

PROLOGUE

The first teacher/parent manual in the Spiritual Syllabus Series outlines 11 Language unit lessons in Class 1 and 2 – for 7 and 8-year-olds. The Language stream is essentially taught in the morning main lessons, for the first 2 hours of the day. There are 3, 3-week Language main lessons a year, or about 90 hours teaching.

But there is also a corollary stream, the Literacy, which is presented as 3 middle lesson units per year. These occupy the 1 ½ hour lesson between break and lunch, and are again sequential, of 3-week duration. The time scheduled being some 60 hours teaching over the year.

So Language, or English, has a 150-hour allotment every year, right through primary school. This does not include a Drama middle lesson scheduled each year, which is included in the Performing Arts stream, and therefore not dealt with in this book. It can be seen however that there is an English Expression component here.

The miracle of words calls on the ego forces of writer, speaker/listener, and reader – it calls on the Self. The potential in children for self-expression is enhanced by a comprehensive, consistent and creative Language education – this manual is directed to these ends. The following is a suggested curriculum structure, emphasizing the aspects of the human being awakened by the various Language paths – aspects detailed in the articles to follow:

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|------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|
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| | | | | | | LANGUAGE – EGO | | | | | |
| LANGUAGE – HEAD | CLASS 1 | | | CLASS 2 | | | | | | | |
| | BODY | SOUL | SPIRIT | BODY | SOUL | SPIRIT | | | | | |
| | WRITING | EXPRESSION | READING | WRITING | EXPRESSION | READING | | | | | |
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| LITERACY – CHEST | MIDDLE LESSONS | | | | | | | | | | |
| | WILL | FEELING | THINKING | WILL | FEELING | THINKING | | | | | |
| | FOREIGN LANG. | ORAL | WRITTEN | FOREIGN LANG. | ORAL | WRITTEN | | | | | |
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Full Primary Curriculum in my book *La Pleroma*.

Full High School Curriculum in *A Steiner High School?*

Detailed Programming Guide in *A Steiner Homeschool?*

THE FIRST MAIN LESSON

Class 1 Capital Alphabet – Main Lesson

The Teacher crossed the last T and dotted the last I on his submission to the State Education Authority. It was on teaching writing in Class 1.

Apparently, there was going to be a curriculum re-structure, and they wanted all the input they could get.

“They must be desperate asking me,” The Teacher mused “after all, they still regard Steiner Education as ‘alternative’. They haven’t grasped that it’s one of the oldest teaching methods around, remaining unchanged, in essence if not detail, since the 1920s.” He read it through once more.

WRITING IN CLASS 1.

Class 1 is regarded as a ‘Letter’ Year – the children turn 7 in this year.

Writing is the first lesson taught in Class 1 – writing is taught before reading. The children learn to write the forms of the letters of the alphabet – one letter at a time. As the letters are abstractions, and small children realists, an attempt is made to lead the child to the individual letter from the real world – to its symbol.

This is often done by finding where the capital letter actually occurs as a form in the world, and then gradually distilling it out. For example, the waves of the sea naturally make “w” forms (“w” in wave), the children hear about waves in a story, they paint them, draw them, overlay them on tissue and “w”s and finally write them. The class may go to the beach and draw the “w”s 10 meters along in the sand with sticks, run the shapes, draw them in the air with their fingers, experiment on the board with them, make a small scene of waves in the class room with blue fabric; sing about them, speak verses about them and act them out in a play. Learning “w” (and all the other letters) becomes a singular and unforgettable experience.

The vowels are not taught in this way as they are an expression of the inner, emotional situation in man, they are taught in a feeling-experience way.

The lesson scheme is on a block basis, that is, the same subject is taught each morning (until playtime) for several weeks. This first writing “main lesson” (as it is called) is considered the most important of the child’s primary years, and for this reason it usually takes weeks to complete. It has been found that when the letter-learning process is so experiential (taking in many of the child’s faculties) the problem of dyslexia (and other related word problems) is most uncommon. The teacher tries to stimulate the thinking (content), feeling (art) and the will (written letter).

The children do not raise barriers against the written language when it is presented as a whole, engaging process.

The teacher is keen that the children should retain the artistic shaping of a letter at this stage and the concern is not that it should fit some external expectation of correctness; however a basic capital letter is used, this has been found the easiest letter form to copy and accords with the evolution of written English.

The writing of numbers is taught in the first Maths main lesson, and similar principles apply, like repetitive forms (oyster shell type), mainly to establish correct direction – these forms and directions are imprinted into their unconscious memory organization.

Dynamic form-and-movement drawing is employed in Class 1 to inform and correct the children's incipient writing habits. If a child has difficulty in forming letters, the teacher may write his work lightly in yellow and the child will write over it in a darker color. Throughout Class 1 the children write words and subsequently sentences, spelling lists and so on.

One of the main accents placed upon the writing at this time is its special arrangement. When basic principles of page composition are introduced at this age it eliminates lots of headaches (re margins – space at the top of the page, etc.) in the future. The children do grasp the idea of something being placed correctly on a page, and this is done without lines or other aids – just by eye.

Often the children emphasize letter forms by going around them again and again, by outlining them or by tracing them through the book tissue paper. The teacher is careful at this stage to give correct letters as the children retain bad habits (as well as good) for many years. For instance, a lower case “n” should not slip into a line of capital letters. Writing posture and grip is given attention here too. The sloping desks should be adjustable to suit the child's height and care is taken that he sits up straight and that the focal length of both eyes is equal.

At the completion of Class 1, the children should be able to comfortably write, say an eight-line verse in a morning's lesson in neat, well-spaced capital letters in bees-wax stick crayons with almost no mistakes in copying from the board. They should not show visible signs of fatigue. If it can be achieved gently, the teacher encourages the use of the right hand; however, there is no coercion.

Almost all of the main lessons following the alphabet introduction contain writing, therefore the child's writing progress is virtually uninterrupted from the first day. Of course the teacher approaches the child's needs individually and sets expectations consistent to those which can be achieved. An excellent exercise for the children is to write with their feet, and mouths – it illustrates how hard writing is!



Now a consonant – D for Dolphin!

WRITING OF THE BUSH

Class 1 Story – Main Lesson

The Ice High Maid

She saw the mountains, bush and shore,
She saw the dark folk and the flowers,
She saw the path of the seasons four,
Through her crystals clear in her icy tower.

There, that should be okay for the text I want my Class 1 to write today. Blackboard work begins to assume more importance in this second Language main lesson. It should still be in verse, a gentle transition for these little ones to the harder edges of rose in Class 2. It should also be read by them, and to them, before they begin writing – and at the end as well. Speech redeems the necessity to imprison The Word on paper. Oh, and the written content must be rich, drawn from the story usually, a story in this Language of Nature main lesson best serialized.

These stories are the linchpin of the main lessons, especially this one, the Expression language main lesson. Main lessons appeal first and foremost to the scholastic impulses in the child; although ‘head’ lessons, they should still be invigorated with art, humor and pleasant discursions of all kinds; however they still remain the core of formal learning.