

January 31, 2014

TO: APC Members

FROM: Donna Levesque, Pedagogical Council Chair

SUBJECT: Report on Pedagogical Council meeting of January 28, 2014

WALDORF ESSENTIALS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

Members of the Pedagogical Council were asked to prepare written reports to bring for discussion at this meeting. The following is a distillation of these.

Martyn Rawson, keynote speaker and an author/editor of The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum, presented "Waldorf Essentials", based on his 35 years of teaching in Waldorf schools as well as visits to Waldorf schools all over the world. These essentials include:

- Learning and being in a community.
- Doing things beautifully; developing aesthetics.
- Development of the self: biological, social, cultural
- Eurythmy
- Creating new concepts
- Translating: interpreting Steiner's work through a process of intuition
- Teacher education
- Working together collegially
- Crossing boundaries, both cultural and spiritual
- Going places
- Gathering new experiences
- Work: skilled work requiring a social purpose, mastery, and a creative process
- Caring for the world
- Experiential learning
- Building bridges, both practical and metaphorical
- Infiltrating: penetrating ideas so as to carry them into another place and/or time
- Research, with an anthroposophical, pedagogical perspective

As the Council discussed other observations from visits to charter Waldorf schools in California, it became evident that in order to move ahead with planning for next year, our community needs a clarified, explicitly stated, commonly-held vision for our school. In Foraker terms, we need to be clear about “who we are” and “where we are going.” We formulated some guiding questions to begin this process.

- Who are the children we are currently serving? What defines the community we are working with?
- Who are we trying to attract? What image do we want to create for ourselves?
- What niche(s) do we fill in the greater community?
- What is the philosophy behind our interventions?
- How do we teach reading, and all subjects, using the Waldorf philosophy?
- What overarching Waldorf essentials inform our decisions?
- What distinguishes us as a Waldorf school?
- What is the greater/long-range vision for Birchtree?
- Who/what drives our decisions (academic standards? behavioral standards? exemptions from our charter? choice of teacher? etc.)
- What is our culture?

There are other questions, but these underlie most of our decision-making. Answering them will aid in setting priorities, investing in resources, and hiring.

One concept that intrigued some of our teachers who visited California schools involves the idea of sponsoring a school-within-a-school at Birchtree for families who choose to homeschool utilizing a Waldorf-inspired curriculum. Jamey Duhamel may be able to speak further on this topic.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Levesque