



Candlenut Steiner School

Peace Protection Enlightenment





School Vision

It is our aim to be true to the spirit and intentions of the educational impulses and insights offered by Rudolf Steiner:

We aim to support each individual child as he strives to reach his own full potential. We work to encourage each child's unique gifts and potentials to unfold in a creative, nurturing, peaceful and respectful environment.

We strive to develop equally the faculties of thinking, feeling and willing - head, heart and hands - within each child, so strong foundations are laid for initiative and moral strength in adult life.

We aim to create a place where goodness, beauty and truth permeate the pedagogical, physical and social fabrics.

It is our intention to be aware of and responsive to the unique learning opportunities provided by our local natural environment.

We are continually striving to provide and develop a curriculum and learning programme that is inspired by a deep understanding of human development. A curriculum that embraces and reflects the universal values of freedom, equality, peace and democracy and that values diversity and individual worth. A curriculum that enables children to develop into productive and moral adults, who are, in and of themselves, able to impart meaning to their lives.

We view ourselves as a community of learners - teachers, parents, and students - striving to achieve individual, communal and global growth and understanding.

If you want to build a ship, do not call people together to make plans, divide up work, fetch tools or cut trees, rather teach them the longing for the wide reaches of the ocean - then they will build the ship for themselves.

- Antoine de Saint Exupery

School Details

Candlenut Steiner School is a small independent private primary school situated in Kuranda (approx. 20kms from major tourist centre Cairns) in Far North Queensland. The school has a current enrolment of 108 and offers an educational program from Kindergarten to Class Seven. The school plans to extend its program to High School in 2011.

The school is co-educational and non-denominational and offers a curriculum based on the educational insights and impulses of Rudolf Steiner.

Rudolf Steiner (1864 - 1925), an Austrian scientist, humanitarian and philosopher, was a man ahead of his times. He developed a new approach to many essential aspects of life including medicine, architecture, agriculture, the arts, social science and education. He ventured beyond the study of humans as merely creatures of intellect and physical form, to acknowledge the importance of human spirit. He viewed the world holistically as well as spiritually and foresaw the problems arising in our modern world and provided insights into possible solutions.

Anthroposophy, meaning 'the wisdom of man', is the name given to the philosophical perspective underpinning Steiner's work. It is not a religion. There is no compulsion and no dogma. Neither are Steiner's ideas actively transmitted to the children. They merely provide a perspective from which the teachers can deepen their understanding of children and develop their teaching craft, so that they can nurture their students in a more meaningful way.

Steiner education endeavours to educate the whole child. It addresses equally the areas of academia, artistic experience and practical skills, along with a nurturing of the human spirit. Educating head, heart and hands is regarded as important so as to produce well-rounded, capable adults. Through this balanced approach students develop clarity of thought, a sensitivity of feeling, and a constructive strength of will.

School Values and Pastoral Care

At Candlenut Steiner School we seek to remove competitive pressures inherent in many educational establishments. We prefer to see each child reach his or her own full potential and express his or her own uniqueness and individuality. This individuality is allowed to unfold in a creative, nurturing, stress free, peaceful and respectful environment. It is inhibited where children are required to compete against each other to achieve externally imposed goals.

Steiner education prefers motivation and direction to come from within the depths of each human being. It is the teacher's role to kindle the spark through creative, caring and inspired teaching practice. The teacher then allows the individual, in freedom, to unfold that which lies within him.

All teachers are encouraged to foster loving relationships with all the students in the school and to develop relationships with the families of the children in their care. Teachers are as much concerned with the childrens' emotional and physical development as their academic progress. Candlenut's unique curriculum has been specifically designed to "speak to" all aspects of the child's developmental stage, with academic learning delivered in a way that stirs the feelings, awakens a sense of morality, connects students to the natural world, engenders a sense of wonder and enthusiasm for life and learning and enhances healthy physical growth and development.

The school campus is small and close relationships between teaching staff are fostered via weekly meetings to ensure that the care, safety and needs of every student in the school are supported. Teachers work collaboratively to help students and solve problems and issues that may arise. The school has a well developed behavior management policy based on the understanding that for children to develop in a healthy way there needs to be a steady movement of authority from outer to inner. There is initially a need for constant positive and gentle guidance from adults who can model loving authority steeped in personal discipline. Gradually we begin to expect children to develop self discipline and to take more and more responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Teachers at the school support and encourage this process through the specific behaviour management techniques implemented at different stages of children's development.

At Candlenut we recognise the importance of developing values in young people. To meet our responsibility to educate children holistically, a values program has been incorporated into our school culture. To encourage community and home involvement, continuity and support, parents are made aware via the weekly newsletter of the particular value being focused upon.



School Management Structure

The Cairns Rudolf Steiner School is an independent school and a not-for-profit company. It is not a community school nor is it a denominational school. A board of directors oversee the long-term planning, legal and financial management of the school. The board is comprised of dedicated teachers who are supported by legal and financial advisors.

School operations are managed via a system known as facilitated shared decision making or distributed leadership. School management is distributed between elected teacher managers and paid administrative managers who are supported by task groups made up of parents, teachers or other community members. Each manager is required to create an action list each year to improve the area of the school that is covered in their mandate. This system ensures the school is in a constant state of improvement.



Distinctive Curriculum Offerings

The Candlenut curriculum is unique in that artistic subjects are given equal time and attention alongside and within academic subjects to ensure that each child gains real skills in the areas of art, music, drama and handwork that they can use throughout their lives.

"Art exists for its own sake. Teachers should love art so much that they do not want this experience to be lost in children. They will then see how the children grow through their experiences in art. It is art that awakens their intelligence.

It is the teacher's artistic sensibility that brings soul into the school. They bring a happy mood into the children's seriousness and dignity into their joy. With our intellect, we merely comprehend nature; it takes artistic feeling to experience it."

Rudolf Steiner

In 2008 the following subjects were included in the school program alongside standard subject areas of Math, English, SOSE, Science, HPE and LOTE.

- Art
- Music
- Drama
- Hand craft
- Nature studies
- Gardening
- Pottery
- Building
- Cooking

Extra-Curricula Activities

At Candlenut Steiner school we are committed to providing extra-curricular activities for students and their families, to enrich their schooling and to promote and enhance school and community relations. The movement to a new campus in 2008 brought with it more opportunity for and increased focus on a variety of such activities. This area is a work in progress and over time this is a focus for school improvement teams.

In 2008 a knitting program was established that involved students making knitted squares to be sewn into blankets and donated to various charity organisations. The school choir and orchestra performed at Mareeba Hospice where our first blanket found an appreciative home.

Several students attended a 3 day recorder workshop in Paluma hosted by the North Queensland Recorder Society.

An active community garden group was established to begin the work to create educational gardens within the school grounds.

Our Senior Class travelled to Black Mountain Hideaway in Julatten where they camped for four days and learnt the basics of horse care and horsemanship. The daily rides along the National Horse Trail were greatly enjoyed.

The following extra-curricula activities were offered in 2008:

- Knitting program
- Circus skills
- Chess
- Recorder
- Orchestra and Choir performances
- Singing lessons and groups
- Parent Groups - craft, gardening, playgroup

Parental Involvement

We seek to work alongside parents to ensure that together we can offer the children the very best. School and home are seen as two elements that create a whole learning experience for children. Both must be working harmoniously towards the same goal for a successful outcome.

Parents' role within the school is to help develop and grow the cultural life of the school. To help organise and participate in community building activities, festivals and celebrations, concerts and plays, excursions, music consorts, fund raising and study groups.

Parents also participate by contributing 20 community hours each year. These hours can be used helping out at the tuck shop or in the library, assisting teachers in and out of the classrooms, gardening, attending working bees etc. A Class Carer is elected for each class and it is their role to organise class social events and support the teacher as needed.

We aim to promote a strong and meaningful sense of community within the school. This sense of community is encouraged through community gatherings and festivals. The school hosts four festivals each year: in 2008 these were a Festival of Lights, a Music and Drama Festival, a Harvest Festival and Bushdance and the annual Rainbow Fair.

The school has an active Parents and Friends Association who work on Fundraising Initiatives and help to organise school festivals. In 2008 the P&F developed its own vision statement:

Our Steiner School is an exceptional school. It is not like other schools where the child is dropped off in the mornings, picked up in the afternoons, and the running of the school is of little concern.

This school is a community of families who wish for something special, not only for their children, but as a lifestyle choice. As this community, we need to create the sense of belonging for parents, children and teachers, and to support each other and our school in creating the beautiful, nurturing environment in which both our children and ourselves can grow.

Our school relies on the commitment of you and your families to build this sense of community, of coming together to support each other, our school and teachers, to create our school's many amazing events, and

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to share the vision for our school. This coming together demonstrates to our children how to work together and what can be achieved as a community, reinforcing the beliefs and values of our school.

The P&F association aims to provide our school and its community with this support, to serve the school community in a range of areas by taking on special roles and commitments, and to provide a forum at which parents' thoughts, suggestions and concerns can be aired and discussed. There is close liaison between the P&F and the college.

The P&F provides opportunity for families to nourish our school and have creative input to support and influence the everyday environment for our children, to support the teachers and allow them to proceed with classroom duties without the distractions of fundraising and other needs, and to show our children we care for and support their school.

All parents and friends are genuinely welcome to attend the P&F meetings, and all contributions have a positive effect on the school. Many people have many qualities, and we need to seek out and make use of the differences among the skills within our community. Supporting the P&F doesn't mean you will get lumped with a hundred odd jobs; just being present at meetings helps to keep the energy cycling, and reinforces support for our school community.

Being a committed part of our school community involves keeping up to date with news and initiatives, attending working bees, being reliable for rostered duties (flowers and frozies etc.), helping with the Rainbow Fair and other fundraising activities, and taking an interest in the P&F and associated activities (mainly fundraising). What can you offer? Come together with other parents, get to know each other and become part of the community involved with creating OUR school for OUR children. It is fun and the personal rewards are tremendous. You are part of this school too.

Role Description

The role of the P&F at the Candlenut Steiner school is to deepen and strengthen the cultural sphere of the school. This is achieved by:

- *Organising and conducting regular fund-raising activities for general funds as well as specific needs.*
- *Organising and running the annual Rainbow Fair, the annual Bush Dance and other social events*
- *Organising the set up of various parent groups including but not restricted too craft group, doll making groups, study groups.*
- *Organising and conducting the weekly tuckshop service*
- *Supporting the College and administration in other tasks when requested*

It is the school's intention that the P&F should become an incorporated body during the 2009 school year, which will allow them to apply for various government funding for which otherwise schools are not eligible.

The P&F is managed by a President who oversees and organises meetings, a secretary who takes minutes and distributes information to the wider school community and the treasurer who handles the finances of the P&F. Elections for these positions are held annually at the AGM conducted in February. All members of the school community are welcome to nominate.

Parents were involved in the following activities in 2008:

- Organising fundraising events
- Building and grounds maintenance and upgrade
- Festival organisation
- Tuckshop operation
- Craft group
- Class carers
- Driving and helping on excursions and camps
- Making beanbags, costumes etc
- Office help - photocopying etc
- Gardening
- Working Bees
- Classroom reading programs
- Library help
- P&F

Staffing Information

Qualifications	Percentage of Classroom Teachers and School Leaders
Doctorate	14%
Masters	0%
Bachelor	86%
Diploma	0%
Certificate	0%

Average Staff Attendance for the school, based on unplanned absences of sick and emergency leave periods of up to 5 days.

Number of Staff	Number of School Days	Total Days Absent	Average Staff attendance rate
12	186	38	182.3

Proportions of Staff retained from the previous year

Number of permanent teaching staff at the end of 2007	Number of these staff retained in 2008	% Retention rate
7	6	86%

Teacher Professional Development

Expenditure on and teacher participation in Professional Development in 2008:

The total funds expended on teacher professional development in 2008 was \$9 677.92. 100% of our teaching staff were involved in school funded Professional Development activities during 2008.

Professional Development Activities 2008:

- College of Teachers Study Group Meetings - weekly for approx. 2hrs
- Gleneason Steiner School 1 week intensives - Class 1, 3 and 5
- Proficiency in English - Alan Wagstaff
- School Leadership and Management - Alan Wagstaff
- Copyright in Schools
- Teacher School Visits to Mt Barker Steiner School and Willunga Steiner School
- Four whole day school based PD sessions covering -
 1. Handling Difficult Conversations
 2. Planning for Composite Classes
 3. The Importance of Gratitude
 4. Morning Circle
 5. Developing a singing/music culture within a school
 6. Painting

Total Number of Permanent Teaching Staff in 2008	Total Expenditure on Teacher PD	Average expenditure on PD per teacher
7	\$9 677.92	\$1 382

Key Student Outcomes

Average Student Attendance Rate:

The average student attendance rate in 2008 was 90.13%.

Total number of students (at census)	Number of school days in program year	Total number of student absences	Average attendance rate
70	186	1182	90.92 %

Benchmark Testing Results:

The methods and intentions of a Steiner School are deep and far reaching. Like walking and talking, children learn at their own pace. We honour this process and seek to maintain the self confidence and self-esteem of each child. Testing and ranking of children is not in accord with our school ethos. Such tests can feed the egos of some, erode the confidence of others and eat into valuable teaching time as teachers must prepare students to sit tests. Non-invasive methods of assessment are used throughout each child's education.

In *Working With Curriculum in Australian Steiner Schools* (June Cunningham, 2004), the Steiner approach to assessment and evaluation is summarised:

Steiner schools tend to be smaller than other schools, and it is a central pillar of their philosophy that they are human-centred, with the development of the child's whole being as their principal focus.

Class Teachers teach a child for up to 8 years so they:

- *Get to know the child well, learn the best way to approach, motivate and discipline each child*
- *Have more opportunity to observe the child's progress (no having to spend the first term each year just getting to know the class)*
- *Develop on-going close contact with parents - ideally a team atmosphere*

Assessment can therefore be very individual and personalised:

- *More unobtrusive and informal, with few if any formal tests, at least until High School*
- *Emphasis is on continued learning and holistic development rather than on grading*
- *The ideal is a personalised education and development plan for each child*

Why are Steiner Schools opposed to the current mandatory state and national testing, 2001 (excerpts)

- *Steiner education is based on a particular understanding of child development and maturation and integration of faculties. At the core of this understanding stands a picture of a natural progression, within which are stages - not only of growth but also of levels of consciousness - physical, imaginative, intellectual. The educative process and curriculum in a Steiner school is carefully designed to support this natural progression.*
- *Introduction of skills and knowledge is therefore based on a concept of child-readiness. In the younger years, the introduction of formal literacy and numeracy skills for example is therefore delayed to allow for the fuller development of physical faculties e.g. hand-eye co-ordination, gross motor skills, fine motor skills. At this level (kindergarten and lower primary) literacy and numeracy skills are woven into activity.*
- *When introduced formally (aged 6-7), literacy and numeracy skills are woven into the curriculum in a very pictorial and imaginative way in-keeping with the forces of the imagination operating so strongly at that time. This has been proven to be a very effective approach and with long-lasting benefits.*
- *However, almost all other schools whether government or non-government, or with particular religious or cultural ethos, follow a very common and conventional approach to the acquisition of literacy and numeracy. This places Steiner schools in a unique dilemma - how do we stay true to our tested and long-standing curriculum and approach (the reason parents choose our schools and the reason teachers choose to teach in them) and yet comply with government requirements and accountability?*
- *Furthermore the concept of testing is itself very foreign to our students, particularly in the primary years. Each child is regarded as gifted in some area and tolerance and acceptance are encouraged and valued in our classrooms. "Success" and "failure" are not emphasised, rather a child is seen as being on a continuum of development which will enable him/her to fulfil hi/her potential.*
- *In the schools which trialled the tests, particularly in the lower years, it was felt that in both format and content, the experience was so foreign as to render in valid the results of the tests and make them of little use either to the school or the Government.*

At Candlenut Steiner School assessment occurs in these ways:

- In kindergarten and preschool, assessment is by teacher observation and work samples
- In the primary school, the development of the children's skills is assessed and recorded through main lesson books, class work, work samples, checklists and continuums, oral presentations, reviews and rich learning tasks.

Reporting to parents occurs through parent/teacher meetings and in written semester reports.

National Benchmark tests in Literacy and Numeracy:

All schools must ensure that all students in years 3,5 and 7 sit the NAPLAN tests unless a parent signs a conscientious objection to the test.

Parent Satisfaction

The school has an annual parent survey to gauge parent satisfaction overall and with different aspects of the school. The 2008 survey showed there were many areas that the parents felt extremely happy with and some areas where there was a significant level of dissatisfaction.

As far as student wellbeing is concerned the survey indicated that the school is doing exceptionally well. Many parents were very happy with how their children are learning and how their children's individuality is respected and nurtured. One parent said that their "children are blossoming and maturing faster than they would at a state school. They are challenged more and are constantly trying new and wonderful things. They are taking more interest in the world and taking pride in their achievements. They have learned simple concentration and conflict resolution skills never available to them before." Below are some more comments that were made by parents about the school:

- Develops in children an enthusiasm for and love of learning through a creative and positive environment and a holistic approach
- Encouraging free-thinking individuals through creativity and imagination
- Teaches patience and focus with tasks in a world where everything is rushed
- Respects the children, provides emotional support
- Develops children's individual needs and nurturing. The school promotes Steiner values in their teaching
- Creates a peaceful environment conducive to good concentration
- Challenges thinking and explores topics in depth
- Build self-confidence and self-awareness and awareness of environment on a global scale
- All the work is of a very high standard with special attention to presentation
- Nurtures our children in a caring, uncommercial, not consumer oriented environment, promoting the innocence of childhood and the inherent goodness in life
- Provides a stimulating and holistically supportive environment for developing young minds and bodies
- Supports family and community involvement in the school

- Has warm teachers and staff, who give much time and devote themselves to the school
- The general atmosphere in the school is loving, caring and embracing
- Nurtures creativity, innocence of childhood, promotes good values and hold a reverence for our planet and each other. Stimulates interest in classical teachings...Amazing teachers!!!
- Caring, respecting and nurturing children is extremely high, in my child's class the teacher is unbelievably committed and has gone above and beyond to care and nurture
- The tuckshop has been an extremely positive experience for our children - they are so prepared to try different foods as a result of the amazing effort
- Children are stimulated and happy. They are treated as individuals. The school has the children's interest at heart.
- Good monitoring of the class as a whole. Teacher is very observant of the child's social well being.

The survey indicated that the school needed to improve in the following areas:

Although many parents stated that their children were very happy at the school, they had some real concerns about the overall governance of the school. Some parents felt that enrolments had been lost because of these issues. What they wanted was a stronger and more organised management. They wanted a better and more reliable form of communication. They wanted more information about the children's academic and social progress. They wanted more transparent information about the administration of the school: the school board's report, the P&F minutes, the strategic plan, building & site details, financial details and staffing.

In response to these concerns the school has gone through a major restructure in the areas of administration and governance. A new more structured and organised system of management was put into place and all of the school's operating policies and procedures were reviewed, updated and expanded. An Assessment Manager was elected who has been reviewing and implementing new assessment and reporting processes within the school. The weekly newsletter has been expanded and is now available in electronic format and posted onto the school website. A new school website was designed and created. Moves have been made to incorporate the P&F and the school is working to assist the parent community to establish the P&F as a solid and effective group within the school.

*Strategic Progress in 2008***Physical Resources:**

- The school was relocated to the permanent site in July 2008. Significant work was done on the one existing building on the site.
- A demountable classroom block was purchased
- An octagonal, timber gazebo structure was built to temporarily accommodate the Kinder group.
- A demountable toilet block was purchased and installed
- In December 2008 a purpose built double classroom block was built
- The school office and administration areas were moved and refurbished
- A landscaping project including a creek, bridges and garden areas was begun in front of the new classroom block
- Educational produce gardens were set-up
- A maintenance and storage shed was built
- The carpark was extended and bitumised
- The road in front of the school was widened and turning lanes were constructed.

Pastoral Care:

- A Behaviour and Student Assistance Manager was elected
- A Values Program was implemented
- A fortnightly Sharing Assembly was implemented. During this assembly classes share their work and achievements, students and teachers thank each other for good deeds and thoughtful behaviours and a fortnightly value is explored.

Human Resources:

- A fulltime Business Manager was employed
- A new teacher mentoring program was developed to support new and long-term employees
- A Teacher Development Manager was elected
- A new system for teacher appraisal was implemented to support and encourage ongoing personal and professional growth of all staff

- More teaching staff were employed to cover specialist classes and teacher relief and release situations
- Learning support staff were employed

Curriculum:

- A Curriculum Manager was elected
- Two different Curriculum packages were purchased from outside school's and organisations to support the development of the Candlenut School Curriculum
- The whole school curriculum was reworked to fit in with the Essential Learning Standards as required by Government
- A Learning Program Handbook was written which includes school philosophy, behaviour management and assessment policies, rationales for all subject areas, an overview or map of the whole school curriculum and a map to show where and how the Essential Learning Standards are met within the curriculum
- A music specialist was employed to update the school's music program

Governance and Administration:

- A parent survey was conducted to identify areas for improvement
- A new accounting system was implemented
- An annual budget was completed
- A new system of School Management was implemented
- A High School Development Task group was established
- The School applied for and gained membership to the Rudolf Steiner Association

Conclusion

2008 was a year of enormous change and growth for Candlenut Steiner School. There were many challenges as staff and parents negotiated our way through the ups and downs of change. As a result of the new management system, new procedures and policies and the move to our new permanent site, the school moved forward into 2009 as a strong, confident and quality educational establishment. Enrolments have increased significantly as has staff and parent satisfaction.

The remarkable and beautiful growth of the school this year is a testament to the dedication of the parents, students and staff of Candlenut Steiner School. Thankyou.