

Good Things are Happening at Journey School

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“Little Things Are Big”—Jesus Colon

Administrator’s Note:

One of my favorite short stories is about a good but simple man named Jesus Colon from Puerto Rico. He spent most of his adult life in New York City. As he rode the subway late one evening he noticed a mother struggling to carry her groceries while also tending to her three children—including a young babe in her arms. Jesus Colon’s instinct was to help the woman. After all, his parents always taught him to serve those that are in need—even strangers. But, Jesus Colon didn’t help the mother that evening. He wasn’t sure how she might receive his gesture of good will. So, instead of lending a hand, he went about his usual routine. Years later, Jesus Colon intimated in an interview that this seemingly little thing was actually a very big deal. He said he never forgot how he “betrayed” himself, and his family, in those few, “insignificant” moments on a subway in New York City.

This story may feel sad or strange at first. I suppose it is in that a kind, elderly man regrets one decision he made long ago. Yet, when I reflect upon the story I actually feel uplifted. It reminds me that our choices do matter and that at any given moment we have the power to make someone else’s life better. I feel especially hopeful when I think about the story in the context of all the “little” things I see happening at Journey these days. Consider that:

- (1) Over 100 people cared for our campus on a hot Saturday afternoon a few weeks ago. But, the real headlines came when the work day was nearly over. Thirteen adults and children cheerfully searched for a parent’s lost keys after 6:00 p.m.—even though they were tired and wanted to go home. ***Little things are BIG.***
- (2) A few days ago a gardener pulled into the parking lot and told me that he was sent to clean the weeds and leaves around campus. Evidently, an anonymous donor gave the gift without wanting anything in return. ***Little things are BIG.***
- (3) One of our new teachers came to school to check out her classroom. She asked when the beautiful materials were going to be taken since they belonged to a colleague moving into another classroom. I replied that her colleague chose to leave them behind—even though that meant she may have to start over herself. ***Little things are BIG, and should not go unnoticed.*** Thanks to everyone in our school community for all the “little” things. They make a big difference and their accumulative effect is powerful.

Personal Challenge: The 2nd of our 13 Trust Habits calls for the demonstration of respect through simple and selfless acts. Before your next visit to campus, meditate on 1 gift of respect or kindness you will bestow upon another person once you arrive.

Big Rocks v Small Pebbles: While little things are important, it’s also critical for the school to maintain focus on top priorities—or “big rocks.” As you might recall, we’ve already identified 10 research-based priorities to focus upon throughout the year. They’re listed below for your reference, along with a summary of current progress:

The Kids: How Children Grow and Learn
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote a safe, clean, and inspiring learning environment 2. Establish challenging learning goals and effective assessment 3. Guarantee a rigorous, age-appropriate, and holistic Waldorf curriculum 4. Provide powerful daily lessons and student support
The Teachers: How We Provide and Support Great Teachers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Retain, hire, and support a highly qualified instructional staff 6. Leverage and grow school resources to maximize student achievement
The Community: How We Decide and Interact
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Adhere to mission, core values, and reliable data when making decisions 8. Develop high levels of collegiality and professionalism 9. Create meaningful partnerships with families and the community 10. Ensure healthy governance and communication

Accomplished:

- **2008-09 STAR Test Results:** Journey School increased its overall STAR scores in 2008-09 by approximately 50 points. By and large, progress in all subjects occurred across grades. We are still in the process of obtaining overall composite scores and will convey this information to the school community in a comprehensive presentation early in the year. Congratulations for these positive results. We look forward to increased growth over time.

- **Teacher Hiring:** We’re pleased to announce that teacher hiring is complete. In addition to the update provided below, you should expect to receive faculty and staff biographies in the coming weeks:

7th Grade: Rick Vander Kam will assume leadership in the 7th grade. Mr. Vander Kam comes to Journey school with an abundance of middle school teaching experience, a California Teaching Credential, a Master’s Degree in Leadership, and a passion for academic rigor, community-building, character development, and experiential learning. Waldorf education inspires him!

Kindergarten: We are thrilled that Jennifer Lovejoy will join our ranks as the third Kindergarten Teacher. Ms. Lovejoy has already completed her California Teaching Credential, Master’s Degree, and several years of successful teaching experience. She adores young children, their families, and chose Journey School because of the wonders of Waldorf Kindergarten.

Specialty and Assistant Positions: Journey School remains committed to specialties and is happy to inform you of the following placements (more TBA):

Strings: Mr. John Paul Tobin

Eurythmy: Mr. Andrew Dzedulionis

Games: Mr. John Whitfield

First Grade Assistant: Mr. John Whitfield

Kinder Assistant: Ms. Rachel Dunton (more Kindy announcements TBA)

Handwork: TBA

Spanish: Several Grades Teachers

Science: Grades Teachers

First Annual Journey School Institute for Instructional Leadership: We launched a two-week teacher training on Monday! A primary goal is to build a thriving learning community that supports, nurtures, and inspires colleagues through common agreements and best practices.

Teacher Coaching: In addition to our two-week training, teachers have already started to meet with their mentors and colleagues in formal and informal collaborative sessions!

Teacher Handbook: A comprehensive teacher handbook has been thoroughly prepared and is ready for schoolwide adoption. Many hours have been invested in this important tool and we're excited about its implementation.

Revised Parent Handbook: Similarly, we've been working hard to ensure that all parents receive a comprehensive and current Parent Handbook at the outset of the school year. A revised draft will be introduced to Council, Parent Cabinet, and the faculty in the coming days. Our goal is to distribute a Parent Handbook to each family during the first week of school at our School Orientation evening (see below for details).

Facilities: I am very happy to announce that a revived partnership between Journey School and the CUSD's maintenance department has been cultivated. On Monday, the district committed to making many improvements to campus prior to September 8th, and beyond. If you happen to see district personnel on campus please be sure to express our collective gratitude for their efforts during these tight times. Be on the lookout for rapid results! 😊

School Governance: The Council continues to work hard on its year-long strategic planning process. These efforts are made possible through an important school grant project.

Parent Development: A comprehensive Parent Development program will be offered this year—mostly through workshops led by Tim and Patti Connolly (see important events).

How You Can Help!: Contact Parent Cabinet or the School to volunteer; help us stay focused on our ten priorities by honoring the 13 Habits of Trust Leaders and avoiding distractions unnecessary distractions or conflicts; and visit www.allianceforpublicwaldorfeducation.org.

Important Events

Dates	Times	Events
8/24-9/4	All Day	First Annual Teacher Institute for Instructional Leadership
8/25	7:00	Public Lecture at the Waldorf School of Orange County by Christof Wiechert
8/26	6:30 PM	Special Council Meeting (open to the public in the Staff Lounge)
8/25-28	Appointment	Final Round of Kindergarten Interviews for NEW Families
8/29	8:00-5:00	Campus Clean-up
8/30	8:00-5:00	Campus Clean-up
9/3	6:00-7:30	Kindergarten Orientation for ALL families in the Multi Purpose Room
9/8	8:30-9:30	Community Convening on the First Day of School (Front Lawn)
9/9	12:30	Parent Cabinet Picnic on the Front Lawn
9/9	6:00-8:00	Administrative Orientation and Class Meetings, Grades 1-4
9/10	6:00-8:00	Administrative Orientation and Class Meetings, Grades 5-8
9/16	6:30-8:30	Why Waldorf Anyway? A Parent Evening with the Connollys

Important Announcements/Reminders

- Be on the lookout early next week for a school mailing containing important information about the first day of school, lunch, parking, dress code, class meetings, orientation, etc.
- On 9/9 and 9/10 families will gather in the MPR for an Administration orientation (Parent Handbook will be distributed) and will then proceed to classrooms for a meeting with the teacher.
- Specific information about these important meetings will arrive shortly. In the meantime, please mark your calendars. Our goal is 100% attendance! Ideally, you will be able to find child-care on your own. As a core value, however, we believe the school should make events as accessible as possible. For this reason, very limited child care will be provided with advance notification.
- Again, be on the lookout for more information to arrive shortly.
- Please contact Lisa Skibsted at oscarski@yahoo.com or last year's Parent Cabinet representative if you have time to volunteer at the school during the week. We particularly need office support, as the difficult statewide financial situation required us to prioritize the classrooms versus administrative support.
- A list of work day needs and wishes are one the way. Please bring your friends.

- Please recruit 1 potential Kindergarten family to enroll at Journey and have them contact julie@journeyschool.net. We have approximately 10 open spaces in our Kindergarten program and would love to fill them with more children!

Onwards and Upward!

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