

Friday 13th May, 2016

Newsletter #4

Important dates for your calendar:

Term 2: Tuesday 26th April – Thursday 23rd June
Parent craft group- Friday mornings 9.30am
Parent Eurythmy- Wednesdays from 3:15pm
Whitsun Assembly: Monday 16th May
Parent Evening: Wednesday 25th May
Winter Festival: Thursday 23rd June

News from James

We are off to a flying start in Term 2 and we have some exciting projects ahead. It has been very heartening to see our growing student body being so friendly and encouraging towards each other. There is a very positive buzz around the place.

GLaM conference

Below is a verse chosen, courtesy of Vancouver Steiner School, for the Steiner Education Australia Governance, Leadership and Management (GLaM) 2016 conference. I thought it would be a good one for us to think about as we venture forth with our growing school.

‘May we strive together with good will
To form a community
Where the gifts of each one are acknowledged
And where each one does one’s best,
That the highest spiritual powers
May help us bring forth a school
Worthy of all children
That they may learn to live and breathe
In spirit awareness
Blessing the world with their deeds.’

Mel Savill (Business Manager), Jane Button (Board Chair) and I attended the GLaM conference on Thursday, Friday and Saturday last week. It was held in Melbourne at Sophia Mundi Steiner School and attracted delegates from all over Australia and New Zealand. The theme this year was ‘Uplifting Conversations’ and there were many. We came away challenged, enlightened and encouraged at the healthy state of Steiner schools in Australia. The focus was on building a positive learning community, being bold in taking on challenges, constructively and critically appraising the way we do things as Steiner schools and being prepared to change practices to meet the needs of students in our time. We made many helpful connections and will be collaborating with other Steiner school educators in few projects this year.

Business plan

Whilst at GLaM, Jane, Mel and I met with Steve Klipin, Business Manager at Chrysalis Steiner School and consultant, about the next step in the process of developing a thorough business plan for Aurora with three to five year projections. We will be calling on input from the whole school community in the coming months to help set up our long term priorities for spending for Aurora. Once we have confirmed dates we will invite school community members to participate.

Aboriginal education program

Aurora has been working closely with Kazcare and Koori Kulcha in the last few months developing an Aboriginal education program. After discussions with Aurora staff, the school board and leaders in other school programs we have started work on a program which involves: 1. welcoming the enrolment of students with an Indigenous background; 2. a healthy eating program for all Aurora students including native foods; 3. a culture and language program for all Aurora students including local Indigenous teachers and elders. We are keen to set up a program that is integrated, allowing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students to learn from each other and their respective communities. Our lofty aim is for this program to be a model for the broader community. It requires inclusiveness, understanding and courage and I think we have a unique opportunity to make a very positive, exciting project work for our school and the broader community. More details of the program will be given at the upcoming parent evening.

Literacy program

Since the beginning of last year the teachers and I have been examining our literacy program to develop a whole school approach and applying best practice principles in our context. Of particular interest has been the approach to teaching and assessing phonemic awareness which has been recognised as a key determinant of students' overall literacy ability and future capacity. With renewed vigour and inspiration from presentations and discussions at GLaM conference, there will be some further improvements to the way we teach literacy in line with overwhelming evidence in the last decade indicating the importance of explicit teaching in the area of phonics and phonemic awareness. The teachers and I are currently in the process of providing resources, professional learning and staffing for the best possible literacy program for our students as a matter of high priority. More details will be forthcoming at the parent evening.

Clothing reminder

Thank you to all those supporting our clothing policy. Please continue to support your children in wearing appropriate clothing free of prominent brand names or slogans. With the colder weather please ensure that children have enough warm clothing and **wet weather gear**. Students play and work outside in all weather conditions.

Whitsun Assembly Monday 16th May

On Monday morning we will be having an assembly to celebrate Whitsun or 'White Sunday'. The assembly will be for the children but all parents and friends are welcome. In the Christian tradition it is a time to acknowledge Pentecost or the coming of the Holy Spirit. At Aurora it is a time to celebrate community, connectedness, diversity and the the spirit of all things. We will be acknowledging and celebrating the different languages spoken in our community so if you would like to contribute the verse below in a language other than English, please do so at the assembly.

Spirit of All Things

Breathe within me
You spirit of all things
That you may truly think

Strengthen me
You Spirit of all things
That I may truly help

Help me
You Spirit of all things
That I may never forget

New Staff Member

Welcome Pascalle Nelemans to the Aurora staff! Pascalle is our new Cook and Kindergarten Assistant. Her hours will be 9am – 12pm each day. Pascalle has already been assisting us this year and we are all pleased to see that she can continue and expand this work in an official capacity.

Yours with heart,

James

Nourishing the Senses in the Aurora Kindergarten

In the Kindergarten, we've had a joyful start to Term 2 with a fast-growing group, a finger-knitting craze and pumpkins a-plenty! It's birthday season, and the children have truly enjoyed honouring their friends through our beautiful celebrations. We've welcomed prac student Eva Leone, and look forward to Pacalle Nelemans joining us as our assistant each morning from next week onwards. It's working well to have returned to Morning Tea as the meal we prepare at school each day, as it allows more space for our many special weekly activities- bread baking, watercolour painting, beeswax, handwork, seasonal crafts, library, Eurythmy and German. With these things woven into our already-rich daily rhythm, the Kindergarten is a vibrant learning environment, and it's a joy to feel it humming along now that we're in second term and the children are at home in their surroundings.

Over the next couple of weeks, I'll be focussing on child observation and assessment, beginning with the lens of what Rudolf Steiner termed 'the foundation senses' of touch, movement, balance and life. Here is a little background about Steiner's model of the senses, as it's a powerful tool for creating true wellbeing for children and adults alike.

Back at the turn of last century, Steiner was well ahead of his time in recognising that we have more than just the five senses traditionally spoken of. He asserted that we have twelve senses, and indeed researchers today posit that we have between ten and nineteen human senses... google away on that! Steiner saw these senses as being grouped in three spheres, as we see in this summary courtesy of Dawn Tranter & Sally Haughey.

The Lower Senses – “Sensation” Senses – The Physical Senses

The lower senses give us a certain consciousness of our body. The focus period for the development of these senses is 0-7 years of age, and they're spoken of as foundation senses because they pave the way for the perception and cognitive senses that follow.

Sense of Life – This sense allows us to experience our own constitution, whether we feel well or not (editic).

Sense of Touch – This sense tells you something about the object you are touching and your sense of boundary (tactile).

Sense of Movement – Gives us a sense of our joints and muscles when we move. It is development from sitting, crawling, walking (proprioception).

Sense of Balance – Gives us our relationship to the three dimensions of space; above/below, right/left and front/back (vestibular, orientation).

The healthy strength and integration of the lower senses lays the foundation for all the higher level skills- cognitive, social, and spiritual- for the rest of life. When the lower senses are healthy, one has pleasure and joy in being in the physical body. Movements are balanced, coordinated and integrated. Children are eager to explore the world, welcoming new experiences in all sensory realms, being neither reckless nor timid. The child has good balance literally and metaphorically and also understands appropriate physical and social boundaries.

The Feeling Senses – “Perception” Senses – Soul Senses

These senses give us an experience of the world around us. While they are present from birth, the focus period for refining and development of these senses is during middle childhood, 7-14 years of age.

Sense of Sight – Through this sense we experience light, darkness, and colors.

Sense of Smell – Through this sense we experience the quality of things (odors, scents, aromas, etc) and our relationship to them. Smelling is related to memory.

Sense of Taste – Digestion begins in the mouth. Ideally, our sense of taste should teach us what is good for us. Tongue distinguishes different qualities of food.

Sense of Warmth – This a two-fold sense, a temperature sense of hot and cold. We experience physical temperatures as well as soul warmth and coldness.

The Cognitive Senses – “Concept” Senses

These senses give us access to communicating our thoughts and feelings to others, and are also called the social senses. Again though they are present from early in life, the focus of development is during 14 – 21 years of age period.

Sense of Hearing – Our ear has three main parts – the outer, middle and inner ear. Our sense of hearing allows us to differentiate sounds.

Sense of Word (Speech) – Allows us to be aware of the language another human being uses to communicate with us. Allows us to grasp how language is used.

Sense of Thought – The sense that gives one the capacity to understand, comprehend, and picture what another’s thoughts convey.

Sense of Ego – The sense that gives one the ability to be sensitive to someone’s individuality.

I love this model of the twelve senses because it allows us as educators to look in a specific way at where a child might be experiencing challenges, and how we can sensitively adjust their environment and activities to provide rich sensory experiences. I look forward to sharing more about my experiences in actively working with the foundation senses at our upcoming Parent Evening- hope to see you there!

Annabel Brown

From Class 1/2

“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!”

Ode To Autumn by Keats

What a beautiful time of year it is! Autumn in the Southern Highlands gives us such a rich and colourful experience of the change of seasons. It has provided a lovely setting for our current main lesson: ‘Mother Natures’ Garden’. In this main lesson we are learning about the elements and the seasons.

In the early primary years, science and geography comes in the form of exploration and discovery of the world of nature, earth, air, fire, water, seasons and natural processes. These processes are not named or brought to the children in an abstract or intellectual way but rather through nature stories. The water cycle and the ecology of the earth are experienced through characterization of the elements of the natural world.

Science is based primarily upon observation of nature. The students are encouraged to notice the change in the seasons, in the earth and plants and the weather.

The children have enjoyed our morning nature walks, experiencing the elements, writing nature poems and listening to many nature stories. Our morning circle this term is focused on trees in the form of songs, poems and movement.

Transition times, particularly at this time when we are moving into the colder, darker months can be quite hard for the children. We have had some colds and sore throats and tiredness. Keeping warm and drinking plenty of water helps.

Finally, welcome to our new friend and classmate, Dylan Shepherd and his parents, Corey and Kia. It is so lovely to see our school community growing in such a wonderful way.

Kate Koch

From the Middle Primary

We are very excited to introduce Annalise, Isabella, Isabella (yes, that's 2 Isabella's), Taya, Kye (yes, another Kai), Corby-Lee and Nate into our classroom. We know you will all have a great term and we look forward to getting to know you and your families better!

This term the Middle Primary have started the term with a story writing Main Lesson. The Persian Medieval Poet Nizami will enter our classroom as we consider his classic epic 'Haft Paykar', or 'The Seven Wise Princesses'. These princesses from India, China, Russia, Greece, Arabia, Persia and Morocco tell tales of colour and wonder. Alongside these princess storytellers, our class will be writing our own stories and exploring literary concepts such as setting, character development and descriptive writing.

Fractions and decimals will be the Main Lesson challenge during the middle of the term. We will be slicing and dicing numbers, adding and subtracting parts as we build skills and understanding of the bits in between the numbers we know so well.

Hebrew stories will continue during Main Lesson at the end of the term as we sail on from Noah and follow Moses as a little baby on the Nile to the leader on a quest for right and wrong.

Homework will start coming home this term. The homework will be short 'drill' type exercises such as practising spelling lists, reading home readers and maths work. This will be work that students should be able to complete independently as it will follow on from work we have done in class. It will be designed to be completed each night in short, intense bursts that should fit around busy schedules.

Garden Planning

Our garden plan is filled with great ideas and we now need to transition this grand vision into physical action. We need to work out what is feasible, what suits the direction of the school and a timeline for implementation. We would like parents to be involved as we know there are a few passionate gardeners amongst you all. If you haven't done so already, please add your own vision to the map in the office. Just ask Mel for a sticky note to be involved. Looking forward to seeing those who can make it then!

Jeddah Teasdale

Student Work Gallery

