



AWSNA Self-Study Report 2025/2026

South Shore Waldorf School 2025/26 AWSNA Self Study

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Abbreviations and links used as documentation for this report:

1. Governance, Procedure and Policies document (GPP) [ONLINE LINK](#)
2. Parent handbook (PH) [ONLINE LINK](#)
3. [Website](#) (WS)
4. Ravenna Student Management (RSM)
5. Google Drive (GD)
6. Class Teacher Contract (CTC) [GD LINK](#) (permission required to access) 2 / 26

South Shore Waldorf School 2025/26 AWSNA Self Study

Part A: Mission and Waldorf Identity

A1. Mission and School identity

Vision statement

We are a diverse and growing community that acts as a beacon for Waldorf education in Atlantic Canada, inspiring us to live with integrity, creativity, and in rhythm with the Earth. (GPP section 1.1)

Mission statement

We nurture each being through wholistic education, cultivating strength of will, thoughtful inquiry, and the joy of intentional effort. We foster each child's sense of wonder and reverence, support their love of learning, and empower them to thrive as compassionate citizens within the school community and beyond. (GPP section 1.2)

Identity and history

The South Shore Waldorf School was founded in 1996 on a local farm in Conquerall Mills and relocated to our current Blockhouse campus in 2001. In the beginning we were a small, parent-led initiative with a single teacher running a kindergarten and a mixed-age grades class on alternate days. Since then, we have grown into a Kindergarten through Grade 9 program serving families across the South Shore of Nova Scotia.

Our small scale continues to be one of our greatest strengths. It allows for close relationships among faculty, students, and families and strengthens the lived expression of our mission every day. Over nearly three decades, the school has demonstrated remarkable resilience. Class sizes have swelled and shrunk in response to local events and global realities. Through it all, our commitment to Waldorf pedagogy and strong community engagement has remained steady.

Since the pandemic, we have recognized more clearly than ever that long term sustainability depends on building faculty and administrative stability. This has required honest reflection and collective effort. While our mission is well understood within the community, we have worked recently to bring greater clarity and consistency to articulating our mission and vision, both publicly and internally.

From the beginning, we have operated as an independent not-for-profit Association with an active Board of Directors. Over time, our governance structures have become more defined and board roles more clearly articulated. Today, there is a stronger collaborative relationship between board and faculty, supported by a well-organized Parent Council. Major decisions reflect a shared commitment to the school's long term viability.

Our strengths lie in our clarity of purpose, our relational culture, our dedicated faculty, and our long standing presence in Atlantic Canada. At the same time, our challenges are those common to many small independent Waldorf schools. These

include financial sustainability, administrative capacity, faculty workload, learning support infrastructure, and long term planning. We approach these not as deficits, but as areas requiring thoughtful development. Strengthening of governance, financial planning, and faculty sustainability will support our ability to serve future generations with integrity and care. (GPP Section 1.4)

Demographics and school growth plan

While half of SSWS families drive less than 15 minutes to the school, we draw students from a roughly 45-minute drive radius, more or less the area of Lunenburg County, home to around 50,000 people. A quarter of Lunenburg County residents live in one of 3 towns: Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, and Lunenburg, while the other three quarters live rurally. At SSWS, half of our students reside in a town, the other half live rurally. This difference from the general population is likely due to our proximity to Mahone Bay, and that Mahone Bay and Lunenburg attract wealthier residents who are more likely to send their child to an independent school.

It's worth noting that while Bridgewater is by far the largest population center in the area, comparatively few of our students live there, perhaps because Bridgewater features a greater mix of socio-economic statuses and lower-income families (the median income in Bridgewater is \$14,000 below the provincial average). Bridgewater is currently an untapped market for us, and we always strive to be accessible through initiatives like work credits and the Tuition Adjustment Program.

Furthermore, Bridgewater is also one of the only rural municipalities that is growing in Nova Scotia, at around 1-2% per year. Much of this growth is due to an influx of immigration, which is slowly turning the town into a more multicultural location. This is not represented in the demographics of our school, and remains a growth area for us. In

10-20 years, we expect Bridgewater to be substantially more culturally diverse, though factors like the economy and government policy decisions play a large role in this future.

Our school's enrollment currently sits in the mid-50s, but our capacity is likely around 75 in terms of building space and number of faculty. Beyond 75, we would need to add a new building and hire more staff. We currently have 30 leads for next year, and while only a portion of those families will send their child to the school, there are signs of growth.

A2. Description of how the Principles are living in the school

Introduction

South Shore Waldorf School is an associate member of AWSNA. A status that we're excited about and applying to maintain and further deepen. We have recognised, at a board and

faculty level, that we're not yet ready to apply for a full membership, as there's much work to be done. The self-study steering committee invited the Parent Council, Board and Faculty for a one day workshop to decide which principles to choose for this study besides the study of principles #3, #5 and #7. We, as a community, all eyed the chance for growing and chose to add two more principles to our self-study for the following reasons:

PRINCIPLE 4: Waldorf schools support freedom in teaching with the context of the school's shared agreements. Studying this principle is likely to give us an insight into which educational opportunities might be relevant to students at SSWS right now. Questions that seem relevant to us right now are how we use teacher's resources, and how to develop excellence in the program. By choosing this principle we will be looking into the essence of our teaching, and develop insights into how we can strengthen our program as a whole. How do we work with a shared understanding of freedom in teaching and how does this collaboration live among staff at SSWS? The study is likely to shine a light upon the internal as well as external strengths and weaknesses of our educational program.

PRINCIPLE 6: Spiritual development in support of professional growth is an ongoing activity for the faculty, staff, and board. The study of this principle allows us to explore and articulate SSWS's relationship with spirituality. We can explore the rich spiritual resource within our own community in an inclusive way, which may offer us guidance in how we can help our students to meet the world with an appreciation for this often overlooked or ignored aspect of our full human lives. The study may bring attention to how we can strengthen the connection between SSWS's governing bodies, having a spiritual continuous development at the heart of it. It seems likely that the study of this principle will lay the foundation for the study of principle 8 some years ahead.

Principle 3

Anthroposophical understanding of child development guides the educational program.

How principle 3 is living in the rhythms and curriculum. At the heart of our school is a living commitment to the understanding that human development unfolds in stages. The anthroposophical view of the developing human being shapes different aspects of our curriculum (GGP section 5, PH section 3, Class teacher contracts), pedagogy (PH section 2), and classroom life. We strive to meet each child with what

they most need at each phase of growth: physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

In our early childhood classrooms, the emphasis on imitation, rhythm, sensory integration, and creative play reflects our understanding of the young child's learning through movement and experience (GPP section 2.1 and 4. PH section 2). Time outdoors, daily practical work, and the careful pacing of transitions all serve to nourish the will and strengthen a foundational trust in the world.

Child study and broader anthroposophical community in Nova Scotia. Child Study, deeply informed by anthroposophical insight, remains a central practice for our faculty. Through Child Study, we aim to see beyond surface challenges to the deeper individuality of the child. It renews our connection to each student and strengthens our pedagogical insight. Child studies are planned according to arising needs in the different classes, and we aim to conduct child study with every class over the school year.

Our Faculty maintains a connection to the growing anthroposophical community in Nova Scotia and takes an active role in this broader movement by participating in and hosting the revived Waldorf East Conference. Teachers engage with ongoing offerings such as PD-days and renewal courses (CTC page 3). Faculty engage in biography work during some faculty meetings.

Exploration of innovation in relation to the principle. One significant innovation is the work that has been put into establishing a licensed ECE program. SSWS is currently raising money to finance the first part of the project, which will allow us to apply for a substantial provincial grant. Sharing experiences with other Waldorf Schools, we are well aware that we will have to stand firm on the Waldorf principles, as they might be challenged by provincial guidelines.

Another significant innovation has been the integration of nature-based learning. Weekly forest days, outdoor classrooms, and gardening projects are regular features of our early childhood and lower grades programs. In middle school, we have introduced more project-based and collaborative learning to support the adolescent's growing need for autonomy, critical thinking, emotional engagement and social interaction.

We are also beginning conversations about how and when digital tools might be introduced in a way that is appropriate to the students' stage of development and consistent with our educational values. The guiding question we return to is whether a given change truly supports the full development of the human being.

Challenges, compromises, and plans for mitigation. One of our ongoing challenges is ensuring consistent application of the developmental understanding across a small and varied faculty. Our teachers come from different backgrounds and levels of training, and it takes time and support to develop a shared foundation. We have intentions of addressing this through mentoring and observations, which is also documented in our CTC, but limited time and resources make this difficult. Although we have policies and procedures in place for self and peer mentoring (GGP p. 92. Appendix 11), these practices are weak and need work.

Another long-standing challenge is our ability to offer regular Eurythmy. Although we are committed to it as a core part of Waldorf education, the two trained Eurythmists in Nova Scotia live over 90 minutes away and do not drive. One is elderly, and the other has three young children, which makes travel difficult and sustained instruction impossible. As a result, we are currently unable to provide consistent Eurythmy lessons to students. In the meantime, we integrate its principles into teacher development whenever possible.

Our DEI work is currently focused on inclusion, particularly for neurodiverse students and teachers. We are building our capacity to support a wide range of learning and working styles. At the same time, we are reflecting on how to cultivate a school culture that is responsive, accessible, and open to all. Even within a relatively homogenous geographic area, we recognise the importance of this work and its impact on the children and families we serve. Our DEI work is part of the school culture but not firmly anchored in our school policy documents.

Further see appendix 2 for documented policies and practices on Principle 3 8 / 26

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Principle 4

Waldorf schools support freedom in teaching within the context of the school's shared agreements.

South Shore Waldorf School is a tightly-knit community, as is the South Shore of Nova Scotia. SWS staff and board members come together from different educational backgrounds, bringing different perspectives to a shared conversation about governance, pedagogy and policies. Educators on the Board provide insight, context, and encouragement—not direction. Together, these contributions create a governance culture that upholds pedagogical freedom. Freedom of teaching is the freedom to act out of knowledge, the capacity of the teacher to act responsibly, creatively, and spiritually, out of a deep understanding of human development, in service of the child's unfolding individuality, within a collegial (and accountable)

structure.

The role of the board and freedom in teaching are described in various documents, policies and the Parent Handbook. (GPP section 18.7, PH page 3-4). Teachers are expected to follow the Waldorf curriculum, developmental goals, subject expectations, festival life, rhythms, and the school's policies and procedures (CTC page 1).

Mentoring, professional development, and assessment. SSWS has wanted to establish a mentoring program for a while, with rotating class observation, liberating the teachers to observe and mentor each other. This hasn't been possible due to limited time resources, as we haven't had a regular French teacher (who would hold a class for main lesson, freeing a teacher to conduct observations). Only this spring did SSWS hire a stable French teacher, which we're very excited about. There is a sense of increased capacity through improved stability and teacher retention, with mentoring to come. Currently the staff isn't formally assessed, although an assessment form exists as an appendix in our Policies and procedures handbook document. (GPP Appendices 8 and 9).

Compensation, including benefits. SSWS is currently working to create equity within the school's pay structure among staff. Until now there has been no compensation or benefits, except the benefit of no tuition fee for staff children (GPP section 18.3 and 18.4). Conversations around this topic include enrollment, snow days, parents' hopes, teacher workload, etc., all of which are currently being discussed by the Parent Council, Board and Staff.

Professional behavior and expectations, including communication protocol.

Professional behaviours and expectations are outlined in the contract, parent handbook and the policies and procedures document. Communication with the parents and community happens at AGMs, through Ravenna (the student management system), and planned parent-teacher interviews bi-annually. Teachers are expected to provide general care to their own classes - including communication and preparation. Meetings are held throughout the year to bring awareness to parents of the work the students are doing in class. Ravenna is used for record keeping. (CTC page 1 and 2, PH section 7, GPP section 14.3 / 18.7)

Dismissal and grievances. Dismissal is described in the contracts, and we most recently refined the concerns process which offers guidance when conflict and grievance occurs. (PH section 13,)

Pedagogical practices. Due to significant staff turnover since Covid, SSWS is lacking a strong pedagogical culture. That said, the current faculty has taken important steps to strengthen their teaching. A shared literacy approach is being forged through the grades, after faculty invited a Literacy specialty teacher at a PD-day. Friday morning singing and candlelight during weekly assembly offers a regular rhythm. SSWS assessment method of student work is formally an 'end-of-year' report. In the daily life of the school, students present their work in various ways: holiday concerts, Halloween Whispers performances, class plays, art projects, open houses, parent presentations etc.

Innovation and challenges related to this principle. One major positive development is the fact that SSWS retained all faculty from last year to this year. Staff stability is the foundation for developing a strong sense of curriculum and pedagogical practices. The current conversation around equity in pay supports this development too. SSWS has also recently begun doing exit interviews with staff and families who have left the school to get better insight as to why people choose to leave.

Our hiring process goes through relevant online platforms, such as Waldorf Today, Indeed, etc., and is open to every and all applicants. The reality of immigration and moving to a rural area with lower pay is an important part of the hiring process. SSWS has hired applicants from other countries and from the local community.

Principle 5

The Conscious Development of Human Relationships Fosters Individual and Community Health.

Community Life, Alumni and Fundraising. Community life is fostered through seasonal festivals, parent evenings, community work days, performances, and other gatherings that bring families into the living rhythm of the school (PH section 4, 6 and 9. GPP section 10.1/10.2). SSWS maintains informal connections with alumni and former students, inviting them to community celebrations when possible. This in-reach and outreach often introduces the school to families who wouldn't ordinarily consider educational alternatives. Fundraising occurs through relationships, using events that build connection over direct financial requests.

Multirole Relationships. Individuals at SSWS often hold multiple roles as parents,

volunteers, board members, and staff. This deepens investment in the school's wellbeing, but also creates complexity. As one faculty reflection noted:

"we have to be extra alert when that blurriness arises, as it may have an impact on our perception of the freedom each other or each realm has."

The school continues to clarify roles and build the trust that allows each realm (pedagogical, administrative, and governance) to function with appropriate independence. The Faculty Chair and Pedagogical Chair roles are described and their increased workload recognised, but neither currently carries formal compensation. (GPP section 1.10, 14.3).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Where We Are. South Shore Waldorf School sits on the unceded ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people, within a Nova Scotia community that includes African Nova Scotians, newcomer and refugee families, and people from a wide range of spiritual traditions. This is foundational to who we are and what we owe.

The conflict in Gaza and Israel has been our most recent and clarifying opportunity to understand where we are in this work. We discovered that we lacked the shared language, trust, and relational infrastructure to hold that complexity with care. Families from minority faith backgrounds found themselves navigating painful public conversation without adequate support. It has shown us that warmth and good intentions are not the same as being equipped to hold real difference. As a direct outcome, we invited a local Jewish community member and historian to broaden our vocabulary and historical understanding of the region.

Neurodiversity. SSWS has often been a place where families with neurodiverse children feel genuinely seen for the first time. We also hold this honestly: welcoming neurodiversity in spirit and being fully equipped to support neurodiverse students in practice are not always the same thing. We offer individual tutoring and art therapy (clay

field) when possible. This is an area of both genuine strength and ongoing growth which has not been formally described in our policies.

2SLGBTQIA+. We are working to ensure that 2SLGBTQIA+ community members, including students, families, and staff, experience true welcome rather than assumed inclusion. These are not the same thing, and we are working to understand the difference in practice. Although we work with embracing each child as they are, a formal policy in this area has not been formulated.

Community Health and Safety. Policies addressing behaviour expectations and harassment prevention are regularly revisited with input from all three realms, including middle school students. Public health communication practices developed during the pandemic have also strengthened the school's capacity to respond clearly when community concerns arise. (GPP section 6, PH section 5, 12 and 13).

Innovation and Exploration. Some of the most meaningful recent shifts have come from

honest questions: Are our structures actually building the relationships we say we value? Are the right people in conversation? In response, the school has strengthened relational infrastructure through improved transparency with parents, exit interviews, a refined concerns process, an expanded administrative team, ombudsperson roles, and stronger faculty-board-parent council communication. We have drawn on *Partnerships of Hope: Building Waldorf School Communities* to guide this work, and engaged more actively with the broader Waldorf movement through regional conferences, accreditation, and peer connections.

Challenges and the Path Forward. This work is not finished, and some of it has been hard. We have no formal policies or shared agreements specifically addressing DEI, and there is a great deal still to do. Trust between faculty, board, staff, and the parent community was strained following the pandemic and is still being repaired. Faculty continue to prioritise quality of connection over quantity of events, and to make participation accessible rather than burdensome.

Through these efforts, imperfect, honest, and continuing, SSWS seeks to keep relationships at the centre of its work, and to build a community capable of growing in resilience, trust, and shared responsibility over time.

Principle 6

Spiritual development in support of professional growth is an ongoing activity for the faculty, staff, and board.

How is the principle living in school culture and practices? On an organizational level, the faculty and staff plan festivals and concerts that mark seasonal shifts (GPP section 10.1, PH 9), make sure that artistic activities are present in our PD days, and commit to child study at faculty meetings to ensure that we connect to children and classes on a soul level. We also bring spiritual activity into our work as faculty and staff in small ways. Faculty meetings start with a minute of silence and a poem or verse, and we sing together during meetings and on PD days. Faculty and staff who are available often recite a morning verse on the school steps. At board meetings we light a candle, read an opening and closing verse, and end with a song.

Refining roles, developing PD and wages. While the roles of the faculty, board, and parent

council are clear, they could be refined. The roles of the faculty chair, pedagogical chair, and AWSNA delegates are beginning to be delineated (GPP section 14.3). There is a school-culture-based understanding of the roles, and a willingness to call on each other as needs arise, but the details don't live in our policies. The board has a working understanding of the roles of the chair, treasurer, and secretary, who are the members responsible for crisis management alongside the faculty reps. Specific delegation of tasks doesn't live in a policy document.

Our budget has shifted to give faculty more money for professional development, and we recognize that mentoring and assessment need to expand beyond what we do "in house." We don't have that expansion reflected in policy documents, or our forward-looking budgets. Wage and benefits compensation is improving: the Faculty are speaking openly about wage equity and transparency, and have made everyone's salaries visible so we are able to make decisions about compensation in the future. Comparing ourselves to other Waldorf Schools has been useful, and we realise that pay at Waldorf Schools is generally lower than what would be expected in a public school system. We aim to improve pay in order to retain and attract teachers.

We have spent some time revamping the role of our ombudspeople and care committee to better support conflict resolution. We have used these processes with staff and families, but not yet between staff (since adjusting the roles). These changes have been adopted at a policy level and in the parent handbook.

In what ways has the school explored innovation in relation to the principle? We have shifted away from Michaelmas and towards a Fall Festival, which has allowed us to

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connect the Michaelic spirit of the season to Canada's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. There is a longstanding Halloween festival we bring to the community, and we have begun to link our celebration of spring to Nowruz to emphasize the spiritual significance of that seasonal shift.

We have also reconnected with one of the school's founding teachers, Judy King, who this year has been bringing us a series of workshops on the Inner Life of the Teacher to help strengthen us collectively. Emerging from our work with Judy King, the faculty has been engaging in brief biography work during our Thursday faculty meetings. This has already deepened our connection to one another, and drawn links between our childhood experiences and our work with students at the school.

In what ways has the school faced challenges or made compromises in relation to the principle? Most of our challenges and compromises related to spiritual development are connected to our need for richer policy documents. Within policy area 7, we haven't figured out how to increase diversity in our hiring practices yet, although we have a good representation of neurodiverse staff, and a diverse religious/spiritual staff. Building

strategic planning time into the calendars of our leadership groups hasn't happened either. Another challenge is the reality of multirole relationships, which is described under principle 5. Within policy area 4, we are attempting to improve our orientation documents to better support new hires, particularly those who aren't already connected to the school community. The Board's focus on wage increases will also support our recruitment efforts.

Policy and documents reviewed. Our recently updated teacher code of conduct (GPP section 18.7) articulates professional behaviour and communications protocols, but in the past adherence to those protocols has been lax. We have recently shifted away from resolving or tackling governance issues over recess and breaks, and moved those conversations onto email so they are traceable and accessible. The current and ongoing work to sharpen our policy documents is the biggest mitigation effort we are making. We are also working hard to revamp our school schedule for 2026-27, with plans to share teaching loads and alter the structure of our subject classes to build in more time for members of the leadership team (faculty chair, pedagogical chair, ECE lead) to do administrative work during school hours.

Principle 7

Collaboration and shared responsibility provide the foundations of school leadership and governance.

Collaboration

As a small rural Waldorf school, our governance reality is deeply intertwined with the daily life of our community. With limited administrative capacity and a compact Faculty, most issues—whether pedagogical, financial, or interpersonal—eventually reach the Board level. Our community frequently calls on the board to respond to whatever needs arise across the life of the school. In practice, this means the Board is not only a fiduciary and strategic body, but also a circle of community stewards, holding the school's mission, relationships, and practical realities in careful balance.

This closeness to daily school life can blur boundaries, yet it also offers an opportunity for authentic collaboration. It calls us to exercise Principle #7 consciously—to lead through shared responsibility and to make every decision an act of service to the child and the community (Board description in GPP section 22). Principle #7 reminds us that collaboration and shared responsibility are the living

heart of Waldorf leadership. The Board, Faculty, administration, and parents each carry a part of the school's organism. When these parts move in harmony, the school breathes with moral clarity; when they fall out of rhythm, we restore balance through listening, transparency, and shared accountability.

This principle comes vividly to life whenever a child—often inwardly sensitive and awakening in consciousness—finds their relationship with a teacher passing through a period of imbalance, as has been experienced within our own school this year. In such moments, the emerging tension reveals the delicate fabric of trust that must live between the spheres of home, classroom, and governance, and becomes a living mirror of how the school's social organism truly practices collaboration.

Challenge and Response

In the unfolding of such situations, there is a tendency toward polarization: the parent feels unheard, the teacher feels questioned, and the Board grows wary of overreach into pedagogical matters. The natural impulse within each sphere—to protect authority, safeguard reputation, or advocate for the child—can create distance rather than dialogue. In these moments, a collaborative framework must be consciously enacted, not merely conceptually held. The role of the Board Chair is to hold the middle space: to ensure that each voice can be received with dignity, while maintaining the living boundaries between the cultural (pedagogical), rights (governance), and economic (organizational) spheres.

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Through reflective dialogue and shared inquiry, the situation can be reframed—not as a matter of judgement, but as a pedagogical opportunity. In collegial partnership, Faculty leadership and the class teacher may return to the question of what is being communicated, both explicitly and implicitly, to the child and the parent. From a Waldorf perspective, a child's experience of mistrust is rarely attributable to a single influence; rather, it may point to an unmet need for connection. In response, the teacher is supported in approaching this moment as part of their own pedagogical path—through collegial observation, mentoring, and renewed self-reflection—so that the relationship may be gradually restored in the spirit of freedom and trust.

Collaborative Actions

To bring Principle #7 into living practice, we established a collaborative action plan with clear yet differentiated accountability across the spheres:

Pedagogical Mentorship: Throughout the Faculty's life, collegial mentoring is arranged to support the teacher's ongoing development, with particular attention to relational pedagogy and restorative approaches. This may include classroom observation, reflective dialogue, and guided self-study oriented toward cultivating trust with the developing adolescent.

Restorative Relationship Work: The teacher takes up conscious gestures of

reconnection as part of their pedagogical practice, including greeting the student each morning, entrusting them with meaningful responsibilities, and recognizing their contributions. In this way, the focus gradually shifts from managing behaviour to perceiving and supporting the student in their becoming.

Parent Partnership: The parent is engaged as a collaborative partner within the process, offering insight and participating in a shared effort to support the child. Conversations are oriented toward mutual understanding rather than correction, and communication seeks a balanced picture that includes recognition of growth and progress.

Governance Oversight

The role of the governance sphere is to ensure that processes are held with clarity, transparency, and respect for appropriate boundaries. Follow-up conversations are supported in a structured and thoughtful manner, while documentation remains aligned with governance scope. The Board does not enter into pedagogical decision-making, but seeks to uphold the integrity of the process and to be accountable to the school's guiding principles.

Outcomes and Learning

When such coordinated efforts are sustained over time, they give rise to gradual yet meaningful shifts. The student's engagement may strengthen, tensions within the classroom soften, and the relationship between parent and teacher may evolve toward greater trust and cooperation. Within the Faculty, these challenging experiences can deepen a shared understanding of adolescent development and the nature of relational authority.

Leadership Reflection

Such experiences reaffirm that collaboration and shared responsibility are living necessities within a school community. They call for ongoing cultivation through attentive listening, clarity of boundaries, and a disposition of humility. Within this, the role of the Board Chair is to hold and orchestrate the conditions that allow others to meet authentically in service of the child.

Through situations of this kind, a governance culture is gradually strengthened and deepened. In this way, Principle #7 is not only expressed in policy or intention; it becomes a lived experience—tested, stretched, and renewed through the reality of human encounter.

Conclusion: Collaborative Authorship of School Life

The resolution of this year's situation led to the recognition that the path which best serves the child ultimately lies beyond our school community, while collaboration remains a form of authorship—a process through which each participant co-creates the evolving life of the school.

Even when a family's journey continues elsewhere, the way the community responds to the situation — with honesty, respect, and shared responsibility — becomes part of the school's living narrative. When teachers, parents, and governance members engage one another with genuine interest and mutual regard, they help shape a social organism grounded not in hierarchy but in a shared moral purpose. Each perspective contributes to a deeper discernment, ensuring that decisions arise with integrity and in service of the child.

Principle #7 thus lives not only in moments of harmony, but also in those requiring difficult discernment. Through such experiences, a culture of trust, transparency, and renewal is sustained—one in which each challenge, even when it leads to parting, contributes to the community's growth in consciousness, responsibility, and compassion.

A3. Completed Principles Assessment

Vibrant – The principle is living and is an example for other schools

Established – The principle is living with consciousness

Aspiring – The principle is living but is not fully consciously implemented

Weak – The principle is not living

Any aspiring or weak principle will be included as a major priority in the Priorities List.

Principle assessment	Description	Assessment
Principle 3	Anthroposophical understanding of child development guides the educational program.	Established
Principle 4	Waldorf schools support freedom in teaching with the context of the school's shared agreements	Aspiring

Principle 5	The conscious development of human relationships foster individual and community health	Established
Principle 6	Spiritual development in support of professional growth is an ongoing activity for the faculty, staff, and board.	Aspiring
Principle 7	Collaboration and shared responsibility provide the foundations of school leadership and governance.	Established

Part B: Policy and Practice Review

B1. Response to Policies and Practices #1 : Independence

The South Shore Waldorf School Association (SSWSA) registered with Nova Scotia Joint Stocks in 1993 as a Not-for-Profit Organization and was granted Charitable Status with the Canada Revenue Agency on January 1, 1998. The Association includes all those who have children currently enrolled in the school, the Faculty and staff of the school, and all friends who have expressed desire to support the school. SSWSA By-laws are found [here](#). The Association acts in accordance with the registered bylaws updated in 2023.

Private schools in Nova Scotia must comply with the Education Act: SCHEDULE A OF CHAPTER 1 OF THE ACTS OF 2018, as amended by 2018, c. 3, s. 36; 2019, c. 14; 2023, c. 10, ss. 69-121; 2023, c. 14, ss. 6, 7.

Permitted:

A child may attend a private school. 2018, c. 1, Sch. A, s. 85.

Requirements:

(1) A private school (a) must meet local health, safety and building standards; (b) shall give

notice of its operation with the Minister in the manner required by the Minister; (c) provide statistical information with respect to the school, as required by the Minister; and (d) where requested by the Minister, provide evidence that students are making reasonable educational progress appropriate for their age and grade level based upon results of nationally or internationally recognized standardized achievement tests. (2) The Minister may appoint or designate a regional education officer to assess a private school, including its teachers, its educational programs and its instructional materials, to inspect its facilities and to perform such other duties with respect to the private school as the Minister may require.

(3) A private school may offer a religious-based curriculum. 2018 , c. 1, Sch. A, s. 86. 19 / 26

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B2 Response to Policies and Practices #2Responsible Self Reflection

This year's self-study report has indicated a number of areas of focus for SSWS over the next four years, particularly the need to strengthen and clarify our school policies and governance structure. The self-study process itself has been immensely rewarding, and highlighted areas of potential growth and improvement that the staff and Board find as exciting as they are challenging. We already see the value of working towards our next self-study report in four years (double check w. Melanie Reiser), and the need to structure that work clearly so we are able to achieve our targets and goals.

To this end, one of the first steps we need to take after we receive the recommendations made by the visiting team is to create a plan, divided over four years (?), that will make it possible for us to create a logical sequence for tackling our major and minor priorities. We have seen the value of bringing our Board, Faculty & Staff, and Parent Council together to write this year's report, and a similar process of community engagement to help shape our priorities plan needs to occur. At the same time, responsibility for following through with those plans, and adjusting them as circumstances arise, needs to live with specific members of the school community – either a self-study committee, or the Board & Faculty Chairs, the Admin team, and our AWSNA delegates.

The changes and realizations emerging from this report need to yield actions and changes that live with us on a daily basis at the school, as well as shaping our long-term planning between now and our next self-study.

B2. Completed inventory in the Policy and Practice Inventory and Assessment.

See appendix 1: Policy & Practice Inventory & Assessment.

B4. Completed assessment in the Policy and Practice Inventory and Assessment

See appendix 1: Policy & Practice Inventory & Assessment.

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South Shore Waldorf School 2025/26 AWSNA Self Study

Part C: Reflections and Future Plans

C1. South Shore Waldorf School's major strengths. (1-3 pages).

Community, relationship and rhythm: South Shore Waldorf School is a small rural school that has grown in the province of Nova Scotia for close to 30 years. The sense of dependence on each other, and a willingness to exist and explore Waldorf education is what has carried and built a community that belongs to and surrounds the school filament through space and time. This gives the community a depth and makes it stretch across generations. Although most staff have come and gone, the school has remained. Not as an institution without connections, but it has maintained strong connections to previous teachers and the wider Waldorf community - with a few hiccups now and then. This quality is reflected in the Board, which has carried the school through difficult times. There is a sense of persistence and strength in place.

Staff, parents, board and teachers have strong interpersonal relationships, and it is hard to separate one from the other. School and community are one and the same. Teaching and living are not divided but intertwined, as we're part of the same community, in- and outside the school walls. Yes - there's a need for clearly defined boundaries, but it gives us a fuller understanding of each other as human beings.

SSWS has a quiet but notable ability to welcome a wide range of families into the life of the school. Some arrive with a deep understanding of Waldorf education and actively seek it out, while others come from the local community with little or no prior knowledge of

alternative education and, in many cases, would not typically consider a private school. What meets them here is not ideology but lived experience.

The strength of the school is evident in the children themselves. Families see it in the way their children return home calm, centred, and more at ease in themselves. They see it when a child who once believed they were “bad” at a subject begins to approach it with confidence, curiosity, and even enjoyment. This transformation, grounded in relationship and rhythm, is one of the clearest expressions of the school’s impact and integrity.

As a rural school, we have many opportunities that we find exciting (and perhaps take for granted on occasion). There are numerous opportunities to connect to the natural world, and structure our school life in response to seasonal rhythms. We have direct access to both farmland and the ocean, and several families at the school work to grow food or on the ocean, and are willing to bring their expertise to our school community.

We are also located close to several rural communities that themselves are rich and vibrant contributors to the South Shore. We have a World Heritage Site in the town

of Lunenburg, a wealth of art galleries, bookstores, theatres, music festivals, several technology companies, a working waterfront, and a vibrant multicultural association in nearby Bridgewater. These offer plenty of connection points for our school, and are resources we can draw on to enhance the educational experiences of our students.

As the only AWSNA accredited school east of Montreal, we are also recognized within Atlantic Canada as a hub for Waldorf education. This means that we are in contact with other initiatives across the province, and have a chance to share our successes and growth with others who are interested in bringing a Waldorf approach to their communities. This asks a lot of us as a school, but helps to strengthen our resolve and express our values with clarity.

C2. Description of priorities for future work.

After completing all prior sections of the Self-Study Report the school can look to its future, agree to its direction in which it is moving, strengthen its focus, and outline the path that it will follow.

Main work of Thursday's meeting:

Ranked Major priorities:	Priority
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1	Refining principle 4: Need to offer more mentorship, teacher assessment, Professional Development to enable teachers to reach their full potential in relation to our shared agreements and their freedom to teach
2	Refining principle 6: clarifying our governance structure for school leadership, offering opportunities for professional development and creative exploration for faculty, staff, and board members Issues: Building strategic planning time into the calendars of our leadership groups. create a checklist for determining when leadership figures should recuse themselves from specific conversations or topics, or how on a governance level we need to operate (which role to speak from) when serving on the Board, as a Faculty member, and as a parent. Plans to share teaching loads and alter the structure of our subject classes to build in more time for members of the leadership team (faculty chair, pedagogical chair, ECE lead) to do administrative work during school hours.
3	Diversity statement: Though we recognise that outside of the general statement (GPP, p. 39) we do not have a complete DEI policy, we do feel it resides in the ethos of the school, is reflected in our Vision and Mission statements, and we are dedicated to making this a top priority at SSWS going forward. DEI work: - Formulate policies to reflect the needs of school and community - Continue to invite speakers of different cultural backgrounds

	- Develop DEI Policy, which does not exist - How do we include kids from diverse backgrounds? - Create diversity in our hiring practices - Formulate diversity in policies and practices
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4	Retain and strengthen school culture: - Pay equity, benefits and staff retention (The school is actively working to improve salaries; the Board approved an automatic 2.5% annual increase to match inflation) - Continue to develop a sense of why people arrive at SSWS and why they leave - Alumni/ae. We created a marketing work credit this year to create the database; this person will work with the Development Coordinator. Also, see discussions in faculty meetings minutes
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Ranked minor Priorities:	Priority
1	Develop a provincially licensed ECE program, knowing that we will have to pay attention to the Waldorf component of such a program. ????
2	Eurythmy
3	Budgeting, including three-to-five year planning
4	Strategic planning: Outdated document 'Charting Our Course' has not been revisited and used as intended.
5	Child study: this process is not adequately defined or documented
7	Student Assessment: No shared approach to assessment exists. Continue to build, explore and refine the educational program and curriculum. Grade 8 Curriculum is listed in GPP p. 20-21, but there are no specific completion standards and expectations.
8	Teacher Request for Educational Support: We have added to the French teacher's contract to support faculty during the main lesson with certain students; a second VIA volunteer assists in particular grades class as needed. Observation and support for class teachers is not effective.
9	Continuously support and develop the French program.

C3. Summary of self-study process

Self-study process at SSWS:

1. Preparation for self study:

- a. Ben Gallagher, Faculty Chair, was part of the Detroit Waldorf School accreditation process. Spring 2025.
- b. Toronto AWSNA Conference: Four teachers went. SSWS reconnected to AWSNA. Camille Wilkins and Lasse Bruun Eriksen were part of the conference.
- c. Lasse Eriksen and Camille Wilkins became AWSNA delegates in June 2025.
- d. Lasse Eriksen Went on an accreditation visit at London Waldorf School, Ontario. Autumn 2025.

2. Self study process:

- a. **Self study timeline created:** Writing responsibilities delegated among board members, faculty members and community members.
- b. **Vision and mission statements updated:** Parent council, parents, board, faculty and staff formulated the vision and mission statement together.
- c. **Self-study principles chosen for self-study:** A one day workshop. conversation between board, Parent Council and Faculty.
- d. **Policy document challenge:** Major policy documents had not been updated or consolidated for a while or they existed in different parts of the school drive. Admin worked hard to consolidate these documents into one written document with clear procedures for changing it. Board approved the change.
- e. **Report writing:** The report has been written by faculty, board and community members. The board has had a chance to give input to the different written sections.
- f. **Editing:** Steering committee, admin lead, Faculty chair, Pedagogical chair edited and reviewed the report.
- g. **Recommendations and future plans:** Board and faculty give the priorities and major recommendations.

South Shore Waldorf School has been out of touch with AWSNA for some time. A lot of internal movement previously made it hard to carry the work and reflection that was needed. But the retention of staff from last year to this, had made it possible for SSWS to pick up the AWSNA obligations again. Early on in the self-study, we all recognized the potential for SSWS to grow, which inspired us all. An idea which has lasted us throughout this self-study.

Thus, the self-study process has been carried by the entire school. It has been shared at community events, online in emails. The community has been invited to participate in re-writing the mission and vision statements, and the board and

closer community has been involved in writing our self-study report. This is in many ways representative of the qualities that are currently alive at South Shore Waldorf School.