



Vimala Cursive: Not for Students

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Vimala cursive is less a handwriting program than a path for soul development. This is the essence of why it is not a good choice in the Waldorf/Steiner School classroom. Vimala causes problems in both the academic curriculum and the child-development curriculum. It is against the spirit of Steiner's indications and should not be part of the Waldorf/Steiner School curriculum.

Academic Curriculum: Vimala is Not Good Handwriting

Vimala is a poor choice for a handwriting curriculum for students.

The purpose of teaching students handwriting in school is to facilitate written communication. When choosing a handwriting program, there are two areas to consider: 1) ease of writing; and 2) ease of reading. While the shapes of Vimala letters are not difficult to learn to form, some of them are very difficult to read—even when formed perfectly. For example, the lowercase letter *G* looks like an incomplete figure 8: it looks as if it is not fully formed, even when written correctly. Vimala also has letters of odd sizes, such as the lowercase letter *T*, which looks like an uppercase *T*. People who use Vimala cursive look like they cannot capitalize properly. You can tell that that is not the case when confronted with perfectly formed Vimala written by an adult who has perfected the script, but Vimala makes students' developing writing even harder to read than usual. It also creates an impression of bad handwriting and grammatical error, particularly if the students already struggle to capitalize words correctly.

Students need to learn a conventional form of cursive that will enable them to read cursive script written by the rest of the world and write in a manner that will enable the rest of the world to read their handwriting. Vimala fails on both accounts.

Child-Development Curriculum: Vimala is Developmentally Inappropriate

It is very desirable for adults to take up their own development, such as by changing their handwriting. It is not desirable for teachers to take their students through such a path of self-

development—students are not ready to take up their development in this way until they come of age.

Students in grades 1–8 should be working on the development of their etheric bodies and then astral bodies from puberty until around age 21. Steiner is clear on the developmental stages and ages. Only after this work is done are people ready to take up their development in freedom.

Teachers who bring Vimala to school children are doing something very much against the spirit of Steiner's indications regarding child development. Everything at the right time. Teachers must tread very carefully in this realm. They can do harm to their students by bringing things at the wrong time.

Form drawing is a better approach for the child-development curriculum. Steiner made form drawing for students. It helps the students work on the levels they are developmentally ready for. It also provides a path of development that can be continued into adulthood. Adults who wish to take the practice of Form Drawing further are invited to consult Laura Embrey's work on Form Drawing for adults at <https://lauraembrey.com/>. She is quick to tell teachers never to bring adult form drawing into the classroom--students are not developmentally ready for it. Instead, Ms. Embrey gives forms that are developmentally appropriate for different ages/grades. She recognizes the power inherent in Form Drawing and uses it to work in tandem with child development.

Conclusion

There are numerous problems associated with Vimala cursive in the classroom, from academic concerns to developmental issues.

My recommendation is to teach the students a standard cursive font such as D'Nealian, Handwriting without Tears, Zaner Bloser, etc. That way, everyone can easily read students' handwriting because it is standard, and students learn to read everyone else's standard cursive writing too. If students wish to take up their development through handwriting when they come of age, they are then free to do so. They can decide to use Vimala as a path of development when they are of an age to make those decisions for themselves.

If you want to help your students, a better path is to teach an academically robust Waldorf curriculum instead of Vimala. The Waldorf curriculum works on both the academic curriculum and the child-development curriculum. (Consult my books *The Roadmap to Literacy* and *Continuing the Journey to Literacy* for more information about how to make an academically robust Waldorf curriculum. For more information, go to <https://renewalofliteracy.com/>. Be sure to include Form Drawing.) The Waldorf curriculum will help the students develop in a way that is healthy. Vimala won't—not until the students come of age and not unless they freely make the decision to take up their development through handwriting.

Steiner is clear that self-development is a path for adults, not children. People should be free to decide whether to take up a path of self-development or not. People should only attempt such a path after they come of age. Waldorf teachers who teach Vimala cursive are working against the spirit of Steiner's indications.