

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2016

## Newsletter #5

### Important dates for your calendar:

Term 2: Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April – Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June  
Term 3 commences Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July  
Parent craft group- Friday mornings 9.30am  
Parent Eurythmy- Wednesdays from 3:15pm  
Queens Birthday Public Holiday – Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June  
Winter Festival: Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June

### News from James

*[It is] ...what you are that matters; if you are good this goodness will appear in your gestures.*

The Kingdom of Childhood Lecture 2, R. Steiner

### Reflections on our parent evening...

Thank you to all those parents, guardians and friends who were able to make it to our parent evening on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May. The highlight for me was the singing led by Ganga throughout the evening.

During the evening we visited classrooms and the class teachers talked through their current teaching programs. This process enabled us to see the progression of skills and concepts as the students move through the school. We are very fortunate to have such a strong teaching staff exuding goodness and beauty for the children.

We spoke about the short history of the school and our place in it. It was interesting to see as we stood in a large circle, starting at the founding parents and moving around to the latest enrolments, that half the circle was made up of parents who arrived at the school since the beginning of 2016. This is a reflection of the student body, it has roughly doubled in size since the start of the year. We discussed the challenges in this change as well as the positive elements.

So, how do we embrace this development and growth whilst at the same time maintaining the important core values (such as truth, beauty and goodness) that were present at the foundation of the school? One tool we can use to enable creativity and development in a structured and orderly manner is through action research. It is a model that enables us to introduce projects or programs to the school on a small scale, examine their effectiveness and value, collect evidence and make decisions about the next step. This constant cycle of gathering of data, reflection and visioning does take work and commitment but it allows us to maintain a balance of consistency and vision on the one hand and agility and flexibility on the other.

On the parent evening I explained how we are using this action research model in two projects at the moment. One is the Wiritjiribin partnership between Koori Kulcha and Aurora. It is an Aboriginal culture project that involves welcoming local Aboriginal students to Aurora as well as providing a language and culture education program for all students at the school, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. We have started on a small scale and will grow slowly, changing to suit the school and the new students as we go. There will be new language and culture teaching at our school starting next term.

The second project we have just started is a literacy review. As a staff we have been examining how we have been teaching literacy and the importance of explicit teaching of phonemic awareness when teaching literacy. We are not going to wait for the findings of a full-scale review before we start implementing what we believe is the right path. We have a fair idea where we need to head with this but we will start on a small scale and build. We have already started using a new set of readers for students as well as phonics based spelling programs. We will continue to monitor student progress and develop the program as we go.

A third project (that I didn't mention on parent evening) is the development of a comprehensive business plan. We started this project late in 2015 and plan to produce a formal document by November 2016. In the meantime, members of the Board, staff and a business management consultant have been, and will be, meeting in its development. We will ask for input from parents on a planning day in Term 3.

It has been and will continue to be a time of growth and change in our school which can be scary and exciting. I am confident of a strong future if we can continue with the spirit of inclusiveness and big-heartedness that has been evident over the last couple years. During the parent evening and since then, there seems to have been a renewed vigour and energy in parents to be involved in helping to establish stronger school community links, foster parent education and build relationships. This has come from established and new parents alike. Stay tuned for more developments. It is heartening to see such respectfulness and inclusiveness in building our Aurora community.

## Announcements

### Aurora Out of School Hours Care officially launched

After a long and exhaustive process of filling in many forms, undergoing training, collecting certificates, inspections and writing many new policies, AOOSHC has finally received the official go ahead from the Early Childhood and Education Care directorate (the regulatory body in charge of authorising out of school hours care). We are currently offering Tuesday-Thursday afternoons from 3.15-6pm. We would like to extend this to Monday-Friday afternoons according to need. In the long term, we are looking at extending the service to before school care and vacation care depending on the need. Eventually it will be offered to students from other schools enabling them to receive a taste of Steiner education.

### Winter Clothing

Now that we are officially in Winter, children have the option to wear a hat or beanie as there is less risk of sun damage and there is evidence to suggest that in Winter children need some skin exposure to the sun for their health. Please ensure that all students have warm clothing and a rain coat for wind and rain. It is important for students to wear clothing appropriate for outdoor activities including covered shoes or boots.

Yours with heart,

James

## The Foundations of Confidence

At our recent Parent Evening, it was striking to hear many people speak about the natural, unaffected confidence they see growing in their children. What is it we do differently at our school that enables this quality to come forth? I believe it's the way we look to the children as competent beings.

In our Kindergarten and across the school, we create an environment where students are engaged in real-life learning. The classroom is more than a space of practise and preparation for an adult future – rather, it is life itself, here and now. The children are participants and key players in this community, and their contribution is needed and valued. From the earliest days of schooling, the children are involved in a whole range of domestic and self-care tasks. We give children room to do things for themselves, make their own mistakes, and find their own solutions. All this within a space of warmth and care.

So how might you support this structure outside the school? First, it takes time for children to do things on their own. More time means more opportunities for success so factor that in to your plan. Second, be open to new possibilities of what your child might achieve on their own. Third, bringing things to completion is an essential skill, so create small goals along the way and be around to see that they happen.

So back to the big picture. True confidence comes from knowing we have the skills and resources to take care of ourselves and those around us. By allowing children to develop these from an early age, we empower them to become skilled creators of their worlds, now and in the future. So step back and let your children show you their stuff...you may be pleasantly surprised!

Annabel Brown

## From Class 1/2

In the lower primary class we have been having fun with mathematics. When I told the children our next main lesson was maths they cheered!

This term we have been working with the four mathematical processes.

For the early primary years it is important that all intellectual concepts are transformed into imaginative pictures so that the child can assimilate abstract ideas in a way that makes sense to them and works with their pictorial consciousness.

The four processes are introduced in story form so that the child has an immediate and joyful connection with what they have to learn. Our story characters are King Equals, Times Multiply, Plus Addition, Minus Subtraction and Share Divide. Out of this content the class work arises. It is wonderful to see the children come to understand the difficult concepts of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing.

In mathematics we work from the whole to the parts so that the children experience unity, rather than disconnected fragments. For instance; we might say "Here are 12 crystals how many different piles of crystals can you make from the 12?" We can make from the 12;  $10+2$ , or  $5+7$ , or  $9+3$ , or  $6+4+2$ , or  $2+2+2+2+2+2...$  in fact there are many different combinations that will all be correct. By starting from this premise, the children build confidence and enthusiasm towards mathematics.

This approach builds on our previous maths main lesson from last term where we explored the quality of numbers. The consciousness of the young child still experiences numbers as qualities at least as much as they understand them as quantities. In response to the enquiry, "What is one?" the students responded with "One is the Sun!" "One is me, there is only one of me!" "One stands alone!" After going on this exploration with all the numbers up to twelve ("twelve months in the year") the children experienced a feeling for the numbers, for oneness and twoness etc. And suddenly their whole world is full of numbers!

Children love to count - they enjoy the rhythmical regularity. As well as using the counters the children made last term and the crystals that Renae kindly gave our class, we have also been counting aloud together. Once the children are comfortable with counting, it is a small but important step to count with strong rhythms, speaking some numbers quietly and others loudly - and suddenly the times-tables appear! We are now clapping the 2, 5 and 10 times tables.

A big welcome to Jai Campbell, Seth Abrahams and Xanda Smith who have joined our class. A big welcome also to their families who have joined our school community. Our class continues to grow in a wonderful way.

Kate Koch

## From the Middle Primary

Maths is beautiful. Maths is truth. Maths is good. And it can be really challenging to work with!

Enter fractions and decimals. This past few weeks our class has been breaking apart the whole numbers we have encountered in previous years and allowing fractions and decimals to find a solid place in our maths consciousness. Fractions on one hand are a simple concept, it is simply a process of dividing numbers into parts. But there are many rules to investigate and understand. Why must all the parts be equal? Why can we compare/add/subtract some fractions easily and not others? How can we view a group of objects as a '1' and then apply the rule of fractions? What does the place value system have to do with decimals? And the hardest of all - remembering which number goes at the top and which at the bottom! Luckily for our class I really love maths and the thought of fractions and decimals gets me excited. We have been using manipulatives, diagrams, pictures, paper folding and straight out mental stamina to try to answer these questions that go beyond simply answering the question and start to build a solid foundation on which further study can sit. Confidence in fractions/decimals is growing as is an ability to simply say 'I don't get it' - a welcome statement that says to me 'I am wanting the guidance so I can seek the answers myself'. A powerful statement indicative of this age group.

Fractions divide, and our day is also divided in a rhythmical way. One part to note is the twelfth of our day spent jogging. It has been a great way to start frosty winter mornings. You might have noticed parents creeping in to the mix too. It's good fun and really warms you up. So if you are at drop off and wearing anything resembling jogging shoes don't be surprised if we ask you to join in too!

Thank you to the parents who were able to attend the parent night. It was great to sing together and hear all the wonderful stories from the different classrooms.

Please remember that I am contactable via email [jeddah@aurorasteiner.nsw.edu.au](mailto:jeddah@aurorasteiner.nsw.edu.au) or at school each morning from 8.30 or at the gate Mon and Fri afternoons.

Sincerely, Jeddah.

## German

Sehr geehrte Eltern,

The last Parent Evening presented a valuable opportunity in which to briefly share the purpose and content of what each class experiences during German this term. I will now elaborate further on this theme for you all, especially for those of you who were not able to make it to that event.

That a second language is a central feature in the Steiner School curriculum goes well beyond opening the door to other cultures as well as travel possibilities as adults. Actually, its ultimate purpose may well surprise us. We intend to enable children to come to an inner experience of the higher Word behind all speakable languages; that human, creative essence which can be translated into and expressed in any language. It is an example of how Steiner Education holds the higher, noble human being as paramount in its task of receiving and educating each child. With deep reverence for the child we hold a higher ideal for each of them to 'grow into' in their own way.

Originally, students in Germany learnt two foreign languages; English as a cousin language, and then another language from another language family, such as French (from the Latin family). As already mentioned, two languages raises the children beyond the outer form of the language to its inner gestures and higher meaning. For me it is the ideal of the child to 'remember' and command how to bring their inner life as living expression into the world. As they progress through the school classes, they may stand as an individual who can sense that higher being who speaks through each human and natural encounter.

In Kindergarten this term, we are singing, speaking winter verses and playing finger and circle games - just as you learnt English, or your own mother tongue, through song and gesture, so do we. Through movement and imitation, the children come to an inner feeling of the gestures and shape of the German language and 'embody it' with their limbs. At this age it is a full-bodied experience which requires no translation into English.

Class 1/2 speak an opening verse before some songs about winter and daily life (washing, animals, our body). We then play games around the different colours or counting. This age group is especially introduced to short plays based on fairy tales, such as Dornröschen and Hänsel und Gretel, which the children quite enjoy. As in Kindergarten, the children are still able to imitate and learn through solely speaking German.

In Upper Primary we begin with a special verse about standing in the world ready to perform noble deeds, introduce ourselves, then bring songs around months of the year, directions, and classroom items. We also continue games around colour and counting. Thursday is our writing day, where the learnt songs and verses are written into their German books. These books will form the basis of the students learning to read and pronounce German.

A final note on difficulties experienced while learning a foreign language: the younger child lives in its consciousness closer to the source of human language, the Word; so they can 'understand' the language in context without needing an intellectual approach of direct translation. As the children get to class four and beyond, they need to play and test themselves with the language, thus with a different approach they encounter new resistance and difficulty in 'not knowing'. I have found that dealing with the anxiety of not being able to understand any more is helped, just like when learning a musical instrument, with trust in time and repetition. For our new students though, they do get support with the necessary English to bring them to where we are this term (such as directions with games and bookwork).

If you wish to learn a little German for our Winter Festival, I suggest you learn this song (original version of "I go with my little lantern"):

Ich geh mit meiner Laterne  
und meine Laterne mit mir.  
Dort oben leuchten die Sterne,  
Hier unten leuchten wir.  
Mein Licht ist aus,  
Ich geh nach Haus,  
Rabimmel, Rabammel Rabum.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Ben

## From Jenny

A group of teachers and parents are planning a Storytelling and Associated Crafts Exchange afternoon 1.30 -4.30 on Friday the 24th June (the day after school breaks up.) If you are interested in contributing towards a larger community workshop and/or joining an ongoing working group.... please feel welcome to come and join us.

Jenny

## Library Book Reviews

Charlie and The Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl

Book Review by Amy

Charlie was one of the 5 people who got the golden tickets to see Mr Willy Wonka's factory. Mr Willy Wonka's factory was one of the biggest chocolate factories in the world. I think this book is really good and I think people 15 and under would like it. I think people who like adventures should read this book.

The Daring Escape of Beatrice and Peabody by Kimberly Newton Fusco

Book Review by Isabella S

Beatrice is a ten year old girl. She has a pet dog named Peabody. One day Beatrice escaped from her home with Peabody. They have an exciting adventure. People who like dogs should read this.



## Student Work Gallery - Class 1/2

