

May 2018

Awaken Wonder

Breathe



The Anchorage
Waldorf School

Awakening Wonder

Breathing

The earth breathes in sun and moon cycles: seasons, months, weeks, days and nights. These rhythms not only influence human lives, but also guide a Waldorf teacher's activities. Waldorf education recognizes that each period during children's development affects how they assimilate the forces found not only in their environment, but also in lessons delivered in the classroom. Rhythm and timing become fundamental.

Rudolf Steiner acknowledges that children's development in the first seven years is predominantly connected to their senses. Young children form perceptions of the world through direct contact. Steiner attributes all human activity of mind and spirit to the development of this nerve/sense system. This is why kindergarten children play in nature: to experience firsthand the richness of all the senses. Natural materials pervade the classroom to deepen their understanding of the earth.

Between the ages of seven and fourteen, the system that is fast developing in children is the rhythmic system. During these years, children's breath-to-pulse ratio becomes more adult-like. This rhythmic breathing occurs some 25,920 times each day! It happens without conscious effort, whether we are awake or asleep. Steiner suggests that excellent teaching unfolds in a similar rhythm, one in which children breathe in lessons and breathe out their learning as a matter of habit. This is why Waldorf teachers incorporate a vast array of artistic activities throughout the day: to engage the rhythmic system of seven to fourteen year-olds.

What is often referred to as the "breathing" in a Waldorf classroom provides a pulsing between activities. When faced with intense intellectual or physical activity, adults and children alike experience fatigue. But when teachers alternate periods of mental focus with periods of movement or expression, children become invigorated. Rhythmic activities include recitation, clapping games, singing, and playing musical instruments, as well as artistic endeavors such as drawing, painting, sculpting, knitting, and woodworking. These activities all involve the heart--center of rhythmic life--in some way, whether physically or emotionally.

Summer in Alaska conspires to deregulate our breathing, with its extraordinarily long periods of daylight. Maintaining rhythm becomes both a greater challenge, and a greater mandate. How can families carry a healthy breathing into this time of year? In several ways. Firstly, choose simple rituals that can be adhered to: reciting a blessing before meals, lighting a candle at dinner, reading a story before bed. Continue to build the habit lives of children: making beds each morning, setting the table, washing dishes, sweeping floors, doing chores at the same time each day or week. Punctuate your days with physical activity and time spent in nature. Provide children with plenty of games to play and basic materials for artistic time: crayons, pencils, paper, yarn. Play musical instruments and sing. Stick to regular snack, meal and bedtimes. Consider eliminating electronic devices and media. (And prepare for a few days of pushback with the mantra "This, too, shall pass.") Among other undesirable effects, electronic gadgets remove children from their immediate environment, disrupt daily routines, disallow heart-to-heart interactions, and throw off circadian rhythms. Alaskan summers abound with wonders that fill the senses and activities that strengthen our rhythmic systems. Enjoy spending these months with the ones you love. Breathe in fresh mountain air; breathe out worries and cares.

~Donna Levesque
Pedagogical Director



Fireweed Preschool



Sunflower Kindergarten

Dear Parents,
I've worked with your flower,
And helped it to grow.
I'm returning it now,
But I want you to know:
This flower is precious,
As dear as can be.
Love, take care of it
And you will see
A bright new bloom every day.
It grew and blossomed
In such a wonderful way-
In August, just a bud,
Then January, a bloom,
Now a lovely blossom-
I'm returning it to you.
Remember this flower,
As dear as it can be-
Though rightfully yours,
Part will always be with me.

Have a fantastic summer!
Love Miss Susan & Miss Isabeau



Grade 1



Grade 2/3

We are already looking forward to Grade 3/4! Ms. Schallert's "Instrument Petting Zoo" was exciting for all. Students in grades 4 thru 8 presented an introduction to each instrument, playing separate parts of one musical piece, and then putting them together again. Food for thought as my children begin playing their instruments in the fall. Many thanks to Mary and all of the orchestra students!

Another focus for Grade 3/4 will be the continuation of Practical Arts and Fiber Studies. We so enjoyed our field trip to Xavier's home, barn and pasture. Xavier has three lambs who gifted us with lamb kisses! We have a fleece from one of Xavier's sheep that we will wash, card, and spin into yarn in the fall.

It is hard to say goodbye to this year, but it is grand to look to the future.

Happy Summer to you all!

Warmly,





Grade 2/3 Continued

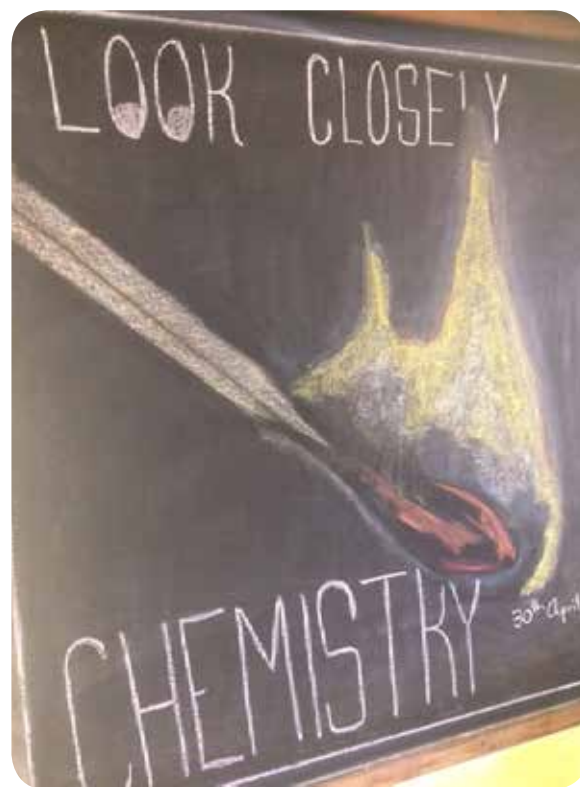




Grade 4/5



Grade 6/7



Grade 8

Grade 8 had an amazing time on their 8th grade trip. We spent five days at Camp Manito-wish Leadership Camp in northern Wisconsin. The days were full, with lots of games, team building, initiatives, low and high ropes courses, canoeing, painting, singing, fire- starting and tons of laughter and fun...TOGETHER. Our trip ended in Chicago with a performance of Hamilton. We had a great time all around. Wally Steger, we are forever indebted to you for your willingness, compassion, leadership, kind nature and flexibility. You are a gem! Thank you for going with us!

It has been such a treat to be in the presence of these fine individuals. Grade 8, I hope all your days are filled with love, joy, laughter and good friends. I'll miss you.

Love,
Ms. Klein



Grade 8 Graduation





Handwork
Grade 2/3
Gnome picnic



Woodworking turned gardening

Golden Cottage

We are all so excited to be inching closer to summer break, and have been spending much of our aftercare time together outside, enjoying the beautiful weather! Sidewalk chalk, rock painting, basketball, soccer, and tons of tree-climbing and outside games have filled our afternoons. We also made fresh watermelon and strawberry smoothies as a treat!

Russian

We would never think that we could squeeze so much fun learning into the last few weeks of this school year. Our 1st Grade worked on their Russian alphabet coloring books. Grade 2/3 learned about some Russian art styles - Khokhloma, Zhostovo, Gorodetskaya, Gzhel - and tried to replicate some designs in their lesson books. They look beautiful! If you ever decide to go to the Alaska Zoo, you may consider asking our Grade 4/5 students to borrow the zoo maps they created with all the animals and birds labeled in Russian. They are very detailed and you will easily find your way around using their zoo maps. Grade 6/7 reviewed some Russian art styles, wrote a few paragraphs about them and drew some examples. During their last class they made and enjoyed blini, Russian pancakes or crepes). Grade 8 went on a field trip to the Eastern European Store and Deli for lunch, where they could practice some reading and speaking while ordering. They are experienced now in Russian cuisine, and they could give some advice on what to try.

Have a great summer break!

Ms. Burton



The things I pick up

I have learned a lot this year while doing maintenance here at the school.

I know many Sunflower and Fireweed children learn how to finger knit; love to make notes for their parents; and fill their boots with sand and wood chips, but don't realize it until they are in front of their cubbies.

Grade 1 students love blue beeswax but forget where they put it; like to wear their muddy boots straight to their desks; are capable of getting watercolors in places I never thought possible, in the most artistic way; and are incredible at tidying up.

Grade 2/3 continually move their desks around the room to make space; accomplish many large scale projects from dirt to silk; and are capable of beautiful main lesson drawings.

Grade 4/5 is very particular; will use the shortest of pencils and nubs of erasers; and discovered they were able to spend time in groups while expressing their own individuality.

Grade 6/7 tested their spatial awareness and emotional boundaries; enjoyed recess from their classroom boardwalk; and found new ways to bring color and light to many events on campus.

Grade 8 began the year unsure of many things; drank a lot of tea with honey; held on to items they thought made them comfortable; and helped us all to realize how important it is to be at the top once in a while.

What I learned most this year was that I am lucky to see the big picture. As parents we become focused on one or two grades that our kids may be attending. Every morning, I can see the past, present and future of our campus, and for our students, within the three hour window I spend cleaning up. I can sense the struggles and successes from the day before, as well as the one ahead, as I travel through the classrooms. I see beautiful chalk board drawings our teachers create while judging themselves and their ability. I feel the absence of a child as a desk gathers unfinished work. I hear lingering laughter and smell the outdoors that children collect in the form of sticks, rocks, flowers and pine.

I also get to be one of the last ones in the parking lot after drop-off, peering into the windows of each grade space, witnessing the magic of morning handshakes, verses, candle-glow and flute music. It is in these moments I am reminded that what we see depends mainly on what we look for.

Thank you for all the "good mornings", the hello waves from behind your warm windshields, the parking lot chitchats, the watchful eyes as kids crossed in front of you, and thank you for doing it every morning with me.

Amanda German





MayFaire

