

Astrea Ravenstar, on Looping

Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs

In Waldorf schools, “looping” with your class has been the norm for 100 years. Astrea Ravenstar, class teacher at the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs, spoke to us about her experience with Looping.

How does looping work in a Waldorf school?

“In Waldorf schools, the traditional ideal is that one teacher carries most of the core subjects for an 8 year class cycle. In our school, we have divided the class teacher cycle into a 1st-5th loop and a 6th-8th loop. The teacher really knows the class -- their interests, strengths and weaknesses-- and can craft their lessons around the needs of a particular group. It is easier to know how to engage the class and to differentiate learning. The greatest benefit is the development of long-term relationships between the parents, student and teacher.”

What about learning a new curriculum every year?

“When I moved into 2nd grade with my group, everything was so much easier. I knew the parents and their family backgrounds, I knew how each of my students learned. We hit the ground running in second grade. We moved more quickly through the curriculum than we would have otherwise.”

How does this model support students and families in a post-Covid world?

“We were able to leverage our relationships when it came to switching to remote learning. The uncharted territory had a few landmarks in it because Waldorf families expect contact and connection. Sharing struggles was easier, and we all found a way forward together. This fall, knowing who my students and families are, we can meet the challenges together.”

Any advice for schools considering looping?

“It’s important for teachers to consider where their strengths lie. Waldorf used to stress a 1st-8th cycle, but it is rare for a teacher to have that range and confidence. When teachers have a good sense of their own strengths and skill sets, they can elevate the potential of their looping cycle.”