



Putting Down Roots

Thawing ground, gentle rain, and a warming sun beckon us at this time of year to plant. The growth from seed to fruit is nothing shy of a miracle in my eyes. Ever since planting my first radishes as a young child, I have never ceased to marvel at how a seed can contain an entire plant. A cabbage seed, for example, is not much larger than a poppy seed, yet it produces a very large plant! This is but one of nature's wondrous mysteries.

In Waldorf education, much attention is paid to the plant kingdom. In its whole-to-the-parts pedagogical approach, children as early as first grade begin to draw trees or flowers that include a root system. First graders are not consciously taught about root systems, but their inclusion in plant drawings confirms what they have already experienced when pulling plants from the ground: plants are attached to the earth by their roots. As kindergartners, they have subconsciously learned about life beneath the earth's surface through stories such as *The Root Children* or *A Winter Garden*. Children in Waldorf early childhood programs (often named after plants) move through the growth cycle of plants in circle activities, where the children become bulbs, bedded in the earth and covered by a blanket of snow, awaiting the warmth, light, and moisture of spring to push through their earthen roofs.

In their study of botany in fifth grade, students become conscious of how invisible elements influence growth. The unseen root system first establishes the plant's vitality. Once above ground, a plant's growth is affected by the air in which it respire. Rudolf Steiner acknowledged that just as invisible forces affect plants, they also affect human life, as soul qualities. Our soul lives encompass activities within ourselves that directly affect our outer, physical well being.

I was beautifully reminded of the phenomenon of invisibility a couple of days ago, when I ran into an AWS alumni parent at the grocery store. When I asked how her children were doing, this mother proudly listed her daughter's recent achievements: a perfect score on her ACT exam; winner of the Anchorage Youth Symphony's concerto competition; first place in Anchorage's Trig-Star math exam (sponsored by the National Society of Professional Surveyors); and a Seal of Bi-Literacy in German after only two years of study! This parent immediately acknowledged that Waldorf education had provided the foundation for her children's growth. This foundation—this root system—was strong, elaborate, and far-reaching. In her view, the Waldorf movement offers hope in a difficult and complex world, building capacities in children that come to fruition in ways unforeseen. Where else but at the Anchorage Waldorf School could her daughter have developed the mind and soul capacities to simultaneously excel in core subjects, music, mathematics, and foreign language?

At the end of the growth cycle, a plant withers. Leaves dry and crumble while flower petals fall away. Throughout this contraction, something else expands. Just as the seed swelled underground at the beginning of the plant's life, now the seed pod above swells. It swells until it bursts, releasing new seed that will fall to earth. These seeds, coming from vibrant, robust plants (substitute our graduates) promise new life and growth.

In the Anchorage Waldorf School's 25 years, how many times have we seen this contraction of old life to create the seeds of new life? Countless. With the warmth of the new season, we are preparing the ground to plant new seeds. This spring, the school has embarked upon a path of accreditation. We are putting down roots that expand in many directions and extend a long way. Invisible growth.

~Donna Levesque
Pedagogical Director



Fireweed Preschool

Lady Spring,
dressed in green,
she wears a primrose crown.
All the children are asking,
Where is lady spring?

We have been enjoying our melting play yard!
The sandbox has been unearthed, finally, and
the children are in heaven! Lady Spring is
very much here.

Miss Michele



Sunflower Kindergarten

The world is waking up again,
And SPRING has just begun.
The catkins on the willow tree
Turn yellow in the sun.
March brings us bright and windy days,
April gives us showers;
Then May puts green leaves everywhere,
Makes meadows full of flowers.



What a glorious spring: such a smooth melting process this year, and the sun has been lovely! Our daffodil and tulip babies that slept all winter within Mother Earth's warm embrace are peeking their little heads out in our garden bed! The children have been enjoying rediscovering outside toys that rested during the winter. The horse reigns are getting a lot of love as well as the watering cans and bug houses! Inside, we are singing about the sweet pussywillow, trying new color combinations during our painting time and enjoying the adventures of the *Bremen Town Musicians* during storytime! Miss Smith and I have been enjoying our 'First Grade Games' with our rising 1st graders. It is so sweet to see their earnest excitement! We are also working on pouches for those going on to first grade and will soon be dying some yarn to gift our friends who will enjoy another year in Kindergarten. All is well in Sunflower Kindergarten!

Miss Susan & Miss Isabeau

Grade 1

How We work with our Hands

In first grade we learn the joy of creating with our useful hands and to have reverence for the plants and animals that provide the materials for our work. We learn new skills and practice them to the level of habit, helping to develop our will in healthy ways.

Our hand working skills develop fine motor skills as well as the integration of body and mind, which are part of the foundation necessary for successful academic work. The children model with beeswax. They sculpt something that relates to a story. In our language blocks we sculpture letters and in our arithmetic blocks we sculpt numbers. We spend an entire year modeling animals, gnomes, people, and elements from stories.

First graders paint weekly. Our paintings focus on the qualities of the three primary colors and their combinations. We explore a series of color studies and the children learn how to control the shade of the color from light to dark using delicate brush strokes.

First grade draws daily with beeswax crayons. Drawing with both block and stick crayons is part of main lesson. We work with layers, first lightly blocking out spaces with color, then adding more and more detail with each layer to find form. In this way shapes are built up from gesture and outline is avoided. Our hands serve us well.

Ms. Smith



Grade 2/3

Now as we round the corner to the end of this amazing year's journey, our class has experienced some culminating tasks and some new beginnings. The children have created needle-felted wall hangings with the silk from the silkworms we raised and whose cocoons we harvested. One chapter closed!

A new chapter began with planting vegetable and flower seeds for our gardens. The seeds germinated over one short weekend! We have our work cut out for us to care for them as they wait to be planted in the earth.

We have ventured into the Hebrew stories of creation, the fall, the flood, and the story of Moses. The paintings and drawings for these stories held a new quality of depth in content and techniques with both mediums of wet on wet painting and crayon work. More importantly, these studies lead to our class play. I must say that I have never enjoyed a class play experience as much as I enjoyed helping this class stage "The Story of Moses"! They worked together with such joy, supporting one another. The struggle to memorize their own lines, in addition to the choral speaking parts, nurtured the reading process for many. Thanks to all parents and grandparents who helped with that!

The children particularly enjoyed rehearsing in small groups to create communication between characters. Their team work to create intonation in the choral speaking parts was golden. Their angelic voices came together in unison to sing "Go Down Moses", which has some tricky rhythmic challenges. Dancing the Israeli dance "Mayim" was an all-time favorite movement experience for them! We have had so many experiences this year that have brought the children together as a cohesive class group, but this one was the best yet!

I must extend special thanks to these amazing volunteers who helped the children make the story of our play come alive: Amanda German; Jenn Owens; Rosey Grundwaldt; Gabriel German; Melissa Lilly; Darrell Lilly; Seth Eggleston; and Rachael Eggleston.

Warmly,
Meg Eggleston



Grade 2/3 Continued

Grade 4/5

For the past four weeks, we have immersed ourselves in Ancient Greece. As we step away from this Golden Age of Greece, I have a chance to relish the good work we've done. From getting caught up in the stories of the Iliad and the Odyssey to sitting down with each other to enjoy a Greek-influenced meal, we enjoyed the feeling of Greece. We argued over Zeno's paradoxes; we felt the strange success of the Battle of Thermopylae; we discussed, Socratically, what fairness was; we saw a glimpse of the Greeks' drive to understand the world. We're continuing this work as we prepare for the Pentathlon on May 10, at Goose Lake Park.

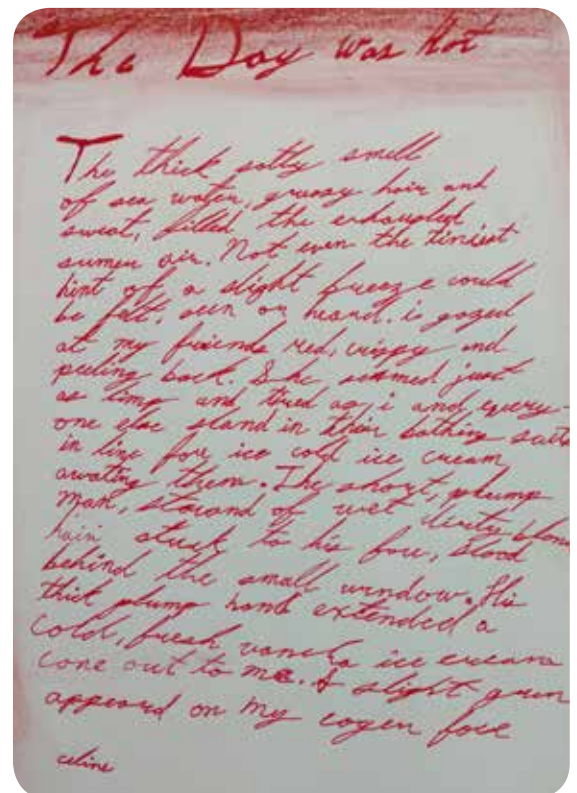
Mr. Jensen



Grade 6/7

As the spring weather is bringing back warmth to Alaska, our sixth and seventh graders are doing some growing of their own! This is the time of year when I catch myself thinking back to how different the class is now from the beginning of the year. They are larger than life at this time of the year and they have difficulty being contained by anyone. The curriculum rises up to meet them in our creative writing block. They are asked to wonder about their world, to look at it clearly and objectively. They are asked to bring soul to their writing in wishes for themselves, and for others and finally, they are challenged to express surprise, (difficult for twelve or thirteen year-olds or even adults, but we managed it somehow)! Keeping a certain mood, our students are able to write with more depth and enjoyment. What they've brought from themselves is amazing.

with warmth, Shannon Herda



Grade 8

Wow! Wow! Wow! On April 11, Grade 8 completed their 8th Grade Projects with an evening of presentations for the community. They did a stupendous job and showed their diligence and hard work in every presentation. Eighth graders, I am so proud of you!

These projects are a Waldorf tradition that gives our graduating students a chance to fully immerse themselves in a topic of their choosing, while they cultivate skills that will be valuable in the years ahead.

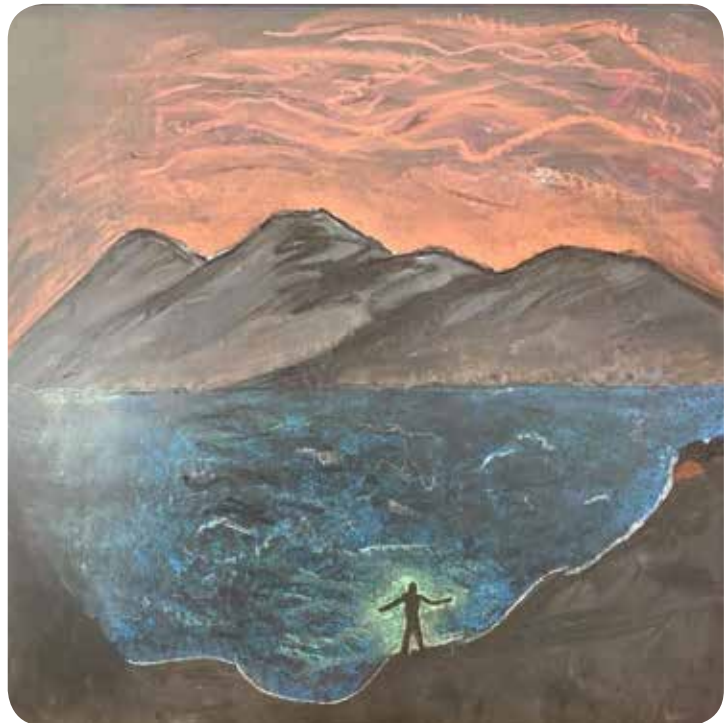
The skills cultivated while working on the 8th Grade Project include:

- Working with a mentor
- Working on a long-term project
- Setting and following timelines and deadlines
- Gathering and organizing materials
- Practicing research skills and research paper writing
- Learning something new, or developing an existing skill or interest to a new level of expertise or depth
- Building public speaking/presentation skills
- Giving back to the community with volunteerism

A completed 8th grade project consist of:

- The physical project itself
- A research paper
- A display
- An oral presentation given to the community
- Weekly check-ins, with the teacher, throughout the year

-Ms. Klein



Miska Alexia: Living With The Land



Through the mentorship of Karen Evanoff, a Dena'ina Athabascan Elder and an anthropologist for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, I learned about the skills required of a professional anthropologist. In addition, I have learned about my culture as an Upper Kuskokwim Athabascan, I have attended the Elders and Youth Conference, I have interviewed elders, and I have created an educational video about living with the land.



Gia Unterberger: Eighty Square Feet

Small structures have always stood out to me and building has always been a skill I have wanted to learn. My mentors, Mark Cooper and Andrew Warner, guided me through the different aspects of building, and provided me with experiences in structural design and basic construction. As a result, I was able to plan and build my own tiny home.



Jack Rode: Main Parts Of A Computer

I think it is important to understand the technology around us. With the help of my mentor, Allen Huffman, I was able to learn about computer components, I got to take apart a computer to see all of its inside, and I got to build a computer too. Through research, I read about the oldest computers and today's most modern computers. There is a lot of technology around us and we should know what it is made of and how it works.



Harlin Hopkins: Learning Motion

My goals for drawing human figures has been to find precision to manipulate and move them, and to gain skills that will help me, one day, write and illustrate my own graphic novel. People communicate through body language, as much as they do through words. This is important in drawing, because an illustration has to reflect the words being spoken. Alexandra Sonneborn and Elizabeth Hatton have guided me in drawing hands, faces and feet and manipulating them to show movement. Through a method of trial and error I have gained valuable skills.

Zane Warner: *The Toughest Exams Happen At 10,000 Feet*



Even as a small child watching planes fly overhead, flying was the skill I have always wished to learn. I joined the Civil Air Patrol to help me work towards my goal of becoming a pilot and my dream of one day joining The United States Air Force Academy. My mentor, Alex Soto, has guided me along this path by helping me prepare speeches, by studying and practicing for CAP exams and in the building of the F-22 Rapture jet.

Kelsey Malloy: *Learning To Read Between The Rules*



Graphic design combines art, words, organization and customization. With my mentors, Sue Wilkens and Rob German, I was able to tap into these interests I already had. While learning about color in relation to emotion, layout, the design process and real world applications of graphic design, I focused my efforts on a digestible component of graphic design, using t-shirts as my medium.

Jonah Doniere: *Up With Dogs*



Dogs Helping People is a service based project. The focus is on the NATIONAL Crisis Response Canine teams that tap into the human-canine bond. This work is used to inspire resilience, recovery, and coping skills for those effected by crisis. My mentor, Margaret Griffo, and I work to serve my community in many ways and I have learned how to handle people in crisis, how to handle canines, and the importance of having my own support system.

Middle School Music

As we arrive at spring and, in poetic contrast, the end of the school year, we have spent much of our time polishing skills and songs that we have learned throughout the year. But just like spring is the time for new life, we have also come to a few new pieces to learn and take with us into the summer. In recorder, we have been learning an English madrigal by Thomas More, which has provided a new complexity to the interplay of parts. Each section now must learn to stand alone and hold their own line, even as all four weave together into a single whole. In choir, we have been singing a beautiful setting of an “Irish Blessing”, as a way to wish us well on our future journeys, as some of our students graduate and move on to new paths and challenges.

Mira Starr

Russian

This month we read lots of Russian fairy and folk tales in Grades 1-3. We met very interesting and famous characters in the tales, some unkind and some very brave. Baba Yaga (Bony Leg) can be found in a house with chicken legs, living deep in the woods with her black cat, and she flies in the mortar with a broom. Lots of dragons appeared in the books after we heard the story about a three-headed dragon, Zmei Gorinych, that was defeated by one of the famous knights, Dobrynya Nikitych. We also met the Skeleton, the Deathless, and the Guardian of the Forests. First graders made their own sets of Matreshka dolls (nesting dolls) as well as alphabet cards to take home and practice. Students in grade 2/3 have started practicing Russian cursive writing and reading simple words and sentences. Grade 4/5 students entered a new April verse in their *Books of Poems* and were busy practicing their play, “Bag of Apples”. Sixth and seventh graders completed their autobiographies, wrote down questions based on their information, and practiced them in the dialogues. Eighth graders have been working on their skit that summarizes their grammar and vocabulary block on language skills, countries and nationalities.

Ms. Burton





Handwork

Handwork on display for Open House



Woodworking

Golden Cottage

Golden Cottage Program has welcomed some recent changes, new staff members, and different students joining our aftercare program. We were thrilled to receive an indoor hockey set from Dune Lankard. We also stocked up on new games, books, and art materials. We are so thankful for these fun and generous gifts! We enjoy using them every day now as we play, create, laugh and explore together.

During the last few months, we've had student-lead reading during our candlelit snack time, made buckets of "slime", painted the snow in bright colors, built an erupting "snow-cano", and created countless pieces of unique artwork, while always enjoying lots of free time outside or in the Great Hall. We're looking forward to May and all of the growth it brings as we begin sprouting seeds and shifting our focus towards summer-themed crafts and activities!

Calling ALL Community to help with this beautiful celebration!

Sign up sheets are in the front lobby. There are one hour shifts.

Work Party: **May 11** - Friday after pick up - Set up begins!

Thanks so much from the May Faire team!



May Faire

22nd Annual Anchorage Waldorf School Spring Festival for Children

Face Painting

Games

Live Music

May Pole

Crafts

Storytelling

Pony Rides

Food

and more!

Saturday May 12, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Free parking available at Baxter Elementary School.
For more information, please visit waldorfAK.org or
contact the school at 333.9062

The Anchorage Waldorf School
3250 Baxter Road
Anchorage, AK 99504



The Anchorage
Waldorf
School

Awakening Wonder