Kindergarten Observation Summary

Name: Student
Birthdate: 9/6/2017
Date of Observation: 2/16/24
Age at time of Observation: 6 yrs 5mths
Present at Observation: Parents (mother & father), teacher & Kris Boshell

A child is best prepared for a healthy, successful experience in school when fully ready to undertake academic work. "Readiness" is a term often used to describe the individual timing of a child's developmental process in relation to ease of learning. Waldorf Education takes a developmental approach, using multiple lenses to observe each child's individual process and timing for physical maturation, social and emotional maturation, and sensory-motor integration.

The "Picture" of Readiness

This picture of readiness is determined by looking at multiple developmental aspects—physical maturation, social and emotional maturation, and sensory-motor integration. This information is gathered through observation of both full-body movement (gross motor) and dexterity of hands and fingers (fine motor). Speech, hearing, use of language and interpretation of what is heard are also observed. How well the child can access memory at will and remember a sequence of instructions are also part of this picture of readiness.

Some indicators of physical maturity for school readiness are growth of the six-year-old molars, loosening and loss of baby teeth, and lengthening of limbs in proportion to head size. Also observed are individualizing of facial features and the beginnings of a "three-fold" bodily quality seen in a lengthening of torso, development of arches in the feet and lengthening of the fingers bringing new possibilities for dexterity and manipulation of objects.

Sensory-motor observation includes noting integration of the automatic, reflexive nature of early movement patterns from the first three years of development. These automatic movement patterns wisely provided training for the infant to master the movements leading to uprightness by age one and ability to move freely through three-dimensional space by age three—see below "early movement patterns and bilateral integration." It is widely understood that if these patterns linger beyond their appropriate time, the child's academic success may be hindered. If unintegrated, a child uses compensatory movement in attempts to manage the physical coordination needed for academic working. Our wish is for children to bring ease and fluidity to their learning based on the ease and fluidity of their movement systems. At this time of introduction to the world of formal/academic learning, such ease will lead to a love of learning that lasts a lifetime.

The Observation

Following is a summary of the readiness indicators observed in the learning support readiness observation that you may have observed. Information from your observations at home, the teacher's observations in class and those from the Learning Support session are put together to build a working picture of your child's development. Keep in mind that development is a process extending over time and will vary for each individual. We don't expect each child to manage all of these activities with full competence; there is no "pass" or "fail." Through the expression of gesture, movement and behavior, children share a picture of their unique inward experience. With careful observation, we can awaken to children's inner experience and explore what might best support their needs in the classroom. In the grade school, many learning opportunities are offered through rhythm and movement. Children learn

concepts by doing movements in a steady, sustained rhythm that also support the development of memory. Dexterity of hands, movement of feet and speech are combined to work into the body; mastery of static balance provides the child with the inner place of quiet needed to quiet oneself outwardly. Brief descriptions of some of the developmental aspects considered in our observations are as follows:

Gross Motor (large movements of the body): Upcoming first graders can jump holding both feet together. Once this is mastered, they begin to hop on either foot independently—though one will likely be stronger. Hopping will be possible in a forward direction with good control. Galloping and shuffling from side-to-side with either foot leading is another developed skill. Sustained cross-patterned skipping and moving horizontally on the floor like a lizard or on hands-and-knees like a cat has developed. Playing two- and one-handed toss-and-catch with a playground ball and beanbag is also usually in the domain of the school ready child. If the child has had opportunity for practice, beginning skills for jumping rope independently are emerging.

Student demonstrated good fluidity to skip, jump with her feet held together, hop on one foot (right), walk on tiptoes. When walking on heels, her upper limbs imitated her lower limbs so that her arms & wrists were bent in flexed position, the left more pronounced than the right. While alternating between lifting & lowering her arms overhead, Student tended to go faster and asymmetrically, her shoulders noticeably raised at the neck for lifting. As she attempted to keep her arms high over her head, her head moved forward and chin slightly down—showing tension at the neck/shoulders. As she continued, she adjusted to a position with her arms more in front than overhead, lowering them as she went, showing signs of rapid fatigue. These observations suggest that she would benefit from ruling out structural issues at the neck & shoulders. This may help to bring about harmonious, symmetrical, upright movement with more ease as she practices these movements in first grade. At the end, although it was apparent she was experiencing fatigue, Student persevered showing her high level of capacity and enthusiasm to participate by completing a complex sequence of clapping, jumping and counting, doing most of it independently without teacher support.

Early Movement Patterns and Bilateral Integration:
Each child is born with a series of reflexive movements that guide development. Once each of these movement patterns has served its purpose, it is integrated by being replaced with movements that the child intentionally directs. More permanent postural forces are then available to the child, giving a sense of stability and an inward experience of quiet centeredness. Similarly integrated are the "midlines"—invisible planes of division between upper and lower body, left and right sides, and front and back. While the midlines are still active as a barrier, a somewhat fragmented experience may result as the child is challenged to work with one part of the body without unnecessary overflow movements appearing in another part—for instance, when using fingers intricately, one may be unaware that the jaw or tongue may be active simultaneously. Once the midlines no longer act as barriers, a new level of experience of the body as a whole is achieved and the student can use one part without another part imitating it or being activated. When such early movement patterns and midlines are active beyond the normal timeframe, they can interfere with freely directed and coordinated movements, which are important for academic development.

As Student moved along the mat, it became apparent that residual activity from early movement patterns was lingering. Compensation to maintain stability in her limbs brought tension. This suggests structural issues may have been hindering her overall stability and ease of movement. Prone movements (on tummy): Student moved in a cross lateral pattern, but without efficient use of her toes to propel her

body forward. Prone extension (lifting upper and lower body simultaneously): she held this position for nearly 30 seconds demonstrating a fully developed pattern, then was able to lift her upper body independently from the lower body showing integration of this pattern is well on it its way to completion. Supine flexion (lifting her head while lying on her back): at first, she leaned to her right without lifting her head to see her feet. When she was asked to lift her head to see her feet, it was effortful (as if the head felt heavy) using her hands/arms to help lift, instead of the head alone. When positioned on hands and knees, her arms initially locked at the elbows, then relocked on the left side after loosened by the teacher as she moved her head up/down, left/right—the head movement brought instability to the arms (residual pattern). By locking at the elbows and compensatory movements she was able to improve her stability. Such compensatory movement uses excess effort that is better reserved for learning instead of coordinating/directing the movement system.

Midlines: Student was in-process of fully integrating her midlines—they acted as barriers to her ease of working. Some examples: when working at the table, she worked around the midline/cross of a figure 8 form; she shifted her torso from upright to leaning towards her left, working out to her right side with paper and crayon at the table; while tossing a beanbag, she engaged focused effort to keep her hands together. We will keep a watchful eye and work to encourage her continued path of development towards complete bilateral integration with freedom of movement between left-right, front-back and above-below for ease of learning.

Sensory systems: Self-movement/Proprioception and Balance/Vestibular
The health and stability of the basic sensory systems—subconscious perception of body geography, including control and awareness of limbs during movement, plus ability for static balance while stationary and in slow movements—are important aspects of children's sensory development. Stability in these systems creates the experience for a strong center of self, a strong sense of groundedness and inner quiet, foundational for academic learning.

These two systems showed they were active at work towards mature development. Student achieved static balance standing on one leg (left) by leaning forward and holding the raised leg out behind her. When in more of an upright stance, she lost her balance. The same was true for standing on her right foot. When standing with both feet held together, tilting her head forward or backward + eyes closed resulted in instability—this suggested the presence residual activity of an early pattern that affected balance triggered by the head position.

Student demonstrated that her proprioceptive system is developing nicely. In using beanbags, she demonstrated that she could adequately gauge or adjust the amount of effort needed to complete the task and applied advice from the teacher to try new and different ways to do things. This suggested she was developing a sense of her own movement--the unconscious awareness of limb placement and how to gauge an appropriate amount of effort to complete a task. Her willingness and ability to wait, watch & listen to a new way of doing an activity, then taking up the new challenge by following through and practicing it will be beneficial as a rising first grader when she will be learning lots of new things and new ways to do them. Today she tended to run-on past the point she was instructed to stop, but was able to move on when directed.

Dominance:
Each person tends to unconsciously use one hand, eye, foot, and ear as the preferred or dominant one, with the dominance for all of these ideally being on the same side of the body. For efficiency in academic working, it is especially beneficial when the preferred hand and eye share the same side. In

addition, knowledge of a child's dominance is useful information for the teacher in terms of seating in the classroom.

Student demonstrated that her dominance was unconfirmed at this time—if structural issues exist, this could have an effect. She was strongly right-sided in eye. She used her right hand for writing, drawing, only using her left hand at first for a one-handed beanbag toss. She consistently used her right side for tasks except standing on one leg when she used her left. She explained at one point that her left leg was hurting her so she couldn't use this leg as she "usually does." Despite the midline sometimes acting as a barrier, she showed that she had mostly worked through the stage of symmetry, on her way to bilateral integration, as she was developing a confirmed 'doing' and 'helping' hand seen as she worked at the desk.

Dexterity:
Grade school work requires well-developing fine motor skills for drawing, writing, handwork, instrument playing, hand games, etc. We explore how the child is developing independent capacity of the individual fingers along with speech. Ease in grade school tasks can be anticipated when the child can manipulate small objects with pairs of fingers, cut with scissors, use a needle and thread, knead dough, play clapping and finger games, and so on.

Student's fine motor movement showed it was in-process of developing towards mature dexterity. Her grasp on her crayon was sometimes tense with the middle finger positioned on top of the crayon + the crayon rested in the crook of the thumb. The ideal grip, to achieve full dexterity of the hand/fingers, has the pointer on top with thumb working in opposition from below—the middle finger provides support underneath for the writing/drawing tool to rest upon. The grasp she used with her middle finger on top is a common compensation for the early movement pattern mentioned above. To support continued development, Student can do developmental movements and other activities that put weight on her flat palms, do heavy work (like garden and household tasks) and fine motor (hand) activities: kneading dough, chopping vegetables and fruits, finger knitting, sorting small items, paper folding, cutting with scissors, play pick-up sticks, play marbles and more. Fine motor in the hands is connected to fine motor of the feet, so activities for the feet are also helpful: jump down from things landing on both feet (always with care from height she feels able), with toes--pick up and carry objects like marbles from one place to another, walk on heels, tiptoes, draw with feet in sand, find objects with toes buried in a sand/bean bin, and more. Note that fine motor activities also benefit the oral motor and oculomotor (movement of the eyes)—in other words, when working with one of these fine motor areas, they all benefit.

Visual Capacity:
Form and artistic drawing, copying and writing letters and numbers require that the eye and hand work as a unit with coordination and relative ease. Performing a series of drawings shows how well the eye and hand work together. Like hands and feet, the eyes are a pair that moves together. In good visual functioning, the eyes' movements are coordinated in tracking, scanning, adjusting focus from near-to-far, and converging to see something up close. This motor development of the eyes is closely related to the early movement patterns since eye movement develops along with the patterns. We explore how the eyes team together and how smoothly they track and scan. Eyes are at rest when looking at a distance. As something comes closer, a near point of focus requires the muscles in the eye to contract. (This is a big consideration for developing eyes in our world of technology that often results in long periods, sometimes hours, with something at a near point with a flat surface.) While we are not attempting to diagnose vision problems, movements of the eyes can give a picture of how they are developing and whether or not further examination by a vision or sensory integration expert might be

beneficial. Ease of fluid, mature eye movement is important due to its profound effect on attainment of skills for reading and writing, and the potential for strain and fatigue due to compensation.

Pursuit movements (tracking), convergence (eyes moving to center when something is brought in close proximity, then smoothly back again as object moves away) and fixation (holding the eyes still, focused on an object with eyes in different positions) were generally challenging overall. Student's eyes were not moving harmoniously together and did not stay on the target as it moved. At one point she leaned forward and used her finger to point at the object to compensate when her eyes fatigued. Rapid fatigue in eye movement is something that we must keep a watchful eye upon since ease of eye movement is important as she learns to read and write. Cranial nerves enervate much movement for the visual system, so it is possible that a cranial compression exists. This coincided with other observations where structural issues were suspected.

Despite movement challenges observed in the visual system, Student recalled three shapes in the orientation they were shown with apparent ease, with accurate construction of a circle, square & triangle.

Listening and speaking:
A great deal of instruction and content in the grade school is given orally, so children must be able to accurately perceive and process inwardly what they hear. Children are asked to repeat verses, clap rhythms, sing familiar songs, and follow a sequence of directions. The first grade curriculum also expects each child to be able to offer verbal responses and descriptions of material presented in the lesson—for instance, helping to recall the story told the day before. Foreign languages in the early grades are taught through oral presentation, so the development of the oral-motor and auditory skills is essential.

Student's attention was consistent. She offered appropriately to conversation as she went, sharing her ability to describe pictures from her imagination. She listened to instructions, watched demonstrations, followed through on what was asked of her, then stood ready for the next instruction—sometimes going on a little longer than instructed, but able to recover to get back on task. When asked what she recalled on a list of grocery items, she recalled 2 of 4—the first and last items. She gave an accurate recall of a one-sentence "story" including some descriptive details. When given a sequence of 3, 4, then 5 numbers to repeat immediately after given, she did each successfully. Clapping patterns of increasing difficulty given to her out of direct view were successfully performed. To continue to reinforce her good auditory skill, be sure to make a habit of saying things only one time. If she doesn't respond or asks for you to repeat, first ask, "What did you hear me say?" This will help her to continue her good habit of listening right away when someone speaks to her.

Drawing:
Children's drawings show developmental milestones in archetypal forms. The rising first grader is asked to create a free drawing that includes three requested elements. The ready child's drawing shows a typical development of form, balance of composition, detail, and grounding of objects. How these elements are combined is another marker of readiness and the small details the child carefully and intentionally adds give us clues to the individual picture of his/her process of development.

Student engaged in each of the drawing activities. She included 2of 3 elements per instructions in a particular drawing, then asked for the teacher to repeat the instruction. It was apparent that she knew something was missing. Her drawing supported the observations of a developing proprioceptive system—especially for overall sensing of the boundary of her own corporeality, the possibility of

structural issues along with digestion (this refers to digestion of food as well as "digestion" of sensory and other information). The peacemaker and pressure massages, along with cocoon wrapping, can support continued development of the boundaries of her own body which, in turn, supports proprioception and spatial orientation. The kindergarten is a wonderful place held with clear and strong boundaries, where continued development is addressed on a daily basis, as well as support from home in daily living activities—for instance, kitchen work, like food preparation, from start-to-table-to-cleanup—which support the development of process from beginning to end.

Summary and suggestions for support:

Student is a strong and capable student who is bringing many wonderful gifts to the first grade. Student has been observed in similar ways with regards to what was observed today so that this screening showed a good representation of an average day. She has been observed as coming into the role that is expected of a kindergarten child. She had the ability to focus, to listen to a direction from a teacher and complete the task on her own which will benefit her going forward. This screening helps us to keep watch on Student's continued development in specific areas to work together to support her efforts at school and home. Your continued support of providing adequate sleep, daily rhythms and attention to healthy eating and lifestyle at home will maintain the foundation for continued rapid growth and development as Student does her work to develop skills and her natural talents.

At school:

- *Continue developmental movements briefly each day at school.*
- *Continue all the activities of the kindergarten with specific activities in mind to support the areas noted in this report.*
- *Kris Boshell can be available to demonstrate supportive exercises to do at home: massages & cocoon wrap.*

At home:

- *Consider a **structural evaluation** by a craniosacral, cranial osteopath or other structural specialist to support her overall regular development regarding ease/freedom of movement, with special attention given towards cranial compression affecting the ease of eye movement, proprioception, confirmation of dominance & balance.*
- *To **support healthy eye movement** as her eyes continue to develop, keep close work on flat surfaces (especially screens*) to a minimum when possible, and when do, take frequent breaks. Note that daily developmental movement practice will also support regular development of healthy eye movements.*

  **Screens are flat which eliminate the need for the eyes to make the small movements that eyes normally do when experiencing objects in three-dimensional space. The movement of the eyes is part of the movement system, so eyes need opportunities for natural movement and rest—looking at a distance allows them to naturally rest, for instance, when spending time outdoors.*
- ***Visual activities** to strengthen harmonious and effortless movement: Aiming games like ring toss onto stick held by partner, aim upside-down—bend over and pass between your legs into a basket, or roll a ball back and forth with partner upside-down (pass between your legs—do briefly building up from less than a minute to 3 minutes at a time—too long can overwhelm the system). Note that the visual system can be strengthened by these brief visits to "upside-down world" as she plays.*
- ***Fine Motor Activities**—see in "dexterity" section.*
- *Offer **tasks that she can participate in from start to finish**—meal preparation, wood working projects—sawing, carving, hammering, sanding, driving in screws; gardening—prep soil, plant seeds, regular watering, weeding, harvesting.*
- *To continue to improve **auditory memory and processing**:*

a. *Let Student be in charge of two items while shopping that she finds and adds to the cart. As she masters two items, then increase it to three, and so on.*
b. *Give just two instructions and work to add a third over time. For instance, "Go upstairs and put on your pajamas." Example for three instructions: "Jump with your feet together to your room, put away two pieces of clothing, walk on your heels back to me." Important: resist repeating instructions, instead asking her what she "heard" you say—this will help her to "tune in" when you speak the first time.*
c. *Play games like <u>The Chest in Grandmother's Attic</u>--player 1: "In the chest in grandmother's attic I found an apple." Player 2:" In the chest in grandmother's attic I found a bear and an apple". Next player: "In the chest in grandmother's attic I found a chocolate cake, a bear and an apple"...and so on.*
d. *Story game: each tells the story from the beginning taking turns to add elements to grow the story. For instance: "Once upon a time there was a brown bear." Next: "Once upon a time there was a brown bear who wore red pajamas." Next: "Once upon a time there was a brown bear wearing red pajamas who found a magic carpet" …and so on. Notice that the wording doesn't have to be exact, but aim for all elements/details to be included. When the story is done, using an assortment of craft materials, she can make something that represents her favorite part of the story.*

Thank you for the opportunity to work with Student. Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to be present as we observe and discover ways to work together to support Student's continued development. We are committed to working together to give Student the opportunity for a successful experience in accessing her high capacity with ease so she will experience a lifetime love of learning. It will be a delight to witness her growth and development over many years to come at Waldorf School.

Observations by Kris Boshell & [teacher who observed]
Report prepared by: Kris Boshell, M.A.