

Initial Procedures for Starting a School

These procedures form a part of the Federation Steps to Membership, April 2003 document.

Steps to Membership

Once a core group establishes the intention to become a Waldorf school it should apply to the Federation for membership as a new initiative school. Thereafter the school passes through the stages of membership as it matures and culminates in being recognised as a full member.

There are four categories of membership with the Federation. These are:

1. New Initiative Schools
2. Developing Schools
3. Established Schools
4. A Registered Kindergarten or Playgroup which elects to remain as such without developing into a primary school.

1. A New Initiative School

Step One: The Letter of Intention

The core group of parents initiates classification by writing a letter of intention to the Federation Council. This letter should identify the feeder group for the school and the type of school seeking classification, i.e.

Playgroup only

Kindergarten only

Kindergarten intending to grow into a primary school immediately

Kindergarten intending to grow into a primary school in the near / far future.

Further requirements for this letter are included in the Appendix to this document

Step Two: Requirements to Open a School

The Federation responds to this letter by providing the list of requirements to open a school and by making available a copy of the Federation Guidelines, which deal in greater detail with the requirements below.

The Requirements

- The teachers and the founding body should be able to show a commitment to the ideals and practices of Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy and a wish to support and contribute to Waldorf Education in South Africa and the worldwide movement. This should include a written statement of intent
- A School mentor or experienced Waldorf teacher on the staff, who is approved by the Federation Council.
- Trained teacher/s who are registered with SACE. Teachers untrained in Waldorf must be engaged in a Federation-approved training.
- Adequate salaries for the teacher/s and staff, including the mentor.
- The costs of the school mentor.
- Federation levies.
- A letter sent to the Federation requesting classification as a New Initiative School, with evidence of all of the above.
- The school should have knowledge of the Department of Education requirements for opening a school and should comply with their requirement for a minimum number of 20 pupils.

Step Three: Application for New Initiative School Status

Within the first or second year the school is expected to apply for classification as a New Initiative School. In the interim the school will not use the names Waldorf or Rudolf Steiner in its name but will use “**Provisional** Waldorf School” or the words, “using Waldorf or Rudolf Steiner principles”. The requirements for classification are as follows:

In the event of an existing school that wishes to establish a Middle School or a High School, the new initiative within the school will be able to use the name Waldorf, under the ambit of the existing school.

Requirements for Classification

The requirements listed below are described in greater detail in the Federation Guidelines

- A demonstrated commitment to the ideals and practices of Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy and a wish to support and contribute to Waldorf Education in South Africa and the worldwide movement.
- A School mentor or experienced Waldorf teacher on the staff.
- Trained teacher/s, who are registered with SACE. Teachers untrained in Waldorf must be engaged in a Federation-approved training.
- A Development Plan for the next five years

- A Financial Plan including adequate budgeting for all staff and for Federation levies.
- A Publicity Plan.
- Incorporation as a non-profit organisation with a board of trustees and a constitution.
- A Vision and Mission Statement.
- The school should have informed the Department of Education that they are in existence and are working towards compliance with their requirements.

Step Four: Federation Council Visit

On receipt of the above letter the Federation Council members will be delegated to will pay the school a visit, interview the teachers, the mentor and other staff and will discuss the above documents. Once they are satisfied that the necessary steps have been taken they will recommend to the full council that the school is eligible to be a New Initiative School.

The Federation Council will then grant a “New Initiative School” status which the school can hold for a minimum of five years. Such a school will not use Waldorf in its name but will use “**Provisional** Waldorf School” or the words, “using Waldorf or Rudolf Steiner principles”. Correspondence may state, “Registered with the Federation as a New Initiative School”

- Kindergartens and playgroups, not wishing to grow into a primary school may request classification as a Registered Kindergarten / Playgroup. The steps for this are also included at the end of this document.

Once a school has complied with the above it should then work towards accreditation as a developing school. Refer to the Federation Steps to Membership, April 2003

Appendix

The Appendix below states the Federation requirements for starting a new school, as set out in the Federation Guidelines 2000.

Mentorship of the New School

The Federation council has to appoint an experienced Waldorf School teacher to act as mentor of the new school at least for the first three years. Should the school already have a suggested mentor this needs to be stated in the letter. The Federation could also appoint the College of Teachers of an established school to act as mentor school if such a

possibility exists. Experience has shown that new initiatives are considerably advantaged when the core group includes an experienced Waldorf teacher.

Application to Start a Waldorf School

An application to start a school must contain the following details: Development Plan, Financial Plan, Teachers and Publicity Plan. These are described below.

Development Plan

A development plan has to be drawn up by the initiative group. This plan has to outline in stages how the school is to grow in terms of rooms for classes, furniture needed, the equipment needed and the materials needed for the classroom. It needs to set out how many classes will begin and how, in the succeeding years, additional classes are going to be accommodated.

An outline of the number of teachers required in each year needs to be included, and how the school is planning to find trained Waldorf teachers. This often requires finding suitable candidates from the school's own circles who could start their training immediately.

Financial Plan

A financial plan has to be made, showing how the funds are going to be raised for the costs of the school. It requires a budget for the year detailing income and expenditure and, if necessary, shortfall to be covered through other means.

Specific fund-raising drives should be thought out. The budget for the year must reflect both the financial plan and the development plan. The delicate balance between what parents can afford to pay in fees and the expenses of the school need to be carefully negotiated and decided upon. It is usual that between 80% to 90% of the school's running expenditure will account for salaries.

Teachers

The initiative group has to find suitably qualified teachers to start the school. It is very important that the teachers who start a school have at least had a Waldorf teacher training and/or some experience in teaching at a Waldorf school. The new school can advertise at all the existing Waldorf schools and at the teacher training centres in the country and/or abroad. It can also speak directly with trainers at training institutions.

In exceptional cases a person without a Waldorf training could be considered for a teaching post, but only if arrangements that are acceptable to the Federation Council are made for that person's training while teaching. However, it must be realized that it is not easy for a new teacher to cope with both teaching and being trained as a teacher. The Federation mentor has to assist the parent initiative group in the selection of the teachers of the school during the first three years, and has to report back on this to the Federation Council.

Publicity Plan

A publicity plan needs to be made, showing how the school is to make itself known and how it is to attract a reasonable number of pupils in order to make it viable. Exhibitions, lectures, coffee evenings, study groups, interviews with the radio, writing articles for the press, workshops and open days are some of the possibilities for publicity.

Group Structure

It is very important to come to agreement as to how the initiative group (or core group) of the new school is going to function. A central co-ordinator (whether employed or voluntary) is essential. This person carries the overall responsibility of the initiative and maintains an overview of its progress.

There should be a commitment in such a group to form a study group so that the group comes to share a common understanding about Waldorf education.

Clear delegation of different duties is needed. Small groups of people would need to be responsible for publicity, fundraising, development and for education, with one person as a co-ordinator for each group. The education group concerns itself with finding the teachers required, liaising with the mentor, encouraging training of teachers and arranging parent education sessions.

Common Problems

In the initial stages of establishing a new school, typical problems could be :

- * a lack of joint vision
- * lack of clarity in how decisions are made
- * lack of commitment
- * insufficient understanding of the ethos of Waldorf education and uncertainty about who carries the authority, teachers or parents.
- * insufficient finances to run the school

The mentor or the Federation Council can be approached for help with these problems. They are part and parcel of every new initiative, and must be seen as its greatest growing points.

Legal Requirements

According to current legislation schools not founded by the Department of Education have to be registered.

The first step that a school would take is to form an association of members who would be the prospective parents and individuals who are interested in supporting the initiative. Generally such a group would elect a board of governors or trustees who would draw up a constitution.

The Department of Education requires that the constitution must provide for the dissolution, corporate status and efficient control and functioning of the school. The Department will provide a draft constitution to serve as a guide.

In order to facilitate the financial business of the school it may register an Education Trust or a number of trusts for the purposes of fund raising. Alternatively or additionally an association may register as either a Section 21 Company not for gain or a Volunteer Association not for gain.

Each of the three options makes different provisions. A school must decide which form will best meet its financial needs. A detailed explanation is given below.

Schools may also wish to join the Independent Schools Council, which is an information and support body on all aspects of school management and educational matters.

All schools must understand and apply the new legislation concerning employees, included in the section on New Legislation.