

Signs of First Grade Readiness: Physical Development

Waldorf teachers look for a variety of symptoms of physical development to determine whether a child is ready for First Grade:

- the change of teeth
- ratio of head to body
- visible joints
- an observable arch in the foot
- individualized facial features
- S-curve in spine
- consistent heartbeat of 60 beats/minute
- respiration once every four heartbeats

The change of teeth: In Steiner's time, this traditionally happened around age 7; however, it seems to be occurring earlier in modern children, so this is not necessarily as good a guide as it used to be. Look for your child to have at least seven of the eight physical characteristics described above for deciding he is ready for First Grade.

Ratio of head to body: Your child's limbs begin to lengthen and his head becomes smaller in relation to the rest of the body. An infant has a ratio of 1:4 between head and body. In a First Grade child this ratio is 1:6. As a sign of this change, the child becomes able to reach his arm over his head and completely cover his ear with his hand.

Visible joints: Check to see if your child has visible knuckles and kneecaps instead of dimples.

Individualized facial features: Your child should have an enlarged and clearly defined chin and nose and a loss of fat on his cheeks.

Signs of First Grade Readiness: Skill Development

Consider whether your child can do the following things before entering him in a Waldorf First Grade program:

- walk forward on a balance beam, maintaining balance
- catch and throw a large ball
- climb stairs, alternating feet with each step
- tie knots and bows
- zip and button clothing
- hop, on either foot
- hop, with both feet together
- skip
- habitually walk by swinging opposite arm when stepping out with one foot
- shake hands by offering hand with thumb outstretched
- sew
- finger knit
- play finger games
- have established dominance (left-handed or right-handed)
- have a conscious goal in drawing or painting a picture

When in doubt, do your child a favor and wait.