

Geography

As the child's world expands, so should the curriculum

(David Sobel, Map Making with Children)

Geography: Introduction

Geography is an understanding of the earth as a physical space. Long before we learned to map it, humanity dwelled on the land, found its sustenance there and explored the places, moods, climate and weather of the land of which they were a part. Human cultures have been shaped by the places people lived, and whole landscapes have been shaped by human actions. In the modern world, human behaviour is impacting on the earth in ways that are having catastrophic effects on the climate and by polluting or destroying whole regions. Steiner Waldorf education believes that if this is to change, children and young people need to form a relationship to the earth, its oceans and atmosphere, climate and the space we are all part of through experience, empathy, knowledge and understanding.

This relationship begins by exploring the world before our doors, beneath our feet and that rains on our heads. Children, both urban and rural, need to discover the land around them, how it has shaped our culture (housing, clothing, food) and how we are connected to other places (rivers, pathways and transport routes).

The geography curriculum has the logic of space: it expands radially outwards from where we are to places near and then far, describing as we go the landscapes we pass through, the agriculture and industries that grew there and have often now gone silent. We learn to orientate ourselves in space and how to represent it in abstract but useful maps.

As the curriculum expands, it leads to other continents, other landscapes and life forms, to climate zones hotter, colder, wetter and drier than ours and the people who were indigenous to those places. The water cycle follows a precious resource from dense mist on the mountainside to slow, fat, heavy estuaries dumping their silt in wide deltas, to the ocean and back again to the sky. Beneath the soil we come to rock that breaks through the surface in evocative peaks and cliffs, revealing a whole history of deep time, slow inexorable change, the vast, transformative forces of pressure and sometimes the threat of explosive outbreaks of geo-revolution.

Climate leads us to look up at the atmosphere, its vast movements of air that transport water, warmth and dust across oceans and continents, making the Sahara dead and dry and the Amazon fertile. And beyond the atmosphere we follow the sun and moon, gradually turning our geocentric experience of the earth into an understanding of a complex model of spheres spinning in empty space.

Geography is also the foundation for economics which, at heart, is the process of creating value through the transformation of raw materials to meet human needs and trading them. Where these resources come from, how we get them and what impact that has, who profits and who loses are important lessons to be learned.

Geography: Purpose of study

A high-quality geography education should inspire in pupils a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people as an integrated living system, and the earth in its context in space, that will remain with them for the rest of their lives. This engagement with geography should engender a sense of adventure, wonder and responsibility. Through an appreciation of the complexity of natural phenomena and processes, pupils should develop a profound

understanding of the intimate connection between physical landscapes and the evolution of human societies, cultures, and cultural understandings of the relationship of human beings to the world as expressed in myth, art, religion and science. Geographical knowledge, understanding and skills provide the framework and approaches that explain how the Earth's features at different scales are shaped, interconnected and change over time. Pupils should have a growing understanding of the changing impact of human activity on the environment over time.

Geography: Aims

The Waldorf curriculum aims to ensure that all pupils:

- Develop contextual knowledge of the earth as an integrated whole, including providing a geographical context for key physical characteristics and human activities
- Understand the processes that give rise to key physical and human geographical features of the world, how these are interdependent and have changed over different time scales
- Develop geographical skills that allow them to:
 - o Interpret and communicate geographical information through maps, diagrams, globes, narrative, images and numerical data.
 - o Learn effectively and experientially through fieldwork

Long Term Curriculum Intent

Language and communication

1. Communicate information, thoughts and ideas about geographical phenomena through a variety of media, e.g. words, text, diagrams, pictures, maps

Health and well-being

2. Have a sense of place, space, scale and community

Senses

3. Observe, absorb and process information about the environment obtained through sensory perception

Imagination and play

4. Use models, maps, diagrams and globes to create mental images and representations of landscapes and environments, translating between 2D and 3D
5. Imagine oneself in a different place, space, landscape and environment

Empathy

6. Imagine different cultures, communities and people who live in other places, and their ways of being in different environments
7. Understand the similarities and differences of people and places

Aesthetics

8. Appreciate and represent the aesthetic qualities of places, spaces, landscapes and environments

Inquiry

9. Ask and answer questions about geographical phenomena
10. Investigate the interaction of humans and their geographical environment
11. Use cartography as a way of both representing and navigating environments and landscapes.

Democratic participation and society

12. Understand the relationships between geographical location and culture
13. Understand the impact of geography on power and politics

Lifelong learning

14. Develop a sense of adventure; be inspired to explore the world

Future thinking

15. Imagine the physical, political and cultural world that future generations will live in, and how this could be affected by one's actions
16. Have an awareness of sustainability and the need to protect nature and the natural world,
17. Act out of an ecological understanding

Holistic thinking / Spirituality

18. Understand the complexity of interrelationships between geographical features and processes and human beings
19. Experience the earth as a living organism
20. Have a spiritual sense of place

Judgement

21. Make judgements about the veracity of geographical theories based on understanding and critical thinking