



# ABOUT THE LEARNING PROCESS

***If children are not taught in a classical sense how and what do students learn in a democratic school?***

Democratic schools promote the natural ability of children to develop and educate them-selves, at their own pace and in their own individual way. Many learning processes take place “between the lines” in the area of so-called informal learning. Our students’ learning is shaped by curiosity. There is no predetermined path in which direction or how profound their curiosity will lead them. The school offers a stimulating environment in which the students encounter diverse areas of interest. In the mixed-age community, the students learn a lot from and with one another. Perhaps they see someone sew and decide to learn to sew too. Or they are watching a soccer game and want to find out more about soccer statistics. Or they want to build a sword and realize that they have to learn to measure and cut wood. The active role of the pupils in everyday school life includes many learning opportunities. Social skills, the ability to work in a team, project management and the pursuit of personal and community interests are particularly encouraged. Pupils in democratic schools develop into highly committed, self-motivated, tolerant and willing people. ***If employees don’t teach in the traditional sense, what do they do all day?***

Employees ensure an environment in which everyone can pursue their interests freely, independently and undisturbed. Staff are available to schoolchildren when they visit them and are generally just “there” without being intrusive. Above all, the employees try to interact with schoolchildren of all ages on an equal basis. Accordingly, the rules of the school assembly also apply to employees. If students want to learn something specific they can ask members of the school community to teach them. Employees as well as pupils are thus possible teachers depending on their knowledge and skills. ***How do the students develop interests?***

***How do they come across the topics that are relevant to them?*** Waldkinder offers a large, diverse range of teaching aids and illustrative material. Besides that, pupils can open up their areas of interest via different channels: traditional lessons or self-taught, via electronic media, mixed-age interactions, projects and much more. By encountering a wide variety of topics and areas of interest in everyday life as well as living together in a mixed-age community, the students consciously and sometimes unconsciously open up diverse areas of knowledge and experience. Thanks to the opportunity to deal with it without restriction, you will get extensive skills. ***Why is boredom good?***

Boredom is not a problem that needs to be combated, but an expression of an important process of self-discovery. Boredom and enough free time to be able to experience boredom allows us to reflect on our thoughts and impressions and to process them. Because boredom is an uncomfortable feeling, it motivates us to look for things we want to deal with and to discover our interests in the process. Offering “good” ideas can inhibit this process. Children, whose boredom is “interrupted”, sometimes accept what is offered, thus stop searching and end up doing things that do not really interest them. It is quite hard work for our students to go through this process and discover their unique interests and passions. ***If we don’t test the students, how do they know they are learning?***

Our students check themselves or, if desired, can take orientation tests. It is their responsibility to set their own learning goals and to decide whether they have achieved them. When a student tries to learn Spanish but doesn’t understand her Spanish-speaking friend, she

realizes that she needs to work harder on her Spanish. If a student does not understand how cells divide, then they know that they need to ask more questions on the subject. Students are much better at self-assessing than we ever could. Furthermore, they do not associate failure with a feeling of shame. They recognize failure as a milestone in achieving their goal. **How do students learn mathematics at the Waldkinder school?** Like all things, math is best learned through practice and fun. Students learn mathematics by playing cards, video games, cooking, budgeting at school meetings and many other activities. Just think of all the situations in which adults use math in their everyday life. The students practice math in the same situations. Because at the **Waldkinder** school you don't prepare for life after school, it already takes place here. At **Waldkinder** school, we do not test math skills. It is therefore not uncomfortable for the students to ask for help. The school has specialists with whom our students can work together if necessary, for example to discuss questions about higher mathematics. Students will learn math at their own pace, when they need it in their lives. **How do new children learn to find their way around the school concept?** Every child experiences entry into a democratic school differently. Some prefer to withdraw and observe first, while others jump right in and take an active part in school life right away. Some make contact with employees, while others avoid employees as much as possible. After all, everyone learns what they need to know about school - at their own pace, in their own way, and mostly when they need it. We trust that you will ask for help if and whenever you need it.