



Edge Hill Country School

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Newsletter: January 2012



EDUCATION AND THE IMAGINATION

Rudolf Steiner believed that imaginative teaching is a way of creating synthesis and wholeness of human experience. Steiner saw the imagination as a point of departure from the observable and objective to the ineffable and subjective, telling us about 'love', 'truth' and that life can be beautiful, a place where the existence of another world can be perceived and where at the same time we are able to make better sense of the material world.

Whether or not 'another world' exists is always a matter for individual exploration, which in many ways does not require that education takes a particular stand. Education, however, can encourage non-dogmatic exploration, and the imagination, according to Steiner, is the primary vehicle for such exploration to occur.

(from "Tracing the Origin of Rudolf Steiner's Pedagogy of Imagination," by Thomas Nielsen and Julia Smith)

STEINER'S VERSE FOR AMERICA

(1923)

May we be centered in the feeling
of compassionate love in our hearts
as we seek to unite with human beings who
share our goals
and with spirit beings who, full of grace,
look downward on our earnest, heartfelt
striving,
strengthening us from realms of light
and illuminating our love.



Snowperson, by Aurora Meek, Grade 1

PHOTOGRAPHY: THINKING IT THROUGH

The subject of photographing the children at school has been under discussion lately. While policies regarding the taking of photos at Waldorf school events vary from school to school, the overarching and underlying intention in a Waldorf school is to avoid the promotion of excessive self-consciousness in the children, to allow the children to engage fully in their activities, and to validate the importance of "living in the present."

In addition, this question has been complicated by the "digital age," in which cameras seem ubiquitous, instant feedback perhaps takes away from simply experiencing the moment without an intervening image, and privacy can be violated if images are posted on the Internet. At the same time, parents (and teachers) understandably take pleasure in having a record of school activities and performances -- witness this newsletter itself.

A photo permission form was issued to each family at the beginning of the year. If any family has specific preferences regarding photography and their children, please reiterate or state these to Marie-Eve or Lise. Faculty will ensure that a family's wishes in this regard are honoured. **Although there should be no public posting of any photo taken of children on school grounds without the permission of the family**, the teachers are deliberating regarding the use of cameras at school events. We feel that as long as photographs are not taking away from the child's experience in the moment or with the audience's experience of the performance, it would seem that photos could be taken by a single person, to make one CD to borrow and print for personal use only. Please feel free to respond to faculty about this question, either in person or via the school e-mail. No decision has been made to date.



Colour study, by Athens Batten, Grade 1

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Tuesday, February 14

Teddy Bear Picnic for the children; students bring a teddy and blanket

Monday, February 20

Civic Holiday

See last page of newsletters for "reminders"!

Class News

Rose Quartz Kindergarten

Marie-Eve Perreault



Our return from the holidays has been smooth and diverse. The children have taken up the new dynamics of circle time with joy and keenness. The big steps through the snow transform into tiptoe steps, jumping steps and skipping steps at the beginning of our seasonal circle; their growing sense of themselves in their bodies is visible. Combined with clapping rhythms and playful songs, they are happy to imitate and love the repetition. These children enjoy being active for the most part and this can be seen at quiet time when resting their body is rather difficult. It is an important though short part of our day, to learn how to rest, feeling that quietness through the body. It allows for an important out-breath. It seems with a new story every week instead of every other week, their imagination is nourished and their interest is more easily sustained, which helps them be successful at quieting their body.

Although King Winter has found his winter throne and Big Chief North Wind blows his icy blasts every now and then, the regular peaks above freezing are challenging our immune systems. Warmth is very important for young children so layers and extra clothes are great for this tricky weather.

WECAN MEMBERSHIP

We have successfully completed the renewal of our developing member status with WECAN (Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America), which entailed a site visit by regional representative Sue Martin in the classroom in December and an updated self-

study. This gives us support and guidelines to help our direction and program and is always an ongoing goal and striving.

Amethyst Class

Megan Gruner



The children have been waiting anxiously for King Winter to settle in and it looks as though he is here to stay for a while. It is truly a joy to see the children so ecstatic to go outside and play during their breaks!

The Amethyst Class returned from Christmas holidays to a new mathematics block. The Grade 1 children were introduced to the four math process through a series of stories featuring the fairies, Enforio and Freya, and their traveling companion, Rootling the Gnome. As you may remember from our last newsletter, these three companions were off to the Amethyst Kingdom to deliver the numbers they had collected and safely stored away in their number book. These numbers were to be delivered to the King to protect them from the evil Witch of the Underworld. Since our math block started we have met Queen Addo, who loves to add up gems, nuts and seeds. Her best friend, Maiden Minus, makes sure everyone in the kingdom has what they need and gives away what Queen Addo has stored up. King Divide is a very fair sort of fellow and shares everything equally between his subjects. Soon we will be meeting Ricky Ticky Times, the King's magician, who magically multiplies anything he likes! This magical math journey has enchanted the students and has made the introduction of these mathematical processes a living part of their imaginative life.

The Grade 2s were introduced to the concept of place value. An ongoing game of Capture the Coin has helped to sharpen their mental math

ability and solidify the concept of place value. We continue to work on our times tables through movement, skipping, rhythm sticks and bean bag tossing. The eight times table is currently being examined and learned.

Our recorder playing continues to improve and we are enjoying playing (and singing) many songs about King Winter and Jack Frost. We play the recorder every day for about 15 minutes and we are finding the cumulative nature of the short and regular practices to be quite effective in helping hone our skills. During our weekly music class we are exploring percussion and keeping the beat in 4/4 time. It is evident that the students are very proud of their recorder playing and singing abilities. There are frequent spontaneous outbursts of singing in our class. This is music to my ears. The children find true joy in choral singing. Perhaps we will play for the coffee house planned at the school!

We are all looking forward to our Winter Fun day planned for January the 24th at the Durham Conservation Area. We are looking forward to tobogganing and going for a winter hike to look for animal tracks. Perhaps we will be lucky enough to have a hot chocolate on the trail!

Pick-up Time

Please remember that pick-up time at the end of the school day is between 3:15 and 3:30. There is supervision until 3:30, at which time we will ring the school bell to indicate that faculty is no longer on duty and parents are responsible for their children. Faculty will ensure that all children have a parent/guardian/pre-arranged carpooling driver present. After-care can be arranged at \$5 per ½ hour per child. Note that after school all children must be directly supervised by a parent/guardian. Playground rules require adult permission and direct supervision when climbing trees.

Arrival

Please note that children should be in class and ready to work no later than 9 a.m.

Citrine Class

Christina Schwarz



The Citrine Class reunited after the holidays full of energy, happy to get back to the daily rhythm of classroom activity. It could be my imagination but the children all seemed to have grown a few inches and matured in both behavior and opinion in the two short weeks we were apart. They are really growing up. I was of course very proud of them for their performances during the Christmas assembly. The class has a knack for pulling it all together and shining when it counts even though rehearsals in the days before sometimes lacked focus. They will probably remember their "The Wind and the Moon" forever as we did work to memorize it during many morning circles. We continue to use the stick rhythm pattern we did to sing "The Little Drummer Boy" to practice spelling.



It is always a busy time before the holidays and making Christmas crafts and presents is part of the season. One craft was folding strips of paper into star shapes. It was complicated and yes, even frustrating at first, but following along slowly and paying careful attention to my instruction worked and the last few stars were folded swiftly and with confidence. The

folded stars were strung together then dyed in the goldenrod dye we made in the fall, giving them a soft yellow glow. You may have all noticed the results in our backdrop during the play.

We were and still are studying fibres and clothing. We used fleece, carding and wet-felting it into ornaments to which we added beads and embroidery after they were formed. This allowed us to discover wool and its unique characteristics hands on. Now we are learning of its history, its qualities, the way it is processed as well as its many uses.

Form drawing has been used to complement the fibre block. We "wove" colours in our most recent painting class and we "knitted" a large full page mitten. We also used small lines to "embroider" our own patterns, formal and Asian, after learning about silk.



Felicity Meek with felted decoration.

The students have been creating and acting out small skits for main lesson with humorous results. We have been singing in rounds and are learning a new recorder song also to play in a round. We are weaving patterns walking to various verses in morning circle and are getting used to tossing bean bags in unison.

Mental math continues to become more complicated with division and multiplication being the focus. Word problems are practised almost daily. Our most recent entry into our math books were squared numbers drawn with pennies. We have also recently played money bingo where the students need to count the coins on their card.

All the students are reading books of their own choosing and reporting on them according to their abilities. The class is looking at various consonant blends, finding words and forming sentences. We continue to work on recognizing nouns, verbs, and all the "colour" and "how" words that make sentences much more interesting. We have begun a new novel, *The Brothers Lionheart*, which begins with sadness but has turned now into a grand adventure. There is such a cozy vibe in the classroom these days with the colder weather and everyone intent on getting the ideas they have for their main lesson pages into their books just as they imagine them, all quiet with concentration. Later they will be laughing and giggling together over one of their running jokes, bursting to get outside to continue their mutual imaginative game. It is simply a joy to watch their exuberance.

CALENDAR FUNDRAISER

All calendars have been distributed and if everyone has sold or sells all their calendars the profit would be \$1500 towards the fundraising goal of the school. If you haven't sold them all yet, they are still more than 11/12ths current - it's not too late! Please bring in your money from the sales to Marc or Marie-Eve.

Jasper Class

Lise Gunby



Lately in the Jasper Class the subject of Waldorf "rules" has come up. Why do we have guidelines about what clothing students wear? Why do we ask that students not bring electronic devices to school? Why do we discourage conversations about television programs, movies, and facebook in class? These discussions have coincided with the study of physics as our main lesson block and have therefore been an interesting reminder of how curriculum and our "rules" complement one another.

"Increasingly," writes Roberto Trostli, a Waldorf science teacher, "we are surrounded by the tools and products of modern technology, yet most of us do not understand the principles governing many machines and technological processes." Physics teaching is designed to work with clear and clarified senses to observe phenomena, and to learn to feel at home with the inventions of the human mind. The goal is not simply to be receivers and users of technology (that is too easy!), but to begin to understand underlying concepts and principles. With respect to school rules about media use, we ask, in order that the children may work with clear senses and be empowered by their own capacities, that media and other distractions that can so easily obscure, alter, or overload sense perception be left elsewhere or avoided altogether. "Living concepts," which arise from direct experience and the cultivation of observation and judgement, Steiner would say, are the basis for true knowledge and thus for inner freedom. The power of real observation is a sensitive, cultivated, and concerted one, and science in the Waldorf classroom strives to create an environment in which it might flourish.

Jasper students began their physics block with a study of magnetism and we are now looking at simple machines. From the “earth” section of our main lesson books we will move to air (acoustics), fire (heat) and water (changes of state, hydraulics). Our painting lessons are complementing our main lesson study, and our scientific illustrations remind us how much learning is entailed in accurate renderings of our materials and demonstrations. We are beginning to work in clay with the Platonic solids with regard to their association with the four elements: earth the cube, air the octahedron, fire the tetrahedron, and water the icosahedron.



The world of the Egyptian gods portrayed behind a screen in the Jasper Class production of The Light of Osiris. Students performed their play in December. The “light” of Osiris, as bequeathed to Horus in Egyptian mythology, suggests the light of the Christmas/ Hanukkah season in varied cultures.

In music we are learning new part songs and our latest ukulele hit is “Hey Jude.” Recitation work features homonyms and words with crazy irregular English spelling. This crazy quality is also a highlight of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, short readings of which bridge our opening circle with main lesson work. Our weekly spelling lists continue, as does grammar review. In reading groups we are sharing the story of Gilgamesh, which is a

magnificent Sumerian epic about the adventures of an ambitious philosopher-king and his soul-mate, the wild Enkidu. We have completed our review and extension of the four processes in math and have moved on to measurement and more geometry.

In February we will be welcoming the Toronto Waldorf School Grade 6 class for an overnight camp, some sledding (assuming there is snow) and some astronomy (assuming there is some clear sky!). Please help them to feel welcome at our unique country school.

REMINDERS

Thursday January 26
Board Meeting 3:30 at the school

Thursday February 2
Evening with Cory on the **Threefold Social Order**; 7 p.m. at the school.

Saturday February 4
10 a.m. – 3 p.m. **Board-Faculty visioning retreat**

Monday February 20; 10 a.m. **Book Study**

MAY FAIR AND EDGE HILL’S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Planning is underway for the May Fair and 25th Anniversary events on the weekend of May 25, 26, 27. This is an important group of events to meet our fundraising targets for the year and is a community and social festival. Big thanks go to Kimm Culkin for holding the ideas and building the framework. It’s now time to put that framework into action. Marc Fortin will be in charge of finding people to do things as volunteer coordinator, matching people to tasks. If you have any questions or ideas about a specific interest in something you want to be involved with, please talk to Marc. Jennifer Clark is taking on the alumnae database which also includes past teachers, parents and community. Please pass any names on to help streamline Jen’s task.

DOLL-MAKING WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 24 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Edge Hill School, Concession 2 north of Edges Sideroad; (519) 369-3195

Join us for an all-day workshop at Edge Hill School to create an individual Waldorf doll from basic materials. Made of cotton knit fabric and wool stuffing and using techniques drawing on traditional European doll-making, the Waldorf doll allows the child to improve or strengthen imagination and creativity. These dolls feel soft and warm!



Instructor Dorothy Lind is a veteran Waldorf homeschooling parent of more than 20 years. She has taught Grade 5 at Edge Hill School and was a summer camp craft instructor at Aurora Waldorf School in New York. Dorothy operated the “Gifts of the Goddess” shop in downtown Durham several years ago, and has led workshops for adults and children in doll-making, moccasin-making, hoop-drum construction, buckskin coat making, and assorted other craft and art workshops, both in Ontario and New York.

A cost of \$65 includes all materials, payable by cash or cheque. Please register by calling 519-369-3195 and leaving your name and phone number. We’ll get back to you to confirm. This workshop is geared for those 14 and over.

Children 13 and under require the help of a parent to participate in this session; both will be admitted for one workshop fee and will receive materials for one doll.

A warm thank you from the faculty to Edge Hill parents for the gift of nourishing soups.

THE VALUE OF HANDWRITING

“Using advanced tools such as magnetic resonance imaging, researchers are finding that writing by hand is more than just a way to communicate. The practice helps with learning letters and shapes, can improve idea composition and expression, and may aid fine motor-skill development.

It’s not just children who benefit. Adults studying new symbols, such as Chinese characters, might enhance recognition by writing the characters by hand, researchers say. Some physicians say handwriting could be a good cognitive exercise for baby boomers working to keep their minds sharp as they age. Studies suggest there’s real value in learning and maintaining this ancient skill, even as we increasingly communicate electronically.

Virginia Berninger, a professor of educational psychology at the University of Washington, says handwriting differs from typing because it requires executing sequential strokes to form a letter. She says pictures of the brain have illustrated that sequential finger movements activated massive regions involved in thinking, language and working memory – the system for temporarily storing and managing information.

And one recent study of hers demonstrated that in grades two, four and six, children wrote more words, faster, and expressed more ideas when writing essays by hand versus with a keyboard.” (from “How Handwriting Trains the Brain,” by Gwendolyn Bounds)