

## A Word from Ms. Mall

Dear Winterberry Families & Friends,

As many of you may have heard our school mentors, George Hoeffcker and Donna Burgess, arrived at Winterberry on Monday, February 25th. During this visit they will be working with our community, staff, and faculty to create a comprehensive picture of where we have been, where we are currently, and where we are hoping to go in the future.

During their first week with us they will be spending time observing and interviewing our faculty and staff regarding pedagogical issues. This time will vary depending on scheduling issues, however each class will be observed for at least 45 minutes. After an observation our mentors will be following up with each staff member for a minimum of 30 minutes.

On Sunday, March 3rd, our mentors will be working with our community from 9am - 4pm (lunch will be provided). This time together will be used to reconnect with our shared community values and experiences. George and Donna will be using the practice of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to guide us through our day together. AI is based on the theory that organizations move in the direction of the images they hold. This means that when we concentrate or focus on the positive we will be more likely to realize our desired outcome. Together we will celebrate what we have accomplished in the past seven and a half years. We will also work to identify an accurate picture of where we are in the present. Lastly, we will use the information we gather/create to inform our future

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### Upcoming Events

#### March 2013

- 1st! Winterberry Stage, 6-9pm
- The community potluck has been cancelled
- 3rd! Community Workshop 9am-4pm
- 4th! In Service: NO SCHOOL
- 5-7th! Parent-Teacher Conferences:  
!12:30 early release
- 7th! WPG Mtg., 6 pm
- 8th! All-School Ski/Walk Day
- 9-17th Spring Break
- 19th! Search for the Self: Adolescent Talk with  
!Principal Shanna Mall 6:30-8:30pm
- 21st! WCC Mtg., 6 pm
- 28th! SBA Science, Grades 4 & 8

#### April 2013

- 2-4th! SBA Reading, Writing & Math, Grades  
!3-8
- 4th! WPG Mtg., 6pm
- 6th! Head, Heart, Hands Auction, 6pm
- 17th! Grade 8 Play
- 18th! WCC Mtg, 6pm
- 19th! Grade 4 Play

Awakening the innate potential in every child

direction. Our hope is that this work will help our community kick off an intentional strategic planning process.

During our mentors' second week with our community George and Donna will be meeting with and interviewing parents, board members, and various staff/faculty. In these meetings they will be completing AI interviews designed to collect community wide information regarding Winterberry. There are sign-up sheets in the front office if you are interested in signing up to be interviewed. The information gathered during these conversations will be used to inform the final summary document created by our mentors in regard to the current state of Winterberry Charter School.

For those who have worked with George and Donna in the past, thank you for all you have added to the life of our school. I hope you will be able to make it on Sunday. We also have many new families and

George Hoffecker and Donna Burgess help initiate "Appreciative Inquiry" based organizational development processes. Appreciative Inquiry is a positive, collaborative process for engaging people to build the kind of organizations and world that they want to live in. An AI process can help identify an optimal administrative structure for an organization.

Appreciative Inquiry is based on the assumption that there is a "fateful" connection between the questions we ask about the past and the present and the images we hold of what is possible in the future.

We can choose to inquire into the life of our organization based on the view that human systems are primarily constellations of problems/obstacles to be analyzed and overcome or we can seek

## Reflections on the Eight-Year Journey by Jeremy Crawford

Mr. Crawford is the first teacher at Winterberry to teach a class through the entire cycle of first through eighth grade.

When I was asked to reflect on my journey with my class, I was honored to take up the task. As the deadline approached, however, the task grew larger and larger: a mountain that I saw in the distance at first, thinking it was nearby, then realizing its true size as I approached. Now I stand underneath its soaring banks, and can barely see the top. This, truly, is a reflection and remembering that deserves more than a couple of paragraphs.

But, as Goethe pointed out, and I try to remember, let us not be turned away from the good by becoming dazed and, in turn, paralyzed, by the ideal. His phrasing was, "Don't let the ideal stand in the way of the good." This is an apt phrase for the experience a teacher has going through the years with his students. Waldorf schools tend to attract strong visionaries, and the training that we receive as teachers is strongly idealistic, rooted in the brilliant and incredibly durable recommendations that Rudolf Steiner made almost 100 years ago to the first group of Waldorf teachers. This leads to my first reflection: that the gift that Steiner gives to teachers is the invitation, even directive, to live in the real world, yet simultaneously stay connected to the earth below and the heavens above. This leads to an incredibly rich daily practice for the teacher, and throughout my eight years at Winterberry, even in the times of stress, or when the reality of the world seems overwhelming, I have constantly been grateful for this gift. Our task, first and foremost, is to work each day to be balanced between the lofty ideals of the heavens (what can be), and the rich, insensate geology of the earth (what is), so that we can actively work on the present good (what is becoming.) The gesture of the teacher is one of constant transformation. We root ourselves to the earth so that we know the past, we gaze up as high as we can reach to see what potential the human spirit has, and thus our real work becomes intensely now, and imminently practical, with the children, as they move through these poles. In other words, the children are a living reality of what is becoming, and it is the sacred duty of the teacher to pay close attention and offer out of his imagination, his thinking, and his feeling every experience that seems worthy of the children and which will support their becoming.

Of course, there are many more layers of this journey, the principle one being the long time-frame in which it is traversed. The Waldorf curriculum is unique in many ways, of course, but the eight-year loop is perhaps the most obvious and, to some, most insane. Why, I have been asked many times over the years, would it benefit a child to stay so long with one teacher? Don't they all turn into little versions of you? Don't they need to experience many different personalities, sets of expectations, and so on to gain flexibility and to be able to survive in the real world? If you are reading this, perhaps the value of the eight-year journey is already obvious, but my one reflection, as I approach the end of this particular stage of the journey, is simply this: the human being is never complete. The teacher must constantly change and grow with his class, and the children, of course, are constantly changing as well. Being able to observe the changes in my students over eight years has been another incredible gift that I am constantly grateful for, and the change in them is mirrored in my own inner development. It is difficult to overstate the profound transformation that I have gone through as my students have moved through the stages of childhood. The idea that the teacher is a "fixed" entity, and that the children, over time, will press into the "mold" that he shapes for them, belongs to an entirely different paradigm of what education is and does. The image here is one of unfolding the wings that we all have, and of celebrating those unfoldings one at a time, with awe,

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reverence, and mutual respect. My students are fellow human beings on a life-journey, and I am blessed to stand by them every day. I would not dare to mold them—I do not have that right. To see them, to encourage them, to strive to look past the outer shell to what lives and breathes within—yes. And, in an incredible stroke of the brush that paints our lives, this year they are really seeing me, even empathizing with me as a member of their expedition. Our relationship has transformed profoundly: from the imitation and imagination of their young years, to the need for strong boundaries in the middle years, and now to a moral and ethical equality. I am still the one in charge of the rhythms and routines, but the students are now fully aware of the relationship, and actively support its growth. This, perhaps, is the most surprising and rewarding element of the cycle.

Finally, I reflect, and have done so continuously throughout the journey, on the connected lives that a Waldorf class creates. Much has been said, and I have just added my bit, about the teacher/student journey. But what of the families? For me, this has been every bit as rewarding as my work with the children. The words "parent involvement" are pale and inadequate descriptors of the commitment that families make when they embark on this journey. In ways, the leap of faith by parents is far greater than that taken by any other group involved here, for the parents must trust, trust, and trust again. In my experience, the trust placed in me by the parents of my students has been the greatest gift of all, and every parent of every child I have worked with in connection with this class has left me richer. This does not need to be spoken, really, for the sheer fact of it is profound: for the entirety of the child's educational years, the parents trust a single human being to go through the necessary growth to see the evolving needs of the students. It sounds implausible at best, when we approach it from a purely materialistic place. No amount of "training" can ensure this, no amount of "adult education" can guarantee the successful completion of this journey. Only faith and trust, which must flow both ways, can achieve this remarkable situation. I have always trusted the families of my students, and they trust me. There is plenty of room for disagreement, of course, and healthy dialogue on class or individual issues, but the underlying mutual support is essential. We are all climbing the same mountain, and at times it seems that it is insurmountable. Yet each and every time, we take the next step. It is this faith, this trust, that nourishes the entire enterprise, which holds every child in a safe embrace, and which says, in the end: "You are a human being; unfold your wings; take flight." And, when we have done this together, waving goodbye is joyful.

## Why Did We Choose a Grade 1-8 Cycle?

Traditionally in the U.S., elementary school runs from 1st-6th grade and middle school runs from 7th-8th. Increasingly in Anchorage, the shift to middle school is beginning in the 6th grade. At Winterberry, we have chosen to honor the Waldorf tradition of a 1st-8th grade cycle. What are the reasons for this and how does it benefit our students?

As with many aspects of Waldorf education, the 1st-8th grade cycle is rooted in the natural development cycles of children. During these years, children learn primarily imaginatively and through their feelings. Thus, teachers tell them wondrous stories and draw beautiful pictures; the children then weave these together to create their own "text books". The "Middle School" years begin the transformation of the child from this stage to the next more intellectual stage. However, the early teen is still a child in many ways. Nurturing the beginning of this intellectual development within the imaginative, beautiful, and familiar rhythms of the 1st-8th grade school will help to ground the burgeoning intellect.

Not only does the octave support the child in the transition between imagination and intellect, but it allows the children to truly develop this "middle space," (which has its own value), and come out true leaders and visionaries among their peers. Removing the child from the community in which he has developed so well for the first six grades makes no sense developmentally, for in his last two years he can transform into a leader, a provider of



A group of dedicated parents and community members has been fostering a discussion of how to bring Waldorf or Waldorf-inspired secondary education to Anchorage for a year now. Recently, the group brought Meg Gorman up from San Francisco to give a lecture and a workshop on Waldorf high school and the developmental and educational needs of adolescents. Meg is a long-time Waldorf high school teacher and teacher trainer. She has taught at independent Waldorf schools across the country and intern

The Annual Head, Heart, and Handauction is quickly approaching. This event is great fun for our



## A Parent's Reading of Encountering the Self: Transformation and Destiny in the Ninth Year by Hermann Koepke

In Encountering the Self Hermann Koepke draws on his experiences as a Waldorf teacher to discuss the developmental change children undergo between the ages of nine and ten. His book is intended to guide parents in understanding and responding to this change in their children. Although this book is of particular interest to parents of third graders, it is also of value to those seeking a better understanding of how the Waldorf curriculum is designed to educate children according to their developmental stages.

The book begins with two chapters describing home visits by a teacher to two families of nine-year-olds. These conversations between teacher and parents illustrate how children of this age are developing a new concept of themselves as individuals, often accompanied by questions about mortality, their own origins, and a sense of separation from others. In addition to

## Winterberry Charter Council Meeting Reports

The WCC met February 21<sup>st</sup> in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. Present were Shanna Mall, Alicia Besh, Erin Fleischer, Melissa Janigo, Meggan Judge, Mike Rehberg, Tara Smith, Bob Steinmann, Gail Swartz, and Kyle Vander-Schrier.

We heard reports on testing, budget, the February WPG meeting, and the Faculty Council. We discussed the March WCC officer elections. We reported on our individual and subcommittee board goals on parent education, teacher training, ASD organization, and intra-body communication. We viewed the draft Winterberry informational video together and reached agreement on what revisions we would like to see. WCC officer elections will be held at the next meeting.

The WCC held a Special Meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup> in the teachers' lounge to meet with Cheryl Johnson of ASDTube. WCC members present were Alicia Besh, Erin Fleischer, Melissa Janigo, and Tara Smith. Cheryl Johnson and Mary Mead also attended. We focused on finalizing the Winterberry informational video.

Please feel free to attend any WCC meeting just to listen or to give us your comments! Our next regular meeting is March 21<sup>st</sup> at 6pm.

### After-School Dance Class

After-school dance class on Mondays 3:30-4:30.  
Classes held in the Eighth Grade classroom.  
Taught by Trinity Colvin.  
\$5.00 per a class.  
Proceeds go towards the Eighth Grade Class Trip.  
Have fun learning new dances!

### Volunteer Coordinator Needed!

We are still in need of an enthusiastic individual to fill the vital role of Volunteer Coordinator for the school. Please contact Ms. Mall for details!

## From the MTC

Hello Winterberry Friends and Families,

Since we are welcoming Winterberry's mentors, George Hoffecker and Donna Burgess this month, it seemed appropriate to organize this issue of the newsletter around the theme of Waldorf education. We are pleased to share with you a variety of perspectives on Waldorf education, as we explore the philosophy behind the curriculum and the experiences of students, parents and faculty.

We aim to keep the calendar in the newsletter reliable and up-to-date. However, when scheduling changes occur or new information is announced, you will receive emails from the Winterberry Business account. If you are receiving regular emails from your child's teacher, but not from the Winterberry Business email, check with the front desk to make sure that the school office has your correct email address.

Please feel free to contact any of the current MTC members with any questions or comments you might have about anything in the newsletter. You can find our email addresses at the end of this newsletter. You are invited to contribute to our newsletter and attend our meetings to share your ideas for topics you'd like to see covered in future issues. We meet every Monday, right after school.

With Thanks,

The MTC

If you have questions for the Anchorage School Board, their names are below. Contact information for these board members can be found at [www.asdk12.org](http://www.asdk12.org)

Anchorage School Board  
Jeannie Mackie, President  
Tam Agosti-Gisler  
Gretchen Guess  
Pat Higgens !      Natasha Von-  
Imhof  
Kathleen Plunkett  
Don Smith  
ASD Superintendent  
Jim Browder Ed.D.

“We receive the children in reverence, educate them in love, and let them go forth in freedom”

- Rudolf Steiner

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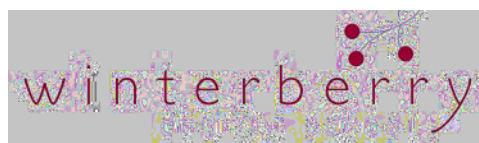
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Chloe Parry-Childerley, Grade Six,  
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## Moving Traditions

*Winterberry nurtures and promotes the development of healthy, responsible and creative human beings. Our aim is to provide a holistic learning environment and demonstrate that all children are natural and inspired learners who can achieve. Inspired by Waldorf educational methods, our integrated curriculum seeks to provide each student with meaningful, hands-on, developmentally appropriate experiences that inspire learning and personal growth.*



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