



**"CHILD STUDY" – ONE OF THE WAYS WE
WORK TO KNOW YOUR CHILD BETTER**

In our work with the children in the Waldorf school we strive to create a complete picture of each child so that we can best meet his/her needs. This process may include family visits, medical history taking, review of previous school records and testing, Extra Lesson, Reading and Math Assessments, and discussions with all of the child's teachers (i.e., Class Teacher and Subject Teachers.)

An additional component of our program is called the Child Study, during which the entire Faculty carefully looks at one child, and then discusses observations during two or three weekly meetings. The primary purposes of this are for the Faculty to work to deepen its understanding of child development, and for the individual student's teachers to seek wider and higher guidance in their approaches to the student.

In the first week of a Child Study, Faculty members who don't teach the particular student will take time to observe him or her. We also ask that the parents write a biography of the child (approximately two pages), outlining birth and other important events and observations.

Between the meetings, teachers meditate on the shared observations, and then discuss what they've thought about in the final week.

The child's class teacher makes notes during the process, and when the Child Study is complete will have a conference with parents if they desire it.

Please feel free to discuss any aspect of these assessments with your child's teacher or the Educational Support Team.



SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR CHILD STUDY BIOGRAPHY

Parents are asked to write a biography or outline including information on the following as they deem appropriate and helpful to our group consideration of the child. It would also be helpful to have the child's parents complete a Developmental History form.

A. Pre-birth and birth

1. Family circumstances, i.e. siblings if any, where living, length of marriage, any significant aspects surrounding the child joining the family.
2. Pregnancy and Birth event - early or late, weight, health of mother and child, etc.

B. Early childhood

1. Family circumstances
2. Who cared for - describe role(s) of mother, father, other family members.
3. Development of crawling, walking and talking; other developmental highlights.
4. Feeding, i.e. breast or bottle, food preferences, contentedness, etc.
5. Personality in general, and when began using "I", etc.
6. Sleeping
7. Significant events such as family changes, illnesses, nightmares or bed wetting, etc.

C. Pre-school/kindergarten age

1. Family circumstances
2. Who cared for - describe role(s) of mother, father, other family members.
3. Continued development
4. Feeding, i.e. breast or bottle, food preferences, contentedness, etc.
5. Personality in general, and when began using "I", etc.
6. Sleeping, including bedtime ritual
7. Significant events such as family changes, illnesses, etc.
8. Preschool and/or kindergartens attended

D. Up to date - continuing themes and history from above. Also...

1. House description, i.e. sleeping arrangements, play setting, media use in household and by child, etc.
2. Unusual sensitivities, i.e. foods, clothing, sounds, etc.

E. What question does this child bring for us to meditate on?

CHILD STUDY - BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE FACULTY

The "science of qualities" values human experience and depends upon sense perception to paint a meaningful picture of life. There is, in fact, nothing new about this kind of science. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) and his Romantic contemporaries worked diligently to hold on to a scientific methodology which valued qualitative experience of phenomena, just as the Scientific Revolution with its quantitative, mechanistic vision of the world was gaining ground. This approach can help us to step out of the now dominant, mechanistic/psychological paradigm. The doors of science are opened to all with curiosity, questions, fascination and reverence for the natural world. We enter into relationship with the phenomenon as scientists, and our discoveries come alive with meaning, brought forth through the creative language of deepened experience in the natural realm.

Goethe was best known as a poet and playwright. His contributions to science, however, were far reaching. Goethe's extensive research in colour, plant development, morphology and embryology, breathed life into our scientific knowledge. Most influential of all has been his particular 'way of doing science', which provides the tools for us to transcend the reductionist paradigm. Fundamental to Goethe's approach to science, and in contrast to the mechanistic doctrine, is his insistence that the scientist is not a passive observer of an external universe; that there is no 'objective truth'. He saw the individual in a reciprocal, participatory relationship with nature, and valued the contribution the observer brings forth to the observed. Goethe's science requires that we actively engage our senses, and trust that they can reveal the real world. Goethe worked towards opening up new 'organs of perception' which would expand our understandings of the world into an integrated whole. This is a science of relationship, of quality and of wholeness. And we can use this kind of science to ask questions about all forms and functions of life.

We are always fascinated by how organisms grow. How, for example, does the magnificent beech tree arise from its tiny seed? How do we explain its form as it changes through time? Biologists are always looking for explanations to get at the mechanisms behind the phenomenon. Goethean scientists on the other hand, seek an understanding of processes by delving into the phenomenon experientially. Goethean observation of the leaf sequences of plants demonstrates one way in which we can come to understand plant development.

Goethe advocated intensive observation of the physical realm and called this way of seeing 'exact sense perception'. His method of active seeing however, also required the use of our imaginative faculties to explore the realm of process which lies between the solid forms of the living, physical world, a way of seeing he called 'exact sensorial fantasy'. His methodology presents a stepwise learning sequence from seeing physically (exact sense perception), to seeing fluidly (exact sensorial

fantasy). In reality, there are no necessary distinctions between these two levels of experience: in wholeness, they are experienced simultaneously. This structured approach, however, allows us to experience the difference between meeting the boundaries of the outer, physical world, and dissolving those boundaries in order to experience wholeness.

In "From Symptom to Reality", Rudolf Steiner indicated the following:

We must learn to see through the picture-nature of man to his spiritual archetype. And this will happen as we go on into the future; man will, as it were, become transparent to his fellow-man. The way his head is formed, the way he walks: all this will be seen with an inner insight and sympathy altogether different from what the men of today are as yet inclined to evolve. For the only way to learn to know the human being in his Ego is to cultivate this understanding of his picture-nature, and thus to approach him with the underlying feeling that everything outer physical eyes can see of him is related to the true supersensible reality of man, as a picture painted on canvas is to the reality it represents.

This underlying feeling must be gradually developed; this must be learned. Man will meet man not so as to perceive in him merely the organisation of bone, muscle, blood and so forth. No, he will learn to feel in the other man the image of his eternal and spiritual being. Behold, the human being passes by us, and we shall not imagine that we can understand him unless this that passes by us awakens in us the deeper vision of what he is as an eternal and spiritual man.

In this way we shall learn to see the human being. And we shall really be able to see him thus. For everything we see when we perceive human forms, human movements, and all that goes with them as a picture of the eternal, will make us either warm or cold. It will have to fill us either with inner warmth or with inner cold. We shall go through the world learning to know men in a very deep and tender way. One man will make us warm, another will make us cold. Worst of all will be those who make us neither warm nor cold. Thus we shall have an inner experience in the warmth-ether which penetrates our etheric body. This will be the reflex of the heightened interest which must be evolved as between man and man.

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR CHILD STUDY

WEEK ONE

STEP 1 - PHYSICAL OBSERVATIONS

Weight	Height	Head form & size	Hair
Eyes	Face	Skin	Nose
Ears	Trunk form & proportion		Legs
Feet	Arches	Fingers	Toes
Warm/cold	Moist/dry	Neck	Forehead
Mouth	Chin	Teeth	Shoulders
Chest	Spine	Length of limbs	

Everything of a physical aspect that awakens your attention.

STEP 2 – SPEECH

Pitch	Intensity	Articulation	Breathing
Disturbances	Origin (nasal, throaty, clear, etc.)		Vocabulary
Do ideas flow easily?	Finished sentences?	Singing	

STEP 3 – MOVEMENT

Control & balance	Coordination	Strength	Mood when moving
Hands and arms	Posture	Gestures	Levity/gravity
Speed	Sitting/deskwork	Handwork	Woodwork
Gym	Eurythmy	Extra Lesson	Main Lesson Books
Painting	Gait	Laterality	Movement stages

STEP 4 – BEHAVIOR

Playing or working with peers		Relationship to teachers, to parents	
Aggressive/meek	Follower/leader	Restless/inert	Interrupts
Pushes/avoids	Complains	Prefers to be alone	Pleasant/friendly
Eating – gesture, preferences		Friends	

It is important to observe these aspects quietly over time.

WEEK TWO

STEP 5 – LENSES PROVIDED BY RUDOLF STEINER

12 Senses – go through all and describe any peculiarities
Temperaments
Constitutional types
Polarities – e.g. over/under stimulated

STEP 6 – BIOGRAPHY

(See separate handout)

STEP 7 - IMAGINATION

As we strive to continue to build a picture, we must still labor against the habit of intellectual conclusions. Perhaps, for instance, we can take time to characterize movements in relation to an animal.

STEP 9 – POSING POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Without coming to final conclusions, what might we say are questions this child seems to bring? This may be a matter of contemplation between the second and third weeks.

WEEK THREE - THE HELPING HIERARCHY

What questions arise?

What needs can we identify in any of the following areas, and what practical steps can we recommend?

Medical/health

Soul/religious/psychological

Developmental

Pedagogical