

Distance Learning Update 4/11/20

- Monday, April 14th is a school day
- We have no new information to share at this time about distance learning or its duration.

What follows is a deeper look at the concepts behind our particular take on distance learning as a Waldorf School. Read it when you have the time. Our next *Messenger* will feature different pictures across the school of how this method serves each age as well as an offering of some glimpses into our distance learning in practice.

We wish you peace and good health in this time,

Ignacio Garat, Jason Gross and Rachel McGarva
The Governance Council

A Unique Aspect of Waldorf Education:

One of Rudolf Steiner's insights for us as teachers is that what we remember and what we know or come to understand are two fundamentally different human processes. This means that if we wish to educate young people so that they come to know, it must happen by a different process than how we ask them to remember.

Of course these two processes overlap and interact, and both are necessary in educational practice. However, most of humanity for most of modern history has focused on educational methods that train memory with *coming to know* as a byproduct, and few pedagogies outside Waldorf education have focused on a method that addresses the question: *How do we come to know?*

For Waldorf teachers answering this question is a continual practice of learning how to provide education - opportunities for students to come to know. Rudolf Steiner encapsulated the process in verse form in the upper grades Morning Verse:

I look into the world...

I look into my soul...

The World Creator weaves...

Coming to know is a process of weaving between looking into the world and looking into the self. This process is a self-willed, living, personal encounter of the self and the real, natural world. It is guided by the human interaction of the teacher with the students, and it evolves and matures with personal development and skill development. The latter is to help the young person deepen the encounter of the

self and the world, to continually develop the process of coming to know. The former is personal, unique to each individual; this process is profound and sacred. The role of the teacher is as witness, and yet it is the most important result of a living, true and real learning process. Through this education the *I or self* and the *looking into the world* develop together.

Summerfield's Distance Learning Approach:

The challenge we face today due to distance learning as the Waldorf teachers of Summerfield is how to guide this process without being present with the children. The issues, questions, challenges and solutions we are working on are different at each age. What is a constant truth, however, is that interaction with a screen is not interaction with the world or the teacher, and therefore it cannot – by itself – be the vehicle for the process of coming to know. Can the screen be a tool? This depends on the age of the child and how it is used.

The internet may have all or most of the world's knowledge collected and accessible. But access to it - if that can be done in a non-overwhelming manner - is very difficult to make more than an aid to the process of memory and even at that only at an age where a young person can discern the difference between what they "perceive" there and what they experience through their senses in the real world. The confusion or the blurring of the real and the virtual can have very serious consequences for an individual's development. *I look into the world*, the real world, - most often guided by a real, human interaction between student and teacher - must occur for the process of coming to know to take place.

At Summerfield the concept of our distance learning is to keep the process of coming to know alive, true and real while we are physically distancing. How we are doing this is different at each grade level. Your children's teachers are working with you to explain their methods and their reasons. To do this we need you, the parents, to participate with us in carrying and even implementing these newly emerging curricula and methods.

Of the many challenges inherent in this is understanding why our teachers have chosen these experiences. We hope this will come with time and practice. Your teachers are reaching out in many forms. These, by nature, are slow and incomplete, which can cause frustration. We hope to be adding depth in the upcoming Messenger about our methods, choices and goals throughout the school. You can learn from looking at the full spectrum of our offerings, no matter the age of your child.

We realize that answering all the questions – both yours as parents and ours as teachers – is a process that takes time. We hope that it is a continuing education for us all, that we continue to refine and get better at it, and that we can be together again as soon as possible.

Continuing to learn is an essential element of being a Waldorf teacher. We must always be reshaping and

renewing our offerings to keep them living, real and true for the students. It is with great reverence and respect for the task you are now taking up with us, for your efforts and sacrifices, that we sincerely thank you for working with us in this process.