A WORD FROM ELLON ...

Hello Everyone.
Welcome back to Term 3. Haven’t we had wonderful weather for the holidays? It was so special to have sunshine and beautiful blue skies. I do hope you have all enjoyed the break.

Behind the scenes there has been lots happening for the staff over the holidays. Kellie, Andrea and Xiola spent the first week at the Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood conference. They shared their experiences at our Pupil Free Day last Friday. It was wonderful what they shared, and inspirational.

Last weekend I was a participant at a conference at Samford Valley Steiner School: “Inner Life for Outer Work with Children”. The Presenter was Florian Osswald who is one of the leaders of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum. This was also a very rich weekend and I feel privileged to be part of this education movement that is always striving to keep renewing the impulse by networking throughout the world.

Over the holidays I met with Jenny Edney to consider the feedback from the food surveys and develop the menu for Term 3. It is displayed on the noticeboard in the room if you would like to know what the children are eating each day, and is also included in this newsletter.

I believe it is very exciting that we are providing food as a curriculum focus. I would like to share with you some of the aspects that are important to why the food is part of the curriculum.

‘Learning from life for life’ is part of the young child’s learning experience and builds the right foundation for all future learning.

Children experience the process of providing a meal. They enjoy being involved in the preparation of developing a wholesome meal together.

We aim to provide wholesome food that is not packaged, which means the children can connect with the preparation process as much as possible. So it is just wonderful when we can add something from the garden or we prepare the bread batter on Monday/Wednesday for the making and baking of the bread rolls on Tuesday/Thursday.

The repetitive menu allows them to feel confident and in control. They know what to expect. It is also nurturing for the will development of the young child. The joy of discovering new tastes and overcoming dislikes is also another aspect. It lays a foundation for healthy choices at a different stage of their development.

The community activity of all children and adults sharing a meal together provides many rich moments and learning experiences for all.

Continued next page ...

What’s On This Term

25th Anniversary Planning Meeting: Tuesday, July 26, 3.30pm

Parent Curriculum Night:  
Wednesday, August 10, 7pm–8.30pm.

Byron Bay Community Market – Charity of the Day:  
Sunday, August 7, 8am–2pm.  
(See roster closer to the time.)

Working Bee:  
Saturday, August 27, 9am–12pm.

Spring Festival:  
Wednesday, September 21
I could go on about the language, math, and science learning that is occurring also. However, for me the most important aspect is to understand that at this age your child is a sense organ – in a certain sense children live by tasting everything encountered. Everything that affects a child from outside is recreated within. What a lovely way to explore sympathy, antipathy and empathy through overcoming dislikes through taste.

As parents if we can value the experiences your child is tasting and feel confident that they are nourished on many levels you will be supporting your children in building a firm foundation for all their future learning.

This term we are trialling having lunch at 11.30am and afternoon tea at 1.30pm. In the early mornings there will still be the opportunity to graze while the meal is being prepared. However I do encourage you to ensure your child does eat breakfast before they come to preschool.

Already in Week 1 we have had such a positive response. On Monday, after eating all his vegetable rice at lunch, and while finishing his last mouthful of pancake with yoghurt and poached pear for afternoon tea, Kade proclaimed: “Delicious and nutritious” (a phrase he learned from his big brother Teal, who in turn picked it up from Julie’s kindergarten room at CBRSS).

Regards,
Ellon

What a Special Day for Periwinkle!

A visit from important Waldorf Educators from afar.

On our first day back to Term 3 we had the privilege to have two very important visitors for lunch: Florian Osswald, who is one of the leaders of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum, Switzerland; and Peter Gladsby, Education Administrator from Samford Valley Steiner School, Brisbane. Both these gentlemen have many years experience in Waldorf Education and a strong commitment to supporting Steiner Education throughout the world.

It was such a wonderful visit on so many levels, and it is hard to explain the deep sense of gratitude to have had the opportunity for them to share a lunch with all our little people and experience what we are doing here at Periwinkle.

Once again it was the children themselves who demonstrated the importance of their work and how hard they are learning constantly all day. For many of the children there wasn’t even time to stop and have a chat, their own work took priority, while others shared their knowledge. Leela took time to show them a skeleton leaf, which was very fragile and had to be carried ever so carefully so it didn’t break. My heart was beaming as very little children were clearly demonstrating that the foundation for life-long learning was being well established and each one was invidualising their own experiences. What a model of a perfect classroom I believe was being reinforced.

A special thank you to both Peter and Florian for making the time to visit Periwinkle. I feel we now have strong links with Wardorf Education around the whole world. Periwinkle can only be stronger for their visit and the impulse of Steiner’s work strengthen.
LANTERN WALK ...
HELD AT CLARKE’S BEACH, JUNE 29

Photos by Brett Connable

Matt Stiebel
Ph: 6685 3876
Mob: 0428 973 554
P0 Box 470, Byron Bay
Lic no: 74489C
Recommended by Periwinkle!
“Metamorphosis of Learning” Overview

By Amber Greene

As part of the worldwide celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Rudolf Steiner, Periwinkle Preschool graciously hosted an afternoon of lectures, entitled “Metamorphosis of Learning – Growth Principles of the Steiner Education Movement”. Five knowledgeable presenters shared the fruits of their work.

Rod Tomlinson spoke first and shared some history of the Waldorf movement, and the first school. We were treated to a slide show of photographs of the original school grounds as Rod sought to dispel myth and dogma surrounding what is the true ‘essence’ of what it means to be a ‘Steiner’ school. Rod spoke eloquently, buoyed by his deep reverence for the subject but also formed out of his lifelong research into Steiner education. At one point he shared a quote from Steiner, with regard to opening a school, and teaching. “Stay truthful to the essentials. Don’t rely on what other people have done in the past. Set your own free, but controlled, imagination (fantasy, living inner picture) to work. Have faith in what you find for yourselves. Work it out for yourselves.” (The ability to do this is, of course, directly connected to an individual’s path of self development and contemplative insights they encounter along the way).

Rod painted a picture for us of how schools have evolved across the world to become ‘Waldorf’ or ‘Steiner’ schools. He suggested that in the translation from the original school to newer initiatives something has been lost of the crucial motif behind the name. That is, the focus on the word ‘free’, in reference to freedom from economic concern and state intervention, such as a National Curriculum. The loss of this single word has possibly contributed to a sense of confusion around what is essential and what is incidental in a modern school bearing the title. Rod suggested that we refer back to the four conditions that Steiner specified to guide our road:

1. that the school be open to all children;
2. that it be coeducational;
3. that it be a unified twelve-year school;
4. that the teachers, those individuals actually in contact with the children, have primary control over the pedagogy of the school, with a minimum of interference from the state or from economic sources.

For those who wish to deepen their understandings of the spiritual development of human beings on which the education and pedagogy is based, Rod suggests reading ‘The Study of Man’ and ‘Philosophy of Freedom’.

Next up was Ellon Gold, Director of Periwinkle Preschool, who began with a quote, “The seeds of a person’s entire lifetime is within the child”. Those of us who work in the early childhood realm know just how true this statement is.

Listening to Ellon, it is easy to see her passion lies in teaching as the joy from her work is written on her face. Ellon shared her beliefs that the most important aspects of working with the young child under seven are both the surroundings and environment in which the child is ‘educated’. She gave an overview of what Steiner describes as ‘sense perception’, and how the things we choose to surround the child with impact deeply upon the child’s physical and spiritual being. Ellon’s most important request to us all was that we all strive to have a genuine understanding of the human being (as given by Steiner in the picture of biographical development) and to develop our devotion to being educators of all little children.

Konrad Korobacz continued on with Ellon’s theme, adding that the most important question to ask of the environment is, ‘Who is it that stands in front of the children?’ This led to a discussion of the factors that must be deemed of the highest importance in a teacher: namely, that the teacher is healthy and well, is continuing on their own path of self development, and is able to look at the whole picture of the unfolding world, making sense and order from seeming chaos.

Konrad suggested that education must not focus on political or economic spheres (such as training our students for particular trades or skills that our society will need in the future) but instead can be a spiritual endeavour to help each individual find their own talents and destiny path. He also shared with us that it is the idea of ‘aesthetic education’ (art and the senses), that Steiner schools are renowned for, that paves the way for total engagement of the children.

Our fourth speaker was Gillian Rogers, who is currently completing a Masters in Steiner Education through Canberra University. Gillian spoke of the hope she has for education as a fundamental force to change the future, especially the social future, of what humans would and could become. She spoke too of the difficulties faced by modern education, of the children we meet today in our classrooms and the challenges that come with, and through, the very different world they are growing up in. She shared that one thing that has become evident to their study group is the dual nature of intelligence – holding great promise, but also potential for darkness. She recounted that the premise of Steiner education – working out of truth, beauty and goodness – will be

Continued next page...
imperative in the future as a means to mediate light and dark. Gillian gave us an overview of the processes involved in the Masters degree, and shared a little of the Action Research projects students must complete to succeed. This action research will hopefully prove bountiful to those working out of Steiner Education, giving us a contemporary take, solid data and feedback on what we believe to be true of education.

The final speaker was Cristina Rubsamen of Lillian Rock Steiner School. Cristina has studied alongside anthroposophical health practitioners for many years, and is trained in Extra Lesson. Cristina’s task was to attempt to bring awareness to us of how teachers and health support staff can work together with the children and the families in schools. Her most important contribution was as a real life, working model of how teachers and support staff need to work together for the greater good of the student and family. This is not an easy path to take, yet one with bountiful rewards.

Periwinkle staff and families are to be thanked and congratulated for the delicious spread of nutritious sustenance that warmed our bodies, hearts and souls over the afternoon and evening. This soul food, freshly brewed coffee and many varieties of hot tea replenished the many, many people gathered in the name of Rudolf Steiner in the moments between lectures. With edibles in hand to break the ice, we embarked on new friendships and rekindled those of old.

For me, the afternoon and early evening sped on by as the five-hour span of talks was filled with laughter, wisdom, humorous interludes, enlightening moments, sparks of clarity and a deep thankfulness that somehow I had found my way to this work. I think it would be fair to say that most attendees left the building filled with a joyful sense that the world at large would soon begin to recognise the very wise and ‘before its time’ insights given by Rudolf Steiner for the health and lifelong wellbeing of all children around the world. I look forward to a time when all children, not just those who are lucky enough to be enrolled in a Steiner/Waldorf program, are able to grow and learn and unfold their inner selves through an artistic and whole approach such as Steiner suggests. We can all look forward with much anticipation as we wait for this day.

Note: Ellon’s ‘Seeds of Learning’ lecture is included in full on pages 11–13 of this newsletter.

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**CRAFT NEWS**

**Term 3**

**Craft Group Dates**
(Saturdays from 12.30pm)

July 30 – Wire Dolls, Matchbox Dolls
August 13 – Formed Head Sack dolls
August 27 – Silk Dyeing
September 10 – (TBA)
September 24 – Getting Ready for 25th Anniversary

Reminder emails will be sent with further information. and a notice will be placed on the noticeboard the week before craft group meets. Don’t hesitate to call Toni or Carolyn with any enquiries or requests.

**Craft Coordinators**

Toni Dumas: 6680 4839 or 0458 400 610
Carolyn Harrington: 6687 1809 or 0448 881 708
Hello to Periwinkle.

I spent some time recently visiting SOH - here are some photos of the children playing with your donated toys. They love them!!!

The money raised by your stall at last year’s Spring Fair has been used for two main things:

1. A clinic nurse was paid last week to visit and check each child - she then returned the next day and gave out necessary medicine for head fungus, ringworm, and other ailments. (You can see her dressed in a green suit in one of the photos.)
2. The other half of the money has been given to Emily to use to pay for the process to get NGO status - it is quite a lengthy process with several govt charges along the way, including setting up a constitution - all with quite high costs - but once she has NGO status then more people in Australia and other countries will be interested in giving donations as it can be a tax deduction. So this is very, very important - it could take a year or more to come through but Periwinkle has covered the costs - well done and thank you!

On one of the days I was there, a visitor arrived who worked at KLM Airlines and gave 40 beautiful woollen blankets for the children to have at rest time - I have included the photo of some of the children wrapped up warm and cosy. It is heartwarming to see that some corporations can take time to help out!

Cheers, Susan
Vital Years Reflection
by Xiola Nolan

On the first Sunday of our preschool holidays, Kellie, Andrea and I travelled to Melbourne to attend Vital Years, the biannual conference of the Australian Association for Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education. This was the 14th Vital Years conference and it lived up to its strong reputation for bringing a group of well-respected, insightful and articulate guest speakers together. The theme of the week-long conference was ‘Thresholds in Early Childhood: Supporting transitions in the life of the young’.

Each morning after a half hour of singing (a beautiful experience) we explored the development of the child from pre-birth to seven years through a series of lectures. Anthroposophy acknowledges the spiritual realm as an important aspect of human development. As such we explored Steiner’s work around pre-birth and his insights into the development of the will in the young child. There were four guest speakers and each speaker brought their own personal warmth and sense of humour. They generously shared both their intellectual understanding and their practical experiences of working with the young child and their families from an anthroposophical perspective. As well as the morning lectures we also attended two workshops of our choice each day. These workshops were both nourishing and inspiring.

All our lectures and workshops emphasised the importance of the inner life of the teacher. The inner life of the teacher is a foundation of anthroposophical education as Steiner clearly stated in his first lecture to the first teachers of the original Waldorf school in Stuttgart:

‘... you can only become good teachers and educators if you pay attention not merely to what you do, but also to what you are.’

‘Foundations of Human Experience’ (formerly The Study of Man), Lecture 1

Like parenting, teaching and working closely with the young child never stops asking us to deepen our own sense of humanity. The heart of our daily task as parents and educators is the paying attention to what we are.

We feel very grateful that we had the opportunity to attend the Vital Years conference. It was wonderful to spend time getting to know other early childhood educators from around the country and New Zealand. We are enjoying bringing some of these new ideas and insights into our work with the children already. It gave Kellie, Andrea and I a chance to talk late into the night, to really belly laugh together and, of course, to shop!

Warmest Wishes,
Xiola

PERIWINKLE 2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Term 3: July 18 – September 23

Tuesday, July 26: 25th Anniversary Planning Meeting, 3.30pm.
Saturday, July 30: Craft Group, from 12.30pm.
Wednesday, August 10: Parent Curriculum Night, 7pm–8.30pm.
Saturday, August 13: Craft Group, from 12.30pm.
Sunday, August 7: Byron Bay Community Market – Charity of the Day. 8am–2pm.
Saturday, August 27: Working Bee, 9am–12pm. Craft Group, from 12.30pm.
Saturday, September 10: Craft Group, from 12.30pm.
Saturday, September 17: Cape Byron Rudolf Steiner School Spring Fair
Wednesday, September 21: Spring Festival
Saturday, September 24: Craft Group, from 12.30pm.

Term 4: October 10 – December 16

Saturday, October 22: Periwinkle’s 25th Anniversary Celebration!
Wednesday, November 2: Parent Curriculum Night, 7pm–8.30pm
Saturday November 19: Working Bee, 9am–12pm.
Tuesday, December 13: End-of-year Celebration for Monday–Tuesday–Wednesday group
Thursday, December 16: End-of-year Celebration for Wednesday–Thursday–Friday group
Friday, December 17: Pupil-free Day
Periwinkle has been fortunate enough to have Sandra Frain as one of our Trustees since 2008. In this role, Sandra provides anthroposophical and governance support to Periwinkle, and brings with her contagious enthusiasm and goodwill. Susan Perrow (Periwinkle’s founder) invited Sandra to be a Trustee because she had shown an appreciation for Periwinkle while conducting an employee assessment as a consultant in 2007.

Sandra holds a Masters Degree in Steiner Education (2000), a Bachelor of Child Study Degree (1980) and certificates in Biodynamic Gardening (2000) and Dramatherapy (2003).

For over 30 years Sandra has been developing educational programs for children, youth and adults in Canada, New York, the Caribbean and New South Wales.

Sandra is involved in a leadership capacity in the Regional Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Teachers educational events. She regularly teaches teachers and other interested adults on a variety of topics ranging from Sourdough Bread Baking to Biodynamic Gardening Practices to Healthy Happy Child Development Practices.

For the anthroposophical adult education ‘Grail Quest’ Sandra works with the Early Childhood Training and the Foundation Year students. For the ‘Cape Byron Group for Anthroposophia’ she co-hosts many public events with her husband Brian Keats.

In 2008, two of Sandra’s children’s stories were published in Susan Perrow’s book Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour.

Sandra has been offering Family Day Care since November 2006. She was previously employed as a preschool teacher at Shearwater Steiner School.

I asked Sandra to share with us some of her journey in Steiner education:

“Rudolf Steiner’s work first came to my attention in the late 1970s while studying many pedagogical approaches for my Bachelor of Child Study Degree. My first job as a professional was in a Child Development Centre run by Dorothy Olsen an acclaimed Steiner Early Childhood Educator in northern Canada. I was impressed by the gentle, natural, valuable, wise, beauty-full, sensible, healthy, non-invasive ways of being with the children: of ‘‘bringing them up’. Seeing them for more than their surface: of considering who is the spirit of this child and my spirit in relation to theirs.”

From that point on the educational programs I developed were underpinned with my impressions of what the experiential value was to children and adolescents and adults. When my daughter was three years old I sought for and was lucky enough to find a Family Day Care for her whose teacher had a Masters in Steiner Early Childhood Education. The atmosphere that Carolyn Barton created was so welcoming that I wanted to stay for the day too!

In 1997 I moved from Canada to New York to study for my Masters in Waldorf Education. Because of my particular interest in biodynamic and organic food I studied that also while in New York and then lived on a biodynamic farm centred around care for the elderly. The other farmers and I developed educational programs for visiting children. My mantra had been to bring the people to the land and to the people. I moved to Australia with my daughter in 2001. I felt supported by the familiar culture of the Steiner schools she attended in Canada, the US and then Australia. In 2006 I began living my dream of having children in an educational program in my home. In 2011 I cannot think of anything I would rather do. It is such a joy to welcome families who are looking for what I have to offer thus my business name and motto: Living Loving Learning (and Laughing too) Educational programs for people of all ages. I offer Parent Education and cyclical Festivals as a way to support the work that the children and I do on a daily basis. Considering the concept that it takes a village to raise a child, the more community we can create for us all the more supported we may be.

It is a privilege and a pleasure to be in colleagueship with Ellon and the other excellent teachers and parents at Periwinkle Preschool. What a nourishing environment for us all thanks to the vision that is held for the sake of the children.”

Sandra also opens some of her Parent Education Evenings to Periwinkle families.

Thank you to Sandra for her ongoing involvement and contribution to Periwinkle.
‘Holding and Enfolding our Children’ was the theme of a Parent Education evening held by Sandra Frain on Wednesday, June 15.

As parents were at home looking after sick children the evening was appreciated by three grandmothers (two nurses and Periwinkle’s Director Ellon Gold) and one mum (a physiotherapist) home schooling four children aged 3–12 years.

Five games were played, including a transitional one that led into Sandra’s ‘Rest Routine’. A lavender ‘face, hands and feet’ washing ceremony, a puppet show, some music and prayer rituals finished off the Rest Time activities. These games and routines were couched as ‘Techniques for Behaviour Management (Child and ours) while HAVING FUN and Getting Children (and US) to REST’.

Everyone then experienced the art of orchestrating lively and quiet games (in and out breathing), which carry the child/ren along in a happy musical rhythm and culminate with absolute silence. Children need to develop the ability to relax in absence of perpetual stimulation. This is a necessary life skill. We adults need to learn how to achieve this for all of our benefit. ‘Holding’ methods including ‘rocking’ were discussed.

Sandra spoke of the importance of rest and sleep for us all: children and adults. She recommended Henning Kohler’s book Working with Anxious, Nervous, Depressed Children for motivating us to respect the child’s need to sleep and to commit ourselves to supporting children getting adequate sleep and rest opportunities. Sleep is a necessity for children’s healthy development. Deprivation of it leads to a multitude of problems that can be prevented or remedied through sleep hygiene practices. Children have a right to peace and quiet too.

A healthy supper and opportunity to borrow relevant books concluded a enriching evening.

Sandra holds regular Parent Education Evenings as part of her family day-care in Mullumbimby – Living Loving Learning (and Laughing too) Educational programs for people of all ages. As a Periwinkle Trustee, she also opens some of these education evenings to Periwinkle parents. Details are emailed to Periwinkle families.

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**A Blessing for One Who is Exhausted**

*John O’Donohue*

Take refuge in your senses,

Open up

To all the small miracles you rushed through.

Become inclined to watch the way of rain

When it falls slow and free.

Draw alongside the silence of stone

Until its calmness can claim you.

Be excessively gentle with yourself.

Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.

Learn to linger around someone of ease

Who feels they have all the time in the world.

Gradually, you will return to yourself,

Having learned a new respect

For your heart

And the joy that dwells

Far within slow time.
Thank you to all the Periwinkle families who came out to help with the Term 2 working bee. It was perfect weather for gardening. We cleaned out many of the garden beds to get them ready for a fresh new garden design being put together by Gigi’s dad, Paul Richmond. We also did a whole lot of pruning, raking, cleaning of gutters and blinds, and paper cutting. We will be looking for people to help us out with planting, mulching and maintaining the new garden beds, so if you have a green thumb or just want to help make Periwinkle shine, please come along to the Term 3 working bee scheduled for Saturday the August 27, 9am–12pm. Children are welcome and please bring some morning tea to share.

Special thanks goes out to Matt Stiebel from NatureForm Landscaping who volunteered his time as well as his tools, trailer and hauling out all the green waste for us. Thanks Matt, and to all the staff and families who help make Periwinkle such a beautiful place to be.

Sincerely,
Cyndi Harris, Working Bee Coordinator
Welcome everyone. It is not only a pleasure but also a privilege to be hosting an afternoon of educational talks here at Periwinkle Preschool as a tribute to the contribution Rudolf Steiner made to the world. It is exciting to be able to work with a body of knowledge that is becoming more and more modern even though it is now 150 years since Rudolf Steiner’s birth. It is also quite special to have the afternoon here at Periwinkle as I am led to believe when Periwinkle started 25 years ago it was the first Rudolf Steiner educational impulse in the Byron Shire.

I would like to share with you my journey to meeting anthroposophy.

Just over 30 years ago a little girl called Jessica, my niece, was born with severe physical disabilities. She lived till 26 and for her entire life she was dependent on those around her to meet her every need. It was her parents’ journey to find what this child would need and believe me in our materialistic world this was not an easy task.

Through my sister’s determination and inner knowing she did not give up that search until they found Inla – an anthroposophical curative school/home in Sydney. Here Jessica was acknowledged as a human being on her life path and, even though her physical capacities were very limited, her soul and spirit was intact and deserved to be nurtured, educated and honored. So at Inla she was given a full Steiner education. It was never considered that her potential was limited to what could be measured through her physical capabilities.

When Jessica died Rosalind Peacover, a Christian community priest, acknowledged this young woman in her eulogy as a Matriarch, whose entire life was to ensure others did their work. She was honored with dignity and respect for her life’s work. With the materialistic thinking of our time the soul and spirit of Jessica could have gone unnoticed and the tremendous effort for her to survive in her physical body could have been the focus. Had Jessica not been part of my extended family I may never have found my life work. Today I again acknowledge Jessica as a profound communicator of my life, even though she never spoke a word.

Why I share this story is I think it demonstrates in a very practical way, a very real way and truthful way, aspects of what Rudolf Steiner has said about human development: that a human being’s journey has purpose; life isn’t always measured on what we can or cannot achieve, and unless we acknowledge the soul and spirit of a child we fail to bring the right education.

To support Jessica my family would provide respite, with my husband Geoff and sons Steven and Craig helping me look after her. It would be full on as Jessica could be 24/7. At the end of a couple of days when it would be time for her to leave – without ignoring the intensive work for the families who look after children with additional needs – I want to share with you I would often notice that, instead of feeling absolutely exhausted, there was something of a gift within us that made us feel very nourished.

I then discovered a Steiner school that had started in Bowral, which both our sons attended. At this point I wasn’t a teacher and for some years I enjoyed being involved as a parent in that community.

Later I undertook Steiner teacher training at Parsifal College and Gleneagon School in Sydney. This was an amazing, wonderful, sometimes fun and important two years. It wasn't only what we were learning but how we were learning: the value of integrating academic work with art and action; a wholistic approach engaging our thinking, feeling and will. I’d like to express my deep gratitude for the lecturers from those years and the commitment they had to mentor us through an incredible journey. One of those lecturers, Gerry Josephson, we are so lucky to have right here in Byron Bay, continuing to offer training for adults. Others were Sylvia Brose, the first teacher of Steiner Education in Australia, and Susan Harris, to whom I am extremely grateful. Their belief in my potential sustained my learning and transition to teaching.

On completion of my Steiner training I went to Wollongong University and studied Early Childhood Education. For me personally to teach in any school I felt I needed to have a picture of all the different disciplines. You can imagine my surprise when I discovered I was enrolled in a teacher training and nobody was mentioning Rudolf Steiner. I made a commitment to myself that if I believed that Steiner Education was so important then I had a responsibility to demonstrate how this knowledge deserved to be acknowledge in these institutions and I started to link Rudolf Steiner pedagogy to the theories being presented. This journey continued to deepen my appreciation of Steiner’s work. It is very nice to be able to evidence that what contemporary research is just discovering Rudolf Steiner had talked about 100 years beforehand. Both the lecturers and other students welcomed the approach I took at the university in my undergraduate and post-graduate studies.

From the post-graduate studies I developed an article on how foundation literacy is being practiced in Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Centres, to support educators to understand how the seeds/beginnings of literacy is supported during the early years and can be referenced to the contemporary research. This article was published in Star Weavings Spring/Summer 2010 edition and is also on...
Steiner describes that it is in developing these living ideas about the human development that, as educators, we can transform those ideas directly into will.

We can learn in a very practical way from hour to hour how to answer a most important question.

You may ask who asks that question? It is the children themselves. Thus, the most important thing is to learn how to read the children.

A genuinely practical understanding of the human being in body, soul and spirit guides us in learning how to really develop this skill. Again I quote Rudolf Steiner:

> It is, in fact, true that primarily the first three years, and then the remaining years before the age of seven, are the most important for the general development of the human being.

If you are a parent of more than one child I am sure your children have shown you they are individuals; they must be met in their own nature. We need to listen to the questions of each child and learn how to answer in a very practical way. I believe parents do this very well with their little children. The parent learns quickly from the child that it cannot be any other way.

Rudolf Steiner then continues on to say:

> During those first years, a child is actually an organ of sense perception.

What is the nature of this sense perception?

It is important to capture the difference between the sense perception of the young child to an adult.

For example, adults taste what they eat with their mouths, or gums or on their tongues; it is localised in the head. For young children, taste has an effect upon their entire organism. In a certain sense children live by tasting everything encountered. Children do not differentiate between spirit, soul and body. We could say the same about other senses – for example, the sight or hearing localised in an adult in the eye or ear is however spread out through the entire organism of a young child. That is the reason children do not differentiate between spirit, soul, and body. Everything that affects a child from outside is recreated within. Children imitatively recreate their entire environment within themselves.

Today there is a tendency to approach the child the same way as we would approach an adult. Adultised children is a question (a challenge of our time).

It is important to deeply work with this idea of the child as an organ of sense perception and our roles in surrounding the child with images that the child in essence will take into its own being. Rudolf Steiner gave a wonderful lecture on ‘Walking, Speaking, Thinking: Milestones in the life of the young child’ in August 1923. He clearly demonstrates in very concrete terms what happens for the young child in these three processes and what implications there are if as adults we have not provided the right environment and if we have not left human nature free:

Continued next page...
If, as teachers, we do not leave the human nature free and act only as assistants, then we spoil the human organism for all of earthly life. ... We need to understand that the seeds of a person’s entire earthly life exist in the person during childhood.

It is interesting to note the importance of the inner quality of the educators as a child is learning these skills. A child learning to walk must be met with love, learning to speak must be met with truthfulness, and learning to think must be met with clarity. I quote Rudolf Steiner to demonstrate the influence of the educator’s body, soul and spirit on the developing child:

For the young child is an extraordinarily subtly organised organ of sense perception, he or she is receptive not only to the physical influences of the surroundings, but also to the moral influences in particular the influences of thoughts. As paradoxical as that may seem to today’s materialistically thinking people, children perceive what we think when we are near them. As parents or teachers, it is important that when we are near young children we not only avoid doing things we should not do in front of children, but also that our thoughts and feelings, which the children feel, be inwardly true and moral. A child forms its being not just according to our words or deeds, but also according to our attitudes, our thoughts, and our feelings. During the first period of childhood, until the age of seven, the most important thing for education is the child’s surroundings.

Now this can become a big problem as today there are many external influences that can make the young child very vulnerable. It is more and more difficult to create the environment of the child to ensure the young child is naturally using its own inner forces in an active way.

Most educational theories acknowledge the child as an active independent learner and the teacher as a facilitator of their learning rather than a bearer of all knowledge.

Socrates himself said, “Education is the lighting of a flame, not the filling of a vessel”.

However OUR CHALLENGE TODAY is to enliven our thinking with an understanding of the development of the human being in body, soul and spirit if we are not to be misled in our educational practices.

To conclude I encourage you all to:

- honour your role as educators of the child between birth and seven.
- consider that the social questions of the day rely on us all achieving a genuine understanding of the human being.
- think about how it is in developing these living ideas about human development that we, as educators, can transform these ideas directly into will. And, in doing so, we will have the skills to respond to the children’s questions hour by hour.
- look forward to developing your devotion to your role as a professional educator to all little children.

I leave you to ponder some key ideas:

- That everything the young child does in the Early Years is the organic preparation needed that will support the unfolding of more formal learning at a latter stage of life.
- The energy spent on providing the right environment for the young child will ensure your children are able to unfold their true potential throughout their life’s journey.

A child forms its being not just according to our words or deeds, but also according to our attitudes, our thoughts, and our feelings. (Rudolf Steiner)

Thank you for your attention today. It has been an honour for me to present to you.

Before I go I would like to acknowledge:

- Steiner’s educational legacy on behalf of our children and their futures.
- Geoff, my husband, who for many years has been my rock through this journey. He puts meals in front of me when I believe I haven’t got time to eat and quietly does many a practical task, when it seems there is nobody else to do it. Thank you
- my friend Megan who continues to encourage and guide me in discovering my own untapped potential.
- all those who have worked with me over the years, in particular the staff and families from Briar Rose Room at Samford Valley Steiner School and here at Periwinkle Preschool. Their commitment to journey with me and the discoveries we have made together have been profound. Thank you.
- Today I also want to acknowledge the staff here at Periwinkle, for the practical effort and support they have shown to ensure me the time I needed to contribute to this wonderful day of tributes to Rudolf Steiner’s 150 Years.

Don’t be afraid to pick up Steiner’s lectures and become familiar with these aspects of his work that stand apart from other theories. Think about: have you found Steiner Education for your children or have your children brought it to you? We are all life-long learners striving for self-education and, as Rudolf Steiner has indicated, self education is the only true education but the hardest to achieve.

Thank you

PERIWINKLE MENU  
TERM 3

Monday (Grain of the day: Rice)
Early Lunch  
Vegetable Rice (with varying seasonal vegetables), served with optional omelette and macadamia nuts
Afternoon Tea  
Brown Rice & Buckwheat Pikelets with Maple Yoghurt (natural yoghurt with a dash of pure maple syrup), Poached apples/pears, Herbal tea

Tuesday (Grain of the day: Barley)
Early Lunch  
Pumpkin & Sweet Potato soup, Sourdough Spelt and Barley Bread Rolls, Labneh
Afternoon Tea  
Bliss Balls, Seasonal Fruit and Vegetable Platter, Herbal tea

Wednesday (Grain of the day: Millet)
Early Lunch  
Seasonal Vegetable Frittata, Salad platter, Homemade Spelt and Sesame Crackers
Afternoon Tea  
Millet Muffins, Seasonal Fruit Platter, Herbal tea

Thursday (Grain of the day: Rye)
Early Lunch  
Pumpkin & Sweet Potato soup, Sourdough Spelt and Barley Bread Rolls, Labneh
Afternoon Tea  
Bliss Balls, Seasonal Fruit and Vegetable Platter, Herbal tea

Friday (Grain of the day: Oats)
Early Lunch  
Vegetable Rice (with varying seasonal vegetables), served with optional omelette and macadamia nuts
Afternoon Tea  
Brown Rice & Buckwheat Pikelets with Maple Yoghurt (natural yoghurt with a dash of pure maple syrup), Poached apples/pears, Herbal tea

(No oats to suit dietary requirements of some children – you may wish to incorporate these into breakfast at home.)

On birthday celebration days afternoon tea may be replaced by a Seasonal Savoury Dip served with Vegetable Sticks and Homemade Spelt and Sesame Crackers.

Extras: A mix of sunflower seeds, pepitas and sultanas is available for if a child is still hungry. Homemade sesame spelt crackers are also available as a savoury snack option.