

The Matter of Matric

Introduction

The Matric Department's email address is matricmatters@rosewaywaldorf. What does it mean to us to say that Matric matters? Firstly the description addresses *matter* as a noun, meaning *the subject or situation under consideration*, thus meaning the issues and practical consideration of Matric, the administration, organisation and co-ordination of all the requirements and activities specified by the process of tuition, registration and examination. Secondly, it addresses *matter* as a verb, meaning *that which is important or significant*, as in: "Matric matters in South Africa, if one intends to take up tertiary studies."

In the national educational landscape, Matric represents the end point of a 12-year academic journey (which is preceded by a school readiness programme in Grade R (the readiness and reception grade) and years preceding that in early childhood education). The final phase of schooling, the FET (Further Education and Training) encompassing Grades 10, 11 and 12 focuses specifically on the content foundation and final content testing of Matric. Matric serves as the conclusion of primary and secondary education, and as a gateway to tertiary studies and vocational apprenticeships.

The Waldorf journey

In a Waldorf school the focus in the 12-year journey of school (preceded by the years in play group and kindergarten) is not on content, nor on testing the learnt content in a conventional examination (writing answers to previously unseen questions on preset and learnt work in a limited time span). Waldorf education does not teach content. It uses content to teach children and young people. So, what does it teach in young people? It teaches the young human being to think, feel and act. It addresses the human process of engaging with content and incorporating it. The word incorporate, to take in and make part of the whole, comes from the Latin for embodiment, to take into the body and form into a body. Learning is the process of making information and the content of subjects one's own. This process of learning how to think (question, analyse, synthesize), of reflecting upon and managing one's feeling and developing a feeling (sense of one's understanding), and the capacity and ability to take action and engage with the requirements of what is being learnt, is the full focus of education in a Waldorf context. It is the process of human development. It is measured in a wide range of assessments and evaluated in the drawing out of value for the individual student. Learning is not reduced to testing cognitive memory. It is expanded to be a life-long process of human development, of extending one's thinking, feeling and action to make sense of the content one is working with and thereby make sense of one's own self and journey in life, and by extension, make sense of the world and its meaning. In a Waldorf school we teach children and young people to learn and how to learn, through the experience of Waldorf schooling.

Matric in context of a Waldorf school

So, what place does Matric have in a Waldorf school? At Roseway, as at many other Waldorf schools world-wide, the 12-year school experience is not focused on Matric. It is not the end outcome of education. In that specific (narrow) sense we really do not prepare young people for Matric, and neither do we care to do so. Through the years of high school (secondary school) the focus is on human development: the capacity and ability to incorporate and also to unfold an individual learning process and experience. This culminates, concludes, if you like, in the Class 12 year. This year carries an underlying theme: integration. Here we are working on the essential process of integrating content,

correlating subjects, considering the essential value and significance of things and developing an integrated view of learning, of the world and of one's self. This process of integration is life-long and belongs to the idea that we can truly become people of integrity, in the fullest meaning of that term. Hence, no focus, time or deliberate preparation is made towards Matric. Matric belongs to a different system and needs to be viewed in its own context.

Matric at Roseway

Matric is managed in a year at Roseway (the so called 13th year). At this age: 18 turning 19, it is possible, based on the learning process established in the Waldorf context, to school young people in content comprehension and retention for the purpose of set examinations that quantify the ability to grasp, hold and feedback information in chosen subject areas. The foundation of the capacity to think, to study, to manage the work requirements and engage with appropriate interest and enthusiasm in a subject is what has already been established. Matric requires that the student choose wisely the areas that suit their interest, temperament, academic abilities, future plans and passions. It requires a realistic grasp of one's abilities and capacities. Matric (in any school) is a year of hard work and focus, of effort and practice. This is best achieved when the student enjoys the content covered in the subject area and enjoys the challenge of working with it and incorporating it. In Waldorf education content is carefully chosen, not for its own sake, but in order for it to be useful in the engagement of young people's thinking, feeling and will. In Matric the content areas may sometimes feel arbitrary and limited. Being well able to manage this possible frustration or disappointment is part of the process.

Matric has its own full set of material to learn. It is not a revision year. Although areas of work have been covered in the Waldorf context in previous years, and the thinking and approach required to take on the content has been established, the content list (as in other schools) is applicable to that year. Matric is not a revision year in the general school experience outside of Waldorf education.

Each student will be able to do as well in Matric as they are able if they have chosen their subjects well and engage fully in the learning process. In a school that carries a varied range of abilities, the Matric results will reflect that range.

A very good question to ask is: "Does Matric prepare students for tertiary studies?" The overwhelming consensus of university lecturers and professors is that Matric does not prepare young people for the way in which they should approach their studies nor for the demands that tertiary studies place on young people. It is important to bear in mind that Matric is part of the regulated approach of the state to the completion of secondary schooling. In that sense it is not designed to prepare young people for tertiary studies, although it is used as a gateway into tertiary studies. What a Waldorf education does do, especially in the 12th year, is to prepare students for the thinking and research questioning required at under-graduate and post-graduate level. It also prepares them for the demands made on them as young people, in terms of maturity of approach, dedication and the motivation to engage and manage the courses. Roseway has enjoyed receiving most encouraging feedback from universities such as UCT, Stellenbosch and Rhodes on the quality and maturity of our graduates. The feedback, including a letter from UKZN on one of our first graduates when in his first year of under-graduate studies, reflects on the enquiring minds and "out-of-the-box" thinking that make Roseway Waldorf graduates stand out at university. This speaks to what has been gained from a Waldorf education. This is where one can see how Waldorf education develops a young person not only for further studies and work but for all the challenges and demands of life. Waldorf education is able to build the self-confidence of the student with mature self-reflection, and strengthen innate capacity while developing a broad range of skills and competencies.

Given the significance of Matric in South Africa as a gateway, a key to further studies and activities, it is a service that a Waldorf school is happy and more than capable of providing, but it is truly not the focus of our work in the 12 years of school. It can be done well and many fine examples (in Waldorf schools world-wide and at Roseway) can be cited. The Matric Department at Roseway is dedicated to offering tuition in a wholistic way while preparing the young person for the examination. The rigours and restrictions of Matric are managed with care and understanding, but also with the required challenge and facilitation for the young person to find their motivation. In other countries where such an examination year is not required for entry into university or the job market, the Waldorf Class 12 year is often highly regarded and appreciated.

Are students at Roseway prepared for Matric? If one means, has the content work and examination technique been introduced before the 13th year, then the answer is no. If one means, has the student been informed of what to expect and are they ready for this experience, then the answer is most certainly yes. Of course, one may be informed of an experience, but it is not the same as having the experience. No amount of information about child raising can fully prepare one for the experience of having a child. If, by the question: "Are students at Roseway prepared for Matric?", one means are students ready in themselves to take up and manage the challenges posed by Matric, then the answer is yes. That said, we do not discount anxieties that society at large may create and the personal temperamental anxieties that certain students may have. This is not unique to a Waldorf context. The full support and understanding of the young person's situation is needed, both by the school and the family. For some, Matric will be a very hard year. For many students at Roseway it has been a very good year, and has been achieved with great success. The success may not lie in a set of straight "A"s. It lies always in the realization of one's capacity in the context of hard work, determination and self-confidence.

Students at Roseway are prepared for Matric before the 13th year by being well rounded in their knowledge base, exposed to relevant content and concepts within the Waldorf curriculum and encouraged to develop the maturity and flexibility in thinking that makes managing Matric in one year possible.

Matric Structure and Pass Levels

Matriculation in South Africa involves passing the National Senior Certificate examinations. The regulations for this as well as content and cognitive levels of questioning are Gazetted.

7 subjects are required for the National Senior Certificate (NSC): 4 Core Subjects: Home Language (HL), First Additional Language (FAL), Mathematics/Mathematical Literacy and Life Orientation, and 3 Electives chosen from the following subjects offered at Roseway: Physical Sciences (requires that the candidate has chosen Mathematics), Life Sciences, Geography, History, Consumer Studies, Tourism, Religion Studies, Dramatic Arts, Visual Arts, and Music.

A Bachelor level pass (which makes a candidate eligible to apply for a course of study towards a bachelor's degree) requires a pass in at least 6 subjects (must include HL) and over 50% in 4 subjects (Life Orientation does not count towards this). The same criteria but for 1 less subject over 50%, equates to a Diploma level pass. Hence 3 designated subjects must be over 50%. A Diploma level pass makes a candidate eligible to apply for a course of study resulting in a Diploma). A Higher Certificate pass allows a candidate to apply for a one year certificate course (at tertiary level).

Home Language, Life Orientation and 1 elective subject are considered passed if the mark is 40% or more. First Additional Language, Mathematics/Mathematical Literacy and the other 2 electives are considered passed if the mark is 30% or more.

Usually around 30% – 35% of all candidates in the country who pass Matric obtain a Bachelor level pass.

In order to consistently obtain Bachelor level passes over 90% implies that a school does not have a broad cross section of ability within the student population. No school can make a child more intelligent. It can, if it is a Waldorf school, facilitate the development of full potential, thereby assisting students to do their best and improve their achievement within their capacity. The main focus of a Waldorf school is to assist in the development of soul faculties: thinking, feeling and will, so as to support a young person in managing themselves through life. For schools to manage consistent Bachelor passes over 90% several factors must be in place, including, the potential exclusion of academically weaker students, the restrictions on the subjects students may choose to do (the 3 electives and the choice between Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy), the obtaining of more concessions than are actually required or needed, and possibly more time dedicated to drilling the passing of an examination (which in itself does not mean that the students have fully comprehended the concepts and have learnt how to think for themselves).

In conclusion

Students at Roseway are guided and supported to make wise choices in their electives but subjects are not packaged, and students may choose what they wish to take as their individual Matric package. This can (and does) lead to certain students not achieving as well as they might had they chosen other subjects. It is well known that a student usually does better in subjects which reflect not only their interest but also their aptitude.

At Roseway, Matric is not seen as an end in itself. It is also not viewed as the measure of the individual student's success or not. Students who choose subjects well suited to their level of interest, ability and engagement usually do very well. It is of value to ask what is meant by "doing very well". We do not restrict the term "doing very well" to only indicating "A's" across the board. For some students, a set of B results is "doing very well". For other students scoring all marks over 60% is "doing very well", while for another student simply passing the subject over 50% is "doing very well". It is always the case of being relative.

No set of results can predict how another different human being might do. Asking for the Matric results as a measure of future success is like asking if someone can achieve greatness based on the ability of another. Nevertheless, the success of young people who have graduated from Roseway can provide assurance that an academically inclined young person, who chooses subjects that well suit their temperament, interest and abilities, and match this with hard work and mature dedication, can do very well indeed. In the first 60 matriculants at Roseway, one young lady went on to obtain an International Rhodes Scholarship, completing her post-graduate studies at Oxford and Stanford, and one young man went on to obtain a Mandela-Rhodes Scholarship. Over the years students have gone on to pursue studies in the health sciences, chemistry, engineering, computer design technologies, commerce, accounting, fine arts, graphic design, languages and linguistics, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, education, marketing, law, copy editing and the dramatic and film arts, to name a few. The Matric results in themselves are not a measure of how well a young person may do once they are

at university. Often the specific direction of their tertiary subjects provides a focus that makes academic success all the greater. Each young person will follow their path and find their way. Our task is not to create a false picture of reality with top marks that may mean little in the long run but rather to accompany the journey with care, dedication, and excellent tuition.

Addendum

Percentage pass level rates, with student numbers attached for context

The new Matric system (with Bachelor (B), Diploma (D) and Higher Certificate (HC) pass levels) came into effect at Grade 12 level (Matric) in 2008.

YEAR	<i>Number of Students</i>	LEVEL OF PASS	% OBTAINED	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
2008	16	B	88	14
		D	12	2
2009	14	B	79	11
		D	21	3
2010	18	B	83	15
		D	17	3
2011	14	B	79	11
		D	14	2
		HC	7	1
2012	15	B	80	12
		D	20	3
2013	17	B	94	16
		D	6	1
2014	16	B	88	14
		D	12	2
2015	29	B	76	22
		D	20	6
		HC	4	1
2016	29	B	69	20
		D	24	7
		HC	7	2
2017	18	B	72	13
		D	28	5
2018	14	B	100	14
2019	16	B	63	10
		D	31	5
		HC	6	1