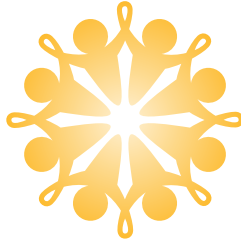


Aurora



SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
STEINER SCHOOL

Education is not the filling of a pail,
but the lighting of a fire
WB Yeats



Annual Report 2015

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School

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Our School

Nestled in the heart of the Southern Highlands among rolling hills, with stunning natural displays of the best of each season, stands Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School.

Our school, while still young, has continued to grow in the past year with the addition of new families, programs, and staff, establishing itself as a first choice option for independent education in our region. Our aim is still to provide a living, inspired learning environment, which strives to foster the qualities of goodness, beauty and truth through the research and implementation of the principles in the educational approach of Dr Rudolf Steiner.

Our learning community and its physical, soul and spiritual needs are the focus of our school. We continue to strive for a respectful, safe and loving environment between all who work and learn at the school. We continue to reach for the best in each student, and our joy is to meet the children through their burgeoning discovery of life, earth, and humanity. Our school recognises that without the respect and understanding of who we are as individuals, the needs of our planet and all life on it, new forms of culture suited to the healthy advancement of humanity will be limited. So on we walk, hand in hand, making history as we go...



Our Education

Rudolf Steiner once said the following regarding the need to understand the inner nature of the growing child:

'Once we can understand those we are to shape, we will be able to educate and teach, just as painters must understand the nature and quality of colours before they can paint, and sculptors must first understand their materials before they can create, and so on. If this is true of the arts that deal with physical materials, isn't it all the more true of an art that works with the noblest of all materials, the material that only the human being can work with—human life, the human being and human development?'

Our education focuses on more than the simple application of curriculum as prescribed by methods given to us through a set of standards. We recognise that as teachers, the way in which we educate children sinks deeply into the physical, psychological and spiritual nature of the child standing before us. The ways we teach in early childhood continue their work in the child over their entire lifetime, often appearing at different stages of their life. For this to be a positive influence, it is essential that we seek to understand the subtle nuances of teaching, harboured in warmth in the growing relationship between teachers and their pupils.

Our teaching program begins with early learning, through our Playgroups, Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten. In this initial phase of learning, up until around age 7, our focus is on helping the children to develop their foundation - a healthy body, a healthy will. We do this through our understanding that rhythm is the grounding force of all life - therefore, our educational program for this age is tailored around rhythms and repetitions in learning, from the small to the very great. Healthy physical development depends upon movement and play. These foundations are beautifully paved in our school, with our natural environment, our large grounds, and beautiful resources for open ended creative play.

In the second phase, we recognise that children, after 7 and up until the early teenage years, develop most strongly in their life of soul, and what is most important here is the understanding that children learn academically much more effectively when they are engaged in warm relationship to their teachers, whom they look up to as a loving authority. During this middle phase, everything musical in quality, whether it be singing, playing a musical instrument, learning to speak poetry with musical expression, brings nourishment and balance to the literacy and numeracy lessons.

Even though Aurora is still too young to offer a High School program, we recognise that from 14 years onwards, now that the physical foundation has been laid in the first seven years, and the basis for a healthy feeling life has been born in the second phase, the intellect is now stimulated in such a way that the teenager engages in the life of thought, questioning the world, interacting with technology, and developing a true basis for scientific thinking.

In this triad of the developmental stages in childhood, a harmonious chord can sound which is carried through the stages of life beyond the school years.

Below are the elements which play through the structure of our educational program:

Main Lesson and storytelling is based upon a historical developmental perspective which gives a sense of timeless values- that we are all a part of humanity, each having qualities to value, share and contribute meaningfully. The archetypal richness speaks to the feeling experience and awakens feeling for beauty, truth and wisdom. This feeling engagement; engaging the life force through a deepening, balanced experience of the senses is always considered in the learning process and encouraged through physical experiential expression, advancing the use of imagination and initiative.

Creative arts and craft

Expressive movement and dramatic and poetic language, verse and song are integral to the daily rhythm of the school day. Deepening their experience through the living arts such as dramatic playmaking, creative movement and language and the exploration of colour creates dynamic nurturing experiences building on the life forces. Children learn about natural resources and how they become the material for making useful utensils containers props and aids in their developing lives. Practical

application of a variety of crafting skills develops their confidence and abilities contributing to their sense of well-being.

Caring for our environment

Outdoor classroom, nature walks, the nature table, building the garden, reaping and preparing foods for community soup and bread, engaging with “green time not screen time”; all are activities which deepen our connection to the natural world and a sense of reverence for life. This in turn develops a sense of responsibility and care for the future and a feeling of empowerment to affect change.

Group and self-directed play in particular engages the children in social and emotional education. The children negotiate many levels of relationships such as experiencing responsible leadership/ cooperation, consensual agreements, independence and self-reliance.

Guidance and modelling by the teachers through their values including a restorative justice style practice, means that their interventions and modelling are always aimed towards respect, equality, health and wellbeing. A weekly focus for discussion at College meetings is based around aspiring values and student social/emotional welfare. A three weekly in-depth Child Study also builds on nurturing and restorative processes.

Sharing circles with the whole class are founded on values of equality, community and an ability to negotiate and accept differences. Strengthening the sense of connection, daily circles including group meal time are a form of communication and engagement, deepening an attitude of care and respect for each other. This in turn encourages a safe and secure balance in personal relationship and group dynamics.

Caring for others and visitors to our school

Teachers promote caring from older to younger children at transition times in the day, they instil procedures such as greetings and acknowledgements and bring attention to inclusive behaviours and changes that assist conscious integration and a sense of rhythm. This in turn adds to a sense of security and self-reliance- of self-respect for the child.

Seasonal festivals and community events are community building with a global and historic perspective. They celebrate multicultural presence and contributions from within our community with aspirations for social renewal. Attending special indigenous nature days encourages respect for Aboriginal heritage and a deeper sharing of values for our environment.

“The Curriculum provides an implicit social and emotional education, nurturing a sense of reverence for life, feelings of wonder and awe and a love of learning.” (Gidley, 2009)



The Living Organism of our School

We call our structure 'A Living Organism', as this is most fitting with our entire concept and practice of education. The 'place' of education is more than the physical structure of the classroom, the grounds, and buildings. For within these grounds and walls, life happens, and it happens in a lively way because of all that holds it together.

School Governance Board – Southern Highlands Association for Steiner Education Inc.

S.H.A.S.E was developed in 2009 for the advancement of Steiner Education in the Southern Highlands. The vision and purpose of the school Board is to ensure that families in the region have access to Steiner Education if they chose it for their children. The School Board carries and upholds the school's vision, ensures that school's practices are both lawful and secure, and that the whole organism of the school is overseen. Through the governance of SHASE, the school can continue to grow into a learning and workplace that reflects accountability, responsibility, transparency, and inclusivity. It has been the Board's vision in 2014 to continue to support the existence of the school and its place in the Highlands. The Board further developed strategies to lead into the future and consolidate the gifts of our first year.



School Management

The Principal is the responsible manager for the school, ensuring that the College of Teachers have the support of content, study and professional development to maintain and grow the quality of the educational program. The Principal is also responsible for liaising with BOSTES, the School Board, Steiner Education Australia and all other organisations that schools are in contact with. The Principal forms the link between staff, parent, students and the School Board. In 2015, the Principal was responsible for educational and business management with the aid of the Office Manager, the College of Teachers, as delegated by the School Board.

The College

The College is a group of teachers and other staff in our school who undertake to develop education programs to deepen the experience of teaching and leading and form a vision of what next needs to be achieved on an educational level. All staff are welcome to take part in College matters. The College undertakes studies to further their own practice, but also central to the work of the College is the development of Child Study, where each individual child can receive a time of focus. Parents were often welcomed throughout 2015 to this College activity as well as other artistic work such as Eurythmy and Bothmer gymnastics. Our teachers are constantly developing their teaching practice in accordance with the needs of students at the school.

Students

The students hold the space in our organism of the heart of the school. All of our work is circling around the needs of our children's education, and how to best meet requirements for their strong and healthy development. The students bring not only their bodies and minds, their joy and anticipation to learn about the world, but also they bring the seed of their destiny, which informs the future of the world. Our children also bring us the challenges which enable us to overcome our own limitations, and compel us to develop capacities we didn't have before, which in turn offers the best of human example and role modelling towards their education.

Parent Body

The parent body is the grounding element in our young school. Throughout 2015, much of our active work in the outer community through marketing came from the gifted and dedicated efforts of our talented parents. Our parent group is diverse and active, celebrating the fruits of what the education brings to their children, and in turn, being celebrated in the school for their valuable contributions. The school recognises that the value of our school is supported by parents through their payment of fees also. The currency of financial support goes a long way to contribute to the success of growing this school with a stable and secure foundation. Our parents offer an active voice in the wider community. Our vibrant parent group work tirelessly to create our newfound presence in the Southern Highlands.

From the Chairperson of the Board

At the time of writing this report we are at the end of Term 1 of our fourth year of Steiner education at our beautiful school in the Southern Highlands.

The year since our last report has again been busy and successful, with the expansion of our school into year 3, the addition of new classroom facilities, a new office for our Principal, the commencement of after school activities and the engagement of new staff members while all the time focusing on strengthening our financial and educational foundations.

At the time of writing the school has 25 students with more to start in Term 2 and increased local interest for our system of learning. Demand for a playgroup has steadily increased giving the children a natural progression into our school.

Our growth must be attributed to the continuing efforts and energy of our Principal, James Goodlet, and his trust in our school teachers and their undertaking of additional responsibilities and ownership in their part in the school.

During the school year, the school continued to invest in the professional development of all of our staff, each of whom have attended conferences and intensive Steiner based learning opportunities in Byron Bay, Sydney and/or in Braemar. James has also attended conferences in being a school principal and in addition to adding to his substantive knowledge, has made valuable connections with other school principals.

At our last annual general meeting, founding member Joanna Panagiotopoulos resigned from the Association to take up studies in Germany. Francis stepped down from a Committee role while still remaining on the Board.

Our new Board members (Chris Cloran, Terence Corbett, Melissa Savill and Inga Oates) have been active with Chris Cloran appointed as Treasurer, Inga Oates taking on the secretarial responsibilities. Terence Corbett with continuing Board members Shirley Bell and Francis Mougel set us on track with maintaining Steiner education and stepped up when important decisions were made. I am deeply appreciative of the many hours volunteered by our Board to the establishment of the school and as proud of its solid financial and pedagogical grounding.

We bid adieu to Melissa Savill as a Board member some time later in the year as she resigned in order to take up the business management role for the school. In this role she is still actively managing our school's finances and attending our Board meetings. So no real change there! Thank you Mel!

I thank the parent body, particularly those parents who so generously give of their time and energy in their continuing support for the school no matter how large or small they consider their own contribution to be. Without the parents, there would be no students so we are especially appreciative of them.

It is also pleasing to see our young people thriving in their development as rounded and resilient young people through our education and thanks is attributed to the teachers who have needed to be flexible in so many ways to make it all work.

To the staff, Principal and Board members, thank you all for your tireless dedication to your roles, for all the late nights preparing for the following day/week and for all your time spent in meetings, and in planning, and in all your extra-curricular activities designed to enhance the educational experience for the children and maintain and strengthen the quality of our beautiful school.

Jane Button, Chairman

From the Principal

In 2015, my first year at Aurora, my two main aims were to 1. establish high quality teaching and learning, 2. build a healthy, inclusive school community. The theme for the year was 'big-hearted learning'. There was a deliberate attempt to reach out and welcome the broader community with open hearts and mind and to offer the gift of Steiner education to the whole community. Daring to think big with an eye for the future was encouraged in the parent community, the School Board and most especially in the staff. This resulted in a wave of ideas for the future as well as some solid short term outcomes.

A key initiative in 2015 was the development of Aurora's Statement of Purpose. This is the basis for our strategic direction and pedagogical work.

Statement of Purpose

As one of over 1000 Steiner/Waldorf schools throughout the world, Aurora is a small school offering a big-hearted education full of nourishment for the whole child.

Our approach, inspired by the indications of Dr Rudolf Steiner, actively engages the senses with real life experience, learning through the head, heart and hands.

We are a school that upholds a respect and reverence for the natural world. We celebrate the Australian seasons, grow food in our garden and explore the beauty of our local area.

We are a school of spirit, welcoming families into our community with open arms and open hearts. We value kindness and compassion and we seek to create an environment that fosters healthy social relationships.

An education at Aurora builds a strong academic foundation. We provide a rich, engaging environment where students learn concepts and skills at a time that is developmentally appropriate. The attributes of curiosity, creativity and capacity are nurtured, ensuring our children are equipped for today's world as morally responsible global citizens.

Some other 2015 initiatives

- Development and implementation of new school name and logo
- Development and implementation of Restorative Practices program for student welfare
- New school website
- Advertising on a regular basis in local newspaper and magazines
- Building of new bus shelter, school entrance, workshop area and office partition
- Development and implementation of specialist music program with Vanessa Woodhill
- Development and implementation of specialist German program with Ben Horsington
- Employment of class teacher, Jeddah Teasdale, for Middle Primary Class 2016
- Initiation of business plan development with advice from Business Management consultant, Steve Klipin
- Engagement of new auditor and greater understanding of the school's financial position for planning
- Establishment of class coordinators
- Investigation of the challenges and benefits of starting a preschool
- Application for and securing of Chaplaincy funding 2016-2018 to help fund Lisa Devine as Chaplain
- Learning program and development of relationship with Moonacres organic farm
- Cooked lunch program for Kindergarten students
- Years 4 registration with BOSTES 2016

Planned Projects for 2016

- Application for After School Care Grant.
- Application for After School Care approval as Provider, Supervisor and Service Centre through the ECEC (regulatory body).
- Application for Years 5 and 6 with BOSTES to become K-6 school in 2017
- Cooked lunch program for the whole school
- Aboriginal students' inclusion program in partnership with Koori Kulcha and Kazcare
- Installation of chicken coop
- Garden and playground development including expansion of sand pit, cargo net addition to cubby, expansion of vegetable garden and tree planting
- Application for full membership of Steiner Education Australia
- Business Plan and Strategic Plan
- Strings Music Program
- Parent Education program and working group

In such a young school, each year is crucial in developing a healthy school culture. 2015 was a year of vision, collaboration and agility. There was a very real sense that every member of the school community was an important co-creator in the future of the school. The individual contributions from staff, parents and students are too numerous to mention and it is probably more appropriate to see the community's achievements as being a combined effort, reflective of the collaborative way we worked in 2015.

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



Teaching Staff

We are indeed fortunate to have a dedicated team of teachers forming our College of Teachers, all of whom are fully qualified and accredited, with additional training in Steiner education.

James Goodlet Principal

James believes in the power of educating the whole child: head, heart and hands. His passions include playing and coaching sport, playing music, the beach, gardening, building, bushwalking and spending time with his family. For over 20 years his career has been predominantly in primary teaching and education leadership and management in state schools, Steiner schools and independent schools. He has also worked in outdoor education and environmental studies as a teacher and manager. He has experience in the building industry as a tradesman and construction manager. He currently combines all these skills and experiences as Principal at Aurora.



James sees the challenge of growing a Steiner school in the Southern Highlands as exciting. Even though Aurora's numbers are small at this stage, it already has a strong community with committed, generous, big-hearted people. He would like to build on this strength and foster the creation of a friendly, inclusive place for learning. A place where adventure is encouraged and creativity is nurtured. A healthy place for all with a focus on the outdoor classroom, practical and artistic skills and the development of independence and resilience in young people.

Annabel Brown Kindergarten Teacher 2015



Annabel Brown is a founding teacher at Aurora, having taught in the Kindergarten since the school's inception in 2013. She holds a Bachelor Degree in Social Inquiry from UTS and a Graduate Diploma of Teaching & Learning from Charles Darwin University, and was previously a Kindergarten Teacher at Chrysalis Steiner School in Bellingen.

Annabel is passionate about children's social and emotional health and relationship to the natural world. 'I find it immensely satisfying to create experiences and environments where children learn through their own exploration and through being in community together. I know that day by day here in the Aurora Kindergarten, each child builds a whole range of skills and attitudes that will underpin their long-term wellbeing- and that's the beauty of a truly developmental pedagogy.'

Having been Steiner educated for most of her own schooling, Annabel returned to the Steiner approach as a teacher because of its relevance to the needs of tomorrow. 'The future is calling for people who can think clearly, draw on the wisdom of the heart, and bring new ideas into practical action. And Steiner education is the best way I know of preparing young people for this kind of leadership in a changing world.'

Of this third year of the school's life, Annabel reflects, 'Together we're building something very precious here- a school with so much heart and with solid academic and administrative foundations. I'm proud of the collegial culture of collaboration that we're creating as the school grows- all of us bringing different perspectives, yet brought together by our shared commitment to take a fresh look at how the essence of Steiner education can unfold in this particular place and time, to truly meet the needs of these particular children.'

Kate Koch
Class 1/2/3 Teacher 2015

Kate Koch is one of the founding teachers of Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School.

Kate began teaching at the previous Bowral Steiner School in 1998. She initially worked in the Kindergarten part time and ran playgroups. Kate did casual teaching in the primary school and went on to teach Health and Personal development and English and Drama in the high school. Kate was co - class guardian for the composite year 9/10 class with Benjamin Cherry and at that time introduced the year 10 School Certificate. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree, a Graduate Diploma in Teaching, and a Masters in Art Psychotherapy.



“In Steiner education we respect and value each child and what they bring to the world.” Kate says, “The primary years are a magical time. We aim to meet the child where they are at developmentally. The world of childhood is a participatory, imaginative world and so it is through stories and artistry that academic learning is introduced.”

“The early years of a child’s education are vital”, she says. “They form the foundation on which their future lives are built. So it is an honour and a great pleasure to be bringing Steiner education to the children of the Southern Highlands.”

Jeddah Teasdale
Class 1/2/3 Teacher

Jeddah Teasdale joined Aurora in 2015 as a part time teacher in the year 1, 2 and 3 class. She comes with a passion for environmental education having gained the qualification of Master of Environmental Management (Honours) and working in the field for many years before retraining as a teacher at the University of New England gaining a Master of Teaching (Primary). She has a particular interest in helping students achieve their full potential in all aspects of their life and has engaged in professional development to assist her in these aims.

Joanna Panagiotopoulos
Speech and Drama, Movement

Joanna graduated as actor and speech artist at The School of the Living Word in 2006. Since then she has been teaching Speech and Drama at Sydney Rudolf Steiner College, as well as guest tutoring in various places including the NSW Writer’s Centre, Wesley University, Metavision Institute, Orana Steiner (High) School, Armidale Waldorf School, and Gibgate Primary School. Joanna helps to co-ordinate Harmony Foundation, a centre to support education and arts based on Steiner’s work. Since 2012 she has been active in the founding of Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School.



This year, Joanna has been working with the students to develop freedom and expression in their speech, supporting the English program. She has also worked with the students to bring fairy tales to life through movement and improvisation. In 2015, Joanna’s program finished at the end of Semester 1 to accommodate her move to Germany for further study. Speech and Drama was replaced by Lisa Devine’s Eurythmy program.

Jennifer Lloyd
Craft Teacher 2015

Jennifer's initial teaching experience was as a Junior Primary/ Kindergarten Diploma trained teacher in country and urban SA for 4 years with complementary training as a specialist teacher in Music through Movement (Dalcoze Eurythmics) and Children's Art classes. Since 1972 she has been studying and practicing as an artist with a focus on personal development, gaining a Grad Dip in Social Ecology as well as an Honours Degree in Visual Arts. Registered as a relief teacher with the NSW DEC over the years she conducted a variety of arts projects in schools. As a Parent at Eukarima/ Bowral Rudolf Steiner School Jennifer offered silk painting workshops and assisted in costume making for several school productions including Mozart's "The Magic Flute".



In recent years Jennifer volunteered as secretary for the Vietnam Children's Project, which sponsors an Orphanage and three Steiner based Kindergartens in Vietnam. This renewed her interest in the philosophical basis for Steiner education. She is now working towards contributing in a rich and worthwhile way to our new and developing Steiner school, teaching Craft and training as a Playgroup Leader.

As she says: "Through the pursuit of living a life motivated by inspiration and joyful loving engagement, through seeking personally meaningful fulfilment, I find myself involved in the extraordinary experience of being a part of this creative growing school community. There are challenges to encounter (we are on an adventure after all) but also many precious moments to cherish. I am the one being educated..."

Lisa Devine
Eurythmy Teacher Semester 2 2015

Lisa Devine worked as a youth worker when she finished school and after working with a "street kids project" spent time working with people who had disabilities. She enjoyed working in a movement and dance program with them. Later she completed a Masters in Psychology majoring in counselling where the focus has been working with people in life crisis. Lisa met the work of Rudolf Steiner through following her lifelong love of movement and dance. She completed her Eurythmy training in 1998 and has been teaching part-time in a range of Steiner Schools since then teaching kindergarten, primary, high school, and adult classes. She completed her Eurythmy Therapy training in 2014.

Eurythmy in Kindergarten in 2015 was focused on developing beautiful archetypal movements in the children through imitating. We are shaping the sounds that live in the words with our arms and feet. These sounds work back into the physiology as their bodies are growing and forming in a healthy and harmonious way. We use stories which mirror the journey of becoming a human being on the earth where goodness is enjoyed. We moved the story of a floppy floppy pancake who ran away and after refusing to be eaten by a number of characters feeds three hungry children. We also moved the story of three billy goats gruff.

Eurythmy in the primary class was focused on creating beautiful archetypal forms as a group. The individual children are working on both fine and gross motor skills and learning the language of Eurythmy where the sounds of speech become alive and work into the physiology of the children to bring balance to their development. For example; the L lifts heaviness into lightness and the S brings chaos into form. The class learned to walk to tricky counting rhythms that take full concentration and bring a sense of joy when they are achieved; they crept silently to take back the gems from the blindfolded lion; they jumped the vowels in their feet with Griselda; they flew the Cassini Curve as falcons and hawks; they polished copper rods which were used for developing nimble feet with "Jack be Nimble", the "dragon's ladder", and the "seven-fold rod exercise"; they stamped as "robbers" and faced the "dragon" with forms in arms and feet that bring certainty and confidence; and they told the tale of Bridget through movement. Together we remembered what a pleasure it is to move our body in ways that nurture our soul and spirit.

Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives. The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility—these three forces are the very nerve of education.

Rudolf Steiner

Professional Learning Summary

In 2015, staff participated in the following professional development activities:

The Glenaeon Teachers Intensive 2015

January residential (5 days)

Attended by: Kate Koch

Child Study Sessions X 12

Throughout 2015

Attended by: Kate Koch, Annabel Brown, Jennifer Lloyd, James Goodlet, Jeddah Teasdale, Joanna Panagiotopoulos (Semester 1- 6 sessions), Lisa Devine (Semester 2- 6 sessions), Benjamin Horsington (Semester 2- 6 sessions)

College of Teachers Meetings with Artistic Development & Book Study

Weekly sessions throughout term time 2015

Attended by: Kate Koch, Annabel Brown, Jennifer Lloyd, James Goodlet, Jeddah Teasdale, Joanna Panagiotopoulos (Semester 1), Lisa Devine (Semester 2), Benjamin Horsington (Semester 2)

Sydney Rudolf Steiner College

Diploma of Rudolf Steiner Education

Full Year distance mode - Introduction To Anthroposophy

Residential 1- April (5 days)

Residential 2- September (5 days)

Attended by: Kate Koch, Annabel Brown

AIS - Obligations in Identifying and Responding to Children and Young People at Risk- Online Course
March 2015

Attended by: James Goodlet

AIS- Online Governance Training- Modules 1-4

March 2015

Attended by: James Goodlet, Melissa Savill

Special needs consultation with Educational Consultant A.I.S

March 2015

Attended by: Kate Koch, Jenny Loyd, James Goodlet

SEA- National Teachers Conference- Cape Byron Steiner School

4th-7th July 2015

Attended by: James Goodlet, Jennifer Lloyd, Joanna Panagiotopoulos, Kate Koch, Jeddah Teasdale

Restorative Practices Training

13-15th July 2015

Attended by: Kate Koch, Annabel Brown, Jennifer Lloyd, James Goodlet, Jeddah Teasdale, Benjamin Horsington

SEA- Governance, Leadership and Management Conference Mullumbimby

August 2015

Attended by: James Goodlet, Melissa Savill

SEA- Delegates Conference

14th-16th August 2015

Attended by: James Goodlet

AIS- Teacher Accreditation Authority Briefings

November 2015

Attended by: James Goodlet

Self-Expression & Leadership Program- Landmark Education

May-September 2015

Attended by: Annabel Brown

The Quest for the Christ Impulse

January 2015

Attended by: Annabel Brown

The Quest from Fear to Freedom

August 2015

Attended by: Annabel Brown

Mentoring Sessions with Thanh Cherry

Attended by: Annabel Brown

Visit to Bangkok Steiner School

September 2015

Attended by: Annabel Brown

The Nature of Learning - Professional Development Webinar

National Tree Day, Planet Ark

Attended by: Jeddah Teasdale



The Student Cohort and Student Achievement

Kindergarten

The Student Cohort

In 2015, the Kindergarten class was made up of eight children- six boys and two girls, all aged 4-6 years old. Three other students attended for part of the year. Three students had attended other Steiner early childhood settings previously, and all together three of the Kindergarten families moved to the area this year to be part of the Aurora community. Steiner education was new to a number of families.

All students spoke English as their first language and nearly all parents were Australian born. Nearly all the children had siblings. There was a fairly high level of individual needs in this group, with five children needing some level of adjustment. Two children had diagnosed autism spectrum disorders, and others variously faced challenges with eyesight, movement, allergies and immune health. Despite these challenges the children all formed a strong sense of belonging in the Kindergarten and worked effectively as a class group. Dramatic play, cooking and oral storytelling were particular strengths of the class.

Three of the five children graduating from this group went on to Class 1 at Aurora, and another three continued on in the Kindergarten.

Our Kindergarten Year

Our theme at Aurora in 2015 was Big-hearted Learning, and life in the Kindergarten was a rich embodiment of just that! Our array of structured learning activities was balanced with child-initiated play and exploration in this environment where the children can learn through rhythm and imitation. We welcomed many new faces and farewelled others, had wonderful opportunities for connecting across age-groups, and celebrated the seasons and special events of the year. The harmony and wellbeing so important at this stage of the children's development was vibrant, and deepening across the course of the year. Head, heart and hands were nourished!

In the early childhood years, we seek to offer a rich environment in where students can experience immersion in the beauty and wonder of day-to-day life, all the while learning in a non-reflexive and unselfconscious way. While the environment and experiences we create for the children are thoughtfully crafted and carefully prepared, we want the children to engage with these in a natural, flowing manner, such that they rarely notice the learning taking place. This allows the children to develop their experiences, knowledge and skills in ways that become simply part of 'who they are', rather than as named-and-labelled competencies extrinsic to them. The result is that these children generally feel a deep connection with their surroundings, a sense of belonging in the world and in the community, and an unselfconscious security in themselves. With these strong foundations, the children are well equipped to set sail into the world of far more conscious and 'awake' learning in their primary school years.

Here at Aurora we value childhood. Our school life is honoured not only as a means to an end (producing a knowledgeable adult) but as an end in itself- our goal is to live well together each and every day, with reverence, mindfulness and enjoyment. Our circle times each morning and afternoon bring the class community together for poetry, music, movement and drama, and games to build social and cognitive skills. Our domestic experiences are highly valued- preparing food, setting the table, eating together, washing and washing up, and caring for our environment indoors and out through tasks such as sweeping, polishing and gardening. 'Making' activities form a large part of our days, both in structured form and in child-initiated play. Paper crafts, beeswax modelling, crayon drawing, watercolour painting, seasonal and nature crafts, handcrafts such as finger knitting, stitching and fleece work- these all contribute to the children's fine motor abilities, pre-numeracy skills and sense of confidence and agency. Child-initiated play is another key dimension of the Kindergarten experience, both indoors and out, and allows the children to explore and transform their environment, integrate their lived experiences, and develop important relational skills. Stories, songs and finger games all contribute to the children's early literacy skills. Alongside these day-to-day activities, we celebrate the seasons and key festivals, and enjoy regular excursions- all events of wonder and magic that connect us with the bigger rhythms of life.

Each term brought its own flavour and memorable highlights. In the final term we enjoyed water play on hot summer days, creek care sessions, regular Library lessons, Advent preparations, and a transition-to-primary program for the older children. Term 3 brought the beginnings of Spring which we celebrated well with picnics, frequent Kazcare nature walks and climbing adventures! Ben's German lessons began, as did Eurythmy session with Lisa, and our Spring Michaelmas Festival & Open Day was a lovely end to the term. Looking back to Term 2, as Autumn moved into Winter, we went apple-picking at Moonacres, dug potatoes, cooked damper over the fire at Mansfield, and prepared for our Midwinter Festival with candle dipping and lantern making. Back in Term 1 we shared afternoon sessions with the older class and had regular singalongs led by James. We cooked peach pie from Kazcare peaches, had barbeque and working bee afternoons, and decorated eggs for our Easter Harvest Festival. Many visiting faces have passed through the Kindergarten through the year, and this has given the children an enormous flexibility and capacity to welcome change. What a big and colourful year we've had!



Class 1/2/3

The Student Cohort

In 2015, the primary class was made up of eight children- four boys and four girls. The eight students comprised of one girl and one boy in class 1, two girls and three boys in class 2 and one girl in class 3. The two class 1 students had completed kindergarten at Aurora Steiner School in 2014. Only one class two student was new to the school, Thus, the majority of children had a familiarity with many aspects of the school life and all students participated keenly in our range of learning activities and classroom routines. At the beginning of term 2 Jeddah Teasdale joined the Aurora teaching staff and joined the primary class for main lessons in the mornings. Jeddah was able to focus on extension work with some of the students and was able to work one on one with the class 3 students using the stage 2 syllabus. Over the year Jeddah formed strong relationships with all the children and became a valued and integral member of the teaching staff. At the end of first term one girl in class 2 left. A class 2 boy left at the end of term 2. At the start of term three a girl joined class 1 and a boy joined class two. Also at this time a class two student left to move with his family overseas. Term 4 saw the arrival of another girl in class 3 and a boy in class 1. At Aurora School in 2015, four students completed class 1, three students completed class 2 and two students completed class 3.

Of this composite class 1/2/3, one student had been diagnosed with ADHD. An individual learning plan was in place for this student and this ILP was reviewed and updated every six months. All students spoke English as their first language. Of the twelve children that attended the primary class, seven attended for part of the year and five for the full school year. Three of the children were from

single-child households, four had a younger sibling and five had older siblings. Of those five, three of the children had significantly older siblings.

In 2015 we were fortunate to be able to offer specialist classes to the primary students in eurhythmy and music, taught by expert teachers, Lisa Devine (eurhythmy) and Vanessa (music).

Special characteristics of this group were a love of language, enthusiasm for the natural world and demonstrated skill in drama and puppetry. Socially, the children bonded well as a class group with each other and with both Kate and Jeddah as their teachers.

As teachers, we worked to create a sense of exploration, collaboration and unity between all the children. We worked to offer the children extension activities in their areas of skill and interest. This included, music, song writing, poetry and nature care.

Student Achievement

Class one is the beginning of the class teacher period and the threshold of a new world of adventure and learning. The class one children were genuinely eager to enter a wider world and experience a new and more organized group experience. The class 2 and 3 students entered the next phase of their learning with a sense of camaraderie and enjoyment.

Nine students completed the composite class 1/2/3 program in 2015. A range of formative and summative assessment methods was used to track the children's learning and development, including main lesson books, day-to-day teacher observations and anecdotal records and tracking via regular skills and outcomes rubrics.

End-of-Year Reports indicated each student's development across all six Key Learning Areas, plus Social & Emotional Development. In all subjects, students consistently achieved Satisfactory and Accomplished grades, with individual students exhibiting occasional areas where they achieved the Working Beyond grade and some occasionally Working Towards. In Creative Arts and also Personal Development, Health & Physical Education students achieved similarly high levels of competence. Around Social & Emotional Development, each student demonstrated Accomplished and Working Beyond levels in relation to many outcomes.



Looking back at Aurora's Goals for 2015

Deepening staff and student learning

- To prioritise and implement further training and skills in Steiner education, including an optional parent program. *All three class teachers enrolled in Diploma of Steiner Education courses through Sydney Rudolf Steiner College. Parent information days and evenings featuring guest speakers.*
- To oversee the acquisition of further resources for primary school. *The new library with a substantial stock of new quality books was established.*
- To acquire more space for extra curriculum needs and office space and staff room and amenities. *Expansion into new office and classroom space was achieved.*
- To increase staff to support the primary composite class. *An extra part time class teacher appointed.*
- To further establish successful playgroups, including a babes-in-arms group, a 1-3 years playgroup, and a 3-5 years playgroups, thus streamlining the education and getting parents involved from the start. *Two playgroups were run, one for 1-2 years and one for 3-4 years.*
- To deepen our understanding of the anthroposophical view of child development within Steiner education through study, training, and discussion- and implementing our learning through a balanced curriculum which reflects the children's developmental needs. *College meetings and professional development focussed on this area. Of special note was the study series in Term 3, led by Joanna Panagiotopoulos, looking at Child Study through different lenses.*

Strengthening our community

- Developing adult learning programs that highlight the Steiner approach and foster confidence in meeting children's needs in today's world. *As well as parent information sessions featuring guest speakers, there have been feature articles targeting parents in newsletters and social networking sites.*
- Establishing an 'open College' section of College work where parents are invited to join us in our work of nourishing the school. *Parents were invited to Eurythmy and other artistic activities at the start of each College meeting.*
- Sharing our understanding and practice of the celebration of festivals. To foster the cycle of the year as a modern approach to understand the universal spirit of humanity. *Detailed information was given at parent meetings and in newsletters.*
- To continue to foster interest and insight into the individual members of our school community. *Parents were invited to share their skills at working bees and educational sessions with students.*

Running the school in light of emerging needs

- To appoint a school principal, while still maintaining a collegial structure in the school, to enhance management processes. *Principal appointed, working collaboratively with College.*
- To implement ways of reviewing governance, management and staff performance, with the aim of supporting areas where growth is needed. *Research has been conducted into the best way to do this.*
- To expand the administration, moving towards business management role in the school. *Melissa Savill was appointed as Business Manager in October 2015*
- To consolidate our structure and communicate it to relevant bodies in the school. *Structure was consolidated and communicated in newsletters and parent meetings*
- To further expand the membership of our Association and Board - selecting people with diverse skills for appropriate governance in the school. *Four new appointments, two with Steiner education experience. Working towards greater financial literacy on the Board membership.*
- To develop a new strategic plan, for 2015-1017, with clear directions for the growth of the Primary school. *Process started in November 2015 with assistance from business management consultant.*

Growing our school

- Consolidate what has already been accomplished through the marketing strategy. *Continuity with new branding and new website initiative*
- To further find ways to showcase the school and what it does well - environment, artistic capacity, spirituality, ethical intellectual learning methods that support true human development. *Establishment and enhancement of relationships with local council, NPWS, Koori Kulcha, ECOS, local farmers and producers*
- To develop new signage reflecting the school branding and making us visible to commuters on Kirkham Rd. *Accomplished*
- To develop a new entrance waiting area for pick up and drop off, with a weather shelter. *Accomplished*
- To expand the children's vegetable garden. *Accomplished with successful food production with further development planned in 2016*

Aurora's Goals for 2016: Key Targets for Improvement

Deepening staff and student learning

- Class teachers to begin Diploma of Steiner Teaching through Sydney Rudolf Steiner College
- Class teachers to attend Glenaeon Class Teacher Intensives
- Literacy teaching and learning review to improve literacy practice
- Music program development including specialist teaching and strings program
- Establishment of a high quality after school care program
- Establishment Aboriginal language and culture program

Strengthening our community

- Involvement in targeted local community events and projects
- Development of high quality, structured parent education program

Running the school in light of emerging needs

- Continuing the work of 2014 in improving financial literacy in school governance
- Establishment of Teacher Accreditation Authority policies and procedures

Growing our school

- Development of a structured marketing program
- Improvement of social media presence and message
- Development of partnership with Koori Kulcha to encourage Aboriginal student enrolments

Attendance and Retention Rates

Attendance

The average student attendance rate in 2015 was 89.15%

FORM	OVERALL	MALE	FEMALE
Kindergarten	80.90%	77.60%	100.00%
Class 01	95.10%	93.10%	97.00%
Class 02	92.70%	90.40%	98.20%
Class 03	87.90%		87.90%

How the school manages non-attendance

The school recognises that a child's school attendance is compulsory. Parents are provided with the school attendance policy at orientation or soon thereafter and this is also discussed with the parents at the child's enrolment interview.

The school has in place a policy, reviewed annually, regarding non-attendance. An attendance register is maintained on a daily basis.

Parents of students are required to report their child's absence as soon as practicable after the absence is known. Where absence has become frequent, meetings are conducted with parents to ascertain whether any difficulties have arisen that the school and parents can work through together.

Mandatory reporting procedures apply where absences are extended or the student may be at risk of significant harm through school absence.

Student Retention

Year	Start Year	Finish Year	Out during Year	In during year
2015	11	13	6	8

Respect and Responsibility

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School intends that all students feel they are valued. Parents and teachers work together to provide care and support, thus engendering self-esteem, mutual respect and responsibility.

The Board has developed policies and procedures within their 'Safe and Supportive Environment' and 'Student Welfare' goals, to ensure that respect and responsibility comes through clearly for students, teachers, parents and the community in which the school resides. These policies are publicly available to parents and are reviewed annually.

In addition to regular parent teacher meetings, the Board and College hold regular meetings for parents to discuss the basis for these policies and the framework in which the policies have been created, so as to educate the school community in how these are to work. These policies are developed with the aim of promoting respect and responsibility among students, parents, teachers and the wider community.

Key School Codes, Policies and Procedures

Student Wellbeing

Pastoral Care at the Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School is based on the philosophy and core values underpinning Steiner education and the school. It is holistic in nature, recognising that the social and emotional wellbeing of young people needs to be addressed along with intellectual and physical wellbeing. The promotion of wellbeing is integral to young people's schooling outcomes, their social development and their capacity to contribute to their families, the community and the workforce. The creative, artistic and imaginative aspects of Steiner education provide opportunities for participation, communication, engagement and expression that can increase student's self-esteem and build a protective connectedness to the school community.

Southern Highlands Rudolf Steiner School seeks to provide quality education for all students taking account of their age, background, ability and interests. As a Steiner school, we believe:

'Our highest endeavour is to develop individuals who are able out of their own initiative to impart purpose and direction to their lives' Rudolf Steiner

We follow the 'Three Golden Rules for Teachers' to:

'Receive each child in gratitude from the world they come from; educate each child with love; lead each child into the true freedom that belongs to human beings' Rudolf Steiner

A comprehensive body of formal documents serve to guide many aspects of school life. All are available on the school's website. Each year, they are reviewed and updated to ensure that they are in true alignment with the school's values and practices. Below are excerpts from a range of key documents relating to student wellbeing, the conduct of all school community members, complaints and grievances, and enrolments.

Student Rules and Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure

This policy provides a framework to guide students and parents on the school's approach to acceptable behaviour to ensure that a positive and productive learning environment is maintained for all students. Descriptions of behaviours that are acceptable and not acceptable are provided in areas such as respect towards others, completion of homework, care for the environment, care of personal belongings and public behaviour. School Rules are also set out in this policy.

Policy and Code of Conduct for Parents, Guardians, School Community

In addition to the Code of Conduct for Students, a Code of Conduct has been developed to encompass all community members who may contribute to the development of the child's education or be

associated with the school. The Policy and Code of Conduct for Parents and Guardians is developed on reasonable community expectations of behaviour encompassing mutual tolerance, respect and personal safety of all with the goal of making the school a safe and pleasant environment for all our community.

Promoting Positive Behaviour and Discipline

Bullying conduct is not tolerated in our school. Anti-bullying policies concerning staff are located within the Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement for Employees, Contractors and Volunteers.

Anti-bullying policies concerning students are located within the Behaviour Management and Discipline Policy as well as the Codes of Conduct for Students, and for Parents, Guardians and the Community.

Discipline Policy

Under the school's Discipline Policy, students are required to abide by the School Rules and Codes of Conduct and to follow the directions of teachers and other people with authority delegated by the school.

Where a student disregards rules, disobeys instructions or otherwise engages in conduct, which causes or may cause harm, the student may be subject to disciplinary action and required to engage in considered restorative practices.

The disciplinary procedures undertaken and restorative practices required by the school vary according to the seriousness of the alleged offence. When advised of an allegation the student and parents will be informed of the procedural steps to be followed in dealing with the matter. In relation to all matters to be investigated, the student will be informed of the nature of the allegation and given an opportunity to respond to the allegations.

The School's Complaints and Grievances Policy

Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School is committed to providing a work and study environment that is safe, fair and free from discrimination for all members of the school community. The school has a responsibility under State and Federal legislation to ensure staff and students are not subjected to behaviour that may constitute discrimination, harassment, vilification or victimisation. An essential part of developing that environment is ensuring that students and parents are encouraged to come forward with their matters of concern and grievances in the knowledge that the responsible staff will take prompt and effective action to address these concerns. Grievances that are not addressed have the potential to grow into major problems that can cause tension, low morale and reduced learning and academic achievement.

In line with this aim, the school has developed a Grievances Framework, which is downloadable from the school website. This Framework was developed so that parents, students and other members of the community know to whom to take their particular concern and how they can expect their concern to be addressed.

Enrolment Policies and pre-requisites for continuing enrolment

Southern Highlands Rudolf Steiner School is a co-educational primary school providing an education based on the philosophy and values of Steiner education and like all NSW schools, we are approved by the NSW Board of Studies. All applications will be processed in order of receipt and consideration will be given to the applicant's support for the ethos of the school, siblings already enrolled in the school and other criteria determined by the school from time to time. To maintain their enrolment, once enrolled, students are expected to act consistently with the school's ethos and comply with the conditions and terms of enrolment. Parents are also expected to be supportive of the ethos of the school.

Enrolment Procedures Information

We offer all prospective parents the following information by email, fax or mail:
Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School Prospectus
Relevant Handbooks and/or access to School Policies via the website
Current Newsletter
An invitation to attend the next School Tour. Tours are held regularly through the year.

Enrolment Procedures for Kindergarten –Year 6

Application for Enrolment

Parents are to complete the Southern Highlands Rudolf Steiner School Enrolment Application Form. Receipt of Application Form, Documentation and Application Fee
Receipt of the Application Form, Application Fee and attached documentation, will be acknowledged by telephone, email or mail. If a place is available, the school will forward an invitation to attend an interview with the Class Teacher and Education Manager or their nominee. If a place is not available, the child's name will be added to the Waiting for Interview List. Prospective parents will be informed of this, and contacted for an interview once a place becomes available.

Interview with Class Teacher and Principal

Both the parent/s or guardian/s and the student are required to attend an initial interview with the Class Teacher and Principal or their nominee at which all aspects of the student's education at Aurora Southern Highlands Steiner School will be discussed including the financial requirements of the school, fees and charges. It is expected that parent/s or guardian/s and the Principal or their nominee will have some private time during the interview. Parents are to make arrangements for younger students to be cared for while this happens. During this interview a start date may or may not be nominated and subsequent interviews may be requested.

Letter of Offer

If a place is available for the nominated start date, a letter of offer will be forwarded to the applicant.

Acceptance of Offer Form and Acceptance Fee

The Acceptance of Offer Form together with a non-refundable Enrolment Fee of \$625 must be returned to the school within 14 days of receipt of the offer. Payment of this fee reserves a place for the applicant's child to commence at the nominated time. If the offer is not accepted, then it will lapse. Upon receiving the Acceptance of Offer Form, parents will be required to read and accept the School's Policies and Procedures which can be accessed online via the school website with a password. After reading the policies parents will need to fill in the Conditions of Enrolment Form to indicate that they have read and understood the school's policies, and return this checklist together with a non-refundable Enrolment Fee of \$625.

Payment of Fees and Charges

The first term's Fees, Consolidated Charges and Other Charges are to be paid prior to the student's first day at school. For families with children already enrolled in the school, the required Fees, Consolidated Charges and Other Charges for the newly enrolled child will be added to their existing account and invoiced accordingly.

Parent, Student and Teacher Satisfaction

Parents, teachers and students are involved in many aspects of school life. This involvement is welcomed and encouraged. A host of parent and student initiatives occurred throughout 2015 including market days, cultural days, fundraising events, marketing and communications, parent information and education, parent involvement in classes and more.

Parent responses to the question “From your perspective, what values does this school represent”

“Giving children a childhood. Wholistic growth and development of the child. Commitment to importance of nature for children. Understanding of the role of the teacher in child’s life. Community.”

“1. Complete child education and learning based in children’s individual learning 2. Fostering child’s love of learning exploring discovering 3. Importance of nature culture 4. Community 5. Questioning the norm of society and remaining true to self”

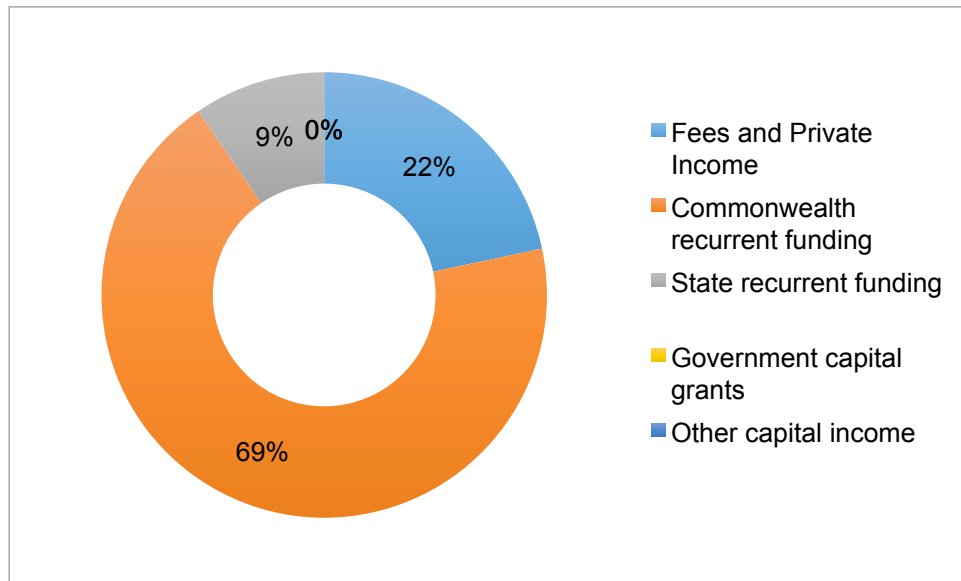
“holding an inspiring and safe space to allow the child to flourish.”

“Caring, kindness, individuality, respect and belonging.”



Financial Summary

Income



Expenditure

