

Teach Reading and Spelling by Phase: Preface of *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition* Jennifer Miltzer-Kopperl

A Waldorf teacher came up to me and said, “Respected author, *The Roadmap to Literacy* is long, and I do not have time to read it. Teach the book to me while standing on one foot.”

Balanced on one foot, I said, “The roadmap to literacy is a metaphor for teaching reading and spelling by phase rather than grade. Can I put my foot down now?”

The teacher said, “No, not yet. What does that mean, teach by phase?”

I said, “It means that there are stages of reading and spelling, and teachers should assess and then match instruction to their students’ phase(s) rather than teach a pre-determined one-size-fits-all curriculum based on grade. Watch my video ‘Little Jenny’s Journey through the Phases of Learning to Read & Spell.’ It introduces the phases—and how students struggle with a one-size-fits-all curriculum when instruction does not match phase.

“Here is the link: <https://renewalofliteracy.com/videos/>. Please, can I put my foot down now?”



The teacher said, “Hold up. Are you saying that Waldorf teachers should differentiate instruction?”

Wobbling precariously, I said, “Yeah. Is that a problem?”

The teacher said, “Apostasy! That is not Waldorf education!”

Hopping around, I said, “I trust we both agree that we are discussing education, not religion. What is Waldorf education?”

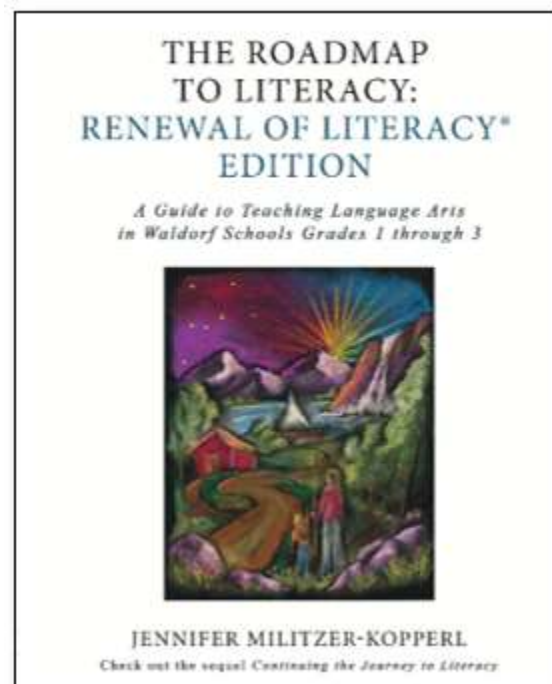
The teacher said, “Well, you know it when you see it. Creative, enlivening. Everyone in the class does the same

thing at the same time. You start by having the students dance around in a circle for a quarter to half the lesson doing singing games, sometimes with bean bags, while faceless felted dwarves look on. Then you have the students copy something down from a chalkboard into an oversized main lesson book on a page with a border. Then they listen to a story. The kids learn to read when they are ready. And did I mention the beautiful wooden desks and the lazured walls?”

I said, “I must put my foot down. There are so many things wrong, I do not know where to begin. Waldorf education is education based on the indications of Rudolf Steiner or education based on an understanding of child development inspired by anthroposophy.”

The teacher said, “But Rudolf Steiner barely showed up in *The Roadmap to Literacy*. And forget about child development!”

I said, “You are right. There was room for improvement. Here you go: *The Roadmap to Literacy: Renewal of Literacy® Edition*. It puts Steiner’s indications front and center and proves that everything in *The Roadmap to Literacy* aligns with Steiner’s intent—including differentiating instruction.”



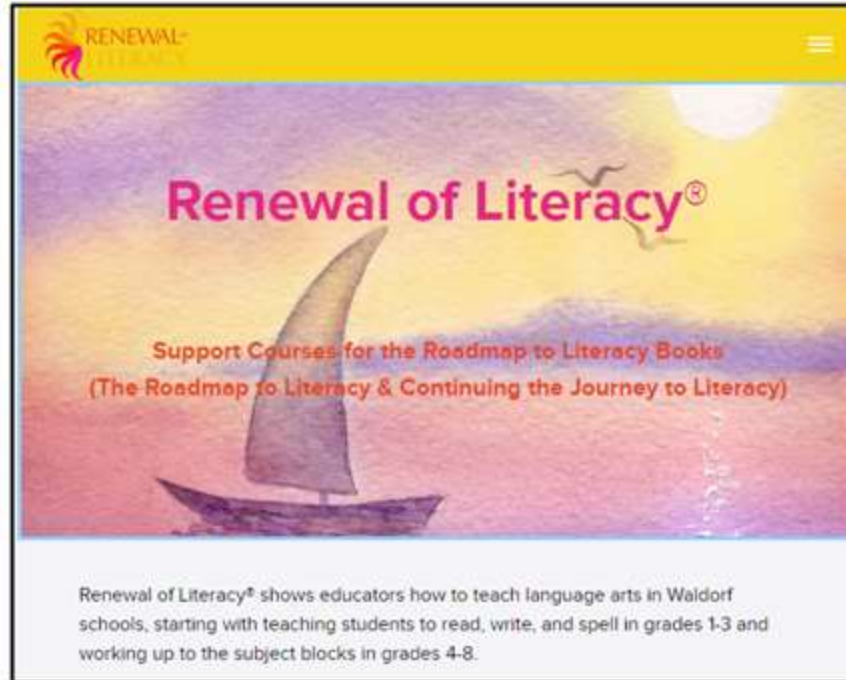
The teacher said, “Woah. Hefty book.”

I said, “What do you expect? Steiner gave hundreds of lectures. There was a lot of ground to cover.”

The teacher said, “True. But I am pressed for time. By any chance, are there support videos? Things I could watch and apply in class? Maybe discuss with faculty and parents?”

I said, “As a matter of fact, there are. I am in the process of creating online courses for The Roadmap to Literacy Books. There is to be a course for *The Roadmap to Literacy* (both editions) and a course for the sequel *Continuing the Journey to Literacy*. The online courses are entitled Renewal of Literacy®. Check it out on my website: <https://www.renewalofliteracy.com>.¹

¹ These courses are now available. <https://renewalofliteracy.teachable.com/>



“The first section of the course for *The Roadmap to Literacy* is done. It is called ‘The Keys to Literacy Capacities,’ and it presents three literacy capacities Steiner says we teachers should develop in our students. It is the support material for chapter 3.3 Phonemic Awareness, chapter 3.5 Symbol Imagery, and chapter 3.7 Concept Imagery. It contains videos and information about these three aspects of language arts, including things you can do in the classroom, discuss with faculty members, and share with parents.”

The teacher asked, “May I ask why you chose to start with these three aspects of language arts?”

I replied, “You may. Students are behind post pandemic. When you work with these aspects, you are literally teaching literacy capacities. Providing direct instruction in these three aspects will help students learn to read and spell, regardless of which grade the students are in.”

The teacher said, “There is a way to get students caught up post pandemic?”

I said, “You bet. And it is the same way to get up to 95% of future Waldorf students reading and spelling at grade level.”

The teacher said, “And what is that?”

I said, “Assess and then teach by phase of learning to read and spell. You know, *the roadmap to literacy*.”²

² I (Jennifer Militzer-Kopperl) wrote an article summarizing how to teach by phase for the Fall/Winter 2022 edition of the *Research Bulletin*. It is entitled “Differentiating Reading Instruction by Phase.” It cannot be read while standing on one foot, but otherwise it provides a useful summary.

https://www.waldorflibrary.org/images/RB27_1militzer.pdf

Since publication, I created an on-demand course based on this article: Ways to Get Students Caught up in Reading and Spelling Post Pandemic.

<https://renewalofliteracy.teachable.com/p/renewal-of-literacy>