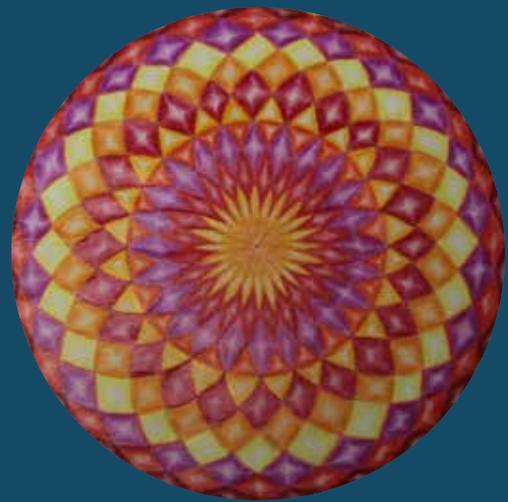

Imagination and Math

A higher purpose: Rudolf Steiner spoke about how mathematics is a training in sense-free thinking. “By developing mathematical capacities in our students, we are helping to lay the foundation for the student’s spiritual development later in life.” — Jamie York.

Middle School Math

The Waldorf Academy math curriculum is based on Making Math Meaningful by Waldorf educator, Jamie York. In today’s society, imagination is associated largely with fantasy and not viewed as useful. In contrast, Waldorf education holds that the development of the child’s imagination is a central aspect of the developing the whole child. Students learn that math is a fascinating and creative human endeavor. In this way, math can be a springboard for thinking flexibly and creatively.



The major themes for math

Grade 1-4: Developing a sense of number. Arithmetic facts are mastered

Grades 5-6: Consolidating skills. Develop the mastery with written procedural skills (long division, adding fractions etc)

Grades 7-9: Developing abstract thinking

The three myths of math:

#1 Only people born with math ability can become good at math. In reality, hard work can help develop a math ability.

#2 Confusion is bad. Confusion is a part of learning math. Every time we learn a new topic in math, we must go through a period of confusion as we gain clarity.

#3 Forgetting is bad. Forgetting is an important part of learning. In fact, for important topics, it can be said in order to learn permanently, you need to forget it three times.



The math specialist at Waldorf Academy begins in grade 5 and teaches three math skills lessons a week. In addition to the math skills lessons, there are 2 math blocks taught by the math specialist in grades 6-8.

Often parents ask, “Will our children be prepared?” Aside from a long list of math skills we believe there are four critical ingredients that our students need in order to be prepared for their math education in high school:

1. Enthusiasm for learning. A love for learning math goes a long way
2. Study skills.
3. Higher level thinking. We want our students to be able to think for themselves, think analytically, and we hope that their thinking is heart-felt and imbued with imagination.
4. Basic math skills. Yes, skills are important but the skills needed for the next step are not as daunting as we might be led to believe.

Many schools split the middle school math classes according to ability. Waldorf Academy keeps the whole class together unless a child has an IEP with modifications. The math curriculum in the middle school is not sequential. This allows a student to recover from a unit in which they struggled. If classes were tracked, the students would be ‘put in a box’ that would be difficult to get out of. We have seen many students struggle at the start of seventh grade, but then ‘woke up’, worked hard and ended up entering high school very strong.