

Reflections on the Graduating Class of 2009

Eighth grade year is sometimes called “The Year of Revolt.” The 13/14 year old child tests boundaries and overthrows conventions in favor of the forms their newfound, deeper thinking can conceive and their wills can incarnate. The curriculum itself provides a salve for these spiritual yearnings, but practical outlets or projects also give them opportunities to create something new in which their good efforts would manifest in constructive, tangible results.

September brought several such opportunities. First, eighth graders worked with the third graders on the Gamroth farm to collect enough rocks to build a labyrinth on the Prairie Hill campus for all to enjoy. Mrs. Abler led us in understanding the geometric pattern, and teamwork enabled students to build it within a single morning. In addition, the class made monthly trips to Repairers of the Breach, where they led craft classes for their clients. Students also served weekly on one of three service groups: STOMP (the social inclusion group), SOS (the environmental group) or ORC (the social service group). Lastly, students were paired with first graders for weekly “Buddy Sessions.” Eighth graders demonstrated tenderness, conscientiousness, and patience with first graders who showered them with adoration and attention during their very active time together.

Artistic work for the fall consisted of watercolor painting and work in mosaic and clay. Led by a local master potter, students built reliefs on clay tiles that they affixed to a large frame surrounding a mirror with a heading, “To Wonder at Beauty,” the title of a verse recited every Monday morning at assembly. As a second project with Mrs. Norris, students created very small tiles, cutting and glazing them to create a 6x6 framed mosaic. After winter break, Mrs. Engstrand enhanced the Human Anatomy block by leading life drawing lessons. Many of the students grew in their ability to depict hands and feet as well as their ability to capture human movement in the gesture drawings.

A major highlight of the semester was the production of Mary Chase’s *Harvey*. The students seemed to adore the story featuring a gentle protagonist, thought crazy by others, who demonstrated genuine, nonjudgmental interest in everyone he met. In addition, to exercising speech skills, the students worked hard to embody characters unlike themselves and to find the timing and mannerisms that would make the 1930’s comedic sensibilities relevant for a modern audience. This required them to work as an ensemble in support of one another and to take initiative in solving several of the difficult special effects or staging challenges that they encountered.

During the Organic Chemistry block, two guest teachers helped students see carbon in action and how similar substances can react differently with radically different results. They led the class in making their own soap, face cream, mayonnaise, a carbon footprint self-study and a bit of biodiesel fuel.

The culminating activity was a seven day trip to Arizona. Immersed in the stark desert beauty, the class hiked the intimidating canyons of the Tonto National Forest and Castle Rock in Sedona. In this environment, the students not only physically challenged themselves but they also solidified friendships and reflected what they valued about their Prairie Hill years.



Class of 2009

Karen Hartz

Prairie Hill Waldorf School admits students of any race, color, religion, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities made available to its students. It does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or national and ethnic origin in the administration of its hiring.

State of School Report: Visioning a great future for Prairie Hill

Dear Prairie Hill Community,

Prairie Hill Waldorf School (PHWS) is proud to be fully accredited by the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). The accreditation was updated after a three year progress review in February 2009, enhancing our motivation to achieve excellence in our school. Throughout the 2008-2009 year, the Board of Trustees has worked in collaboration with the faculty, administration, and community to develop a sustainable future – a vision to ensure that PHWS is an effective and influential educational option for many years to come. Our pursuit is to improve our school's governance and to use the best practices of our Waldorf educational model.

Governance

One significant accomplishment was the participation of the faculty and board to establish a common understanding - a *sustainable leadership* model was needed to strengthen the organization and to provide effective, healthy, leadership. Although enrollment has shrunk in the past few years, the complexities of issues and demands for excellence require effective leadership. As a result, a full time Faculty Chair was hired and a clear administrator's role established.

Finance

We agreed to the goal of operating on a balanced budget. We consolidated and eliminated 10 years of institutional debt with a refinance, yet financing is challenged by increasing expenses and by lower than expected enrollment. Through all, we have maintained a vision built upon a strong foundation of collaboration, trust, and honesty - we maintain that we are at the cusp of great opportunity.

Fund Development

The three major fundraising events, Annual Appeal, Yuletide, and the Spring Auction, outperformed the funds raised by these events in past years - far better than imagined.

In gratitude, Prairie Hill has received two consecutive grants (about \$5,500 each) from the Non Profit Management Fund of Waukesha County, to strengthen management and governance as a nonprofit organization. A professional fund raising consultant, gathering input from many members of the PHWS community, prepared a fund development plan for the 2009-2010 year. The execution of this proposed plan should generate *additional* income above our average fundraisers.

Vision

In December 2008, Prairie Hill announced an anonymous donation of \$100,000 to be used to start a capital campaign – to improve facilities and include an addition of a kinder house. A committee was established by the board, the Capital Improvement and Visioning Committee, to guide the creative process of planning for the new facilities. The vision was presented to the greater community in January 2009.

The strength of our PHWS community, the prospect for the future, and the enthusiasm and support for our mission is great, a community working in collaboration; we continue to look to a prosperous future with a common purpose - a Waldorf Education for our children and a sustainable future for Prairie Hill.

**In service,
Dr. Jewell Riano, Interim Administrator**

School Leadership 2008-2009

Board of Trustees

Lisa Stegink, President
Ted Tuescher, Vice President
David McKnight,
Treasurer/Secretary
Katie Bedor
Carla Bock
Pamela Harsch
Phil Kasun
Ruth Zinniker

Leadership Council

Katie Bedor, Chair
Laura Cassidy
Karen Hartz
Corinne Lorian
Jewell Riano

Administration

Jewell Riano, Ed.D.,
Administrator
Katie Bedor, Faculty Chair
(Part-time)
Corinne Lorian, Circle of
Colleagues (COC) Chair

Faculty Leadership

Karen Hartz,
Grades Department Chair
Dawn Imes, Parent Liason
Sandy Loucks, STOMP Chair
Mechthilde Moser,
Social/Cultural Chair

2008-2009 Highlights

Fundraising and Development

- A successful Annual Appeal raised over \$70,000.
- Yuletide Faire and Spring Auction raised over \$68,000.
- Soup Day, introduced in the 2007-2008 school year, raised over \$1,900.

Enrollment and Marketing

- Welcomed 28 new students, serving 186 students in Wonder Garden through Grade 8, and 33 children in Playgroup.
- Continued the three-part “Window into First Grade” series, attended by 30 people, to provide information about the first grade curriculum, facilitate a positive transition from kindergarten into the grades, and increase enrollment.
- Held two pre-school and Kindergarten sampler mornings attended by 17 families along with successful Open Houses.

Community and Outreach

- Hosted our third Community Education Conference for over 100 attendees.
- Presented educational workshops for the community at large, including monthly parent education talks to share insights into the Waldorf curriculum.
- Performed puppet plays at the Monches Farm Festival and Midsummer Festival, the Yuletide Faire, Delafield Play Gallery, and Park Play Days, thanks to the Early Childhood Puppet Troupe and volunteer storytellers.
- Held a special presentation on Waldorf to a busload of visiting teachers during a course called “On the Move”.
- Parent volunteers continued to put forth generous amounts of time helping to build Prairie Hill into a premier educational facility.

Treasurer’s Report for the 2008-2009 School Year

Prairie Hill Waldorf School, like all private schools, has felt the effects of the challenging economy over the last 18 months.

	6/30/2008	6/30/2009
Assets		
Current Assets	185,128	296,854
Fixed Assets	1,105,516	1,068,654
Other Assets	4,286	13,771
Total Assets	\$1,294,930	\$1,379,279
Liabilities & Equity		
Current Liabilities	383,490	315,466
Long Term Debt	458,602	539,589
Total Liabilities	842,092	855,055
Equity	452,838	524,224
Total Liabilities & Equity	\$1,294,930	\$1,379,279

To assist families in the current financial reality, we increased our Tuition Support budget by 12% to \$130,000, in addition to holding tuition increases to just 2.5%. We are one of very few schools that can report tuition increases of less than 3% *for the last four years running*. Despite these efforts, overall enrollment declined again this year, which created a deficit environment.

Ultimately, we finished the year with a deficit of \$16,000. Because the projected deficit was significantly higher prior to year-end, we want to recognize the dedication and commitment of the Prairie Hill Waldorf School community for their critical role in reducing the deficit. Two key fundraisers, Yuletide Faire and Spring Auction, brought in the highest results in school history, \$35,000 and \$33,000 respectively. Annual Appeal brought in \$77,000, its second highest total on record. To further close the gap, faculty and staff chose to accept a 1% salary cut in order to preserve programs and staffing levels.

This year we secured two separate grants from the Non-Profit Management Fund of Waukesha. As we implement the expert consultants’ recommendations in the areas of corporate governance and fund development, we will strengthen our operational structure and improve our overall financial position.

Looking forward to 2009-2010, our focus continues in the areas of sound fiscal policy decision-making, renegotiating our long-term debt on more favorable terms, increasing enrollment and minimizing attrition, elevating our fund development efforts and providing our students with rich program offerings and talented, dedicated faculty and staff.