

The seventh grade last week lifted a car from the road with a wooden lever. Part of a physics lesson, reviewed and studied in detail the next day. In grade two, the children were square dancing as the teacher counted, “one, two, three, FOUR, five, six, seven, EIGHT!” The lesson was math. In the curriculum updates below, you’ll find more on how lessons at the Cape Ann Waldorf School are woven through with observation and experience, movement and song, writing and drawing. Read on, and ask: What does it feel like to be a clam? And, How many folds does it take to get to the sun?

First Grade: Drawing Difficult Forms

by Rebecca Rugo

The first grade has just finished a short form drawing block. We have been working with various running forms that alternately reach up to the sky and down into the earth.

These forms take quite a bit of practice. It is challenging for many to bring the form below the horizontal mid-line and to make the inflection points where right and left curves meet. On one morning a triumphant “I really surprised myself- I did so much better than I thought I would!” was heard. This has become an increasingly common refrain.

The children love to work with these forms and are very supportive of each other’s efforts. Everyone’s work is generously and genuinely praised. We have also continued our work with the double spiral, the beautiful form that begins with a great curved line that becomes increasingly smaller until it finally reverses upon itself and begins to expand out. This has been a lovely metaphor for these increasingly short days as we approach the Winter Solstice.

This week we will begin a Language Arts block and learn about the vowels.

Second Grade: Taking Light into Dark

by Connie McLeod

In the darkest days of the year the children experience festivals of light in the school community. During the Martinmas walk in November, we walk together bringing our collective light into the darkness. Thus we are fortified to face the lengthening nights with hope and courage.

The great drama of the season, a symbol of the struggle between light and darkness in our souls, is about to reach its climax. Advent occurs during the very depths of the darkest time of the year. This darkest season is not one of despair, but one of intense hope and wonder, for just as the darkest hour occurs before dawn, the longest night is, in reality, a herald of daylight’s return.

Also In Today’s Newsletter

- Hot Lunch Wednesday
- Shepherd’s Play Thursday
- School-Wide Assembly Friday
- Open House Jan. 16
- Learning Conference Jan. 22/23
- Gym Teacher wanted!

Just before the winter solstice in December, we experience the crux of the darkness and its shift in the Spiral of Light.

To face this darkest time, full on and without the distraction of the commercialism of the holiday season, takes great strength and courage. We are given the opportunity to see our children grow in confidence before our eyes as we watch them enter the labyrinth of the Spiral of Light, without us, without their peers, alone, guided only very gently by the angel.

Families quietly enter the silent darkened room. As they sit, waiting in wonderment, a trusted teacher speaks a verse in the darkness and an angel appears, guided by a candle flame, a star. Slowly, the angel blazes the path around and around, toward the center of the spiral of evergreen boughs. There, she touches her star to the central candle, the beacon, then turns outward again, to meet and guide the young child along the path. Older children she may only watch from afar.

Soft living music fills the silence as each child lights a candle in the spiral's center and finds a place along the path to leave it. Very often the best place is where the path is darkest. When the last child has placed a candle on the spiral, all present take a moment's pause to bear witness to what they have created. Before them is a spiral pathway of light, a vision of hope and promise for the future. It is this vision which feeds us all, and lives so reverently in the hearts of our children.

Most of the second graders have experienced this spiral many times; though one this year walked it for the first time, after watching it all of the previous years. Walking into the darkness, alone, takes tremendous courage. These children, now in second grade, may walk it only one more time. Though some may continue to walk for many more years, accompanying younger siblings, it is designed for the younger children in the school; nursery through grade three. It is a profound experience for adults as well as the young children, and I

am still moved by this experience, though my own children no longer accompany me to the Spiral of Light.

On Friday, December 11, the second graders brought light once again, before the winter solstice, through the celebration of Santa Lucia Day. The many Santa Lucia stories all originate from the story of a young girl from Syracuse, Sicily who lived more than 1700 years ago. Her story of love, faith and courage in the face of persecution has spurred more stories referring to her as a protector and a source of strength. It is not known how the Sicilian saint became so celebrated in Sweden. Perhaps through the travels as such peoples as the Vikings, the Swedes heard of Lucia, and in their darkest hour, the anniversary of her martyrdom, December thirteenth, her celebration became an important encouragement to face the deepest of the darkness before the solstice. Second graders, in the Swedish tradition, walked through the school as Lucia and the star children, singing and delivering Santa Lucia buns to all of the students, faculty and staff. Their gift of light and nourishment feeds their own souls, as they grow and become more able and skilled as they enter the heart of middle childhood.

Third Grade: Many Lessons in Language

by Dianne McGaunn

The third grade is just completing our second language arts block. We have been immersed in the stories of the Old Testament, all the way from the Creation through the exciting and heart-wrenching stories of Joseph the Dreamer and his eleven brothers, who, out of envy, sold their brother Joseph to Egyptian merchants. Throughout this traumatic situation and other events that followed, Joseph retained his trust in God. Thankfully, Joseph endures and triumphs over his hardships and manages to save many people, too. This story is so satisfying because it is only when we learn of the latter part of

Joseph's life that we can understand the importance of these seemingly unfortunate life events. It is because of these events and Joseph's destiny that he is able to have such a positive impact on the world.

Stories like these are comforting and satisfying to the third grader, as well as for adults! Through these soul-moving stories, we learn some of the most important lessons of life. Using these stories as a basis for our work, we weave in the more "academic" elements of our curriculum. So in this block, we practiced our beautiful cursive writing as we recorded these wondrous stories in our own words. We also improved our spelling, learned more about proper sentence and paragraph structure, and continued to practice math facts.

By the time you read this report, we will have moved into a short block on liquid measurement. And what a great way to justify holiday cookie baking! We continue to dance and sing each day in celebration of this wondrous season, and look forward to sharing some of our joy at the upcoming assembly, sending you off into a peaceful holiday break.

Fourth Grade: Aligning Form, Function in Nature

by Anna Scalera

In the fourth grade, we are learning a new way to consider the human form. This new way is based on a three-part view of our body: head, trunk, and limbs. While our head rests on top of our body, carried around on it throughout the day, our hands and feet are active and lively. In our trunk, the heart and lungs maintain a rhythm that neither tires us out nor stops for all of our life.

With this new view, we have gained a template to use for comparison with the diverse animals found in the world. One animal we have studied is the octopus. Its form is very much like a head, lacking a trunk and true limbs, even though its

eight tentacles are handy at grasping crabs and clams for dinner. While the octopus is similar in some ways to the soft part of our face and can similarly express its emotions through changing colors, the clam is an animal enclosed in a hard shell. We can imagine what it would be like if our whole body was our skull grown over, shrinking our face down to just a small siphon to filter water for nutrients.

In studying the human and animals in this way, students are learning to observe the alignment of form and function in nature.

Animals provide excellent content for writing compositions, drawing, painting, and modeling. In our writing, we are continuing to work on grammar. Describing the movements and appearance of animals requires us to find interesting adjectives and adverbs that create a picture with our words.

Joyful musical expression and speech also enrich each morning through song, recorder work, and recitation of tongue twisters and poetry. One poem we have been working with is *The Tyger*, by William Blake:

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Fifth Grade: Delving into Mesopotamia

by Laura Quayle

The fifth grade has been busy delving into the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia and Egypt. In Mesopotamia, we learned about the birth of human civilization and of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, an ancient story that was preserved in cuneiform writing on clay tablets. In this strange tale, we saw the creation and taming of a wild beast, an eternal friendship vow made between two mortal enemies, the battle against Humbaba, monster of the forest, and finally the grave confirmation that it is human's destiny to die one day. These stories have served as inspiration to the fifth graders for many writing activities, drawings, skits, paintings, and even a clay sculpture. Feel free to poke your head into our classroom and look at all of the beautiful artwork.

In music, we continue to sing songs in two-part harmony. Several children are learning to play the alto recorder, so we are now playing recorder each morning in two-part harmonies as well. The fifth graders are improving drastically in their ability to read music and have sight-read many recorder songs this month.

Since the last fifth grade update left so many of you stumped with a Math riddle, I leave you with the following trivia challenge from our study of Ancient Mesopotamia: What does *Mesopotamia* mean? What language does it come from? Ask a fifth grader to find out!

Sixth Grade: Experiencing Light, Dark

by Sabrina Babcock

The Sixth Grade has just completed a Main Lesson block on physics. We have been studying acoustics and optics. As part of our focus on optics, the students each wrote a short piece or poem about their experience with darkness and light. Here is a sampling.

In pitch darkness, it seems to go on forever. I lose my sense of awareness in it. I always feel that there is something there, though I have no idea what it could possibly be. Light is almost flowing, like water. It also seems to be finite and yet infinite. It makes me feel warm, both inside and out. When I see beams of light break through the clouds, I feel joy; as if something has happened. -JM

Dark

Darkness is the absence of a light
to brighten a space,
It can be cold as ice and dense
as any object,
It can't be touched or moved by
human hands,
Only by light.

Light

Light can be seen in many forms,
In a candle, in a fire, or in the sun.
Light can be sharp as a knife or
soft as fur.
Only darkness can drive out
any light. -ED-B

Lightness is like a beautiful spring morning, all bright and fearless. The sun is bright; the flowers are open, drinking in all the sunlight. Darkness is like a windy winter night when you wake up and you look out your window and you can't see a thing in your yard. -TW

Darkness is like a big, endless pit of nothingness. It's dark, damp and heavy.
Darkness is like a big, still sea of dampness and

darkness. Then flashing comes the light, saving you from the endless pit. Sharp is the light that cuts the eye, then back to darkness, falling, falling in the endless pit of nothingness. Sharp comes the light, and then heavy comes the darkness. Falling again then whoosh, there's the light driving the darkness away. -MW

Seventh Grade: Keeping the Balance

by Jenny Helmick

The Seventh Grade has just finished a three-week math block, focusing on pre-algebra skills and algebra.

We learned a little about Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, a ninth-century scholar in the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, Persia (now Iraq). He is considered the founder of algebra. The term "algebra" comes from one of the basic operations with equations (*al-jabr*) described in his book *al-Kitab al-mukhtasar fi hisab al-jabr wa'l-muqabala* (*The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing*).

Our first topic was exponents, and we saw how quickly numbers involving exponents grow. If you could fold a piece of paper 51 times—two to the fifty-first power—guess how thick it would be? (See note below.) Conversely, we saw how numbers can get small very quickly too—for example, although there are nearly 7 billion people on Earth, all the seventh graders are connected to President Hu Jintao of China by only FOUR handshakes. (Ask us how!)

On we went to absolute value, operations with signed numbers, order of operations, and formulas. Finally, we learned to solve one-step and two-step equations, keeping in mind that in algebra, as in life, we always have to KEEP THE BALANCE!

Note: If you could fold a piece of paper 51 times, it would be about 128 million miles thick, or more than the distance from here to the Sun.

Eighth Grade: From Renaissance to Vacation!

by Brian Macdonald

Hello again and Happy Holidays! We can't recall what we wrote last as we have been so busy. We dimly remember giving you Mr. Macdonald's Director's Notes from our play's program.

Well, after the play, we picked up our history thread from last year and have moved from the end of the Renaissance through the Enlightenment and are currently learning about the French Revolution. Things went from being religious battles to political ones. We learned a lot about George Washington and wrote a long paper on that. We've drawn George crossing the Delaware on Christmas, in a boat, of course! It's a heroic looking image more than an accurate depiction of what it looked like. Our drawing of the French Revolution is of the three Jacobin leaders around a table. They sure were some strange and scary people!

Between the history blocks, we studied Mensuration which is a fancy word for measuring perimeters, areas and volumes. Some of us laughed when we first heard the word. Mr. Macdonald told us another word that could upset our parents. It means to chew: mastication. We had fun using those words for a few days. We took two final exams and are having another around the time you read this. Then, we are done with school and it's VACATION!!!! Well, that's enough for now. Some of us have to go back to filling out applications to other schools. But, then it's VACATION!!!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Still Seeking Replacement For Beloved Gym Teacher

We are still searching for a replacement for our beloved Mr. Macdonald, who will be leaving us in December. Spread the word to anyone you think may be a suitable candidate.

This is a great opportunity to work the children in a rewarding, fun, and joyful way! The short version of the job posting is listed here. The full job posting is on our website and on www.waldorfteachers.com.

Games and Movement Instructor: The Cape Ann Waldorf School is seeking a part-time Games / Movement Education Teacher to teach elementary classes. This would be a part-time, hourly position, and would run from January 2010 to June 2010 with possibility for future opportunities. We have a strong program in place and we are looking for someone to begin to lead the program before our current teacher leaves in December 2009. Job responsibilities may also include training students for the 5th grade Pentathlon. The ideal candidate will have a Physical Education teaching background and knowledge surrounding the Waldorf curriculum as well as training in Spatial Dynamics.

To apply for this position, please share a letter of introduction, your resume and three letters of recommendation (or contact information for three references).

You can contact the Teacher Search Team by faxing your material to 978-927-5237, calling us at 978-927-8811, or sending email to: HiringTeam@capeannwaldorf.org. Alternatively, you can contact Dianne McGaunn, Connie MacLeod, or Kati Manning directly. We hope to hear from you!

Friday Assembly 10:45; No Early Childhood Classes

The assembly on Friday, Dec. 18 is at 10:45 with a 12:10 dismissal. There will be no early childhood classes on that day (kindergarten, nursery, parent-and-child).

CAWS Christmas Tale Thursday Evening, 7:00

Did you ever hear your fourth-grade teacher sing a solo, dressed as the Mother Mary? Here's your chance, Thursday, Dec. 17, at 7:00 pm.

The Shepherd's Play, an annual tradition at CAWS and other Waldorf schools, will be performed here at the school.

The following words are taken from an essay by fourth-grade teacher Laura Quayle, published in the local paper last week:

“The most meaningful local Christmas tradition to me is one that far too few residents know about: ‘The Shepherd’s Play’ of The Cape Ann Waldorf School. Each year the teachers of the Cape Ann Waldorf School ... rehearse and perform this medieval play, which tells the story of the birth of Jesus.

“The play is translated from high German and is from the small Austrian village of Oberufer, where villagers performed it for their friends and neighbors in local taverns for hundreds of years. The props were minimal and the actors were not professional, but actors and audience alike spent an evening living into one of the most beautiful and timeless stories of the world. The play is both reverent and beautiful in its musical selections and hilariously funny, bringing cheerful entertainment with a deeper meaning.

“The Cape Ann Waldorf School is one of hundreds of Waldorf schools around the world that perform this play each year in many different languages. I imagine there are few plays that have been performed for so many years and in so many places. The deep history of

the play alone brings great meaning. The fact that the cast is entirely composed of teachers, who have strived to learn their lines, sing beautiful solos and play a convincing part on stage adds another level of depth. I mean, did you ever hear your teacher sing a solo, dressed as the Blessed Mother?"

Office Wish List: Volunteer, Filing Cabinet

The office is looking for volunteer help and for a five-drawer filing cabinet.

Volunteer help is needed on Wednesday and Friday mornings to answer phones, do attendance and other miscellaneous office work as needed.

In addition, we are hunting and hoping for a five-drawer locking file cabinet. Do you have one that you could donate?

If you can help, please call Pam in the office: 978-927-8811. Thank you!

Closing Out Lost & Found

It's time to dig through the lost-and-found basket on the landing. The basket is overflowing with rain gear, sweaters, lunch boxes and the like. Unclaimed items will be removed for distribution to area organizations. This will happen very soon! Thank you.

Also, it would be helpful if someone could lay out the clothes and other items for easy viewing as soon as possible. Volunteer also sought to later transport items for donation. Thank you.

Pizza Lunch Wednesday

Pizza lunch will be served again this Wednesday, December 16th. Tickets (\$5.00 for

one slice, \$6.00 for two slices) can be purchased in the Main Hall at drop-off on that day.

Coffee Causing a Stir Mon, Wed, Fri Mornings

The Main Hall is once again buzzing with adult conversation and the vigorous antics of the youngest members of our community.

We have had an enthusiastic response to our morning coffee program. Parents were missing their wake up cup and a chance to socialize.

With Rosemary's decision to pursue other interests, we have decided to continue the parent-run coffee hour on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through this year. We will post a sign-up sheet at the beginning of each month outside the kitchen.

To host a coffee hour, all you need to do is to bake something (muffins, scones, or tea bread), staff the coffee machine, and tidy up the kitchen when you're done. Each shift goes from 8:00 to about 9:00.

This is a great way to start your day, to contribute to the community, and to meet other parents. All proceeds go to benefit the school.

Nursery, Kindergarten Open House Sat., Jan 16

Children may play in the classrooms, make candles, and enjoy a seasonal puppet show at the next CAWS open house for Nursery and Kindergarten.

Tour the classrooms and speak to early childhood teachers while the children play. Do you know someone who may be interested in this beautiful, simple open house? Please let them know. RSVP to Kelly Hiselman: 978-927-1936.

CAWS Conference Coming; Mark Calendar for January

The Learning Conference is returning to CAWS on Friday Jan. 22, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, and Saturday Jan. 23 from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. This conference is for you the parent body and anyone wanting to learn the “What, How and Why of Waldorf Education.”

The conference will open Friday evening with a panel of Waldorf School graduates. The next morning Tina Blythe, Harvard researcher, author, international education consultant and CAWS sixth grade parent will open with a lecture. This will be followed by hands-on workshops focusing on the “why” of Waldorf education, led by our own faculty exploring subjects like reading, math, science, form drawing, movement, handwork, and German.

Lunch will be offered and more details about this great event will follow in the New Year!

Enchanted Caravan Open

Enchanted Caravan will be open this Friday from 8:15-1PM.

We will have the new Mercurius USA order in (aka art supplies)! In addition, we are offering a special holiday book sale: buy 2 books and get your third at 50% off the lowest book price. Special holiday and craft books at 30% off.

Hand knitted “baby’s in a cradle” just arrived. And we are carrying Robin Taliesin’s gorgeous handbags and jewelry!

‘Drop-in’ Aftercare Available This Week

For the month of December, we are offering a drop-in feature for our K-5 after-care program on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

Stop by Mrs. Deveau’s desk and put your child’s name on the *Sign-up Sheet for K-5 After-Care Drop In.*

The cost for drop-ins will be \$15 if picked up before 4:00 pm and \$30 if picked up between 4:00 – 5:30 pm. At the end of December, you will receive an invoice in the mail to pay for the times your child attended.

This is a pilot program. Please give feedback to the Management Team or Lauren White.

Financial Aid Forms Available, Due Jan. 15

For anyone interested in applying for Financial Aid, the FACTS on-line application is now available via the CAWS website.

The deadline for completing the Financial Aid application is **January 15**, and the deadline for submitting all supporting tax documents to FACTS is **February 5**.

Please go to the school’s website under the Admissions section for further information and for a link to the FACTS on-line application. Feel free to call, email, or stop by the business office and talk with Lauren White if you have any questions.

Holiday Raffle: Last Chance

There is still time to buy your raffle tickets and take a chance on winning! Tickets attached at back of newsletter! Submit and pay for tickets in the CAWS office or first thing Friday morning in the Enchanted Caravan.

The prizes—beautiful, hand-made items—are on display in the glass case in the upstairs hallway.

Tickets are 1 for \$5 or 5 for \$20. The drawing will be held Dec. 18 at the school assembly, which begins at 10:45.

Community Association Notes: Conference, Etc.

The Waldorf Community Association met last Tuesday evening to discuss the upcoming learning conference and other issues. Please see meeting notes below, and please plan to attend the WCA's next scheduled meeting, Feb. 9 at 8:30 am. -ed

The WCA covered topics such as the upcoming Learning Conference scheduled for January (see article above) and the CAWS lecture series kicking off Jan. 14. We finalized those dates and guest speakers.

Discussed the possibility of holding a "Toxtour" event at school in the spring. "Toxtour" is an educational electronics recycling organization helping to raise awareness of the global e-waste problem. Explored the possibility of having another Foundations Studies course offered at CAWS. The Foundations Studies course is run by the Center for Anthroposophy in Wilton N.H. to give those wishing to become Waldorf teachers the fundamental background needed and offers an opportunity for all to explore the foundation in Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education.

Talked about the "school calendar" keeping it current and up to date and discussed the hardship it creates for parents when changes are made. And finally mulled over the M-W-F morning coffee/snack hour continuing and lunch options for the New Year. If you missed this meeting try to make our next, scheduled for Feb. 9 at 8:30 in the Main Hall.

The WCA is an organization of parents, teachers and others in the community wanting to support the Cape Ann Waldorf School. The group seeks to enrich the CAWS experience in many ways, including adult education and other events and activities. All parents and teachers from grades and early childhood are welcome.

Turn Your Old Vehicle Into Cash for CAWS

Instead of selling, trading, or storing your old vehicle, consider donating it to Vehicles for Charity for a tax deduction and to give a significant portion of the proceeds to our school. Vehicles for Charity accepts cars, trucks, motorcycles, boats, recreational vehicles...anything on wheels.

It is a very simple donation process—after you contact Vehicles for Charity, they pick up your vehicle and take care of the rest. If you select CAWS as your cause of choice, the school receives 70% of the net proceeds from the sale of your car. Other non-profits and charities share the remaining proceeds.

Donations have already started rolling in... To make yours, complete the online form (<http://www.vehiclesforcharity.org>) or call 1-866-628-2277.

Newsletter Items Due Thursday Jan. 7

The next *Newsletter* is scheduled for Monday Jan. 11. Therefore, announcements concerning January events, meetings, etc. are due on Thursday, Jan. 7. Thank you. Submissions: jmalcolmkennedy@gmail.com. Thank you.

Snowy Day Reminder: No Early Closings

On a snowy or icy day, if weather conditions worsen, school is not shut down early. It is not feasible to contact all parents for early pick up. The school will remain open until the usual closing to ensure that all children are cared for.

If parents wish to pick up their children early due to concerns about road conditions, they may do so at their own discretion. Please be sure to sign them out at the office.

Please do not call the office about early closing due to weather as this can tie up office staff unnecessarily. Thank you for your consideration of this.

Got Ideas?

The *Newsletter* would like to publish your art or ideas. Student journalist? Parent stringer?

Contact: jmalcolmkennedy@gmail.com. Thank you.

PERSONAL

Lost: We have mislaid our Radio/Tape/CD Player, which we leave here when we travel to England. Please, if we lent it to you, could you call us at 978-282-0393. Stephen and Libby Sheen.

Wanted: Does anyone have a humidifier that we could borrow through February? Please call Stephen or Libby at: 978-282-0393. Thank you.