

CALYX

PLEASANT RIDGE
WALDORF SCHOOL
Waldorf Education since 1980
Volume 44, Issue 2
Summer 2023



COMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 4 Labor Day/No School
- 15 Faculty In-Service/No School
- 29 Michaelmas

OCTOBER

- 6 Kindergarten Faculty In-Service
No School Kindergarten
- 13 Grandparents/Special Friends Day
- 30-31 Parent Teacher Conferences
No School

NOVEMBER

- 1 Faculty In-Service/No School
- 4 All-School Workday
- 10 Martinmas
- 16 Fall Concert
- 22-24 Thanksgiving/No School

DECEMBER

- 4-5 Advent Spiral
- 8-9 Holiday Faire
- 13 Santa Lucia
- 20 Kindergarten Dismissal at 10:30
- 20 Festival of Light/Early Dismissal
- 21-29 Holiday Break/No School



Hail Apollo!
Let my javelin soar like the rays of the sun
Let me have the strength of your steed
And the grace of an eagle
Oh Apollo - Help me in this event
So that I may shine like you.
—Orion Viña Tromp, Grade 5 summer 2016



SCHOOL NEWS

The Role of Drama in Waldorf Education

Excerpt from an article by Joen Daelande, director of Les Miserables, eighth grade play 2016

Victor Hugo’s sweeping novel covers social revolution and personal evolution, the struggle of love and hate within the human heart, and the economic divide of rich and poor. As educators, of course, we will not be speaking to fourteen-year-olds like the fifty-year-olds they will become. But to withhold the grand visions and ideals, the sweeping emotional pictures of love and hope, despair and fortitude, courage and loss, because they “can’t understand them” is a true disservice.

The students can be brought to these visions and ideals, however, in an appropriate way. I can’t think of any better way than to have them “play” them out in the great works of drama and literature. As five-year-olds play mother, father, and store clerk with perfect intonation, so now the fourteen-year-old becomes a chalice of emotional depth and subtlety—not understanding in any cerebral way but experiencing it deeply within the soul.

For now, the revolutionary themes of Hugo’s great novel speak strongly to the students as they prepare to move upward to high school. In playing out the whole story, though, the more intimate themes of personal change and redemption can rest inside until the tides of life call them forth. What better way to educate for life?

Eighth Grade Play

Alice In Wonderland



May Day



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TODAY**
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GRADUATION

Class of 2023 Remembrance: Joy and Resilience

Excerpts from a graduation speech by Vicki Ramsay, mother of Cassidy.

Every class has its story, an arc of growing, learning, and developing that allows each child to see themselves in the bigger picture and to mark their individual growth. The elements that keep rising to the surface for me when I think about these children are joy and resilience. They've weathered a lot over the years, and to see them bounding next to the approaching Amtrak train to Chicago was like watching puppies—well, more like gazelles with their long legs—excited for the next adventure.

Many of them came from the Violet and Rosemary kindergartens—tiny and cute, but with an energy so palpable that, at the opening assembly where they crossed the Rainbow bridge for the first time, many people, strangers even, commented on how they felt the joy and exuberance overflowing from this class.

That year we helped build a properly flowy Waldorf classroom with new potted plants, silks, and handsewn napkins. We all took turns being “the star family,” hauling home laundry and bringing in fresh flowers and sauerkraut. Oh, the sauerkraut! These children can be certain they all started off with the best gut microbiomes on the planet.

Many of these kids got their theatrical start in the first grade production of Satchkin Patchkin—where Zelda and Cass worked hard to look lean and mean, Frances and Christian were given the daunting role of being doors, and there was a sweet gaggle of chickens.

Two students joined the class later that year: Sullivan from California and Simin from Texas. Cyrus taught the class how combines worked. They all made get well cards for Christian, who got a concussion and a broken wrist after falling out of the curly willow tree.

By second grade this class was helping care for an orphaned possum named Mr. Furry. They started having field trips, which included picking pumpkins from a pumpkin patch, apples from Turkey Ridge apple orchard, and harvesting grapes and apples from the Hundt farm.

In third grade, discussions of clothing were a hot topic...[and] we discussed the virtues of the dress code. The children developed rules about how to share the best swings outside. Kids visited the grape orchard and they had a work day at Jacob and Sofya Hundt's Compostella Farms.

By fourth grade the kids were really raring to go, and this I think was their first coming of age. Our campout at St. Brigid's Meadows—Dawn and Vince Hundt's farm—was awesome. The children worked and played together, rode the donkey, cuddled the kittens, had one s'more apiece around the fire, and slept in the barn amidst bales of hay with the wind creaking the old wood panels and banging the door periodically. Here you could see their readiness to receive good leadership. But back in the classroom, challenges between parents and teacher led to the teacher's decision in late summer to leave her position.

The only way to bounce back from adversity is to look within and see our own strengths—to find our own way forward, together or separately. The question of who would take this class for their fifth grade year, the year of balance and rhythm, the year that highlights our awareness of truth and beauty, was heavy on our minds and hearts with only weeks before the beginning of the school year. This question was held by faculty, parents, administrative staff, and children. The call was answered by many, all retired teachers who knew the importance of keeping stability and care at the forefront.

Fifth grade began with four teachers holding court. Maureen Karlstad carried the lion's share of connection and communication, while Betty Link, Mark John, and Drew Shonka each shared their specialties. Then came COVID-19 and all the unique circumstances we faced, starting with two weeks of homeschooling followed by online school. For each family, those are unique stories within the larger tale. At this point, finding our way forward was happening separately—the strands of connection through academics or ritual were strained by distance, reliance on internet, and unusual protocols. Pentathlon, for some a day they look forward to since first grade, a time for meeting so many children from other schools, was held with this class alone, at Sidie Hollow Park. Yet even in this circumstance, which could have felt so deflating, the children were buoyant and appreciative. They got to have their event and the day was filled with smiles and laughter.

In sixth grade, when Ms. Mandy came, she inherited the post-COVID world of outdoor classrooms, indoor masking, desks six feet apart, and dealing with a new class, new curriculum, and a need for healing. She found ways to encourage team building and, over time, created a space where students felt safe. Resilience and joy were taking off their winter coats and beginning to feel the warmth of the sun again.

Seventh grade felt more like a return to the old ways—indoor classes, not so much masking, and fun events. The children were noticeably taller and long-legged, the girls awash with emotions. Now the space was safe enough to express these in all kinds of powerful ways. The lesson was in learning how to wield that power with care and love. Their spring trip to Bethel Horizons for the low ropes course gave them tools for trusting one another. Their first Shakespeare play, *The Tempest*, was held outdoors, a reminder of how tenuous “normal” can be.

Students have memories of singing “We Shall Overcome” with Dodie Whitaker's father, Calvin, for Martin Luther King Jr. Day; of Korean students visiting each year, celebrating the Korean New Year and making rice dumplings; and of all the magic of Holiday Faires: candy cane lemons, making jump ropes, candle dipping...

Eighth grade dawned anew, beginning with another trip to Bethel Horizons—high ropes this time, another chance to



deepen trust with one another and to make brave leaps into the unknown. This round the boys were more emotional, the girls steadier. Throughout the year, they seized the challenges of so many expectations for leadership: Enchanted Forest, hot dog sales, the rituals of Santa Lucia, eighth grade projects and presentations, service, learning, and close-knit living together on their eighth grade trip. I heard stories about their trip, stories of joy and of overcoming challenges, and of kids finding self-care within the movement of their traveling group—talking with adults, finding time to read, to get sleep, taking some space away from the group when they needed to.

Now these kids have reached an age where, looking back, the biggest challenges of their childhood are ones that have hopefully shrunk to their proper size. I hope they see within themselves the possibility of being the heroes of their own stories, and also that none of us is perfect, and that is fine. We each rely on our own strengths and talents to get us through and to make up for areas that aren't as strong. It's just how humans are made. Our honesty about that creates a chance to work together, making any group stronger.

Their arc as a class began with joy and became a story of resilience, but also of love and appreciation for one another. May each of them find within themselves the discernment to choose the environments that best help them grow, and recognize their own agency in creating a life they love.

HOLIDAY FAIRE 2023

SAVE THE DATE

FRIDAY **December 8** | *A Joyful Revelry for Adults*

SATURDAY **December 9** | *A Festive Celebration for All Ages*

PLEASANT RIDGE WALDORF SCHOOL
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ALL WELCOME – CELEBRATE. SHOP. EAT. ENJOY.



CURRICULUM

Integrative Student Support at PRWS

"There is no such thing as a disobedient child, only a disoriented one."

Last year PRWS received a grant to formally take up a program embraced by many Waldorf schools worldwide that provides faculty, parents, and students with a shared framework to further develop our support and care capacities. The Three Streams of Student Support provide a shared framework and consistent, transparent process to support students who are experiencing academic, social, and/or behavioral difficulties to move through challenges and conflict and build effective social-emotional skills along the way.

The integrative Student Support program is informed by decades of Dr. Kim John Payne's focused work with children, families, and Waldorf school communities and is rooted in principles of restorative justice and nonviolent communication. Social and emotional health provide a sound foundation for academic learning. When a child is disoriented, their learning (and, at times, that of their peers) is compromised. This "disorientation" can take many forms. Perhaps a student's difficulty lies in the social realm ("They're not playing with me"), the behavioral realm (frequently talking out of turn and at the wrong time), or in the education support realm ("I need more time to finish"). Students (and oftentimes we adults, too) need help to "reorient" before they can move back into "flow," where optimal learning, connection, and engagement with others (or with the work in front of them) are possible.

UNDERLYING PREMISES OF THE THREE STREAMS OF STUDENT SUPPORT WORK:

- *Accountability rather than blame.* When things are going wrong we must set them right. Each individual involved accepts some responsibility to make it so.
- *Empathy is the key to success in life.* Our interventions seek to build empathy in the children so that they can learn to stand in one another's shoes.
- *There is no such thing as a misbehaving child, only one who is disoriented.* When we consider that a child pushing behavioral boundaries is disoriented, we approach the child and situation with more curiosity and care, rather than taking their behavior personally.
- *Conflict is a necessary part of being human.* Our task is to let children know that we are there, guiding them through their conflicts so that they may learn constructive lessons.
- *Our task is to remove hindrances to learning.* Children who experience learning challenges present us with a riddle: What is the key that unlocks their capacities? As educators and parents our work is to seek these keys and support the child to find areas of success.
- *We begin with implicit approaches before moving to explicit approaches.* The Waldorf curriculum is rich in implicit

approaches to social and emotional challenges. In fact, much of the Three Streams work is not apparent to the parent body or the students because it is implicit—embedded in the stories, pictures, artwork, speech, music, drama, and rhythms of the lessons.

Carrie Treviranus, Grade 8 class teacher and last year's Student Social Action Committee coordinator, writes:

In seventh grade the class formed the Student Social Action Committee (SSAC), which is one part of the Integrative Student Support model. Typically taken up by a school's seventh or eighth grade, we are training to be leaders in the school in the best way we can be. This could look like being there for a member of a younger class who is having a hard time, or sitting in on a "No Blame" meeting in which we assist students working through a disagreement. Each student is a member of the SSAC, and two or three of these students are assigned to each class of the school, from Kindergarten through sixth, to be their big buddies. The buddies began connecting with younger classes by introducing themselves at lunchtime and visiting them in the mornings before handshake. The students assigned to the kindergarten were invited to help zip coats to prepare for outside time. We started by showing our kind and comforting presence, a gentle step toward building a trusting relationship.

This work is not new to PRWS. We have taken up study with Kim John Payne and Social Inclusion at various points in the past, and it is living here, woven into our culture, intentions, and practices. We have begun again, working on it in quite a focused way. This includes a committee of faculty and staff members who meet weekly, attend a meeting with Kim John Payne monthly, have another monthly meeting with other personnel from Waldorf schools engaged with this model, and participate in frequent study at our weekly faculty meetings. It is all really wonderful, important, helpful, and refining work.

Last year the seventh grade also explored the topic of "put-downs." Ms. Carrie led the students in a put-down survey, where the students observed the put-downs they heard (or used) over the course of a day. She writes:

As I anticipated, some students counted quite a huge number, and others almost none—which demonstrates how we hear through our different filters. Either way, it was illuminating. We also have learned the game Dragon Wings (created by former PRWS parent David Breitbach and his daughter Kessie). The seventh graders found it delightful! We have four game sets that David donated specifically for us to use as an Integrative Student Support tool. The students joined their buddy classes during a skills period and taught this cooperative and collaborative board game in groups. We look forward to sharing more on this as we continue to take up the work!

Robin Kottke, Development Director



DEVELOPMENT

Happy August!

The first days of school are less than a week away, and the hallway floors bear a telltale sign: the high-gloss shine of freshly waxed floors. Last week, faculty and staff met for our annual August in-service, followed by an All-School Community Workday this past weekend. Teachers, staff, parents, students, and friends worked together to tackle an impressive list of tasks big and small to prepare our building and grounds for the first days of school. This Sunday we'll host a New Family Brunch to welcome the many new families joining us this year. And then, of course, comes the best part: gathering as a community for the Opening Day Assembly to welcome the children and the official start of a new school year.

The rugs upon which morning circles take place have been deep-cleaned and returned to the classrooms, placed atop the shiny floors. A favorite tradition at PRWS is how the students literally *move* through the grades (and here I don't mean jump-roping their times tables, though that's a favorite, too). While students remain with the same class teacher and classmates throughout the grades, each fall they move as a group into their new grade's designated classroom. Each summer the classrooms undergo a profound metamorphosis whereby all contents are removed, the space is thoroughly cleaned and then created anew by teachers of the rising class for whom this room will be home base during the coming year.

This annual rhythm allows sacred space and time for teachers to reflect, write their end-of-year narrative report for each of their students, imagine, and begin studying and planning for the coming year's curriculum and blocks of study. They determine what to take to the next classroom, what to let go of or gift to others, and infuse their new classroom with intentions and materials as they dream and prepare for the year ahead.

It is an exciting change every year, especially for first- and fourth-grade students. First-grade students move from kinder-

garten over to the main school building, of course, and the rising fourth-grade students turn the corner from the lower grades into the upper grades hallway. It's a big deal!

This sweet tradition of moving through the grades is on my mind as our eldest daughter prepares for her last year at Pleasant Ridge. Soon she and her Class of '24 peers will stand outside the eighth-grade classroom to share a morning greeting with their beloved Ms. Carrie, before settling in for the day in their new room at the end of the upper grades hallway—the final frontier of their Pleasant Ridge journey!

What a gift PRWS has been for our daughters, our family, and a great many others over the past four decades. Enrollment has grown significantly these past few years, as many new families are drawn to the school for its rich curriculum, community, and opportunities to play an active role in the life of the school. So much affection has been built here for the school and community, made possible by the love, energy, time, and investment of families and individuals like you.

With the fall comes a new Annual Giving cycle. The generosity of our PRWS community of current and alumni students, parents, grandparents, faculty, staff, and friends helps ensure we reach the fundraising goals we count on each year to balance our budget. **I invite you to consider what you appreciate most about PRWS and join me in making a gift, perhaps in honor or memory of a loved one whose presence has enriched your life. No gift is too small. Whether \$5 or \$5,000, each donation is gratefully accepted and used to invest in the work and long-term health of our school.** Simply complete and return the enclosed remittance envelope, or donate securely online at www.pleasantridgewaldorf.org/giving/donate. Together we can achieve so much!

In partnership,
Robin Kottke, Development Director

DONORS

Many thanks to all who have supported the work of our school April 25 – August 1, 2023.

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Congratulations to Ms. Mandy and the Class of 2023!— Front row (left to right): Clara Hotchkiss, Aveline Belling-Dunn, Mira Splinter, Marlo Peters, Nora Knutson, Zelda Hodapp, Miré Roselle, Mila Pederson. Middle row: Ayelet Parker, Frances Levin, Mandy Palen, Charlotte Brudos. Back row: Cyrus Hundt, Lucah Spicer, Cosmo Crockett, Jarrett Sullivan, Kyle Sleep, Cassidy Ramsay.

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