

# SAN FRANCISCO WALDORF SCHOOL

## Teaching World Languages

Language learning in a Waldorf high school is an experience which nourishes head, heart, and hand. During a typical lesson, Waldorf students engage in one or more real world activities -- conversing with their peers in the target language, interpreting music, illustrating a poem, reading news articles, comics, tweets, short stories, folk tales, plays or classics of literature -- and deepen their connection with the universal human condition. Engagement with authentic resources, those designed for and used by speakers of the target language, ignites enthusiasm and reinforces the appreciation of socio-cultural nuances for language learners. Adolescents in a Waldorf school are met with an education that supports individual interests and initiative, and directly promotes the social gesture of inclusion. Building linguistic and cultural literacy in world languages is a fundamental 21st century skill with boundless opportunities for practical and personal applications. So, how do educators in a Waldorf high school prepare students for authentic communication in the new century?

Language learning at San Francisco Waldorf High School is an organic process informed by the teachings of Rudolf Steiner and by the Standards for Foreign Language Learning outlined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

**“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”**

*- Nelson Mandela*

in “Who?” in Grade 12, the year of synthesis. It is no wonder that the wisdom of these guiding pedagogical questions are echoed in the national dialogue on language learning. Focusing on *What? How? Why? To Whom? (And When?)* as the basis for all human-to-human interaction may seem overly simplistic to the untrained observer, but Waldorf educators have put these guiding questions into practice even before ACTFL began to promote them as official benchmarks for language teaching. ACTFL also outlines the World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages commonly known among language educators as “The 5 C’s”:

1. Communication (Interpersonal, Interpretive, Presentational)
2. Cultures (Relating Cultural Practices and Products to Perspectives)
3. Connections (Making Connections, Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives)
4. Comparisons (Language Comparisons, Cultural Comparisons)
5. Communities (School and Global Communities, Lifelong Learning)

*Continued on page 2 “WORLD LANGUAGE”*



*High School Mandarin Teacher Yi-Hsing Hou  
Photo: Scott Chernis*

## Grade School Foreign Language Program

We live in a vibrant, linguistically rich, globally connected metropolis where parents value foreign language instruction for their grade school-age children. They may recognize that with language acquisition comes cultural understanding, flexibility in thinking, and clarity of expression in both native and new languages. Foreign language instruction can also strengthen comprehension in seemingly unrelated subject areas like mathematics.

At SFWS, students gain a strong foreign language foundation with an engaging curriculum that is tuned to each age and stage of development. Some of Waldorf’s instructional approaches are common in other schools, including an immersive technique in which very little English is spoken in the classroom. It is also widely accepted across the educational spectrum that an early start is key to near-native pronunciation. Young children’s innate joy in imitation simply allows for speech to flow uninhibited.

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Every topic of study (and in turn, each lesson) is carefully crafted in our lesson planning to address the standards of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities at varying degrees of depth. We believe that these five areas work interdependently and cannot be realized in isolation from the guiding questions *What? How? Why? Who?* as held across the curriculum in a Waldorf high school.

It is also my firm belief that language learning cannot develop in a vacuum, independently of real world applications. When high school students "look into the world," as echoed by the morning verse, it will unfold before their eyes and reveal multiple perspectives, each valuable within their unique contexts. Consider the unit learning objectives that I developed in the *El Norte* unit for the Spanish Level IV Elective:

- Students will be able to discuss the Spanish language film (*El Norte*) in the target language.
- Students will be able to deepen their reading comprehension skills in Spanish while exploring and responding to questions based on the film's content.
- Students will be able to improve their aural capacities and verbal communication skills in Spanish through discussion of the film's content.
- Students will be able to express themselves through narrative description.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast their personal experiences of adolescence with those of the characters portrayed in the film.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast their personal experiences of family life and community with those of Guatemalan civil rights activist Rigoberta Menchu.
- Students will be able to explore the historical implications of the Guatemalan Civil War within the contexts of immigration, internal and external migration, global citizenship, leaderships, politics, and legislation.
- Students will be able to present a formal writing sample that provides evidence of an exploration of race, ethnicity, gender, and politics as they relate to the immigrant experience.

As a Waldorf educator, I have a great deal of freedom in selecting authentic materials to meet the needs of the developing adolescent. Rather than relying solely on an illustrated textbook or grammar workbook, I incorporate resources -- written, auditory, and visual -- that are created by native speakers of the target language for native speakers.

Using authentic resources means I must adapt the task, not the text, for the language learner. When I prepared the immigration unit based on the film *El Norte* described above, I had to create level appropriate questions and writing tasks in the target language so that my students could deeply internalize the connections they made from discussions and



Photo: Scott Chernis



High School Spanish Class with Zoe Gressel  
Photo: Scott Chernis

written responses. They will forever remember the story of two siblings, Rosa and Enrique, who fled to the United States from their small Guatemalan village in the early 1980s as victims of ethnic and political persecution. Reading a dry text of immigration statistics would not have made nearly the same impact as exploring the identity question *Who?* in Grade 12. Learning language and its resulting cultural connection stems from real life experience, both internal and external.

For our students who are truly "touched by the creative genius of language itself" as described by Steiner, we offer the opportunity for studies abroad in our international exchange program. This program supports reciprocal exchanges for students within the international Waldorf school community for those who make the commitment to host students from abroad. For students learning a world language, a linguistic and cultural immersion opens the door to first-hand, authentic experiences beyond what the traditional classroom setting can provide. Study abroad is a catalyst for increased maturity and self-confidence as students strengthen their language skills, make new friends within the international Waldorf community, travel, and expand their worldview. Most importantly, a study abroad experience invites students to learn about themselves.

**"Knowing how, when,  
and why to say what to  
whom. All the linguistic and  
social knowledge required for  
effective human-to-human  
interaction is encompassed in  
those ten words."**

**~American Council on the  
Teaching of Foreign Languages**

The advantage of a Waldorf education is that students have world language experience in the elementary grades and upon entering the high school already understand and produce the target language without from discussions and written responses knowledge of its internal structure. At the high school level, students increase proficiency in building sentences and paragraphs for both oral and written communication. By the time students explore the *Who?* question they understand and produce cohesive texts of considerable length in the target language. Waldorf graduates truly internalize the necessity of speaking a language other than English because they appreciate linguistic diversity and value their role as global citizens of the 21st century.

*Zoe Gressel joined the San Francisco Waldorf High School faculty in 2008. Ms. Gressel received her B.A. in Spanish and Secondary Education from Cornell College in 2006 and earned her Waldorf Teaching Certification from the Center for Anthroposophy in 2011. She is currently working toward her M.A. in Spanish through California State University, Sacramento.*



Grade School Mandarin Teacher  
Yi-Hsin Yao with Grade 2 student  
Photo: Cory Powers

Other parts of the foreign language program are decidedly Waldorf: integration of arts with language learning and dual language instruction in Mandarin and Spanish, which begins in grade one and continues until the middle school years. The two foreign languages provide balance in learning and contrasts in linguistics and world views.

### Poetry, Music, and Early Language Learning

Foreign language lessons in the early grades have the feel of a morning main lesson: songs, poetry, and rhymes help children absorb the musicality and feeling of the language. Stories also engage the imagination and help students create essential mental pictures.

Meaning is acquired slowly through repetition and accompanying visuals, gestures, intonations, and body language. Body movement is especially helpful for children learning Mandarin tones.

In the first grade there is no reading or writing – just songs, stories, and poetry. By second grade, students begin to respond conversationally. Music and poetry continue to engage the children; young children can sometimes be heard at recess practicing their Spanish songs together.

By the middle of third grade, students begin to put pencil to paper, recording a well-known story of *elefante* or *mariposa* with a drawing and a word on a page. Students discover the Old Chinese characters from the pictures they draw and explore the progression to the modern characters. The order of the strokes sets an important foundation in Chinese writing; this is taught with colors of the rainbow – first a stroke of red, then orange, yellow, and so on.

Fourth grade marks an important curricular change: oral language acquisition is enhanced through reading, writing, dictation, and written exploration of grammatical structures. Students have the capacity to identify parts of speech, and are able to make written and oral presentations of their cultural studies. This process deepens and expands throughout fifth grade, where grammatical instruction in Spanish includes verb conjugation, personal pronouns, and gender agreement.

### Depth of Instruction

By the middle-school years, students choose to specialize in either Mandarin or Spanish, doubling instructional time. Foreign language classes are now skills classes that demands practice, consistency, and analytical thinking. Students use newfound intellectual capacities to learn proper uses of grammar and syntax and build oral expression through situational dialogues.

Instruction continues to mirror the main lesson curriculum: seventh grade Mandarin students, for example, work with the radical of fire during their chemistry block and the radical of heart during the physiology block. These students also begin to use a dictionary, building a foundation of independent work which will open the door to thousands of Chinese characters.

In Spanish, teachers work with students by telling and retelling the stories read in class. Students enhance their written comprehension and grammar by recording summaries of what they understood in essays, reports, and presentations. Student presentations support linguistic skill development. By eighth grade, Spanish students are immersed in the study of Latin American and Mexican history. They explore the literary masterpiece *Don Quixote de la Mancha* and visit Diego Rivera's mural masterpiece, *Pan American Unity*, at City College.



Chinese New Year in Kindergarten 2  
Photo: Cory Powers

### Cultural Understanding

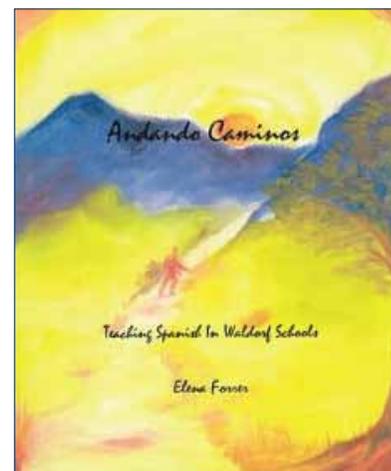
Gong xi fa cai! The Year of the Horse was a community-wide celebration at San Francisco Waldorf School. This began with stories and cultural history, then first and second graders crafted lanterns, third graders made and served 300 dumplings, while fourth graders designed a firecracker banner. Fifth and sixth graders cut paper characters, an exercise in geometrical symmetry. Sixth and seventh graders practiced the art of calligraphy which demands focus and patience.

In both Mandarin and Spanish, SFWS teachers bring to life the culture of the languages of origin and impart the meaning and stories behind the festivities and fun. The Spanish program focuses on different regional traditions and studies, always including singing, dancing, and plays from the countries honored. This year is *El Caribe*, the Caribbean, which includes history and cultural studies as well as a performance by musicians playing native instruments. Years past have been dedicated to Spain, Andean countries and Peruvian legends and instruments, and Mexico with Aztec Spanish plays. Every year, the fall brings the campus-wide festival of *Día de los Muertos*, a centuries-old tradition with Aztec and Spanish roots.

The honoring of ancestors includes an altar and a shared meal of "pan de muerto."

Note: Congratulations to Elena Forrer on the upcoming publication of *Andando Caminos, Teaching Spanish in Waldorf Schools*, published by Steiner Press and available at Barnes & Noble and Amazon.

~ Kim Hopper



## Alumni Corner



### Alumni Profile: Dilys Sun

Dilys Sun, SFWHS Class of 2006, was one of the first high school students to join our high school directly from China. Since graduating she has received a bachelor's degree from Stanford in economics, worked for Deloitte Consulting as a technology consultant, learned to code through Codecademy, a YCombinator-backed technical startup, and joined Airpair, a technical start-up as a Content Manager.

Although Dilys was initially nervous about studying at Stanford, she quickly found that the well-rounded and integrated education that she had received

at San Francisco Waldorf High School had prepared her well for even the largest lecture classes. While many of her classmates struggled with the discussions and self-expression expected by the professors, Dilys was used to critical thinking and taking initiative with her professors rather than simply studying for the test. As a result, Dilys "cruised through the first few years. I really loved this, for it gave me a peace of mind, a sense that this is something that I'm really good at. This made me fearless."

This gregarious attitude led to internships every year of her college career. Her sophomore year internship in Japan was an especially powerful experience. She had been interested in the country ever since travelling there with our high school Eurythmy Troupe. She thrived reimmersing herself in the culture through the internship and her homestay with a Japanese family. It was during this "highlight of my college career" in Japan that Dilys transitioned from a major in chemistry to economics.

In her senior year, Dilys participated in an internship that on the face of it was an odd match. Although she had never worked in the technology field before, she applied to be a technology consultant at Deloitte Consulting. She found it interesting that no one else seemed comfortable with taking a position like this without studying technology previously, but it was a very sensible move for her. "It made sense to me because I can learn everything and it's fun to be challenged." She subsequently took a position at Deloitte after graduating and spent the next two years travelling all over the state, meeting new people and learning a lot. She found that the critical thinking she learned at SFWHS was a huge boost – although she had never studied technology, she could put together documents, explain ideas, and search for solutions. "I found it sort of like not having textbooks in high school and it worked out super well – no one at Deloitte had ever seen anyone operate like me and they really appreciated the outgoing optimism."

After two years at Deloitte, Dilys was ready for another challenge. Working with technology inspired her to delve deeper. In spite of the protestations from her family, she quit her well-paying job at Deloitte to study code on Codecademy.com and Coding Dojo, a web development bootcamp. This was the start of "an incredible journey" that included going to the Crunchies – the Oscars for coders; accepting an award on behalf of Codecademy; and a new job at a technology start-up named Airpair where her role required an extensive amount of technical writing, something she mastered during her education with Codecademy.

Dilys is incredibly happy working in the technology world and feels that her journey from SFWHS to Stanford to Airpair makes perfect sense. She finds that her "untechnical" Waldorf education actually prepared her very well for the technical role that she now fills. She finds that the best developers think broadly and may even be inspired by classical literature and poetry. Good programming requires a well-integrated and connective approach that brings much more to the table than knowing how to write code. Dilys strongly feels that her ability to bring an outlook that is both technological and philosophical stems back to her roots at SFWHS.

## International Student Program:

SFWHS has grown programmatically to meet the growing desire for international students to study in the United States. The International Program is in its sixth year. In this (2013-2014) school year we have 13 International Students (average 8-10% of student body). Countries represented include Australia, Brazil, China, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Mongolia, South Korea, Switzerland, and Vietnam.

While most students are with us 2-4 years, with the intention of graduation and attending a four-year American university, some come for as short a duration as one semester. During their time at SFWHS, some students stay with their own family or family friends and some stay at homestays within our community or near the school.

## Waldorf Student Exchange Program:

This program allows current SFWHS students to have the cultural and language experience of living in another country for 1-3 months. It is a direct exchange with a student from a sister Waldorf High School in another country. Both students will live here and attend our school and then both return to the other country and live with that student's family and attend school there. The Exchange Program is in its 17th year; this year, five students have gone on exchange and their five exchangees have been here. Countries visited include Argentina, Chile, France, Germany, Japan, Spain, and Taiwan, with future exchanges set for China and Peru.

## High School Parent Council

Each year, one of our favorite Parent Council activities is hosting a **teacher and staff appreciation event** at the high school. This year the event was held on February 27th and it was an elegant affair! Teachers and staff were served a sit-down buffet luncheon in the decorated Physics lab, complete with orchids, lilies, candles, and healthy gourmet food in a rich array of colors spanning the entire color spectrum. As one teacher commented, "We get the gift of teaching your children and we appreciate this gift from you in addition."

The Photography Class **seeks donated old film or digital cameras**, in working order, that have a manual setting. Please consider donating any cameras that your family is not using - cameras can be brought to the front desk. As always, please reach out and let us know if you have an issue you would like us to discuss, or if you want to get involved!

### Parent Council Steering Committee

Marilyn Chism, Lisa Anderson

& Martha Luna, 12th grade

Jim Stearns, Lorraine Woodruff-Long

& Margaret Grisz-Dow, 11th grade

Karen Staller & Tammy McMillen, 10th grade

Margo Engels & Jen Wallace, 9th grade

Find out more about our alumni program at [www.sfwaldorf.org/alumni](http://www.sfwaldorf.org/alumni).



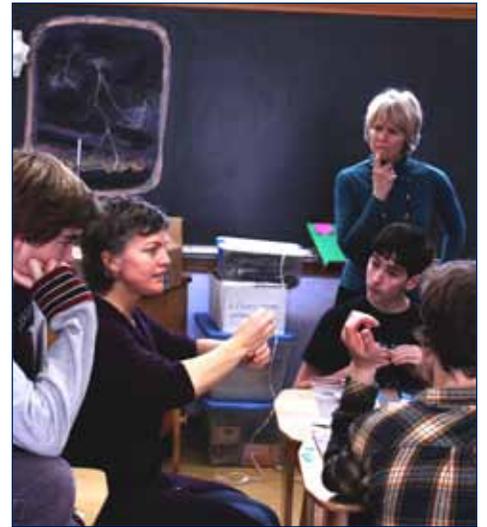
### Around The School

**Top Row:** 4th Grade Play, Aftercare, 10th Grade Retreat

**Middle Row:** HS Girls Varsity Basketball Team

**Bottom Row:** 8th and 1st Grades Knit Together, Making Dumplings for Chinese New Year in K1, 8th Grade Makes Calculators in Physics

*(photo credits: Cory Powers, Lisa Anderson)*



### Grade School Parents Association

#### The Four Temperaments

Our speaker series continued this month with Susan Robinson (parent in grades 4 and 6, and sewing teacher at the high school), who gave us an introduction to the Four Temperaments as described by Steiner.

In *Discussions with Teachers*, a collection of lectures by Rudolf Steiner, Steiner told the first Waldorf teachers that he wanted them to understand the four temperaments and know how to apply this understanding for the benefit of students. The four temperaments are Sanguine, Melancholic, Choleric and Phlegmatic. The temperaments are to be understood without judgement as each one has its own particular strengths and weaknesses.

A sanguine child brings warmth and enthusiasm into a classroom. They greet each classmate or subject with interest, but sometimes that interest can quickly fade. The melancholic child thinks deeply about each subject and is incredibly empathetic. A challenge for the melancholic is to learn how to avoid taking the world too seriously. The choleric child wants to get things done. They bring fire and energy to projects but in their less thoughtful moments can run roughshod over others. Finally, the phlegmatic child is organized and steadfast. One challenge for the phlegmatic is that they can be hard to move from one thing to the next. They often need lots of warning before a transition.

As an adult, the goal is for all your temperaments to be in harmony with one another. So if you see one thing predominating in yourself, then you may have to work to cultivate the other temperaments and bring yourself into more balance and equilibrium.

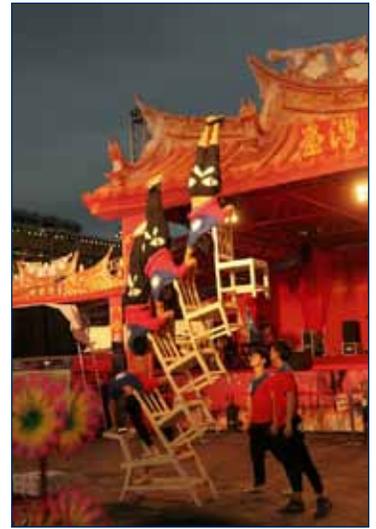
Learning about the temperaments is a wonderful way to see each other in a non-judgmental way and meet the world with flexibility and grace. For more information, please stop by the waiting room by the grade school office for handouts or email [candacetam@mac.com](mailto:candacetam@mac.com).



## Public Events Coming Up

- Friday, March 7 **Mom's Night** elks club, 450 post
- Saturday, March 8 **World Cafe** high school campus
- Monday, March 31 **David Sobel Lecture, Place-Based Education** grade school campus
- Friday, April 4 **Grandparents & Special Friends Day** high school campus
- Friday, April 11 **Grandparents & Special Friends Day** grade school campus
- Wednesday, May 7 **Grade School Spring Orchestra Concert** calvary presbyterian church
- Friday, May 2 - Thursday, May 15 **Online Auction** sfwaldorf.maestroweb.com
- Sunday, May 4 **May Faire & Field Day** lindley meadow, golden gate park
- Saturday, May 10 **Spring Night Benefit Auction** general's residence, fort mason
- Friday, May 16 **Founders' Night** high school campus

*Visit our online calendars and news pages at [www.sfwaldorf.org](http://www.sfwaldorf.org) for more details about events.*



## Eurythmy Troupe Trip to Taiwan, February 13 - 24



*Photos by Miranda Hollingswood, Grade 12*