



Thursday 10th March, 2016

Newsletter #2

For Your Calendar

Term 1: Thursday 28th Jan – Wednesday 6th April
Parent craft group- Friday mornings 9.30am
Parent Eurythmy- Wednesdays from 3:15pm
Grow Cook Eat Festival- Sunday 20th March
Easter Assembly- Thursday 24th March
Autumn Harvest Festival- Wednesday 6th April
SHASE AGM- Wednesday 6th April 6pm

News from James

Truth, Beauty, Goodness

Last year our theme was big-heartedness and we focussed our efforts and resources on being an open, warm, welcoming community. I believe we had a great deal of success in community building with this theme underlying our thinking and actions. This year we focus on the theme of truth, beauty and goodness; more specifically, seeking, seeing and expressing truth, beauty and goodness.

At our parent evening on Wednesday 24th February we discussed our new theme and what it meant to us all in the context of this school and ways we can contribute to upholding these values. Thank you to all those school community members who attended the evening. Lisa Devine, our Eurythmy teacher and Chaplain, spoke about how we bring the concept of goodness to children through stories and opportunities for acts of kindness rather than intellectualising the concepts. It is through our actions and way of being that young children learn goodness, not so much preaching to them about how they should think and act.

In The Kingdom of Childhood Lecture 2, Rudolf Steiner states the following:

These are the things that matter most for the young child. What you say to him, what you teach him, does not yet make any impression, except in so far as he imitates what you say in his own speech. But it is what you are that matters; if you are good this goodness will appear in your gestures, and if you are evil or bad-tempered this also will appear in your gestures – in short, everything that you do yourself passes over into the child and pursues its way within him. This is the essential point. The child is wholly sense-organ, and reacts to all the impressions aroused in him by the people around him. Therefore the essential thing is not to imagine that the child can learn what is good or bad, that he can learn this or that, but to know that everything that is done in his presence is transformed in his childish organism into spirit, soul and body. Health for the whole of life depends on how one conducts oneself in the presence of the child. The inclinations which he develops depend on how one behaves in his presence.

Whether we like it or not, our state of being has the most influence on the young children around us. We know through modern physiological and neurological studies that children adjust to match our physical and emotional states. This is one of the reasons why the staff at Aurora school do a lot of work on developing a healthy 'inner life' both personally and as a social organism.

Behind the scenes

You may have noticed that Mel and I (along with some other staff) have been occupied with extra tasks lately. This term we have been putting together and updating curriculum and policy documentation for our Board of Studies registration process. This is a yearly event for our young school, as we grow each year stepping into a new stage in the students' development. This year we are renewing our registration for Year 4 and we are applying for registration for Years 5 and 6 in 2017. The documentation is due by the end of March and we will be hosting a visit from Board of Studies inspectors on 27th April (second day of Term 2).

Exciting initiatives for 2016

Chicken Coop

Jeddah and the Middle Primary Class will be setting up a portable chicken coop in our playground. It will be up and running in Term 2.

Garden and playground upgrades

Aurora has a small working group for garden and playground development. So far, it is made up of Bec Reidy, Jeddah, Annabel and me. At the moment we are putting together a plan for the garden and playground equipment. You may have noticed some small additions already such as another raised vegetable garden bed with new seedlings already planted. There is a new child lock on the front gate and notice boards in the front shelter for community notices and school notices. Keep an eye out for improvements to the sand pit and the cubby! If you would like to be part of our working group, please join us on Wednesday mornings at 8am for walk and talk sessions.

Parent Education

This year there is a small group of community members who would like to organise a structured parent education program. By the end of this term you will receive an invitation to complete an online survey about the topics you would be interested in exploring in 2016.

AGM 6th April

Our annual general meeting for the Southern Highlands Association for Steiner Education is at 6pm on the 6th April. SHASE is the legal entity that oversees the running of Aurora. The members of the association have the opportunity to be nominated and elected for membership of the Board of Directors, a group of 7 volunteer members of the association who are the governing body of the school. If you wish to become a member of SHASE, please pick up an application form from the office and attend our AGM. If you wish to be on the Board of Directors you will have an opportunity at the AGM to be nominated and elected.

Yours with heart,

James

Easter Celebrations

Thursday 24th March. 9:30am till 1pm.

This year Easter will be celebrated with a focus on children rather than a broader community event. Parents are invited to share in proceedings but it will be more low key than in previous years. There will be a larger event for our Autumn/ Harvest Festival on Wednesday 6th April.

On the day:

Children arrive at normal time 8.55am

Easter Assembly- 9.30am

Shared Morning Tea- 11am

Children's Easter craft- 11.30am

Lunch – students' own lunch 12.45pm

Optional home time 1pm.

Easter: a celebration of new life

Easter in Australia can pose quite a riddle for many of us who care for and work with children. For some it has a strong religious significance; for others it comes and goes in a delicious flurry of chocolate and shiny foil. With its roots in pagan fertility rites, Easter's eggs and bunnies and Springtime colours can seem out of place in our Australian Autumn. Yet for nearly all families it's a special time, and a time the children will likely hold memories of throughout their lives.

So how to make it meaningful and relevant? How can we find and forge our own connection with Eastertide? This is a brave quest, and an experimental one. And it may be said that it's a quest much needed in our time- to imbue the patterns of our lives with 'human-wrought wisdom'; to renew worn-out habits and traditions by re-forming our own relationship to our world. On this journey there is no 'one right way', but rather a sincere wish to dive into the truth-essence of a festival, story, or tradition, and to bring it forth in a way that speaks to us right here and now.

In this spirit, we may look at Easter as a profound festival of death and rebirth- of disintegration and renewal, endings and new beginnings. And above all, of the transformative power of love in bringing forth the potential that lies sleeping like a seed in even the darkest of situations. And what could be more relevant for our world and our time? May our Easter be truly nourishing, and plant a new seed within our families, our community and our world!

"The corn is milled for bread, the broken branch sends forth a shoot

The grape is pressed for wine, the hollow reed becomes a flute

And like the seed that grows from every flower that dies

More radiant than the rose

Let Love in us arise

Let Love in us arise..."

Craft Mornings with Jenny

A reminder that there is a regular Friday morning parent Craft group meeting from 9.30am to 11.30/12. There we learn Steiner soft toy techniques such as doll-making, felting and small gift ideas! All are welcome. We are currently making felt bunnies and will be making up kits to sell at the little shop on Friday.

Grow Cook Eat Festival – Aurora Children's Tent

On Sunday March 20 Aurora will be hosting the Children's Tent at the local Grow Cook Eat Festival in Moss Vale. This is a wonderful family event that attracts over 2000 people each year, so it's a stellar marketing opportunity for our school as well as a great chance to contribute to the wider community.

On the day we will be offering activities including baking, seed saving, puppet shows and egg decorating. We'd love your help on the day or in the lead-up- the more of our Aurora families we have present, the more people we can connect with and the richer we can make their experience. A big thanks to those who have put up hands already to offer their skills and resources!

There are many different ways to support- planning and prep of activities in the lead-up, set-up on the morning, welcoming people, hands-on help in running activities, pack down and so on. So whatever you can offer is welcome! We will be having brief preparation sessions directly after school this Friday plus Monday, Tuesday & Thursday next week- 3.15-3.45pm in the Kindergarten- so please drop by any of these if you can help out. We also hope to have a roster of our primary students to assist on the day- many of them are very keen!

We look forward to a fabulous day together showcasing our school!

From the Kindergarten

Beauty is a key theme that we're working with in our school community this year. Here at Aurora we seek to create a warm, nurturing environment with a sense of beauty, aliveness and order. Through reflection and through discussion with colleagues and families at our recent parent evening, I've been struck by the many dimensions of beauty that we can give attention to... for example beauty in the social realm and in deeds and actions, as well as in the visual and physical space that we immediately think of.

I'm also coming to see that ATTENTION and SPACE can be wonderful helpers in experiencing beauty. What we give our attention to grows, and I'm loving holding the children in that awareness of beauty. I wish I could convey the magical moments that happen between the children every day – it's a privilege to witness!!

In the Kindergarten I'm also working to create space for beauty. Less is more! I've asked the children to choose their favourite play objects, and the rest we're passing on to other classes or simply saying goodbye to. The possibility is a space that sings – a school environment where the things we have bring us joy, light us up and inspire us to care for them well. It's liberating!

Here's to spaces, alive environments from which the children can draw true nourishment, and in which they can develop respect, reverence and a love of life!

Annabel Brown

Primary Painting Class

Monday afternoon painting class includes both primary classes. The children help to set up and to clear up, they are becoming very adept at working together.

A beautiful silence reigns when the children begin to paint.

In these lessons the children are given the opportunity to develop a sense for the quality of each colour and its interaction with other colours. Painting lessons also provide an opportunity to develop a sense for what is aesthetically pleasing and what is not.

In First Term the children are building a relationship with the colours. Painting at this stage is not to do with colouring things. Instead, we are working with the experience of colour.

It could also be said that we are working with an experience of light and dark. Light when slightly darkened, becomes yellow – an expanding colour. Yellow expands out from the centre, fading to the periphery. Pure dark is blue: absolute lack of light. Its innate quality is to envelope and it is darkest at its outer boundary and lighter in the centre. Blue, in its innate quality, is really a boundary colour.

Red becomes the harmony in between yellow and blue. It is consistent, providing balance.

Initially the children experienced each of the primary colours (yellow, red and blue).

Next the children experienced what happens to the quality of each colour when juxtaposed beside another. Pairs of colour are used in such a way that one colour grows out from the centre, whilst the other comes in from the periphery.

More recently the children have been mixing colours on the page creating wonderful colour-scapes.

Kate Koch

From the Middle Primary

The students have been producing their own 30 cm rulers for use in the classroom as part of their Measurement Main Lesson. Students needed to saw and sand their ruler and then use their pencils to add the centimeter increments onto the ruler. It is amazing how accurate these rulers are. The students have done a tremendous job and will go on to use their measurement skills with the creation of a small bamboo fence for the far edge of our swing area.

The presentation from Rhonda from Guide Dogs Australia was marvelous and a highlight to the week. Rhonda showed us her collection of canes and even allowed all the students to have a go at using a cane. She taught us the rules of interacting with a Guide Dog. Most importantly is to NEVER distract or pat a working dog that is in a harness. The students were all engaged and remembered most of what Rhonda had spoken to them about. Did you receive your homework from Rhonda? She asked all the students to give a special message to their parents as homework!

Our next Main Lesson is Autumn on the Farm and we will be delving into the science world of animals and crops and their important place in our community. Chickens, bees and sheep produce eggs, honey and wool but need the hard work and know how of the farmer to produce. We will be farmers, fencing the play area, growing crops and learning how to care for animals.

Now you see that the material you have gathered through describing the environment (in class 1 and 2) you employ in a free way for forming your lesson on practical occupations. The child of about nine in the third class can very well gain an idea.... of how to manure, and how to plough; what rye and wheat look like. In short you let the child enter into his surroundings as far as he can with understanding.

Rudolf Steiner Curriculum Lecture 1 1919

Crunch and Sip seems to be working quite well in the classroom and we will keep it as a permanent, yet optional, part of our morning. If your child is requesting Crunch and Sip then you need to make sure you are packing something that can be taken from the bag and eaten at the table while they work. A water bottle is also needed. Things like grapes and cut up fruit in a reusable container are ideal.

Easter is fast approaching and the school's egg hunt is starting. We are asking families for prepared eggs for our egg decorating activities leading up to the Easter. Eggs need to be blown, washed out and brought into school before Friday 18th March. Our preference is for free range, lighter coloured eggs.

Things for your calendar. Every Wednesday we are working outside so hats and appropriate clothing are necessary. Thursday is lunch at school and library.

Have a great week!

Jeddah Teasdale

From the Library

I am sure you have all been hearing about our wonderful new library! Every week (Thursday for Primary and Friday for Kindy with Annabel) I have been taking a library lesson with the Primary classes, including book talks, borrowing & story time. All the children have embraced this new routine and have been very enthusiastic in participating with the program. My hopes are to help instil in the children a genuine love of books and reading, and develop an appreciation as to how special books are. This is where your help at home is greatly appreciated!

In the first few borrowing weeks of the year, I have been letting the children find their way with all the new material by allowing them to choose their own books, which has been a worthwhile experiment. From this it has come to my attention that a lot of the children are choosing big books way above their reading level! To me this indicates a raw enthusiasm and a desire to really sink their teeth into things. They are obviously eager to learn, which is fantastic! However, from this week on, after getting a feel for the children's interests and abilities, I will be engaging in a more hands on approach with the borrowing by helping to direct the children a little more with their choices.

One book will remain at school for reading time, and the other will be sent home to either read on their own or with a parent.

Please ensure you take the time to either facilitate this for your child by allocating them at least 20 mins a day reading time, or if your child is not reading independently, please, please, please, find the time to read their library book together. We start each lesson with the children telling the class about their book, so it really makes it hard for those who haven't actually read their book.

THURSDAY is Primary library day, FRIDAY for Kindy, so please ensure your child has their book, in a library bag to bring to class, or they unfortunately miss out on borrowing.

Also, for those with longer chapter books, there is a 4 week borrowing limit, but please still send the book on a Thursday so it can be re borrowed. Some children still have books from last year...

I am so excited to be able to offer my time for these lessons and am just so thrilled the children are becoming great lovers of books!

If any of you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to email me, rachel.larmer@hotmail.com

Warm Regards,

Rachel Larmer

Student Work Gallery – Primary Painting

