



Charter Talk.....!

Through out the year I will publish information relative to all charter schools and is intended to educate the Journey School community. One of the most frequently asked question is:

What is a charter school?

A charter school is a public school that is deregulated from most laws and regulations governing traditional public schools in exchange for a performance-based accountability contract. Charter Schools, like all public school, shall not charge tuition, shall not discriminate against any pupil on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability. A charter school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations. [Education Code (EC) 47605 (d) (1)]

A charter in essence is a contract between the chartering agency, in this case Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD) and the charter petitioners (parents, community leaders, and teachers). Terms of a charter usually range from three to five years. Most charters, after approval are supplemented by a Memorandum of Understanding (more on this in a future article). Charters are eligible for renewals every five years. Charters were intended to expand the educational choices for parents and students. They provide competition and should stimulate continual improvement within the educational setting. With the arrival of charter schools we have changed from a rule-based to a performance-based accountability system linked to pupil outcomes.

Charters tend to be much smaller than most traditional schools. They are allowed to waive many state laws, rules, and regulations. Charters and traditional schools share student demographics that are similar. Charters schools are funded by the state, local property taxes (in-lieu of taxes) and by private foundations. Charters provide more flexibility that a traditional public school because they can choose their own curriculum and hire their own teaching staff. Research has shown that charter school teachers are less likely to be certified than their peers in traditional public schools and they usually have less teaching experience. Parents coming from a traditional public school setting claim to be more involved with their charter school than with their previous schools.

Charter schools are not homogeneous. There are many different types of charter schools. In the case of Journey School we have a Rudolph Steiner inspired approach to learning. Others range from project centered learning to others closely resembling the traditional public school model. There is no single charter effect. Part of the motivation behind creating charter schools is to foster innovation, which leads to different approaches to learning. Charters and traditional public schools vary along several dimensions. These differences affect accessibility, achievement, operations and governance.

GEORGE HOFFECKER VISIT

This week George Hoffecker visits Journey. Mr. Hoffecker is a charter schools consultant who helps Steiner-inspired charters. This week he will mentor and evaluate teachers and administrators, speak in a Community Lecture on Wednesday night (6:30PM), and attend Parent Cabinet, Faculty, and Council meetings. George is an engaging speaker, with a wealth of experience and insight. One of our most pressing "hot button topics" concerns how our Charter Movement should distinguish itself from the Waldorf Schools system. Ours is an opportunity for creative success in the Charter Movement, provided we appropriately respect the similarities and differences with Waldorf. Many of our most difficult issues stem from attempting to parrot the Waldorf system. Hopefully, Mr. Hoffecker will tutor us on this important topic.

HALLOWEEN FUN

Journey students enjoyed Halloween festivities in the kindergartens and grades. Many thanks to the parent players costumed as artisans in the kindies. The children brought simple products from one craft to the next, enjoying the transforming magic each step would bring. Along the way they met a blacksmith, farmer, miller, baker, herbalist, wizard, fairy, candle-maker, and enjoyed the music of a recorder ensemble. Meanwhile, in the grades, costumed revelers stepped lightly up the promenade in a class parade circling back to the lunch area. There they displayed their costumes as animals, Vikings, Royalties, fairy-tale characters, etc. A fun time was had by all.

AUTUMN FAIRE

Last Sunday saw Journey successfully transformed into a fair with craft tables, artisans, puppets, and games. Our new bleachers filled to overflowing with children singing "Puff, The Magic Dragon" accompanying the marionettes of the Puppets and Players Little Theatre. Others were involved in the many crafts, including *Apple Stamping*, *Orange Decorating with Cloves*, *Pinecone Turkey Making*, and *Hat Making*. Children painted *Butterfly Cut-Outs* (which may someday decorate the side of a building) and enjoyed *Squash Bowling* and *Tug of War*. Over 125 children and adults found their way through a *maze*! Many children built fairy houses of nuts and bark, flowers and shells! There was a popcorn cart, candied apples, and lots of delicious bake goods. Ceramics and Jewelry were displayed (and sold). And the afternoon ended with a raffle of a dozen cool gift baskets! Well deserved thanks and appreciations are extended to the parent cabinet and volunteers responsible for the afternoon, including Jen Burlison, Stephanie Ciulla, Tom Gruenbeck, Janette Loreto, Mary Wilson, Laura Childers for her beautiful fairy flier, and the many others who made this day a huge success. Their meticulous and generous planning resulted in a special event! In the words of 6th grade teacher Richard Martin, "I have never attended such a wonderful Autumn Faire!"

MOON STORIES AND OBSERVING

On October 20, at the 1st Quarter moon, there was an evening of moon storytelling and observing. Storyteller Kathleen Zundel entertained with “cows jumping over the moon” and moon imaginings from different cultures. Administrator John Bennett told an original moon story “How Owl Got Her Name.” And parent Sam Hahn accompanied children and parents through several songs. Afterwards, the group observed the moon through binoculars. The quarter moon is the best time for viewing the moon’s topography when there are shadows, are not cast during the full moon. Thanks to all the tellers, singers, and participants!

ADMINISTRATOR OPEN DOOR POLICY **by John Bennett**

I wish to remind everyone that I have an open-door policy, and I so encourage you to come to my office and talk over your concerns. Admittedly, my Learning Curve has been pretty steep; and there have been days when I was doing about all I could manage. But I wish to assure everyone, as I reassure myself, that we are through those October fires, which seems an apt metaphor for some of what I have encountered. Sometimes I wish I was a “mind-reader”, so I could know to steer things before they become large issues. But short of that, I hope you will bring concerns to me while there is still maneuverability. No one likes hitting icebergs. And mid-course maneuvers are best planned from “millions of miles” out.

NEW BLEACHERS

Our thanks and appreciation are extended to the Janette and Jim Loreto, and Tom Gruenbeck and Eric Halverson for their acquisition and assembly of four 20-foot long stadium bleachers. These are assembled on a pad behind the restrooms. With their inaugural use during the Autumn Faire puppet performance, it is certain they will be used repeatedly for outdoor performances!

MEET CONNIE MACLEOD

Continuing our introduction of Journey Faculty and staff, we are happy to present the following interview with Connie MacLeod, who addresses the challenges of being a class teacher.

I see meeting the vast range of needs and abilities of the students now coming into the class room as the most significant challenge facing educators today. How do we teach all that is necessary to all students in a general education class room with a full range of learning, psychological and behavioral challenges, impairments, and linguistic diversity, but without the support of a team of special education teachers? How can we bring all that is needed to both the extremely gifted and challenged student, without compromising either, and to the child who falls in the middle ground, who might excel more quickly with more attention?

To address this challenge I enlist the help of the parents in the class. I have asked all who have the interest and ability to work with the students to help in classes. I arrange for them to work with small groups based on abilities, and to lead specialty and track classes. This allows me to make observations and notes and to help guide my future planning, basing it on what is working and eliminating what is not. I will try to expand on this so the class can do more frequent small-group work and some individual work with students who are in need.

I need occasionally to work individually with students who are having behavior issues. My intention is to seek a solution. We discuss what I can do for them, and what I need them to do for me. I ask him why s/he is in school (to learn). I ask why that is important and what s/he needs to do to accomplish that. We talk about what that is, and I ask the student what s/he needs from me in order that s/he can feel good about doing the work. Together we put that in writing and both sign it. Occasionally we must revisit and revise these documents.

Often I simply ask EL students (students who have learning challenges or those with sensory impairment) if they understand the lesson. Asking them to restate what they have learned is working thus far to see if the way I have brought the lesson is meeting their needs. Asking them if they can see the board, or if they know what a word means, are quick assessments to be sure I am scaffolding and reaching beyond their limitation. I use a lot of "spot checks" for them, and also this gives them the opportunity to show what they know to the whole class, building on their self esteem. When they don't know, I can see my shortfalls, and the question goes to the whole of the class and they teach each other, and I correct my mistakes.

The gifted students are sometimes challenged in other ways, so there is a need for balance for them. Elective independent projects and activities must be made available for gifted students to keep them learning when they have finished up the whole class assignments. They may also offer to be a peer tutor, but this should not be over used.

The average students need to feel noticed by the teacher, too. The main focus of lesson planning should be for them. Each wants to be noticed, and I want to notice them for what they are doing right, thus building them up and fueling their desire for learning. Meeting the vast range of needs and abilities of the students now coming into the class room is the most significant challenge facing me as a teacher, and the attention I need to give each individual in my class room requires me to ask more parents to come to school and help.

News from the Social Inclusion Committee

*The healthy social life is found
When in the mirror of each human soul
The whole community finds its reflection
And when in the community
The virtue of each one is living.*

Many parents and faculty members are inspired by the work of Kim John Payne on social inclusion. As members of the Coordinator's group we wish to bring the practices Kim has developed to our community. We hope they will become established in our homes and classrooms. The practices are simple and yet life transforming. So let's help each other to create healthy new social practices.

Kim cited to studies that found that children who bully are significantly lacking in:

1. Perspective taking (being able to see another's point of view)
Which is a quality of our thinking capacity.
2. Empathy (being able to put oneself in another's shoes)
Which is a quality of our feeling life.
3. Impulse control (being able to refrain from reacting)
Which is a capacity of our life of will or action.
This then leads us to be able to have...
4. Imagination and fantasy (imagining different behaviors)

Cultivating these four abilities will create a healthy social life—in the classroom and in the family.

Here are some practices that help to cultivate these four essential abilities:
Politeness and Courtesy, at home, at school, everywhere! When we are courteous our children will imitate our behavior. When we practice politeness and courtesy we create a happier, more orderly world for our children. We can do this by taking the time to greet each other, holding doors, offering assistance, letting others take the first turn. Through these practices we let go of our own self-centered ways. We look outward with care for those around us. We are building the forces of empathy.

Magical and beautiful things happen when we practice politeness and courtesy:

- time slows down
- we create trust
- we acknowledge the worth of others
- we listen
- we relax and breathe more deeply
- we feel good
- we soften our attitude

The list goes on and it is all good! Together we can build the practice of politeness and courtesy throughout our whole school community. We'd love to hear your experiences and stories of implementing this in your lives and print a few in the next newsletter. Get creative and see how many people you can uplift with a gesture of politeness and courtesy this week and let your children be witness to as many as possible, (as well as the recipient of at least a few!)

Journey School Snack and Lunch Guidelines

Nurturing our bodies as well as our minds and spirits are important to us at Journey School. In keeping with our philosophy, the snack time in the Kindergarten includes wholesome, natural and organic (if possible) fruits and vegetables. We also serve whole grains free of artificial dyes and preservatives, with as little sugar as possible. Gum, candy, soda, juices, and processed foods are not allowed. Of course treats served on special occasions are an exception, not the rule. Please send only water for your child to drink at school. Purified drinking water is also available at school.

The avoidance of commercialism and excessive packaging of foods is another aspect of our effort to keep things as natural as possible. In the Kindergarten the children use cloth napkins and dishes free of advertising and media images. We also request that the children's lunches from home be equally as nutritious as those mentioned and that the containers are free of commercial packaging and media images.

Dear All Journey Families,

The individual photo proofs and order forms were sent home Monday and Tuesday of this week. I hope all of you have received them!

The class group photos are on display in the Journey School bulletin board - located on the outside of the kindergarten rooms. Each class has a "regular" and a "silly" photo, with the exception of First Grade. Please indicate which photo you would like - or both - on the order form.

I have scheduled make-up and retakes starting Wednesday, November 14th, beginning @ 9:00 a.m. - to include the retake of the First Grade class group photo with Oriana Duron and sibling/family group photos.

Parents are welcome to be present. If there are a great number of photos to retake, I will extend the retakes to a second day and will let you know which day I will photograph your child/children.

Please email or call me to let me know whom I need to pull out of class - name and grade of each child. If you would like a full family photo, at the Journey School photo pricing, please call to schedule time.

Journey School E-Mail Guidelines

- All school-wide email will be sent through the Journey School office only.
- Email pertaining to Parent Cabinet business should be sent to the PC Chair. This email will either be forwarded to the J.S. Office and/or included in the Bi-Weekly PC Newsletter.
- Emails pertaining to committee work, class business, etc. will be sent between those groups. Parent Cabinet can be updated regarding this business during its monthly meetings.
- Teachers and staff at Journey School will have individual email addresses through the school office in order to facilitate direct communication.

November 2007

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			1	2	3 Autumn Faire	4
5	6	7 Parent Cabinet Meeting 9 am George Hoffeecker Lecture 6:30 pm	8 Council Meeting	9	10	11
12 Veteran's Day NO SCHOOL	13	14 Coffee Questions and Connect 9 am School Photo retakes	15	16 Martinmas Lantern Walk	17	18
19 Thanksgiving Recess Parent Conferences	20 Thanksgiving Recess Parent Conferences	21 Thanksgiving Recess Parent Conferences	22 Thanksgiving Recess	23 Thanksgiving Recess	24	25
26	27	28	29	30 Kindergarten Garden of Light		