



Parent Council Meeting Minutes

Friday, November 1, 2013

Welcome & Verse with Mr. Mike Baker

Introductions

Diversity Committee Presentation: Vernon Dewey (4th Grade Teacher) & Magally Luna (Spanish Teacher)

Vernon and Magally, both faculty members and representatives of the DWS Diversity Committee, presented an overview of the goals and interests of the committee, including:

- Making The Denver Waldorf School the model of an ideal society, as Rudolf Steiner intended, in which all children have access to a course of study and social community that enriches and develops the whole child.
- Mirroring the demographic makeup of the larger community of Denver County.
- Crafting language around student recruitment and retention that is welcoming and accessible to all types of families.
- Developing a welcoming culture within the school community that embraces families and students from a range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as different family structures, gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Investigating new pathways for underrepresented groups to join the DWS school community; examining possible barriers to enrollment including financial obstacles or lack of awareness.
- Researching possible funding sources for a scholarship or other tuition assistance, and strategizing how such a scholarship might be structured.
- Responding to specific needs/concerns brought by the student body, particularly from High School students.
- Learning from other independent schools' Diversity Committees and initiatives, and seeking ways to improve our own efforts.
- Tapping into the resources of other Waldorf schools in the region for recommendations on the best ways to incorporate elements of diversity into our curriculum, whenever appropriate to the needs of the class.
- Ensuring High School student representation on the committee, along with parent and family representation in the future.

Holiday Fair Volunteers Needed

All parents are encouraged to volunteer for this year's Holiday Fair, coming up on Sat., Dec. 7th. It takes the participation of our entire community to make the Fair the amazing event it is each year, so the time has come to roll up our sleeves and get involved. Kimberly Martin, Holiday Fair Coordinator, is also actively seeking a Decorating Coordinator to take charge of the process of getting the school ready for the event. She's also looking for Class Activity Coordinators from



each grade to help gather, organize and train volunteers. In the recent [Newsletter](#), you can find more details about these volunteer opportunities.

On www.denverwaldorf.org, click on the Holiday Fair icon to visit the main Holiday Fair web page, which has more details about what to expect and how to get involved. Look for the image below:



Holiday Fair Volunteer Sign Up pages are now live:

[Parent/Alumni Sign Up](#)

[High School Student/Parent Sign Up](#)

Each grade is responsible for hosting an activity at the fair, and more details will be provided to each class representative about how their parents can support that activity. The Holiday Fair is a great chance to get in the spirit of the season – if you have questions, please contact Kimberly at holidayfair@denverwaldorf.org or at 303-777-0531 ext. 129.

Artwise Fundraiser

Matt “Woody” Woodhull provided an update on the Artwise fundraiser. Families whose children signed up by the October deadline should look for an email from Artwise.com in the next few weeks. This email will have the link to the child’s gallery page on the Artwise website, and from there, parents can start purchasing items and sharing the link with families and friends. A portion of the proceeds is donated to DWS.

If parents did not sign up by the deadline, they can still sign up on their own and select The Denver Waldorf School as the beneficiary. For more information on how to do this, please visit Woody in the office, or contact him at woody@denverwaldorf.org, or 303-777-0531 ext. 128.

Colorado Gives Day

Woody also shared that [Colorado Gives Day](#) will be on Tuesday, December 10th this year. As of November 1st, it’s possible to pre-schedule your donation to DWS. Scheduling your annual donation on this date allows DWS to benefit from the First Bank Incentive Fund, which increases the amount of donations made during the event. Some key points include:

- Annual charitable contributions help DWS cover the operating gap which is approximately \$550 per enrolled student. The operating gap is the difference between tuition/fees and the overall operating cost of the school.



- Annual giving enables DWS to attract and retain the best teachers, and in turn stay competitive in the market place.
- Annual giving helps keep tuition affordable, allowing DWS to be as accessible as possible to all.

Some PC members had questions about whether it was possible to make a restricted donation, or one that is earmarked for a specific use. While we welcome restricted donations at any time, our goal for Colorado Gives Day is to raise funds for our Annual Fund, which is unrestricted, allowing DWS to allocate the money as needed for the school.

PC members also asked about how restricted vs. unrestricted donations work in terms of the Child Care Tax Credit. Each person's unique financial situation will determine their tax credits, but Woody shared some general guidelines:

- There is no minimum donation to receive the tax credit.
- Restricted gifts are not applicable for the childcare tax credit, including the capital campaign.

More information about Colorado Gives Day can be found on our website:

<http://www.denverwaldorf.org/support-us/development-events/community/>.

School Store Volunteer Needed

Woody put out the call for a new volunteer to pick up the Wednesday afternoon shift of operating the school store. The volunteer would staff the store from 2:45 – 3:15 pm, and his/her child(ren) can go to Aftercare free for 10 or 15 minutes until their shift was complete.

Kim John Payne Recap

Leigh Rhysling shared some highlights from the recent parent education event with Kim John Payne, author of *Simplicity Parenting*. She, along with other PC members who attended, shared the following insights:

Steiner said that our traditional practices would weaken because of the rise of individuality and introduction of technology. This has separated us from old customs and caused a shift in self-governing.

We need ideas and expectations about what our community is, because there are no principles guiding us. It is a difficult time in our history; we are witnessing a cultural change. We must continue to work through these issues. Conflict is intense and important. We should not expect or desire to live without conflict.

Our society has an addiction to harmony. We have a “daily interview for pain.” When we prevent or avoid conflict with each other, we deny the opportunity for our kids to know who we are. We can't expect our children to work through conflicts unless we are working through our own.

Process of Conflict/Initiation: New Rites of Passage for Children

1. Seclusion – we may feel alone in our experience



2. Endurance – we tell ourselves that we will work through it; find resolve, compassion
3. Disorientation - Our world/perspective is turned upside down. We don't know what we believe or where we belong. We often get stuck here and cycle back up to #1 in the blame/shame transfer – we think something is wrong with us or make the “other” the bad guy. This is when “stress regress” can happen and we try to find an escape route – children (and adults) seek outside stimulation to avoid their disorientation (can look like pain, boredom, silence) such as drugs, exercise.
4. Change
5. Belonging – this part of the process is NOT a right, we can't always have belonging and it is not static; it can't be clung to. We fall out of belonging and go somewhere else (serial belonging). This could describe a disoriented parent with the school and they cycle back up to #1. If a crisis can be dealt with productively, they will come back to their sense of belonging and feel it more strongly.

Convergence/Divergence

When conflict arises, it is best to focus on what will bring the two parties together, not the differences. When in a conflict, consider differing perspectives instead of opposing opinions. Pause and take in what the other is saying as a different perspective, not something you must defend against.

If someone is forcing their opinion, ask them more about their perspective. Become very interested from a detached place, in their perspective. This opens the door to conversation and feelings of acceptance.

Restorative Discipline

Who knows the child the best?

- Parent knows their child's individual aspects like no other
- Teacher knows child in a group setting and as a social being better than the parent.

In this way, parents and teachers make a great team if each can respect the aspect of the child they know best. Parents and teachers are not in partnership when it comes to telling each other how to parent or teach. When teachers start “should-ing” to the parents in their classrooms about the parents' home life, parents start thinking they have a say in the pedagogy and life of the classroom and vice versa.

Parents must get out of “mama/papa bear brain” when protecting/discussing their child.

Ideally, schools should have a restorative discipline policy in which there is a transparent process, so that parents and teachers know where each stands. Parents need help developing a picture of a plan the school will follow to restore a situation.



A discussion followed the presentation, during which many questions were considered, including:

- Can a Mentorship/Buddy System to pair older and younger students together be implemented in the short term while the school adopts a general policy?
- What is the school currently doing to bring a system of restorative justice?
 - The College of Teachers has made exploring Restorative Justice a priority this fall, with a Task Force set to begin at the end of this month. This weekend, Leigh is personally chaperoning seven High School students to a Restorative Justice workshop.
- What are the next steps for parents whose children are in conflict at school?
 - Approach the child's teacher first. If the conflict cannot be resolved at that level, seek out a member of the College of Teachers, all of whom are listed in the school directory. If you prefer, set up a meeting with Judy Lucas, Administrative Director.
- How can PC members serve as a resource and support to parents whose children are in conflict at school?
 - This item was earmarked for further discussion at an upcoming meeting.
- How can we give our children the tools to feel less victimized by incidences of bullying or social exclusion?
 - Leigh encouraged listening to "The Socially Resilient Child" lecture by Kim John Payne, which is available in the school's parent resource library in the front hall.

Addendum from October meeting:

Q: What is the importance of overnights in the younger (3rd/4th) grades? How should parents who are not able to attend with their child help to prepare their children for a first night or more away?

A: The class overnights are an extraordinary way for the children to live the curriculum through first-hand experiences. When studying farm life, a 6:00 a.m. wakeup call to feed the animals (for example) provides a vivid sensory experience that deeply enriches a child's understanding.

In addition, the social interactions and class bonding that occurs far from home and classroom can be powerful engines of growth and development. In some cases, even bad weather, hard work or other challenges can have small but meaningful benefits – the joy they feel at returning home from a rainy camping trip; the character they build from "enduring" uncomfortable or difficult situations outside of their comfort zones.

For parents whose children have not yet had a sleepover away from a family member, preparing for a trip that involves one or more nights away from home is essential. Judy Lucas recommended partnering with a parent whose child is friends with your child and who will be traveling with the class, and making an effort in the weeks before the trip to have your child get to know them. That way, the child can know that if they need support or help during the trip, that parent can be their go-to grownup.

Next Parent Council Meeting: Friday, December 6th from 8:45-10:45 a.m. Please join us!