

THE NAIROBI WALDORF TRUST SCHOOL 5-3 ACADEMIC MODEL

BACKGROUND

The Nairobi Waldorf School Trust has been practicing the traditional Waldorf/Steiner teaching model. This is where a teacher who takes over students in class one is expected to take them through to class eight as their class teacher. This teacher also teaches the main lesson blocks. The international forum, the body that advises on Waldorf ethos mainly in Europe and Africa, conducted a study and found out that many schools were deviating away from the traditional teaching model to models that suited individual schools.

Since the establishment of NWST, only one teacher has been able to complete this cycle. The challenge has been the rigorous demands placed on a teacher to wear different hats to navigate the curriculum and meet the child's needs in a timely manner. The school has also had only two class eights since inception. This was because of a high turnover of the students due to an unclear status of child progression through the school system. It is envisaged that with the establishment of the proposed Waldorf high school, the students will have a better chance of completing the primary school curriculum at class eight.

PURPOSE

The main purpose of the model is to keep abreast with the child's changing needs along the developmental stages. In class five, for example, the children want to connect to the world and discover all they can about it. However, they are still living in a pictorial realm and the teacher must use images and metaphors to introduce concepts and ideas in the different lessons if they wish the children to grasp and remember them. They gain confidence by ideally having the same source of authority (teacher) that they have always had. This confidence is enhanced with familiarity with their teacher.

This helps them to transit to class six, where the learner seeks a different type of recognition. They no longer want everything to be 'beautiful'. They feel capable of coming to their own conclusions, of making their own decisions. They want to solve real problems, organize their own schedules and projects, work out the ground rules of the class. They want to be challenged mentally and allowed to work things out for themselves. And this is will happen if the teacher is familiar with the learners' development.

THE PROPOSED MODEL

The main objectives of the proposed 5:3 model are:

1. Developing a firm foundation with Waldorf ethos in the primary.
2. Sustained transition and sustenance of students from the kindergarten.
3. Low student turnover in the primary.
4. Sustained transition of students to the high school.

The NWST academic model will use the 5:3 rule. This will mainly apply in the primary school years – class one to eight. From class one to five, the students will have one teacher who will also serve as the classroom teacher. Between class five and eight, the learners will be handed over to another teacher. The application of this model from kindergarten to high school aims at ensuring that the learners have adequate contact time with one teacher at any given stage.

The following section provides an overview of each learning segment in the school and how the model will work.

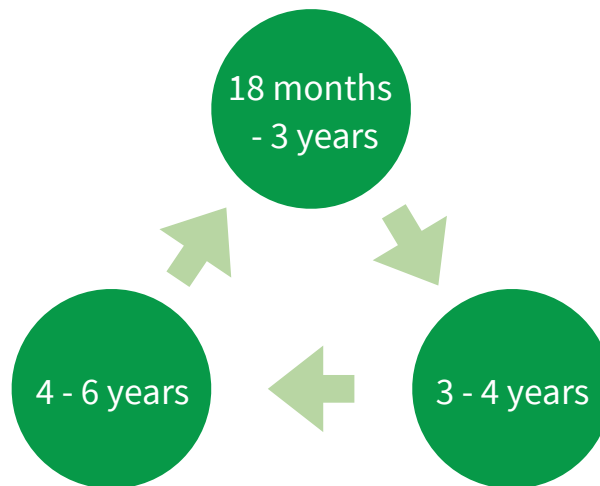
KINDERGARTEN

The kindergarten consists of three age group sets placed in different classes. These are:

1. 18 months – 3 years
2. 3 years – 4 years
3. 4 years – 6 years

Presently there is no structured rotation / movement of teachers between the classes.

In the proposed model, the teachers will remain with a particular class for a 3-year period after which the teacher will move to the next age group. After 3 years with the last age group, 4 years – 6 years, the teacher will loop back to the 18 months – 3 years age group as shown below.



PRIMARY SCHOOL

The primary years are between class one and eight. The model differentiates the following sections in the primary school:

1. Lower primary: Classes one to five
2. Upper primary: Classes six to eight

The class teachers' roles will differ as follows in the lower and upper primary:

- The lower primary class teacher will be expected to teach **all** the main lesson blocks/subjects in their particular class, coordinate the social aspects of the learner, and provide pastoral care to the learner within the class setting.
- The upper primary class teacher will be expected to teach a **select** number of main lesson blocks/subjects in their particular class, provide pastoral care, and coordinate all the teaching and social activities of the class. The rest of the blocks will be taught by specialized teachers.
 - The lower primary class teacher will take learners from class one to five. This teacher will then loop back and take class one again.
 - The upper primary class teacher will take learners from class six to eight. This teacher will then loop back to take up class six once again.
- Subject teaching during the practice lessons that come from 10:45 am in the primary school will continue to be taught by all the teachers according to their strengths and speciality.

HIGH SCHOOL

Specialized subject teachers will provide teaching in their subject content, be in charge of pastoral care, and coordinate social activities of their class.