

Waiheke Island Steiner School

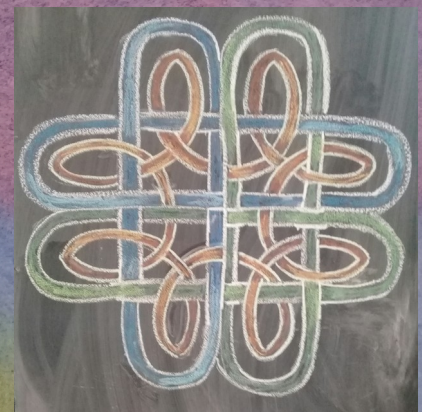
58 Korora Road, Oneroa, Waiheke Island, 1081

09 372 2152

office@waiheke.steiner.school.nz

www.waiheke.steiner.school.nz

Newsletter 2: 24 Here-turi-kōkā 2017



Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou ka ora ai te iwi

*With your food basket (contribution)
and my food basket (contribution)
the people will thrive*

Kia ora e te whānau

We are halfway through Term 3 and have settled into our rhythms. Welcome to Olivia James who joins Nieves in teaching ngā tamariki teina, the younger children. Welcome to our new families – Dillon, Zach, Aurelia and Leon have joined ngā tamariki tuakana, the older class.

We are privileged to have Dee Landon join us to take the children for eurythmy, and John Tupper, who leads the children in working with a range of materials – wood, metal, clay – enriched with story and song.

Class meetings in week 2 were well attended and provided a useful forum for discussing what is happening in the classes. Thank you for your feedback on timing; class meetings will be a feature of the start of each term.

Please mark Friday September 22 in your calenders for the annual Spring Festival. See below for details.

We would like to end the term by inviting parents and other whānau members to join us on Thursday 28 September for our end of term sharing of our learning - much as we did last term.

Ngā mihi mahana (warm greetings)

Nā ngā kaiako (from the teachers)



Calendar

Term 3 10 weeks
July 24 – September 29

Aug 2 Class meetings

Aug 5 Visit to proposed school site

Sept 22 Spring Festival

Sept 28 End of term sharing of learning & shared lunch

Sept 29 Last day of term

Sept 30 Working Bee

Oct 14 Working Bee

Oct 16 Term 4 starts

Spring Festival Friday 22 September

(raindate 29 September)

Save the date. We are organising this festival in collaboration with the kindergarten teachers. It will involve making spring garlands, dancing around the maypole, and a shared lunch. We ask that all children attend on this day, even if they do not normally attend on a Friday. Timings and further details will be communicated soon via email.



Photos from last term's Lantern Festival (which didn't make it into the last newsletter). Thanks Lisa for the beautiful pictures.



Reminders

- As our roll grows and our rooms become fuller, it is timely to suggest that if you know of people who would like to join our Steiner school community, they are advised to act promptly.
- Although we are now heading into spring and warmer weather, please ensure that children are suitably dressed – socks for warm feet, singlets or cosy layers next to the skin, layers that can be removed as they warm up. And soon we will be needing sunhats again.
- Many thanks to the magical fairies who come in to clean the school in the weekends :)



Term 4 and beyond

Thanks to the generosity of Mike and Vibusha, we are able to stay at Fossil Bay while the planning and hard work continues on securing a new site and buildings for our school. Watch this space . . .



Waldorf Education

A lot of care and preparation is undertaken by Steiner teachers to create meaningful, living and beautiful lessons. Ideally everything that the teacher brings to the children is first freshly living within themselves. In this way the children receive the depth and beauty of the Waldorf education, through feeling, imagination, willing, and through thinking.

One of the best ways to support the child for their day of learning ahead is to try to keep their environment free from screens, particularly in the evening before a day of school, and in the morning before school - their headspace is free to fully absorb their lessons. It is a good idea to critically review what movies/ programmes the child is watching, and what video games they are playing. A lot of content can have surprisingly negative messages, often violent undertones, and depicting characters that walk and talk in odd mannerisms. Children of course are imitators, and often need to process what they see by either talking about it, or 'playing it out'.

It is one of the most difficult challenges of this time, this increase in bombardment of information, the need to be entertained, the "plugged-in" phenomena, for children and adults alike. In this digital age we see how exponentially the usage and reliance upon smartphones, tablets, tv programmes and video games has grown. Freeing our children from this bombardment of stimulatory overload through offering health giving alternatives is a huge gift to the child's development. In this way the child's imaginative, mental and physical faculties can develop in more flexible and creative modes of thinking, problem-solving and interacting/ participating in the world - a highly effective way of preparing our children for a future full of possibilities.

Working Bees

Please keep an eye out for an email soon with information about our upcoming working bees for the school holidays. There will be two dates to choose from. It will be great to have many hands on deck for the first working bee, which will be focussed on getting Fossil Bay shared facilities (kitchen, bathroom, grounds) looking sparkling and well-loved before Mike & Vibhusha's return in early October.

The second working bee will be on the last Saturday of the holidays and will be focussed on ensuring the classrooms are beautiful and ready for the children and teachers, come day 1 of term 4.

Dates: Sat 30 Sept OR Sat 14 Oct
10am - 2pm.

**** Please mark in your diary ****

Parents of nine year olds often wonder, “What is happening to my child?” Children at this age can become very critical and argumentative, or very moody and withdrawn. Nightmares, irrational fears, headaches and stomachaches often arise. Some children feel as if no one at school likes them, or others become suddenly self-conscious about being rich, poor, or otherwise “different.” Parents may be accused of being unfair or of not understanding, as the child rushes off and slams his or her door.

Searching for an explanation for the changes in behavior, parents sometimes blame a new teacher, a recent move, changes in the family such as separation or the birth of a sibling, or simply “growing pains”. An understanding of what is actually taking place can help us avoid needless worry and provide the support and guidance that children need during this time.

What is Happening?

The special needs of the nine year old are the result of an important change in consciousness that marks the end of early childhood and the transition to a new developmental phase. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, states, “In the ninth year the child really experiences a complete transformation of its being, which indicates an important transformation of its soul-life and its bodily-physical experiences.”

Earlier, before the age of five or so, the child has a dreamlike state of consciousness in which the outer world and inner experience end to flow together. Outer events are not “observed,” but are deeply taken in through unconscious imitation. Whereas babies learn nearly everything through imitation, kindergarten-age children continue to imitate many aspects of their world, such as the movements of the teacher or parent.

While the power of imitation is so strong, the child feels united with the world and experiences no sense of aloneness. But with the loss of this power around the age of nine, the child feels separated from the world. Something that was hidden and slumbering begins to awaken. Nine year olds suddenly have a strong experience of themselves as separate beings, with a new feeling of distance from the world and other people. This sense of self, first experienced around age two-and-a-half, recurs now in a much deeper way, as the inner emotional life of the child begins to develop.

Although children react differently to leaving the sweet, dreamlike world of early childhood, one response is nearly universal: children become more conscious of their surroundings. You will probably find that what was once passed by unnoticed is suddenly focused on and questioned. This awakening to the world may be met with quiet astonishment or sharp criticism, depending on the child’s temperament.

A critical child may notice whether the statements people make are grounded in the real world or are a veneer. He or she may begin to question parents and teachers, wondering, “How do they know everything?” and, indeed, “Do they really know everything?” Something in the child is seeking reassurance that the authority of the adult will stand the test of quality, and that it carries an inner certainty.

In contrast, another child may become more withdrawn and start to look under the bed at night, or may have frequent stomach aches in response to this new sense of being alone. Parents whose children suddenly want to be alone often feel as if they are “losing” their children, as if the children no longer want to share their developing inner worlds. This is a

time when intimations of mortality and death can enter a child's consciousness. Religious questions and concerns about good and evil may also emerge with the child's increased self-awareness and sense of choice and responsibility.

Usually, within six months after the ninth birthday (and sometimes earlier), the children are profoundly aware of this new sense of separateness between the self and the outer world. As the "I" penetrates into awareness, children begin to experience themselves as self-contained beings. They often feel as though they are in a threshold situation, poised, as it were, on the cusp of their own destiny. A 70-year-old woman wrote of this time in her life: "In this year I had a significant I-experience. I had just come from school in the city and had to change trams. In this moment of waiting, the complete certainty came to me that now all of life lay before me and that I was the one that must travel it.

Essentially, the nine year old is experiencing his or her own identity - to become a separate individuality, able to confront the outer world. Ideally, the child comes through this difficult time with a sense of connection with his or her higher self, a kind of "knowing" that will remain even after the heightened awareness is integrated.

My son spent many difficult months in the throes of "the nine-year change." One night, as he popped out of bed for the third time, I had to muster great self-control to say, "What now?" "I'm glad I'm me!" he announced, radiating like the sun. He went on to explain, "It's just like the song "The Age of Not Believing." The words of the Disney song ran through my mind: "You must face the age of not believing, doubting everything you ever knew. Until at last you start believing, there's something wonderful in you." We all shared in his joy and thanked God that family life could once again return to normal.

Parenting Tips

What can parents do to help their child through this important turning point at age nine?

- Understanding what is happening will help both your child and yourself as a parent. When both parents, or parents together with the teacher, consider a child and his real needs, it can help give the child balance. Be patient– this, too, shall pass. Ten is a wonderfully harmonious time between the crisis at age nine and adolescence, when the next intensifying of self-consciousness occurs.
- Be willing to let your child have her own inner emotional life. You can't "fix it." Honor her need for privacy or her sudden impatience with a younger sister. Be willing to let go and tolerate distance. Your relationship is changing and will improve again once alterations have been completed. Be nearby with understanding and reassurance that she is still loved.
- Share your thoughts with your child about things that go beyond the every-day affairs of life. But don't limit your child by providing "answers" or definitions that can't grow within the child when asked about things like God or death.
- Have faith in self-healing, in your child's ability to come through this phase. Support individual artistic activity that attracts your child (writing poetry, keeping a diary, drawing or painting, music).
- Support your child's interest in the world by providing opportunities to build things, visit a farm, plant a garden, do work in the real world. Encourage a connection with the plant and animal kingdoms and with simple human creative activities now before the child explores the world of technology, which is more appropriate for adolescence.
- Nourish your child with stories that illustrate the interconnectedness of life and the powers of fate and destiny. The story of Joseph and his coat of many colors has this element of the dream heralding his destiny and the patience he needed to see it manifest. In the curriculum of the Waldorf schools, the Old Testament stories are told in third grade because they mirror (2) the inner state of the nine-year-old child. The creation story, for example, describes the child's own experience of leaving the paradisiacal realm of early childhood, acquiring new self-awareness, and with it the added dimensions of choice and increasing responsibility for one's actions. In fourth grade the heroic tales of the Norse myths represent the exploits of the new ego in larger-than-life fashion. The Waldorf curriculum also introduces the child to the world through projects in house-building, farming, and the study of the plant and animal kingdoms, not as abstract sciences, but in relation to the human being.

– Recognize that the child needs to establish a new respect for adult authority that goes beyond the blind acceptance of the younger child. Parents can encourage this by honoring a child's new relationship with a teacher or other adults in his life. Steiner states, "What matters is that at this moment in life, the child can find someone—whether this be one person or possibly several persons is of less importance – whose picture it can carry through life." (3) Parents can also help themselves be this kind of authority by presenting a united front to the child and by both sitting down with the child when questions of discipline arise (single parents may want to bring in a teacher or other adult during this time).

The magnitude of the changes that a child of this age is going through can be better understood if you contemplate the differences between the child of seven and the child of twelve. The seven year old is light-hearted and always in movement. The limbs are active for learning (through touching, doing, walking the times tables, and so forth). In contrast, the head is relatively large and still dreamy. The seven year old is just beginning to get adult teeth. His or her emotions are easily influenced by impressions from the world, with tears changing to smiles relatively easily.

The twelve year old, on the other hand, has a head that is very awake for thinking and longer limbs which seem heavy, tired, and often awkward to control. There is a rich and sometimes over-powering inner emotional life; the older child brings a great deal more to each experience. Physically, the sexual organs are beginning to mature as the child enters puberty.

The nine-year-old is in the middle between the world of early childhood and the world of adolescence. The physical and emotional changes which you may observe in your nine-year-old child are the outer manifestations of the tremendous change in consciousness which is going on within the child's expanding inner world. By understanding the nature of these changes, we can better provide support in parenting the nine year old.

Awakening to the world and a new sense of self brings with it a new need: to understand the real world of everyday life, while at the same time long for intimations of something beyond ordinary life. As parents and teachers, our task is to become loving authorities for the growing child, sharing both a true picture of the world and a sense of our own inner striving.

Notes

1. Quoted in Hermann Koepke, *Das neunte Lebensjahr* (Dornach, Switzerland: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1983), p. 41.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.
3. Rudolf Steiner, *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1986), p. 167.

For More Information

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