

OCEAN CHARTER SCHOOL CORE VALUES WORKSHOP  
Conducted by Hoffeecker Burgess Consulting April 12, 2008

George Hoffeecker and Donna Burgess of HoffeeckerBurgess Consulting were invited to conduct a “core values” workshop at Ocean Charter School on Saturday, April 12, 2008. One purpose of this workshop was to give teachers, parents, board members, administration and staff an opportunity to identify and affirm values and principles that they hold in common as members of the Ocean Charter School community. A second purpose was to give participants an opportunity to learn about, observe and practice a process of “values based decision making” which HBC has found to be very effective in many school settings.

In preparation for the workshop, HBC interviewed 28 members of the faculty, administration, general parent body and board. These interviews helped HBC to form a current profile of the school, design the core values interview questionnaire and to frame the positive topics of inquiry that were presented on Saturday (see “Recommendations” attached).

On Saturday morning, participants conducted 25 minute paired interviews (see “Interview Questionnaire” attached). Groups of six then formed to retell “highlights” from the interviews and to identify themes that they heard during the retelling. Each group was then asked to select 3-5 core themes (values) from the list they had compiled and to present them to the larger group.

What follows is a record of the presentations from the six small groups. Where available, we have included the more extensive list of themes from which the core themes were selected (for groups #1,2 and 3).

**THEMES/CORE VALUES: “WHAT WE CARE ABOUT”**

**“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”**  
**~Margaret Wheatley**

**GROUP #1:**

Themes emerging from the interviews:

- Everyone brings a gift
- Connection and love
- Community
- Wholeness
- Love of teaching
- Holistic nature of our curriculum

- Waldorf pedagogy
- Need for continuity
- Blending of Waldorf and public school methods
- Building something together

**Core themes selected by the group:**

- **Love of community and connection**
- **Waldorf inspired and informed curriculum and pedagogy**
- **“Club of wholeness”**

**GROUP #2:**

Themes emerging from the interviews:

- Embracement
- Involvement
- Barn raising
- Invite the change
- Necessary friction
- Diversity
- Engaged community
- Trustworthiness
- Connection
- Commitment
- Patience
- Imagination
- Community
- Individuality
- Revisit role as parent
- Loyalty
- Gift of teaching
- Family
- Community
- Responsibility
- Acceptance

**Core themes selected by the group:**

- **Heart**
- **Barn Raising**
- **Invite change**

**Group #3:**

Themes emerging from the interviews:

- Direct evidence of the value of what we do

- Acknowledgement of how much it takes for the teachers to teach in this way
- Role of the community, including administration and board, is to support the teachers
- What we are giving the students needs to live in us (the community) as well: mindfulness, vitality, flexibility, open listening.
- A welcoming and informative gateway for new parents, students and teachers
- Our Waldorf education requires commitment beyond what happens in the classroom. It is a way of being.
- Important to stay clear and strong about commitment to Waldorf education because it is inherently very inclusive

**Core themes selected by the group:**

- **Community: leadership/guidance, structure, trust/respect/history**
- **Waldorf methods: balance, tapestry of programs**
- **History and change**

**Group #4:**

**Core themes selected by the group:**

- **Community**  
Support  
Appreciation  
Coherence  
Energy
- **Waldorf in the Public Sector:**  
*Public Sector:* balance; flexibility  
*Waldorf:* honoring of childhood; respect for nature; natural rhythms; children come first; beauty of environment, materials and curriculum; Variety and richness of materials and curriculum
- **Future communal picture: “developing people who will not only replicate what is around them, but can envision something new.”** (taken from the OCS Charter renewal application)

**Group #5:**

**Core themes selected by the group:**

- **Community that appreciates uniqueness and individuality**
- **Parts of Waldorf really work**
- **Beauty**
- **Peace**
- **Follow through**

Group #6:

**Core themes selected by the group:**

- **Community-it's about all of us, not just our children**
- **There is a close continuum of common values**
- **The experience of whole child enrichment**  
Healing, soul, depth, "hold child" enrichment
- **Beacon to the world in education**  
"L.A. is throat chakra of the world."
- **Commitment and devotion**  
Choice to be here; passion; courage; caring
- **Quality of teachers**

#### AFTERNOON SESSION: A VALUES BASED COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO MAKING DECISIONS

In the afternoon, HBC presented an approach to decision making based on the "Three P/Three D" model. In this approach, an organization commits to establishing *priorities* based on common principles and agreed upon processes. All priorities are arrived at by first, referring to the commonly held school principles that are relevant (P1); second, following the agreed upon processes which apply including agreements on how we relate to one another(P2); and finally coming to common judgment concerning the desired outcomes (priorities, goals, action plans). This process supports the creation of congruency at all levels of organizational initiative and planning.

The "Three D" model describes a specific process for moving from *principles* to *priorities* for any decision that an organization has identified that it wants to make in a collaborative manner. In this model, the process of making decisions moves through three distinct phases: Dialogue, Discussion and Decision (see attached description from the workshop). The "Three D" approach is equally applicable in situations where the group has agreed that the final decision will be arrived at through consensus, consensus minus one or majority vote.

Workshop participants requested a demonstration of this process and several volunteers stepped forward to practice the "Three D" model while engaging the following question:

- What recommendations does this (practice) group want to make to the administrator search team for key qualities of leadership desired in a new administrator?”

Out of this demonstration, the larger group proposed that the whole school follow this model for the remainder of the school year and then reflect on the results. Two individuals indicated some reservations about the proposal and this dynamic provided an opportunity for a second demonstration group to use the “Three D” model in addressing the question: “Do we want, as a whole school,” to adopt the decision making model presented by HBC?”

This second demonstration group provided additional practice in using the “Three D” model and also opportunities for further clarification of the model’s application. Through choosing to go into dialogue to discover the needs and values underlying the reservations that had been expressed, we discovered that neither individual held opposition to the process as a whole but had specific concerns about aspects of the process. Out of this experience of the practice group:

- The importance of setting aside our assumptions and judgments to deeply listen and to discover what is living in the other person was again demonstrated (a central function of dialogue);
- Use of the “Three D” model was clarified:  
“P1, P2, P3 is a paradigm for approaching the setting of priorities based community values alignment. D1, D2, D3 is an overall process for making decisions that is applicable to any chosen procedure for arriving at a final decision, e.g., consensus, consensus minus one, or majority vote;
- A new option for signaling agreement or disagreement (taking the “temperature” of the group at a point in the process) was discovered and offered to the group as a possible improvement on the “thumbs up, neutral or down” signal that had been used by HBC.

The workshop ended with an opportunity for individuals to express what they were personally “taking away” from the day. In addition, interest was expressed in continuing to practice the recommended decision making process through addressing the positive topics of inquiry which had been suggested by HBC (see attached “Recommendations”).

After the whole community session, HBC met with members of the board and faculty for 90 minutes to provide a forum for sharing concerns around communication issues.

