

Our Curriculum

[Adolescents] develop in such a way that *the necessity of participating in world events...rises from their whole individuality... So that we... really meet the needs of human nature... human beings must grow into the social life in such a way that they can do something* by which they may advance both themselves & the world.

-Rudolf Steiner, 1921

Interdisciplinary inquiry: Today, continents & disciplines are utterly interconnected, so our curriculum too is multidisciplinary & global in scope. Students are as likely to build statistical literacy in social studies class as to recite poetry in a physics main lesson. A US history block might examine migrants in our history & our communities today, while students perform the Jewish diaspora through *Fiddler on the Roof*: one example of a curriculum **permeated by the arts**. In every period of the day, poetry, song, movement & visual creativity enliven all the disciplines. **Fostering global citizenship** is crucial to our mission. A world of challenge & uncertainty needs human beings with not only knowledge, but also **authentic ethical intuition** & the will to work for good. Hence every class strives to ignite passion & compassion, & to stir individual initiative & collective collaboration.

	Natural Sciences	Math	Social Sciences & Humanities	World Language & Literature	Fine & Practical Arts	Movement	Health
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Thermal Physics ☞ Geology ☞ Organic Chemistry ☞ Physiology 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Algebra ☞ Geometry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Indigenous Americas ☞ Atlantic Revolutions ☞ Current Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ The Novel ☞ Tragedy & Comedy ☞ Literature of the Americas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Copper-work ☞ Black-&-White Drawing ☞ Chorus ☞ All-school Musical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Eurythmy ☞ Social Dance ☞ PE Electives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Nutrition ☞ Habits of Health ☞ Disease Prevention ☞ Communication ☞ Awareness
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Physics of Motion ☞ Acids & Bases ☞ Hydrology ☞ Physiology 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Algebra ☞ Geometry ☞ Trigonometry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Ancient World ☞ Modern Africa ☞ Intro to Political Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Poetics ☞ Modern African Literature ☞ Myth to Literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Weaving ☞ Color Theory & Watercolor ☞ Blacksmithing ☞ Class Play ☞ All-school Musical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Social Dance ☞ PE Electives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Reproduction ☞ Habits of Health ☞ Healthy Sexuality ☞ Disease Prevention ☞ Mental Health ☞ Hazards of Health
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Acoustics ☞ Embryology ☞ Botany ☞ Elemental Chemistry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Algebra ☞ Projective Geometry ☞ Math Topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Medieval Afro-Eurasia ☞ World History 1870-1945 ☞ Intro to Philosophy & Religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Dante's <i>Comedy</i> ☞ Wolfram's <i>Parzival</i> ☞ Global Modernisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Painting ☞ Portrait Busts ☞ Pit Band ☞ All-school Musical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Eurythmy ☞ Social Dance ☞ PE Electives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Responsibilities of Reproduction ☞ Habits of Health ☞ Mental Health
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Optics ☞ Zoology ☞ Meteorology ☞ Environmental Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Calculus ☞ Math Topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ World History 1945-present ☞ Intro to Economics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Goethe's <i>Faust</i> ☞ Postmodern World Literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Self-portraits ☞ Class Play ☞ All-school Musical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Social Dance ☞ PE Electives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Community Health ☞ Care of Others ☞ Sharing Habits of Health ☞ Optimal Self Care

This schedule is representative of a student's four-year experience; the timing & format of topics & courses varies from year to year. Our robust academics more than cover the VT graduation requirements, allowing upperclassmen in good academic standing to participate in self-designed afternoon study, work & extracurricular activities for much of the year.

Our Vision

of the developing human being*



Voices of our community

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Waldorf founder Rudolf Steiner, & generations of teachers after him, have observed that most 9th graders arrive eager to know—and experience—the contemporary world.

"What is going on?" becomes a question with great interest, & the students are flexing new abilities to grasp the answers in thought. Hence current events, causal sequences & the concrete realities of economic geography ground the social studies curriculum.

At the same time, powerful changes are stirring these young people—physiologically, emotionally & intellectually. Stark contrasts of mood, conflicts in which *my* identity & beliefs define themselves by butting up against others— we speak to these experiences in thermodynamics with its contrasts of heat & cold, in black-&-white drawing, & in the history of revolution in the Americas & Atlantic world.



Small classes "make adding your opinion much easier... we are a *close* class so we can state our thoughts freely"

—9th grader, Class of 2018

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For many 10th grade students, new complexities & ambiguities appear on the scene. The process of identity formation sometimes seems to move from a phase of defining the self through conflict to a phase of finding the self in give-&-take with peers. Many of us remember the increased sensitivity & complexity of the inner life as we entered our mid-teens. Best friends & dating relationships become deeply important, & the Health curriculum helps students explore their emotional nuances. Close friendships can be intellectual as well as emotional, & students delight in testing & refining ideas in debate.

"HOW do you know?" often leads to deeper questions along the lines of: "how did it get that way?" Ancient world history feeds the hunger to plumb the origins of things, while the science of pH, water, and the human body moves from extremes toward dynamic equilibrium.



"Writing an op-ed was really empowering... I feel like I grew a lot ... and improved my understanding of government... going to Peter Shumlin's [2015 inaugural] speech & having a real-life, inside view"

—10th grader, Class of 2017

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Junior year brings new freedoms, responsibilities, & concerns, & often a sense of disillusionment with the interests and ideas of younger adolescence. The question:

"Why am I here; what am I doing with my life?" takes on a new poignancy & urgency. We see a turning inward, a new earnestness in questioning the fundamentals. If the age sometimes opens the abyss of inner darkness and depression, then it also brings a new ability of the intellect to soar to new heights of abstract thought, as the growth and turmoil of the body begins to find new balance. In math and science, forays into the "unseen"—electricity, atomic theory, projective geometry—compliment a humanities curriculum that plumbs the depths of Dante's hell, sets out on Parzival's quest for identity, & raises profound religious & philosophical questions through the history of music, the Afro-Eurasian Middle Ages, & the first half of the 20th century.



"We love the depth of **Caring, respect, and constant intellectual challenge** of the Initiative, and how it is formed within the context of social issues and justice."

—Junior, Class of 2016

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At the peak of their Waldorf climb, seniors are invited to pause and survey their studies, which begin to assume the shape of a landscape, and also to gaze out at the horizon of the future. At the center of this panorama, young adults begin to experience a new sense of "I," a subjectivity situated, oriented in the world & in history.

WHO is this self who has acquired a new solidity & sense of definition, & who must now find a relationship to the world in a new way? Seniors study human development & paint self-portraits, plumbing the mysteries of the subject. At the same time, they find self-realization in dialectical relation to the objective world, through economics, world history since 1945, contemporary literature & ecology.



When I was at the Initiative as a guest teacher, the students were so *open, lively, and engaged*—a teacher's

delight! And the school's *sense of community* makes being there a warm and embracing experience. It's the thoughtful "extras"—like weekly morning meeting and community lunch - that make the Initiative a special place. I'm impressed with the teachers' innovations in experiential learning, such as the new school gardening program... -Visiting faculty member, 2014

*We are indebted to the Center for Anthroposophy for the formulation of the "questions of the year."

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