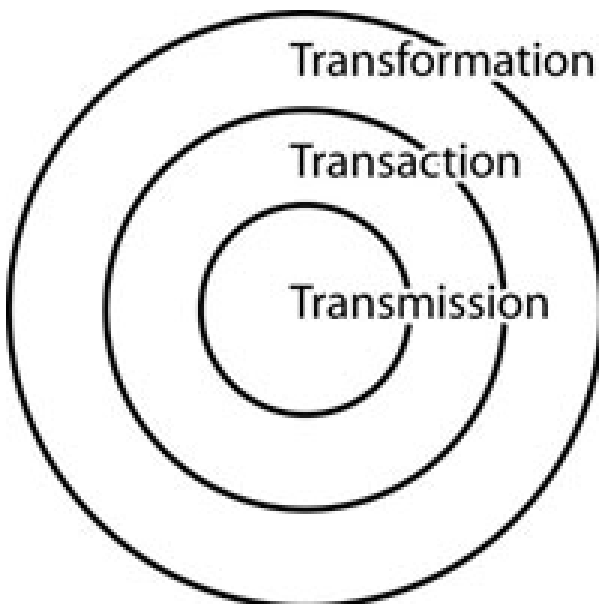
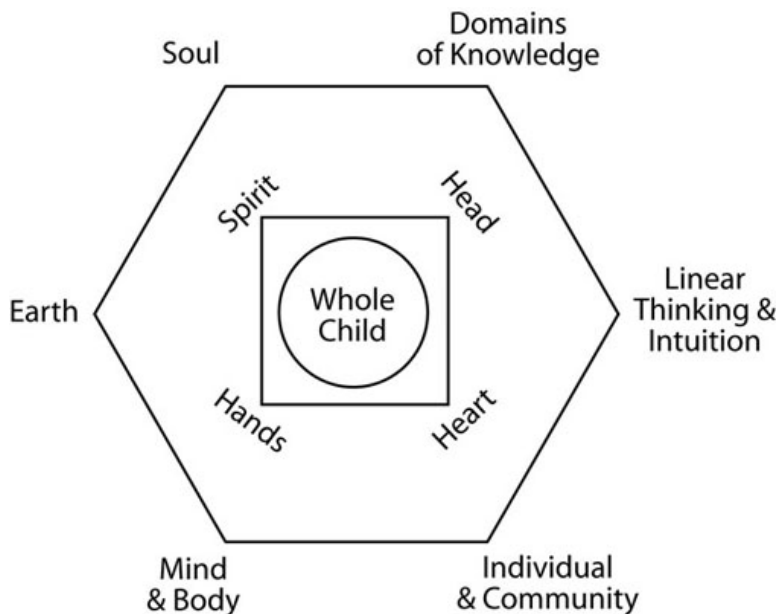


Figure 5 - Holistic Stance

## CONNECTIONS

The focus of holistic education is on relationships or connections: our relationship between linear thinking and intuition, our relationship between mind and body, our relationship among various domains of knowledge, our relationship between the individual and the community, our relationship to the earth, and our relationship to the soul. In the holistic curriculum the student examines these connections so that he or she gains both an awareness of them, and the skills necessary to transform the relationships where it is appropriate.



**Figure 6 - Connections**

Holistic education engages the head, heart, hands and spirit of the child. It is a curriculum that makes connections – community, earth, soul, subject and mind-and-body connections – and it develops intuition and inquiry. This section describes what a holistic curriculum looks like in practice.

### **Community Connections**

Building a community starts in the classroom and extends to local and global communities. Through our community-building program, students gain skills to create solutions to difficult social problems. It is our hope that students who graduate from our school will feel empowered to take social action and will work towards creating a more equitable and just world.

The **classroom** is the child’s first experience of community. The teachers at the Whole Child School (WCS) are committed to building a cohesive classroom community. To build community in the classroom, we have adopted a school-wide, community-building program that provides classroom routines and rituals, as well as a common language. Some of the elements of this program are weekly classroom meetings, language for conflict resolution, cooperative/collaborative learning activities, and classroom

discussions on building respectful relationships.

The students learn about **social justice** through our Social Studies program. Our goal is to introduce the children to multiple perspectives and to nurture empathy around social issues in the classroom that extend to local and global communities. This program is largely taught through literature, and teachers provide learning activities, such as role-play or inquiry, to connect stories to children's lives and experiences.

In the older grades, learning about social justice transforms into **social action**. In grade 5, teachers train peer mediation and leadership to students. Grade 5 students learn about school governance as part of a unit about Government. They take leadership roles in the school community. Throughout the year, they work with primary school students to help build a collaborative and cohesive community. In grades 6 to 8, students learn about **social action** and **justice** in the **local** and **global communities** through project-based learning activities.

A deep sense of school community or **sanctuary** will be created throughout the school. In a sanctuary, teachers and students look forward to being at school, as they feel nourished by the environment, which is one of respect, caring and, occasionally, reverence.

### **Earth Connections**

Students awake to the natural processes of life by connecting to the earth. The curriculum teaches students not only about environmental problem solving, but more importantly, how we are fundamentally embedded in the earth's natural processes. Our environmental program follows a similar format as our community-building program. In the early years, students develop a strong connection and relationship to the earth, and in the older grades, children learn how to take action. Again, the goal is to teach students how to feel empowered to take action and how to make sustainable choices about the environment.

A focus in the primary years is to develop a strong **connection to the earth** through our **gardening** and **farming programs**. On site is a school garden, and the students also tend a local community garden. The school has formed a partnership with a local, organic farm, which we visit throughout the year.

**Primary students** go on **guided nature walks** to local conservation areas, such as the Leslie Spit and the Humber River. On the hikes, students hear stories and learn names of native plants. The children observe life cycles of wildlife – the migration of birds at the Leslie Spit or of salmon in the Humber River.

In the primary years, we aim to teach most of the **Science curriculum** outdoors. For example, the grade 1 Science unit on the needs and characteristics of living things easily lends itself to being taught outdoors. In grade 3, when the children learn about soil, they draw from their experiences in gardening and farming. Also, some of the **Math**

**curriculum** will be taught outside. For example, students learn how to count when they plant seeds and learn about measurement when spacing the seeds.

From grades 3 to 6, the students will learn about our **relationship to the earth** and the natural resources we use in our lives. For instance, our Textile unit starts in grade 3, when the students learn about Canadian pioneers and learn how to make wool. In grade 5, the Textile unit continues when they learn about ancient civilizations. The students' study how textiles are made and they experience how to make fabric from flax and other natural materials. The last part of the Textile unit focuses on **sustainable textiles**.

Grade 7 students choose an **environmental action project** for the year. They document what environmental action they have taken, how their work has made a contribution, and what they would like to do in the future. The goal is for the children to discover what actions, even small ones that they can take to improve the environment. A student may focus on sustainable modes of transportation and an action that the student can start to promote more sustainable transportation.

### **Soul Connections**

A holistic curriculum connects students with their inner lives which is defined here as a vital and mysterious energy that gives meaning and purpose to one's life. Connections to students' inner lives are nourished through **storytelling**. Stories that are told verbally (not read from a book) capture children's imaginations. It is a sacred moment in the day when a teacher tells a story from his or her head, without prompts. Students fall silent as they wait to hear the next part of the story from the day before. Myths, legends, folktales, sage stories, fairytales, histories from around the world are told to the children throughout the grades to connect students to our diverse, cultural heritages and to old knowledge that has been passed down through every culture.

Some examples of classroom routines and rituals that connect students with their souls are: **singing** and **recitation** of poems on a daily basis; **meditation** and **visualization** practices; **community talking circle**, during which each student has an opportunity to share; and **circle time**, which includes singing, dancing and movement activities.

The school comes together to celebrate seasonal festivals and auspicious dates throughout the year. **School-wide celebrations** have ritual and ceremonial elements to them, creating connections, as a school and creating feelings that are usually associated with being in a sanctuary.

### **Body-Mind Connections**

The curriculum emphasizes a natural connection between body and mind. Students are encouraged to explore the connections between their body and emotions, and to develop a sense of what their bodies have to say. A priority is placed on healthy, positive communication and mindfulness in all actions – being aware of what one is doing, while doing it. Mindfulness and a focus on breath encourage students to slow down and be

present with one task at a time.

Techniques employed to stimulate the mind-body connection in the classroom include drama, creative movement, dance, performance, role-play, yoga, meditation and relaxation.

### Subject Connections

A natural connection will be made between school subjects at WCS, producing an integrated curriculum. This will occur at a number of levels, with a strong focus on transdisciplinary teaching.

At the *multidisciplinary* level, the curriculum retains separate subjects but establishes linkages between them. For example, the history teacher might reference the literature and art of a specific historical period and explore how the art was representative of that period.

At the *interdisciplinary* level, two or three subjects are integrated around a theme or problem. For example, in examining the problem of city traffic and other problems of urban planning, subjects such as economics, political science, design technology, and mathematics can be brought together and integrated.

At the *transdisciplinary* level, several subjects are integrated around a broad theme. Waldorf education is a good example of the *transdisciplinary* model. In a Waldorf School, the morning's instruction begins with the main lesson, which runs from approximately 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. The main lesson brings together English, mathematics, geography, history, and science. Central to each main lesson are the arts, as it is the artistic sense that integrates the main lesson.

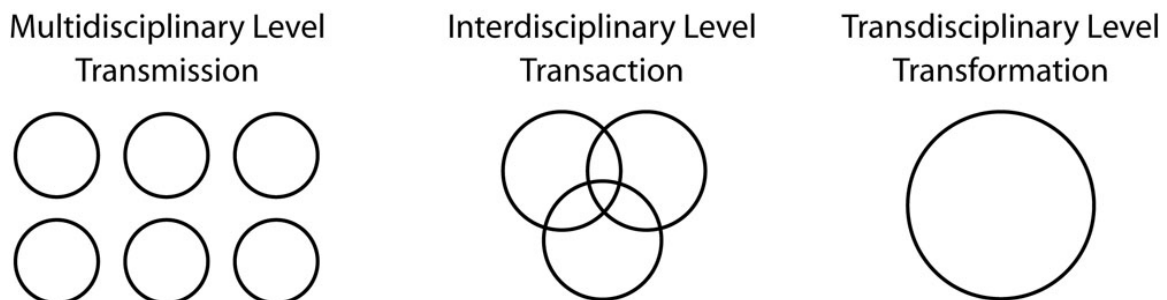


Figure 7 - Subject Connections

A connection is made between school subjects at WCS, producing an integrated curriculum. This occurs on a number of levels, with a strong focus on **transdisciplinary** teaching, when several subjects are integrated around a broad theme. Usually, teachers make subject connections during the **morning lesson**.

The year is divided into 10-12, three-to-four-week lesson blocks. One subject is the focus of the lesson block, and a number of other subjects are integrated into the lesson theme. For example, in the primary grades literacy is usually integrated into a Math lesson block

through stories, poems and math journals. In the upper grades, Math and Language Arts are integrated into Science, Social Studies, Geography or History lesson blocks. The consistent study of one subject helps to deepen the students' understanding of the subject.

### **Intuition and Inquiry Connections**

An **inquiry-based** approach is one of the ways that teachers develop students' intuition. At WCS, teachers provide activities that facilitate exploration in the playground, in nature and in the classroom. Students direct the exploration, making discoveries and predictions as the teacher encourages with open-ended questions. For example, a teacher tells students to observe where plants like to grow. Inquiry-based questions connected to this observation might be: 'Where did you see ferns growing?' and 'Why do ferns grow in those areas?' The teacher documents the students' discussions and explorations.

Children may choose to document their explorations through drawings, writing, mixed-media art forms and music. The teacher provides students with recyclables, wire, clay, paint and other materials (Reggio Emilia inspires this approach).

This chart summarizes how we will make these connections in our school.

<b>Connections</b>	<b>Primary Years (kindergarten to grade three)</b>	<b>Junior and Intermediate Years (grades four to eight)</b>
<b>Earth</b>	Connection to the earth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kindergarten Reggio-based exploration program</li> <li>• School gardening program</li> <li>• Local farming program</li> <li>• Guided nature hikes</li> <li>• Integration of science, math and the arts into outdoor education program</li> <li>• Focus on conservation and sustainability</li> <li>• Earth-based festivals</li> </ul>	Environmental education and action/ Social justice and action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of science, math, geography, social studies and history around environmental and social justice themes</li> <li>• Project-based integrated lesson units to develop awareness for grades 4-6</li> <li>• Project-based integrated lesson units about action for grades 7 and 8</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	Community-building program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-wide community program (Jerry Brodey)</li> <li>• Common language for conflict resolution</li> <li>• Problem-solving approach</li> <li>• Peer mediation</li> </ul>	Community-leadership program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 4 Hiawatha story and the Great law of peace</li> <li>• Grade 5 students learn about participatory democracy and trained in peer leadership skills</li> <li>• Grade 5 to 8 students play role of peer mediators in the school</li> <li>• Grade 5 to 8 students take on leadership roles in the school</li> </ul>
<b>Subject</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transdisciplinary morning lesson</li> <li>• Project-based lesson units</li> <li>• Reggio exploration units</li> <li>• Arts-integration</li> <li>• Integration of science and math into outdoor education program</li> <li>• Subject-specific lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transdisciplinary morning lesson</li> <li>• Project-based lesson units</li> <li>• Arts-integration</li> <li>• Integration of environmental education and social justice</li> <li>• Subject-specific lessons</li> </ul>
<b>Inquiry and Intuition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science inquiry-based learning</li> <li>• Math inquiry-based learning</li> <li>• Social studies inquiry-based learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science inquiry-based learning</li> <li>• Math inquiry-based learning</li> <li>• Social studies inquiry-based learning</li> </ul>
<b>Mind and Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yoga in the classroom</li> <li>• Visualization activities</li> <li>• Meditation</li> <li>• Other forms of movement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yoga in the classroom</li> <li>• Visualization activities</li> <li>• Meditation</li> <li>• Other forms of movement</li> </ul>
<b>Soul</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myths, legends, fairy tales from around the world</li> <li>• Daily singing, music and recitation of poetry in the classroom</li> <li>• Seasonal earth-based festivals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myths, legends, fairy tales from around the world</li> <li>• Daily singing, music and recitation of poetry in the classroom</li> <li>• Seasonal earth-based festivals</li> </ul>

### **3. Seven Key Teaching and Learning Principles**

In a holistic curriculum there are many ways of teaching and learning. The teacher adapts the learning to meet the needs of the children and the lesson theme. We have identified

seven key teaching and learning principles. This list provides a brief overview of our approach and attached to this list are references to further understand these approaches to teaching and learning. Throughout our holistic curriculum document we will refer to these seven teaching and learning principles. To understand our holistic approach it is necessary to understand these seven key teaching and learning principles.

## **1. Narrative-based**

Narrative-based approach is the art of storytelling and oral storytelling is a way of life at WCS. Stories that are told orally (not read from a book) naturally capture children's imaginations. An imaginative story brings concepts and learning to life. New concepts are introduced through stories. Math, Science, Social Studies, Geography and almost all new units are presented through stories, which are also a way to connect children to their cultural heritages. Myths, legends, folktales, fairytales and histories from around the world are told throughout the grades. When students get older, they learn the art of storytelling, tell stories about their ancestors, and role-play or re-enact historical events.

Our narrative-based approach is inspired by Waldorf Education. In a Waldorf school the teacher tells a story orally to the class on a regular basis. Oral storytelling is a ritual in a Waldorf classroom and often the teacher sings a song or recites a verse to introduce the story then lights a candle. Stories are a foundation in the Waldorf curriculum, the students fall silent without any prompting waiting to hear the story.

Oral storytelling is a traditional art form common to most cultures. Almost all cultures have a set of folktales, fairytales, myths and legends that have been passed down through generations. The telling of these stories from around the world connects the children to their diverse cultural heritages. Oral storytelling helps to build a global classroom community. These stories also connect the children to their soul.

Imaginative stories are also used to introduce new math and science concepts. Stories filled with imaginative characters and events engage the student's imagination. Rather than teaching a dry concept a narrative-based approach teaches new concepts through imaginative stories. Songs, verses and art activities further enliven the teaching and learning of new concepts.

Students learn about the natural world through nature stories. In kindergarten teachers will tell nature stories during guided hikes to help the children make a connection to the natural world. Nature stories can be made up to tell the story about the life of an ant. Again in most cultures there are why and how nature stories about the natural world. In our appendix we have provided some examples of nature stories. Our school library has many books and on-line reference materials with nature stories.

## **2. Arts-based**

The arts engage children in the learning process with their hands and hearts. Arts are central to the morning lesson, because arts help to integrate and enliven subject lessons. Examples include dramatizations of a story, painting plants for science, clapping rhythms to learn math, and learning about fractions through quilt patterns. Throughout this curriculum document there will suggestions about how to integrate the arts into most lessons.

This part of curriculum is also inspired by Waldorf education. In Waldorf education, the arts are integrated throughout the curriculum. Starting in grade one the student's are provided with specialized visual arts materials, paper and watercolour paint. These materials help both the children and the teacher learn how to draw and gain some confidence in visual arts drawing and painting techniques. Most lessons have a visual arts component so these materials will be essential in our classrooms.

Music – singing, dancing, reciting verses, clapping rhythms, playing recorder are also daily classroom activities with the class teacher. Songs are often sung during transitions from one lesson to the next or to cue the students about the next lesson of the day. Music is sometimes a good break from writing or math activities. The goal is to establish a balance between head activities like writing, reading and math with hand and heart activities through outdoor education and the arts.

Drama is also an important activity that can be used in the classroom on a regular basis. Dramatizing a story, mounting small plays, role-play, improvisation are all activities that teachers can use to enliven the learning. Drama is very important in second language teaching and learning as well.

Mixedmedia art activities like wire, clay, collage, murals, acrylic and tempera paints, quilting, recycled materials are integrated into our inquiry-based learning activities. In kindergarten, the children express their explorations through mixedmedia art. The children explore nature, light, sound, shadow and describe their understanding through art. At the end of each year the children celebrate the kindergarten journey through a kindergarten art exhibit. Reggio Emilia has inspired our approach.

Visual arts, music and drama are taught as subjects in their own right. In general, we will follow the Waldorf visual arts curriculum and adapt it to the Ontario Curriculum. This Waldorf visual arts curriculum is comprehensive and the students attain significant skills in visual arts by grade eight. We will follow the TDSB music curriculum and seek support from the TDSB music department. The students will start learning recorders in grade 2. The grade 5 and grade 7 classes will have specialized drama instruction and produce a class play in those years.

### **3. Experience-based**

Children learn through experience and exploration. Our goal is to make learning authentic and real for students so that they can better understand and grasp new concepts. The arts help to make learning engaging and interesting for children and

real-life learning activities help students connect new concepts to their lives and deepen their understanding of the concept.

As much as possible our science and math curricula are taught outside in our outdoors classroom. Learning through experience and exploration takes time. Many Science and Math concepts will be introduced in kindergarten through our kindergarten exploration program. For example, kindergarten children take part in our gardening and farming program. It is not until grade three that the students do a project on the growth and changes in plants and soils in the environment. In the primary years the students will have had so much experience with plants and soil that this project is culminating activity pulling together their four years of learning about plants into opening a Spring garden market.

In our overview of each subject, we indicate when and where the exploration and learning begins with a new concepts and when the students produce a project or engage in a lesson unit on that concept. The introduction and exploration of a concept often begins long before the concept is actually taught by the teacher. Teaching, learning and exploration are on a continuum. This provides the children with numerous opportunities and ways to learn a new concept. It also allows for some flexibility if there are split grades.

Experience-based teaching and learning takes many forms in our school. In math it can be the use of math manipulatives like Cuisenaire rods, base ten blocks, geoboards, tangrams, and pattern blocks. These math manipulatives provide visual representations of math concepts. In math, some children need work with math manipulatives for extended periods of time and other children grasp the abstract concept with ease. Projects are also an important part of experience-based learning (this will be explained in our section on project-based learning).

#### **4. Inquiry-based**

There are a wide range of inquiry-based teaching and learning practices to draw from for the purpose of our school (see references). To start with the Ontario Curriculum has many examples of inquiry-based learning activities. Throughout the curriculum are ideas for how to teach through an inquiry-based approach. Reggio Emilia also is another example of inquiry-based teaching and learning. In Math, Marilyn Burns and the problem-based math literature are other examples of inquiry-based learning activities. WCS will draw from all these resources to gradually build our own inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning.

The basic premise for inquiry-based learning is that the teacher prepares learning activities that are open-ended and facilitate exploration and discovery. The teacher poses “open-ended questions” or “provocations” that help to facilitate this exploration and discovery. This approach is largely student-led and often the students work cooperatively in small groups. The benefits of this approach are the students engage in meaningful discussions and they have the opportunity to direct and take ownership

of their learning.

In the kindergarten years, outdoor unstructured inquiry-based learning activities set the stage for exploration and discovery in the outdoors. Kindergarten children come to know the world around them through play, imaginative stories, inquiry, exploration and discovery. These explorations later become the foundation for the learning they will do in the grades. The kindergarten children document their journey through mixed-media art activities. The children learn to work cooperatively and start to develop problem-solving skills.

In the grade school inquiry-based activities are structured around a lesson theme. The teacher initially leads the inquiry through stories and art activities. The students then deepen their understanding through inquiry-based learning activities. The teacher aims to maintain a balance between teacher-led, narrative-based activities and inquiry-based learning activities.

## **5. Cooperative learning**

Cooperative learning is central to building a classroom community. Starting in kindergarten children learn how to work in a learning community. Children learn problem-solving skills early on so that they build the social skills to work in groups. The school has adopted a school-wide community-building program so that teachers, students and parents can speak the same language when it comes to solving social problems and building a school community. The older students in the school will act as peer mediators to help younger children deal with social issues in the playground. Building a cohesive and collaborative community takes an enormous amount of effort and requires the ongoing commitment of parents, students and teachers.

Much of the work in cooperative learning is helping the children to work through problems and issues as they arise. The teacher needs to leave time to before and after an activity to introduce and debrief activities. The children will gradually build up a repertoire of problem-solving skills and language to successfully work collaboratively in groups. Also, rituals like a talking circle help to proactively solve problems before they grow into a larger problem in the classroom.

A lot of the teaching and learning in a holistic classroom is contingent on a well-functioning classroom community. Teachers need to be well-versed in techniques that help to build a positive classroom community. Most schools struggle with building community, our school will likely face similar issues. It is our commitment to tackle these challenges and deal with the social issues that will make the difference.

## **6. Teacher-led learning**

WCS aims to strike a balance between teacher-led learning and student-led learning activities. Throughout the curriculum when students are learning new concepts and techniques in Math, Science, Language, Drawing, Music, and French it is important

for teachers to lead activities.

It is important to note that parts of our curriculum is teacher-led because sometimes there is the misconception that alternative schools are mostly unstructured, child-centred and student-led. WCS offers a structured curriculum and it is the balance between student-led and teacher-led activities that is key to our holistic approach. In most of what we do it is this balance that we seek to achieve. As stated in the section on Inclusion, the teacher will aim to take a transformation position when teaching the students.

## **7. Project-based learning**

Large-scale and small-scale projects help students demonstrate their learning and deepen their understanding of a concept. It is an opportunity for students to apply their learning to a real-life situation. For teachers, it is opportunity to assess the progress of the students and identify where students continue need support.

Project-based learning begins in kindergarten. In kindergarten, the projects are student-led. For example, the students may decide to explore butterflies – what they eat, the colourings and patterns on their wings, where they live, how the change from caterpillars to butterflies. Gradually the exploration changes from an exploration into a project.

In the grade school projects are more structured and the themes of the projects are connected to the Ontario Curriculum. For example, in grade three the students run a Farmers Market in the fall and a Garden Market in the spring as part of their study of the growth and changes in plants. In grade five students form a mini-parliament as part of their study of government. The grade five students also take on leadership roles in the schools community-building program.

Projects in the grade school aim to integrate learning into real-life situations. The students then have the opportunity to connect their learning to their lives and experiences. Often a number of skills and subjects are brought together in projects.

## **4. The Teaching and Learning Continuum at WCS**

At WCS teaching and learning begins with the hands and typically in an outdoor setting. The kindergarten exploration years provide the foundation for outdoor hands-on learning. In the grade school the students continue to learn through outdoor experiences and hands-on activities and gradually new concepts are introduced to the students. The process of introducing new concepts to students is done systematically so that students have a very good chance of grasping the concept. The following chart shows the WCS teaching and learning continuum:

**Exploration >>> Experiential, Hands-on Learning >>> Introduction of Abstract Concept >>> Application of Concept in Real-Life Situation**

There are four steps involved in introducing a new concept. First step is the exploration stage when students play and have lots of opportunity for exploration and experimentation. The second step is concrete, hands-on learning activities where the students can connect the concept to hands-on, experiential learning. The third step is introduction to the concept in the classroom during what we call the **morning-lesson unit**. The fourth step is real-life application of the concept through a **project-lesson unit**. Often the project-lesson unit connects and integrates a number of concepts that students have learnt.

The **morning lesson** is a one and one half hour lesson at the beginning of the day. During the morning lesson, the teacher introduces the students to a new concept. The lesson unit spans 3-4 weeks and the school year is divided into 8-10 lesson units. Each day the teaching and learning builds from one day to the next. This approach gives students the opportunity to build and deepen knowledge over time and learning is progressive and not broken up into short sporadic lessons. The focus is on teaching the new concept, however, other subjects are integrated into the morning lesson. Narrative-based is also a key part of the morning lesson. Typically new concepts are introduced through imaginative engaging stories as described in the section on narrative-based learning. Also, integration of the arts is important during the morning lesson. The morning lesson model is an approach that we have adopted from Waldorf education.

**Project-lesson units** bring together a number of concepts and skills that students have learnt and they are applied to a real-life learning situation. The length of the project and scheduling in the day of the project depends on the individual project. For example, the entrepreneurial adventure project in grade 6 could potentially span the entire year. The building project in grade three could take one month. Each project will vary in length and timing in the day and in the year.

An example of this process of teaching and learning is how students learn measurement skills in the primary years. In kindergarten, students first explore measurement with non-standard units perhaps measuring their height with blocks etc. In grades one and two, students will use non-standard and standard measuring units to measure the height of plants or measuring the spaces between planting seeds in the garden. In grade three, there

is a 3-4 week morning lesson unit that focuses on measurement. During this unit the teacher will tell stories, organize activities that will consolidate and deepen their understanding of measurement concepts like length, area, perimeter, mass and capacity. This will prepare the students for the end of year project when they build a structure and apply their measurement skills to a real-life situation.

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