

## Community School Calendar 2019

### Introduction

Music, speech work and poetry, arts and crafts, as well as play production are enriching the children's daily lives at *Community School for Creative Education*.

The Waldorf role of the arts in our curriculum is not always familiar to visitors and we have been asked, "Does all this art work not take away from the students' academic work?"— In fact, the opposite is true. A plethora of modern research has confirmed what Waldorf schools all over the world have known for almost one hundred years now: Arts, craft, music, etc. are excellent ways of strengthening the children both emotionally and intellectually. To hint at just a few benefits of arts in education:

- Recitation, movement and singing help wake the students up in the morning and get them ready to focus and work;
- Reciting poems, speaking tongue twisters, working on a play, train the ear and practice correct pronunciation, which in turn help with phonetics, spelling and reading.
- Reciting on stage and taking on a part in a play develop self-confidence and cultivate social skills;
- As many cultures in the world know, singing together, matching pitch, learning rhythm and correct timing, help in the most joyful way to develop self-discipline, to build harmonious communities and to find emotional balance.
- Drawing and many crafts activities develop fine motor skills.
- Drawing also schools careful observation which is one of the foundations of scientific research.
- Arts and crafts projects usually require a considerable amount of effort and train endurance and frustration tolerance.
- Music and art engage the children emotionally and give them experiences of joy and fulfillment.

This year's calendar focuses on painting. **Wet-on-wet watercolor painting** is really beginning to take hold in our school as we are getting more and more serious in our weaving between more commonly recognized standards-based instruction and Waldorf pedagogy. We had weekly painting lessons and the class teachers actively supported this work, with the second and fifth grade teachers even participating and also the upper grades school team developing a workable framework to integrate this important practice in the packed upper grades curriculum.

- Wet-on-wet watercolor is designed to soften the pressure of producing accurate depictions of objects. Instead, it allows the students to enter deeply into the experience of the power and the beauty of color, the subtlety of color tones, the connection between color and human emotion. Waldorf pedagogy takes seriously how healing and strengthening this experience is. As now also a broader body of research confirms, finding harmony and beauty in the colors on a piece of paper is amazingly helpful in finding inner calm and balanced joy and

also helps in creating social harmony. These paintings, whether they have a motive or are abstract, always explore how one color interacts with another and how beauty can be achieved out of this meeting.

For a painting teacher it is wonderful to see how children whose own creativity is so often totally overwhelmed by the endless parade of pre-fabricated images that come to them through computer games, music videos, movies, advertisement, etc. etc., begin to stretch their own creative muscles. — Given just a bit of time away from over-stimulation, through their own work we see how they really want to and can create something beautiful and once they succeed they are very proud of what they have accomplished.

## **The Individual Paintings by Grade**

### **GRADE 1**

— *“Finding Green”*

In the first of our weekly painting lessons we “met” yellow, i.e. we filled a whole page just with this one color. I wish you could have seen how amazed almost all of the children were as they fully experienced the radiance of this color! “When are we going to meet red?” a boy asked excitedly at the end of the lesson and other children spontaneously added, “Thank you, Yellow!” to their end-of-lesson thank-you song to the teacher. This particular painting was created when we painted for the first time with two colors and — to the children’s amazement — suddenly found green where yellow and blue mixed!

### **GRADE 2**

— *“Moonlight”*

— *Red Flower*

The observations of second graders are more precise. They now take pride in being able to control the liquidity and strength of the paint so that simple shapes can emerge out of color. Ms. Ana’s participation in the painting lesson added a special quality for the children.

### **GRADE 3**

— *Blue Horse Running*

— *Evergreen Trees*

Our third graders found it quite easy to develop a simple shape like a pumpkin, even a squirrel out of color. The tree painting which the children did with Ms. Hill, shows already very fine harmonious interaction of different colors.

Since the children in this class had so lovingly enacted horses in our last all-school play, I gave them the challenge of painting a running horse! — I must say that I myself was amazed how well they were able to express the speed, wildness and strength of a running horse.

### **GRADE 4**

— *Form Drawing which frames the introduction*

— *Boat on a Raging River*

At this age the protective bubble of the imaginative world of early childhood bursts. A much more realistic perception of the world sets in and often brings disappointment, impatience with one’s own and others’ shortcomings, even intense emotions of sympathy and antipathy. Maybe ‘Boat on a Fast Flowing River’ captures this feeling

quality. Rather than painting during the art lessons we began with form drawing, which is a form of freehand drawing of non-representational forms. Drawing these forms requires appropriate centering on the page, correct mirroring, crossing from left to right and from top to bottom, visualizing three-dimensional space in the weaving pattern, etc. requires not only patience and frustration tolerance. It trains not only fine motor skills and sensory integration but integrates thinking, feeling and doing!

#### **GRADE 5:**

— *Tree at Night*

— *Andromeda*

Fifth grade is usually a very special year. The children have concluded the difficult transition of third and fourth grade and are not yet (or at least not yet fully) embroiled in the storms of adolescence. This enables many of them to now be open and very sensitive to and appreciative of beauty in all its forms. Now we can begin to work on subtlety. We painted every Friday during the last period, which is a very harmonizing way to end the week. The fifth grade teacher's participation in the painting lesson added a special quality. Every time I told a Greek myth which then inspired a future painting. The important aspect here was that the color combination in the painting captured the feeling quality evoked by the myth. It was wonderful to see how the students began to move from following my suggested composition to individually searching for color balance, expressiveness, subtle transitions between colors. — I could see the emergence of artistic sensitivity, skill and creativity.

#### **GRADE 6**

— *Buddha in Meditation*

At this age the inner emotional storms of adolescence begin in full. Feelings are intense and swing wildly between insecurity, loneliness, defiance, yearning, etc.. The students need to enter the difficult path of learning how to ever again find an inner balance amidst the storms of feelings. Painting can be helpful, since the different colors express different feeling tones. By this age that fact can be gently brought to consciousness, which further helps the students in the process of finding their equilibrium. The 'Buddha in Meditation' painting which we did in connection with the students' study of history, civilization, culture and religion of Ancient India in our upper grades humanities course shows a human figure calm and balanced amidst a swirl of feelings and sense impressions expressed through colors.

#### **GRADE 7**

— *Bamboo Branch*

— *Gloomy Autumn Tree*

Here is another example of using art to deepen and enrich the academic learning. The humanities block on culture and history of ancient China inspired some 7<sup>th</sup> graders to try painting in the style of Chinese ink brush art. Very different from western art it is —after long observation and deep sensing of an object — the vitality of the brush stroke in the moment of painting that determines whether the life force in the object is captured and whether the painting is beautiful. This little example shows us how art allows a deeper understanding of another culture. The gloomy autumn tree is an example of expressing mood through color.

#### **GRADE 8**

— *American Settler Observing the Arrival of a British Ship*

Here we have an example of a painting capturing an aspect of the students' history

lesson. Painting this settler helps them think about what it might have been like to live during the American War of Independence.

Hoping that these comments are helpful in understanding how painting is woven into the education of the children at Community School,

Ms Elke Berger,  
Waldorf Coach and Painting Teacher at Community School

### Through the Months

January	<i>American Settler Observing the Arrival of a British Ship During the American War of Independence</i>	Grade 8
February	<i>Tree at Night</i>	Grade 2
March	<i>Bamboo Branch</i>	Grade 7
April	<i>Finding Green</i>	Grade 1
May	<i>'Andromeda'</i>	Grade 5
June	<i>Blue Horse Running</i>	Grade 3
July	<i>Buddha in Meditation</i>	Grade 6
August	<i>Red Flower</i>	Grade 2
September	<i>Boat on a Raging River</i>	Grade 4
October	<i>Gloomy Autumn Tree</i>	Grade 7
November	<i>Moonlight</i>	Grade 2
December	<i>Evergreen Trees</i>	Grade 3

**Ms. Elke Berger** was originally trained as a high school teacher in Germany where she received her M.A.Ed. She trained as a Waldorf teacher in the US and taught for over 30 years in Waldorf schools in California. At Community School, Ms. Berger has taught a range of subjects to strengthen the Waldorf impulse in our curriculum, among them painting, drawing, poetry, mythology, crafts and drama. She has written and adapted three plays for our school, two of them were plays in which the whole school from Transitional Kindergarten to 8th Grade participated. She has conducted Waldorf coaching (especially in our Kindergartens and in the first grade) and teaches a weekly lesson in grades four and five. Ms Berger passionately believes that all children should have the opportunity to experience this education of the head, the heart and the hand — as was intended by the founder of the Waldorf movement.