

Overview of a Potential Implementation of the Winding Spring Process of Education by Robert Canright (12/15/06)

The Winding Spring Process of Education is described elsewhere. This document presents a possible implementation into a school curriculum.

The first three of the eight steps in the Winding Spring Process of Education are the responsibility of the adults. Here are the three steps for the adults.

1. Enlightened Leadership
2. Orderly Society
3. Orderly Family

These three steps mean community leadership, the community at large, and the families in particular jointly commit to the education and nurturing of the children. The remaining five steps in the Winding Spring Process are the major steps in the children's education.

There are five key steps in the education of children as they mature to young adults. The steps are not mutually exclusive. Generally, all five steps might be used during any given school year in appropriate measures. Yet the five steps should be mastered in approximately the order listed. The five steps are:

4. Self Cultivation
5. Orderly Mind
6. Extending Knowledge
7. Independent Investigation
8. Sincerity

Here is a suggested ordering of emphasis, grouped by grades.

Grades 1 – 4: Self Cultivation, Orderly Mind, Sincerity

Grades 5 – 8: Orderly Mind, Extending Knowledge, Sincerity

Grades 9 – 12: Extending Knowledge, Independent Investigation, Sincerity

A good citizen should be trustworthy and reliable. All citizens should potentially be leaders for the community, in public service or business. It is vital that our leadership be trustworthy and reliable. Too many companies have been bankrupted and too many public policy disasters have been caused by highly educated people who were untrustworthy or unreliable. Sincerity is the root of trustworthiness and reliability. Sincerity is the ultimate goal in our quest towards maturity, so it is emphasized every year.

For grades 1 – 4, Self Cultivation encompasses the development of self-control, self-discipline, socialization skills, good work habits, and a commitment to continuous self-improvement. Classroom behavior, polite social behavior, consideration for other people,

cooperative behavior, good work habits, and the cultivation of a positive and encouraging attitude are among the skills stressed at this early age.

The development of an Orderly Mind focuses on good thinking habits. This would include teaching causality, explaining logical or rational thinking and common logical flaws, which include mistaking circumstantial events for casual events. Examining the logic and structure of sentences, of paragraphs, and of stories helps develop an orderly mind. Learning the rudiments of inductive and deductive reasoning through stories help develop an orderly mind.

Structured discussions and debates among students, with questions being asked by the teacher and by fellow students contribute to an orderly mind. Students understand that self cultivation includes the development of an orderly mind. They are taught to analyze their arguments and behavior from the debates and discussions in order to identify areas for improvement.

Developing social skills, work habits, self control, and good attitude are vital in the early years because they build a foundation for success.

In grades 1 – 4, Extending Knowledge includes learning basic skills in math and reading, along with facts considered appropriate for those grade levels. Some Independent Investigation is practiced in science experiments or demonstration and in reports for different subjects, yet Extending Knowledge and Independent Investigation are not the primary focus.

For grades 5 – 8, the cultivation of an Orderly Mind continues to be a major focus. There is reduced emphasis on Self Cultivation but increased emphasis on Extending Knowledge. There is an increased focus on academic skills and facts in preparation for high school. Independent Investigation and Sincerity continue to be a part of curriculum, but not a major focus. Extending Knowledge is the acquisition of skills, facts, and learning the interaction and interdependencies of facts and systems. The students are preparing their skills for high school algebra, physics, and are preparing for significant challenges in literature, history, and critical thinking.

For grades 9 – 12, Extending Knowledge continues to be a major focus. The students are now mastering algebra, physics, chemistry, writing, and history. The students have the previous steps of Self Cultivation and the Orderly Mind reinforced.

In grades 9 – 12 there is now a major emphasis on Independent Investigation. Science is a perfect subject to analyze a situation or set of circumstances, prepare one or more hypotheses, plan and conduct experiments, analyze the results, and draw conclusions. Math can be used to teach Independent Investigation with more complex problems.

Projects in history and literature should stress independent thinking. Liberal arts teachers are notorious for coercing students to parrot back the teacher's opinions. Teachers must

be trained to be objective graders. Reasoned arguments, presentation and interpretation of evidence, and logical conclusions are taught.

A sincere approach to Independent Investigation is emphasized. Students learn about sophistry, illogic, and twisted arguments. The goal of Independent Investigation is workable solutions. Sincerity is emphasized when students are taught to critique their own work to identify potential flaws and consider the consequences of those flaws.

Examples of insincere Independent Investigations would include case studies of corporate actions that enrich a few people but bankrupt the company and hurt the community. A key lesson is that rational thought will not lead to workable solutions if the motivation is insincere; this is the root of sophistry. WorldCom's fraudulent report of projected internet growth is a good example of insincere Independent Investigation.

Independent Investigation does not rely solely on science. History and literature are very good for Independent Investigation. A theme that a graduating class pursues through all four years of high school combines Extending Knowledge and Independent Investigation. What follows is an example of a central theme in high school.

The Enlightenment could be a central theme in high school. 9th grade projects could consider the relationship between scientific advancements and the foundations of the Enlightenment. 10th grade projects might examine the American and French Revolutions for connections to the Enlightenment. 11th grade projects could contrast the American and French Revolutions, consider the impacts upon the people of that time, and consider why the Revolutions turned out so different. 12th grade projects could consider whether the Enlightenment was a success, a failure, or is still an ongoing and unresolved issue and propose what direction society might take based on their conclusions. The students will discuss and debate their analyses and conclusions.

The Enlightenment is one example of a central theme. Every class that starts would have a central theme to consider through its four years of high school. The industrial revolution and the growth of capitalism might be another four-year-long central theme. The influence of ancient Greek philosophers upon contemporary society might be a central theme. There can be central themes that focus on science or literature.

The goals of the central theme approach are to examine a complex issue from different perspectives, draw conclusions, and propose future direction or action. Our students must learn to plan for the future by using all they know of the past and present. They must learn to debate, to learn from the interaction of other people, to dialog and cooperate for solutions, and to deal with complexity and uncertainty.

Every class has a different theme for its four years in high school and at mid-year and the end of the year each class will present a summary of its findings to the other classes. So each class studies one theme in detail, but hears the highlights of the work done by the three other classes.

This wide body of knowledge held by diverse segments of the community means that complicated problems worked by a group of citizens will have the benefit of many points of view shaped by detailed studies in important facets of our civilization. Our society will make a leap in problem solving abilities, and our citizenry will have both depth and breadth of knowledge.

And if our effort to instill sincerity in thought, intention, and action is successful, then our citizens will base their decisions on sincerity, and we will cross the chasm from knowledgeable problem solving to wisdom.

This is how we can prepare our children for a future we cannot imagine.