

Part IV

A Practical Handbook For Reviewing the Common Core Standards –And Beyond

A Process for Analysis and Decision-Making to assist schools and teachers in determining the relationship of their Waldorf-Inspired Public School Program to the Common Core Standards

Introduction

This short handbook for schools and teachers is designed to foster reviews of the Common Core Standards and the Alliance Recommendations for their placement in Waldorf programs—and to consider the potential implications for Waldorf-Inspired programs and their students.

All of the Common Core Standards are included for review in the Tables in Part II of this document, with the Alliance recommendations identified grade by grade, standard by standard, in the analysis there--and summarized as Alliance Recommendations in Part III.

Working Together as a Faculty

By far, the most powerful method of standards review, decision-making, and program revision or enhancement (if needed) is to work together in pairs, task groups, or in the faculty as a whole. Such a process, although it may take an ongoing commitment to extensive work together over time, has the potential to enhance decision-making, improve Waldorf education throughout the school, and to provide a consistent approach to Waldorf education with all school stakeholders and external program reviewers.

Working Individually

In addition to working in faculty groups, each classroom teacher can use the Common Core standards review process to identify appropriate learning expectations, to make powerful decisions to enhance the quality of instruction, to enrich the quality of student learning activities and assignments, and to confirm the quality of their students' appropriate academic growth. Such personalized planning for instructional improvement can have a powerful impact on the healthy, balanced growth of Waldorf students.

Available Resources and their Use: This Document and Beyond

This document serves as a “bridge resource” between a Waldorf program and the Common Core Standards. In these pages, there is much to begin the work with.

In addition, there are an increasing number of resources about the Common Core—in particular the Common Core Standards documents and their appendices--including curriculum and assessment materials from a wide variety of sources (many made freely available online.)

There are also an ever-increasing number of articles and books--and teacher-assistance and professional development programs--in support of Waldorf education.

A selection of some key on-line and print resources is listed on the Resource page in Part I of this document.

The Process of Analysis

***Purpose: Putting the Common Core Standards to Best Use--
To Refine and Enhance the Waldorf Curriculum
And Waldorf Student Learning***

Suggested Sequence, Key Components and Considerations

Suggested Sequence

(The following sequence of familiarization, analysis, and decision-making may be undertaken by the school's faculty as a whole, or by faculty interest groups (addressing content areas or grade spans) or by individual classroom teachers (often focusing on planning for their upcoming grade). Depending on the chosen focus of each analysis, this process can be effectively repeated to address new content components and the related considerations that arise.)

Familiarization

1. Initial Common Core Review

About the Common Core: context (See Part I of this document), For additional clarification, review the Common Core documents referenced in the Resources page including related assessment sites for sample test items and student tasks, which provide indications of what student achievement is intended to look like at a specific grade level).

2. More detailed CC Overview

Review the Common Core Placement Tables for English Language Arts and Mathematics (in Part II) to establish a sense of the development of the student expectations across grades K-8 in each content area.

These Tables include: All of the Common Core Standards for each grade level, K-8, as well as areas for identifying decisions made about the appropriate placement of the Common Core Standards in a Waldorf-Inspired program (columns two and three in the Tables). **Note:** A "Y" in column two indicates a "Yes" for the placement of that Common Core standard in the same grade level in the Waldorf program.

The placements currently identified in the Tables reflect the outcomes of the Alliance review process. They should be understood to be recommendations, and advisory. Schools and teachers are encouraged to consider them and to make their own decisions in light of their understanding of Waldorf education and the particular needs of their students and school community.

Analysis

3. To make these choices effectively, **identify clearly the specific purpose of the analysis.** The overarching practical question:

To identify your placement of the Common Core standards, ask yourself:

“Where (in which grade level) is the most appropriate placement of each Common Core Standard in our Waldorf Program?” (The Tables in Part II were designed to be a useful record-keeping tool as initial decisions are made and notes taken.)

3a. Make Initial Choices of Focus to begin the detailed process of analysis.

What are our priorities? Which content area? Which standards? Which grade or grades? How fine-grained will our initial focus and analysis be: Strand, Domain, Individual Standard? What process will best serve our specific purposes?

Some clarifying questions:

- Are we comparing our current curriculum and instructional practices and student learning expectations to the Common Core Standards for student achievement?
- What are our current student expectations? Academic? Cognitive? Developmental? Social? Emotional? How do these interact?
- What considerations and Waldorf educational principles and values are we bringing to the analysis?

Beginning the Analysis

4. With the identified purpose and the related considerations in mind, **review the standards chosen for analysis to determine when, and where, and how it is appropriate to teach them and for students to attain them.**

Ask yourselves:

- Are they what we expect as student outcomes at the grade level designated by the Common Core?
- If yes, how will students demonstrate their achievement of the standards? What will students say, do, or create as indicators of their growth?
- If the CC Standards are not expected as student outcomes at the designated Common Core grade level, why not?
- Where does this standard belong in the program that we are offering to our students? Why there?
- What did the Alliance recommend? (See the Tables in Part II).

Consider developmental appropriateness—In particular, consider your understanding of the appropriate development of student cognition across the

grades and the forms of thinking required for the student to reach each standard. What is it “possible” for students to do, and when is it truly “appropriate” for them to do so—to nurture and fully support the healthy development of the whole child? See the discussion in Part I of this document.

Decision-Making

5. For the Common Core standards determined to be grade-level appropriate, consider any program implications necessary to ensure that students achieve those standards.

Consider the following **potential implications** of the decisions: This analysis may:

- Inform curriculum design throughout the year. Or across years.
- Inform Lesson Block design and student learning expectations.
- Inform the cognitive components of student activities or assignments.
- Inform my student expectations, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the activity or lesson, and my understanding of student and class progress.

6. If a decision is made to place a Common Core standard or group of standards at an alternative grade level, consider the impact of that choice on the curriculum and student expectations in the subsequent grade level.

7. Following this initial review and analysis of a chosen portion of the standards, compare you decisions and notes systematically with other faculty members (if possible)—exploring and enriching each other’s placements and their potential impact on your curriculum and instructional program.

Patterns of agreement and/or differences may appear and lead to further discussion. Faculty members may want to identify clear areas of consensus—and schedule other areas for further discussion. All faculty members do not need to agree about all decisions, but the discussions can lead to shared approaches in areas of agreement and to transparency in areas of difference.

8. Take action, as appropriate, based on the decisions you have made.

Potential Areas of Impact based on this Process (Steps 1-8)

The following are a few examples of significant areas for consideration as schools and individual teachers make their decisions, and act accordingly:

9. Impact on Curriculum, Block, Lesson Design, and Student Learning Activities

A commitment to (this) student learning (at this particular grade level) may have significant consequences for the students and for the Waldorf program--both in terms of the commitment of instructional time to the identified standards and establishing a minimum level of expected student achievement on them.

10. Impact on the Design of Student Learning Activities and Assignments:

- Are the student learning activities fully supporting student achievement of the standards that we identify as addressed in the activity?
- What does that achievement look like?
- What will I do if the lesson or activities don't appear to have succeeded in terms of student learning?

11. Lesson Design Considerations:

- What do the student's experience?
- How do they engage with it?
- What are they to listen to or view or observe or study?
- What are they to say, do, or create?
- What are the expectations for student learning in this lesson?

12. Curriculum Considerations:

The Common Core Standards are not "curriculum standards." Instead, they focus on student outcomes, what students are to achieve in ELA/Literacy and Math each year. (The standards, of course, have a powerful impact on what teachers teach, how they teach, and what they expect their students to have learned.)

- How do the new Common Core elements, added to or altering our curriculum and instructional program, affect our Waldorf student expectations for the year or the arc of student growth across the years?
- Does the new pattern remain developmentally appropriate and fully address the needs of the whole child?

13. Impact on Special Learning Assistance

- Will the expected annual student outcomes affect my assistance to students who did not meet expectations for a particular lesson, or block, or content area throughout the year?
- Will I differentiate instruction for some?
- What form will that take (during instruction, beyond)?
- Will I plan for extensive renewed opportunities to learn soon or later in the year? Will my students be ready to succeed in the curriculum for the following year?
- Is it appropriate to expect all students to reach specific academic goals at the same time? If not, how will I ensure that all students reach the goals over time?

Implementing the Review—And Beyond

How to Start

Blending Two Perspectives: With Binocular Vision

1. **Review the Common Core Standards** (in Part II of this document), using the review to identify areas for further work on your curriculum and instructional program in your classroom or school. Consider the materials included in Part One of this document, and the references included in the Resources page. Examine the standards carefully. How can they inform your work with students?

And, while engaging in that review:

2. **Identify areas of concern from your experience with your students, and focus on them.** Where are they having difficulty? Why? Are there any academic content areas where you expect them to learn more than they are currently demonstrating?

3. **Identify a specific goal** (of limited scope, but important), or a **key first step** towards a broader goal—one that can be accomplished in a short time frame.

1. Start small.
2. Use the process:
3. Determine what you believe will make a difference now (or soon) for your students--based on your best current judgment,
4. Plan carefully,
5. Try it out, take action,
6. Check for success (look for indicators of the positive impact on your students), and
7. Build on it, considering lessons learned about achieving success and applying them to future teaching and learning opportunities (for yourselves and your students).

Working Together—Into the Future

Plan together on a large, but focused initiative school-wide, identifying an area of greatest need (e.g., our reading program across the grades, or our writing program (incorporating more writing assignments related to history and science in our program—(informed in the upper grades by the Common Core)

Or

Plan and act in an affinity group—for instance, teachers with shared interests in a content area or in a span of grades (e.g., an interest in teaching fractions more effectively in grades 3, 4, and 5—informed by the Common Core standards related to fractions)

The possibilities for starting to work individually or together to improve teaching and learning are always there--right in front of us. Choose something that you care about deeply, explore the possibilities, make a choice, plan a change for the better, and take action. Think of the Common Core as an informative available resource (focusing on student academic outcomes) as you work to improve your curriculum and instructional program and to increase the healthy growth of each and every student.