

Aurora



SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
STEINER SCHOOL

Tuesday 3rd November, 2015

Newsletter #12

For Your Calendar

Term 4: Wednesday Oct 7th – Wednesday Dec 9th

Friday Nov 20th - Primary class overnight camp

Wednesday Dec 9th – Christmas Festival, 10am-1pm (End of School year)

News from James

A healthy social life arises when the whole community finds its reflection in the mirror of person's soul, and when the virtue of each person lives in the whole community. Rudolf Steiner

Thank you to all those members of our school community who attended the parent evening on Monday 26th November. We looked at parenting in the 21st century and the support that parents can provide for children at our Steiner school. We examined how the school and parents can work together to create a healthy school community culture and how parents are instrumental in this. I outlined plans for the school in Term 4 2015 and briefly covered 2016. Annabel guided us through the experience of rhythm and its importance in all our lives, especially Kindergarten children. Kate and Jeddah spoke about primary happenings in Term 4 and beyond. Lisa was our main speaker outlining the stages of children's development, the strengths and limitations of the Rudolf Steiner principles and how we as parents can apply what is relevant in today's world. Feedback about the parent evening from staff and parents was generally very positive and has sparked an interest in ongoing parent education sessions.

In creating a healthy school community culture, with a focus on 'inclusiveness' this term, there is a tension (as there is with most ideas) between being open to ideas, suggestions and attitudes whilst at the same time upholding core principles that we as a community hold dear. What sort of community do we want? How do we ascertain what is worth upholding and promoting and what

is worth discarding? As a learning community we are asked to undergo this process constantly. We make decisions every day referring to our core principles. Earlier in the year we worked together on establishing a vision statement. There was general agreement that we acknowledge the five basic tenets of Steiner education at Aurora. However, when we make day-to-day decisions they cannot all be covered in a vision statement. Our thinking when making these decisions is nuanced.

I gave an example at the parent evening of the importance of students turning up to school on time. I pointed out that punctuality for its own sake is meaningless but it is a sign of respect for the teachers, the school administration, fellow students and, most importantly, sends a message to children that parents value this education. There are also child protection and truancy implications that we as a school are affected by. Thank you to the parents who took this on board and have ensured that their children have been at school on time. It has already made a difference to the mood of the classroom and learning opportunities for the whole group.

Thankfully, the rhetoric in the current political world now allows for greater scope in thinking. We no longer are limited to three word, simplistic slogans. The same applies to the way we approach things at Aurora. Changes to policy and practice will occur as we grow and listen to each other's ideas. This is an exciting challenge for us all.

Change in procedure for absence and lateness

One change we will need to implement is around reporting absentees and lateness. There are regulatory guidelines on these procedures. From now on Mel or I will be in the office each school day. If your child is absent, please phone or email the school in the morning to let us know. Leaving a message on the answering service or with office staff is sufficient and there is no requirement for a hand written note. The teacher will mark the class roll at 8.55am and sent it to the office by 9.15am. If your child arrives after 9am they will need to report to the office first so we can enter them on the system as a late arrival. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this new procedure.

Food reminder

In our busy lives it is understandably easy to reach for packaged, processed food for lunch. There have been many examples of students bringing healthy, tasty lunches without plastic packaging and we thank parents for this support and effort in this regard. We would like to encourage the whole school community to support us in our drive for unpackaged and unprocessed 'nude food'.

Yours with heart,
James

Term 4 in the Primary Class

This term we have had a series of excursions that has seen the Primary class becoming more connected to their local environment. The first week was marked by a walk to the Tulip Exhibition at Centennial Park in Bowral. The students thoroughly enjoyed this experience and were very excited by the range of tulips.

Last Thursday Joe Stammers from council came to the school to help us plant some sedges and trees in the creek reserve next to the school. The students worked very fast to plant more than I thought possible in the time we had available. We still have some more tube stock to plant out and caring for the plants will be an ongoing task for the primary especially if the weather is hot and dry.

Swimming has been a big success with the students eager to get in the water with Tiff from the Bowral Swimming Centre teaching them all the movements needed to increase their swimming ability. Students have improved markedly already and with the upcoming swimming season we hope that they will be safer than ever near the water. The students have to be commended for their independence in preparing for these lessons both before and after swimming. We are all looking forward to the final 3 lessons.

Music lessons with the wonderful Vanessa continue to be a delight. Vanessa is highly engaging and wants each and every child to succeed in her lessons.

Jeddah Teasdale



Why talk about rhythm?

We humans have evolved within a complex web of rhythms. From the cosmic swirls of galaxies, rhythms of the sun and moon and planets, to the seasons, tides, day and night, sleeping and waking... to our heartbeat and breath, our walking pace and cycles. Yet since the invention of the clock, we have lived in more of a linear model where we're pushing and stretching to get the next thing done and move on. As our livelihoods depend less directly on nature and as technology develops to meet our desires on demand, we have less dependence on life's natural rhythms. In many ways our lives are fragmented as increasingly we live under pressure, in rush and hurry. Yet we're built for rhythm, and adults and children alike need its health-giving benefits now more than ever.

So what might be the difference between rhythms and routines? Whereas routine tends to be repetitious 'right way of doing things' that's externally imposed, it could be said that true rhythm emerges in accordance with our internal needs- of head, heart and hands. Rather than being rigid or prescriptive, rhythm can help us to be in the vibrant flow of life and maintain a state of dynamic balance, physical and emotional.

Above all, rhythm is a highly practical tool that helps to bring cohesion and harmony in our everyday lives. Rhythm helps us to experience:

- Security, grounded-ness and order; a sense of equilibrium and trust in life (rather than uncertainty, anxiety and active effort to keep our balance)
- Integration and well-paced growth and development, built on solid foundations (rather than overwhelm and super-speed growth and 'achievement')
- A sense of connection to one another and to the whole, where diversity and variety are held within a bigger context of cohesion (rather than fragmentation and aloneness)

How do we work with rhythm at school?

At Aurora we hold rhythm to be of high importance, right through the school years and most especially in early childhood. It can be said that when a child is held in solid and healthy rhythms in their nurturing environment, this helps them to develop healthy rhythms in their own body and lifelong habits.

We use rhythm in many practical ways- the festivals, movement and music, poetry and language, rhythmical activities like handwork, everyday rituals, the days of the week, and our mindfulness of beginning, middle and end.

In particular, we consciously structure our days and activities to move between polarities- sometimes referred to as a 'breathing process'. From quiet activities to loud ones, big movements to small, indoors to outdoors, group focus to individual focus- these are examples of how we craft the flow of the children's learning experience.

How can you work with rhythm in family life?

In family life, rhythm can be a grace and a lifesaver. It can bring huge benefits- harmony and health, confidence, clarity and calm- for children and parents both.

Each family and household has their own, and it's important that your rhythms serve the unique circumstance and needs of your own household. It can be valuable to take a little time to reflect on the various rhythms that already exist for you and your child- sleeping and waking, mealtimes, going from one parent to another, taking daily car trips- all these things are the stuff of life and can be the basis for joyful rhythms. Overlaid on these are special times like birthdays, holidays, your family festivals like Easter and Christmas and so on.

If you're wanting to strengthen and enliven your family rhythms, start from where you are and honour what you've created already. Choose one or two as anchor points in your day, and be in them wholeheartedly. Children love doing the same thing again and again and knowing what's coming next. Simplicity, repetition and everyday magic- these are the keys. For example:

- Bedtimes can be a time to look forward to with a simple goodnight to all the family, a sharing of a favourite moment from the day, a small song, a nightly look at the stars, or a tuck-in. One thing, done each night, is enough!
- Children's jobs can be a satisfying and joyful part of life. One simple daily task that they can do well and enjoy- this can do so much for their sense of confidence and contribution.
- Mealtimes are an ideal place to bring a touch of magic. The setting of the table, lighting a candle, singing a grace, having each person share something from their day- again, even one of these done repeatedly can energise us and create a welcome anchor point in the day.
- Special days are made more special by an element of ritual. Look back to what you've done with your child in years past on days like Christmas, birthdays or the first day of holidays. There's sure to be some element you'll enjoy doing again and again each year with your child- presents in bed, telling them about when they were small, going to a significant place... opportunities abound to make rhythms that are truly yours.

Above all, enjoy the process.

'Rhythm is life. Rhythm is strength. Rhythm can carry us!'

~ Annabel Brown

Lisa Devine's Talk

Lisa began her talk with the poem below. It is advice given to an indigenous American child lost in the forest. The significance of this poem in building resilience in individual children is obvious. Also, it is significant to us as a school. Aurora is still a young child developing strength in this place in this time, adapting to the current environment, yet grounded, calm and confident. There are times when we need to say: 'Don't just do something, stand there'.

WHAT DO I DO WHEN I AM LOST IN THE FOREST?

STAND STILL

THE TREES AHEAD AND THE BUSHES BESIDE YOU ARE NOT LOST

WHEREVER YOU ARE IS CALLED

HERE

AND YOU MUST TREAT IT AS A POWERFUL STRANGER

YOU MUST ASK PERMISSION TO KNOW IT AND BE KNOWN

IF YOU COME BACK AGAIN YOU MAY COME BACK SAYING

HERE

NO TWO TREES ARE THE SAME TO RAVEN

NO TWO BRANCHES ARE THE SAME TO WREN

IF WHAT A TREE OR A BRANCH DOES IS LOST ON YOU THEN YOU ARE

SURELY LOST

STAND STILL

LISTEN THE FOREST WHISPERS

I HAVE MADE THIS PLACE AROUND YOU

STAND STILL

THE FOREST KNOWS WHERE YOU ARE

YOU MUST LET IT FIND YOU

DAVID WAGONER

Class Music Teaching

It is the right of every citizen to be taught the elements of music; to be handed the key with which he/she can enter the locked world of music. Powerful sources of spiritual enrichment spring from music. We must spare no effort to have them opened up to as many people as possible. Zoltan Kodaly

This quote forms the foundation of my philosophy of music education and has inspired 40 years of teaching young children.

In the classroom the recorder is a useful tool and, used in conjunction with the voice and other instruments, can help to develop children's understanding of

Kodaly developed the teaching of vocal music. Karl Orff, another famous composer, developed a creative approach to music teaching using tuned percussion instruments.

My approach to teaching music is eclectic and the lessons are planned to cater for the children in their particular class. At the moment, in this school, I am trying to develop the children's technical skills on the recorder while expanding their minds to the creative possibilities of the instruments we have available. Sometimes we create something unique. The children invent their own parts on the tuned percussion to a rhythm decided on by one member of the class. I may join in with improvised recorder music. Alternatively, some children play a piece they have learned on the recorder while others construct an accompaniment. Both activities require technical and listening skills. We discuss why a piece has failed or succeeded and the children quickly learn how important it is to listen to each other. Music literacy is part of the lesson and is related to the need to be able to record a musical idea and read other people's musical ideas. To date, I have not pressed the children to make up and notate their own tunes but I shall encourage that next year.

Parents may be interested to view a copy of the book I produced at the Wollongong Conservatorium, with the music and artwork of children. There is a copy for viewing in the school office. Our end of year concert was all the children's own compositions and I hope perhaps we can achieve that at this school in 2016.

I hope this short article gives an insight into my teaching programme. I will finish with two more quotes.

The art of music is the most important part of education, because rhythm and harmonic succession of tones penetrate deepest into soul and lead to good form and bearing. Plato

Central to your teaching is that you are not a music teacher but a people teacher and that part of professional skill is an understanding of the whole person you teach. Ronald Lees, music teacher – Oct 1981. (This is not easy when one

only sees children once a week and is why it is essential that the classroom teacher is present at the lessons I give)

Teaching your children this year has been a privilege and has given me great joy. I hope I can continue next year.

Vanessa



Playgroup

Both playgroups are continuing to have moments of shared delight and wonder. Any new interested parents and their children are welcome to come and see what it is all about. The first attendance is free!

Craft Mornings with Jenny

The parent craft group meeting every Friday morning with the joyous task or making beautiful items for the school shop (and of course a good chat over a nice cuppa!). Meet us in the playgroup space from 9:30am.

All are welcome!!

Photo Gallery



Noticeboard

Little Shop

Our aim is to make beautiful, Steiner inspired materials accessible to our community at the best price possible, with the added bonus of supporting the school!

As we approach Christmas it is nice to be able to source quality toys, decorations and gifts for our family and friends. The parent craft group led by Jenny have been very busy making some beautiful things with more on the way!

We also have the usual supply of books (children and adult!); beeswax; pencils; crayons and candles including candle decorating kits just to name a few!!

In addition to all these we have made contact with a supplier of handmade, Steiner inspired and sustainable wooden toys. I have put together a catalogue which I will distribute this week. Given the little time we have left in the term I will have a short ordering turn-around time just to ensure the best chance of on-time delivery.

Steiner Dolls by Shirley

We have a collection of handmade Steiner dolls, all sizes and forms, on display in the Little Shop. These are here on consignment for the next couple of weeks before they head on over to a shop in Robertson. Please make time to drop in for a look while you still can!

Sunshadow Slippers

If anyone wishes to place an order for some Sunshadow classroom slippers there has been enough recent interest for me to place an order in the next week or two. Please see Mel in the office if you would like to order a pair or two 😊

Fees reminder

All 2015 fees need to be finalised prior to the last day of Term 4. Please see Mel in the office if you have outstanding fees and wish to make arrangements. Remember – we now offer eftpos and credit card facilities in the office.

Wish Soup now available!!

Our talented parent Rachel Larmer has just delivered the first copies of her new book *Wish Soup* and other seasonal tales! Visit the school shop to grab your copy today ☺

