

The Foundation Studies Program at the Waldorf School of Princeton

The Foundation Studies is the first year of study for anyone going into one of the Waldorf disciplines: Waldorf teaching, therapeutic work, agriculture, or specific artistic disciplines. This means that the Biodynamic gardener, the Anthroposophical doctor, the Eurythmist, and the Waldorf teacher all begin with studying Rudolf Steiner's "basic books. Rudolf Steiner was the originator of the first Waldorf school in 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany. The philosophical ideas Steiner explained through his books and lectures are called *Anthroposophy*.

Anthroposophy involves a deep understanding of what it means to be a human being in every sense of the word. The human being's relationship to the cosmos, to nature, to history, and to creativity are all part of the expansive views that are interwoven with Steiner's ideas of world evolution. To someone coming new to study Anthroposophy, much can seem familiar because ideas from world religions and different philosophies are imbedded into this extensive philosophical construct. By taking this course of study, the Foundation Studies, the student embarks on a personal voyage by reviewing their own perspectives and connecting in different ways to the ideas presented in both lectures and artistic work. Each person does this in their own unique way. Studying Anthroposophy is not prescribing to a specific set of doctrines; it is an individual spiritual path.

It is not possible to read and study all the lectures Steiner gave which were written down and published even if one spent a lifetime of continuous study in this subject. Those who meet and learn about Anthroposophy, eventually take an independently directed road of study or join specialized programs. By studying the "basic books" in the Foundation Studies Program and experiencing and integrating ideas through artistic work, one becomes more able to read independently about Anthroposophy or take up areas of special interest.

The Foundation Studies Program at the Waldorf School of Princeton grew out of a self-formed study group of parents who studied for several years together and then looked for a teacher to lead them through the "basic books." In 2002, Elan Leibner, a class teacher, was asked to lead this formalized study. This program was formed in partnership between the curriculum director, Elan Leibner, and coordinator, Pamela Shafer, a teacher and former parent in the school.

The program runs for 2 ½ years of five semesters. We follow the school schedule and do not meet during vacations or holidays. In each semester, we meet six Saturday mornings from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The program consists of lectures based on the reading material, Eurythmy, Spatial Dynamics, Fine Art, Speech, Singing, and Sculpture. The sessions are given by a team of teachers who have had extensive experience in their disciplines. Some teachers are from our community and some are from other areas and travel to us. Traditionally students have been from our Waldorf Community or the River Valley Waldorf School community. Recently students have come from outside the school community to this program as a springing board to realize their goals of becoming Waldorf teachers. The Program is open to anyone who is interested and open to widening their perceptions and understanding of their place and purpose in the world.

Please contact : foundationprinceton@earthlink.net or
Waldorf School of Princeton/ Foundation Studies
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Payment for the program has a sliding scale fee. The total cost is between \$2,700 and \$3,750 which is paid in installments, semester by semester.

Though this is not an officially recognized adult program of AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools of North America), this program has been accepted as a prerequisite for further programs of professional development like the Antioch College Teacher Training Program and Sunbridge College. Many Waldorf schools around the country have begun their own Foundation Studies programs as an effort to train for their own positions, close the gap in the shortage nationwide of Waldorf teachers, and strengthen the relationships of purpose within the community.