



Destination School

Over the past few months, we've been overwhelmed with admission inquiries, signifying a global interest in joining our Alma community. It's become evident that families from diverse corners of the globe are drawn to our little slice of paradise, eager to become part of the Alma tribe. Our recent analysis revealed a striking statistic: 70% of our families have relocated specifically for their children to attend our school. This remarkable trend underscores the magnetic pull of our educational ethos. The transition for new families is greatly smoothed by the warmth and assistance of our existing community members, who recall their own experiences of moving and are enthusiastic about easing the way for newcomers. They offer invaluable support, from sharing practical advice to facilitating introductions,

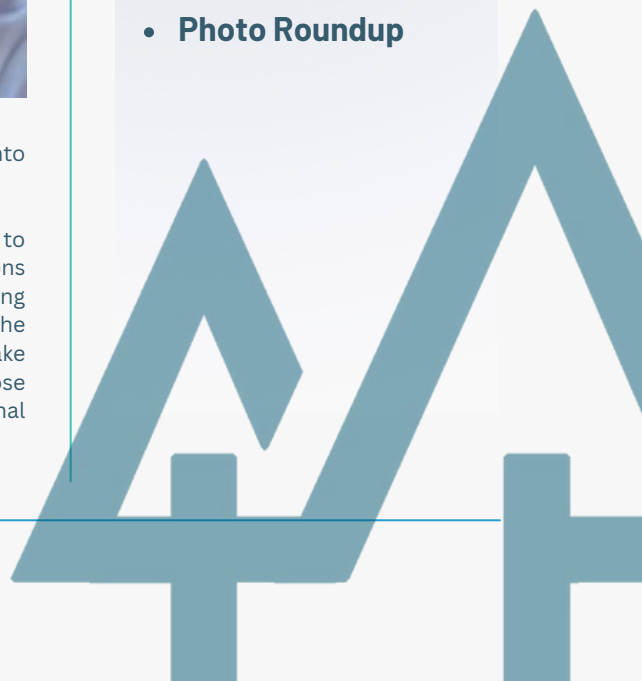


thereby weaving new families into the fabric of our community.

This newsletter is an invitation to uncover the compelling reasons why so many families are choosing Alma, offering insights into the values and connections that make our school a beacon for those seeking an exceptional educational journey for their children.

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Thoughts from the Principal

SCHOOL, CHILDHOOD, PARENTING



Trust

Trust, often defined as the willingness to be vulnerable to another's actions, is not just a personal sentiment but a cornerstone in the realm of education. It lays the foundation for **social cohesion** and strong communities, particularly within educational institutions. This dynamic becomes more evident in smaller organizations where close and direct interactions among students, administrators, and educators are more feasible, fostering a deeper sense of trust.

The significance of trust in educational governance has been a common theme in scholarly articles. These works frequently critique the prevailing governance models that prioritize competitiveness, performativity, and control, often at the expense of trust-building. Such models, emphasizing sanctions over cooperation, inadvertently undermine the very fabric of educational communities.

Trust-Based Education

- **positively affects academic performance,**
- **promotes collective decision-making,**
- **reduces behavioural incidents,**
- **promotes well-being,**
- **enables fairness and justice**
- **and enhances interaction quality.**

"The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them."

Ernest Hemingway

At Alma trust is developed and maintained in various ways. Some are informal and some are **hardwired into the structure of the school** and curriculum. We know that young people are experts on their own lives and capable of making informed decisions.

We trust our students to make choices about curriculum content and regarding when and how they engage in various forms of learning. In the Escuela Bosque students spend most of the day freely choosing their activities and in the Primary School this is exemplified by our Explorations, Personal Projects and various times throughout the week when students work independently on academic work of their choosing.

We also trust them with time. Time to solve conflicts, find intrinsic motivation and acquire self-knowledge through ample opportunities for social interactions.

Our students are trusted with evaluating and managing risk. They can climb trees, use real tools, and engage with other students without constant supervision.

Interestingly, the impact of trust extends beyond the school environment. Statistical analyses reveal that **parental trust** in teachers significantly predicts a child's interest and progress in subjects like mathematics and reading. This finding underscores the far-reaching implications of trust in the educational journey of a child.



School News

Eco School Update



The school's Eco Committee has been working on water conservation initiatives, aiming to make a tangible impact on both our school environment and the broader community. One of our recent endeavors involved the acquisition of seven 1000-liter tanks to collect rainwater. This not only helps in water conservation but also serves as an excellent educational tool for students to understand the importance of utilizing natural resources wisely.

Furthermore, the committee has been actively engaged in experimenting with filtering water from handwashing facilities to enable its reuse in our vegetable patch. This initiative not only reduces water wastage but also promotes sustainable gardening practices within our school. It's a prime example of how small changes in our daily routines can lead to **significant environmental benefits**.

In addition to these efforts, the Eco Committee has undertaken a project to build a pond on the school grounds. This pond serves as a vital source of water during drought periods, providing essential support for local bird and amphibian populations. By creating this habitat, we not only contribute to **biodiversity conservation** but also foster a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of ecosystems among students.

Overall, the work of the school's Eco Committee in the realm of water conservation showcases a commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability. Through practical initiatives like rainwater harvesting, water filtration, and habitat creation, we aim to inspire positive change and empower future generations to become responsible custodians of our planet's precious resources.

Forest School Leader Training

March 18 - 27, 2024

Embark on a transformative journey with Alma Forest School's internationally recognized Forest School Leader (Level 3) Course, delivered in partnership with Cambium Sustainable. This comprehensive training is designed for those eager to establish and manage their own Forest School program or enrich their current teaching credentials with outdoor educational expertise. Over 8 days of immersive, in-person training, participants will engage in both theoretical learning and practical tasks, covering five critical units of study. The in-person training is followed by the creation of a portfolio to be completed within a 9-month period. Upon completion, attendees will have the skills to support learning and development in natural environments, sustainably manage natural resources, and teach outdoor practical skills. This course promises to equip future leaders with the knowledge and tools needed to foster environmental awareness and outdoor learning in their communities. For more details and to enrol, visit [Alma Forest School's training page](#).

An advertisement for the Forest School Leader training course. It features the logos for Cambium Sustainable (Ethical, Connected, Training) and Alma Forest. The main headline is "BECOME A LEVEL 3 FOREST SCHOOL LEADER!". Below this is a photo of a group of people in a forest setting. The advertisement includes course dates (18/03/2024 to 22/03/2024 and 25/03/2024 to 27/03/2024), a course cost of EUR 950, and a trainer named Jose Gomez. A QR code is provided for more information, with a "Learn More!" button below it. At the bottom, it says "An internationally recognised Forest School Leader qualification through an accredited organization." and "BOOK YOUR SPACE NOW!". Contact information for Alma Forest School is also provided: info@almaforestschool.com, +34 646 596 155, and www.almaforestschool.com. The Alma Forest logo is in the bottom right corner.

School News

Author Video Calls



Recently, two of our groups completed their class books and had the remarkable opportunity to engage with the authors, Patricia Wrede and M T Anderson, via video call. They delved into the daily life and challenges of being an author, discussed their sources of inspiration, and shared the paths that led them to becoming authors. Patricia Wrede captivated one class by reading from her new book, "The Dark Lord's Daughter," which the students eagerly selected as their next read. M T Anderson fascinated the students with tales of his very own 'haunted' house, sparking their imaginations.

After consulting with the groups about their interests in genres and plot types, we sought assistance from the Global Educator Collective. With over 100 recommendations to consider, we ultimately selected two books. We can wholeheartedly recommend both selections



Exploring the Body

Our Primary School students have completed their investigation focused on the body. Over the past four months, they have dissected brains, livers, lungs and hearts; learned basic First Aid; prepared healthy food; recorded their heart rates; studied human development starting at conception; tested their vocal ranges; simulated various disabilities; reenacted ancient Olympic games; completed an FBI fingerprint sheet; created food packaging for healthy food; engaged in agility exercises; dated the age of bruises; and tested Piaget's stages of development with our preschoolers. Just to name a few.

Our Explorations always aim to engage our students by being active, relevant, and full of wonder. Our teachers take great care when designing the activities and workshops to ensure that they go above and beyond what any textbook curriculum could offer. Since our team of teachers is learning many new things in the process, their fascination with new understanding inspires our students and models life-long learning.

School News

Chicken Maths



Throughout this term, children from the Azores group have their mathematical explorations at the chicken coop. Being part of Alma places us in the privileged position of being educators and students who can utilize the farm for our **play-based learning**. Why stick to learning mathematical concepts in the classroom, or even within the Escuela Bosque environment, when there are so many options to explore?

Every Thursday morning during this term, we embody the role of Chicken Keepers. The children play a crucial role at the coop each week. We've crafted a plan where children develop their understanding of numerals, counting, comparison, measurement, size, shape, weight, cardinality, and even Geometry, all while fully immersed at the Chicken Coop. The **children's input is paramount**, and so this plan may evolve as we observe their interests.



What this means for our students is that there's purpose behind their actions. Their newfound understanding can be applied to solve problems, making it relevant to their lives. This approach isn't about memorizing numbers but about developing a real-time understanding of them. It has been fascinating to witness **how quickly children become interested in numbers and mathematical concepts when these are connected to real-world problems** to be solved in a fun and interactive manner.

It's been a joy to observe the children tackle these challenges. Each week, there's a buzz of activity and enthusiasm; it's where play, learning, and life converge. Let's see where this project takes us!



School News



Evolving Curriculum

Our Explorations, co-created with our students are a core aspect of the Emergent strand of our curriculum. As always when we get to the end of an Exploration, we ask our students what they want to focus on next. This can lead to a vote on which topic to learn about or come to a consensus on a topic that everyone is happy to investigate. As we began to discuss possible ideas a student suggested Mythical Creatures as a possible next Exploration focus. She also mentioned that she already knew quite a lot about the topic and would like to teach a lesson on it herself. **This comment inspired other students to suggest things they could teach.** Within a few days, we had a structure for this new approach and a long list of student teachers. For a full week, our students took over and offered lessons and workshops on molecules, mythical creatures, dogs, horses, monkeys in Gibraltar, the bubonic plague, blindness, the history of sport, surfing, jellyfish, flowers, ancient Egypt and modern architecture. It was fascinating to watch students plan their sessions, using structures, tools and strategies that they had picked up from observing our staff teach. Their presentations were engaging and well-pitched, their activities were differentiated to accommodate learners of different ages and their classroom management was commendable.

Inspired by their peers, many students who had at first hesitated started to think about things that they could teach and everyone agreed that these student-taught weeks should become a regular fixture of our Explorations. An idea uttered by an 8-year-old student managed to add an exciting new aspect to our curriculum. **This flexibility and responsiveness to the ideas and needs of our students makes Alma such a dynamic place.**

New Woodworking Areas

To enable our students to further develop their maker skills, we have created two new woodwork areas. One in the Escuela Bosque and the other one in the Primary section.

It is always a highlight for visitors to see even our youngest students competently handle tools and independently work on projects. Visiting parents often comment that they have never allowed their own children to use real tools, especially saws, because of the fear they might get hurt. This is commonly followed by an inquiry as to how many accidents happen and astonishment when we explain that accidents are very rare and playing football is far more dangerous.



There are two reasons for accidents being so rare. Firstly, we take great care to train our students to use tools safely. This includes a gradual introduction to certain kinds of power tools as their skills progress. Growth comes with being given responsibility.

In addition to this, we know that students are competent navigators of risk when given the chance and necessary information.



The World of Education

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION



School Anxiety

A recent study conducted by researchers from the University of Connecticut focused on how accommodating strategies affect children's ability to cope with school anxiety. The findings were surprising and somewhat counterintuitive.

Students who had teachers who provided more accommodating support for students such as providing reassurance, doing things for the student or modifying classroom routines or activities to avoid provoking student anxiety were reported to develop more avoidance strategies and have increased levels of anxiety.

This study supports earlier findings that document that greater levels of accommodation by parents at home are associated with increased anxiety and poorer treatment outcomes.

These studies suggest that teachers and parents should **focus on building resilience and supporting students in 'facing fears' rather than avoiding them.**

Link to the full report below.

[Child Avoidance of Anxiety-Provoking Situations in the Classroom and Teacher Accommodation](#)

Social & Emotional Learning

A recent review of research by the Yale School of Medicine that looked at 424 studies involving over half a million students found overwhelming evidence that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) leads to "improved academic achievement, school climate, school functioning, social-emotional skills, attitudes, and prosocial and civic behaviours."

At Alma, SEL is central to our curriculum and community building. It is part of our DNA and impacts everything we do from the way the day is structured, our staff are trained and the resources we use.

- **Mixed-aged learning** allows our students to develop social skills by giving them opportunities to take on different roles throughout the day. They support and care for younger students, seek advice from more knowledgeable pupils and have more varied friendship groups.
- Our staff are trained in **non-violent communication** and encouraged to play. Rather than telling our students how to navigate social situations, we model ways to effectively resolve conflict and have fun playing.
- During our **Morning & Closing Circles** we approach SEL in a more structured format. These moments give groups a chance to discuss emotions, and strategies for navigating a complex social world.

We can recommend the activities and lessons developed by the [Random Acts of Kindness Foundation](#).



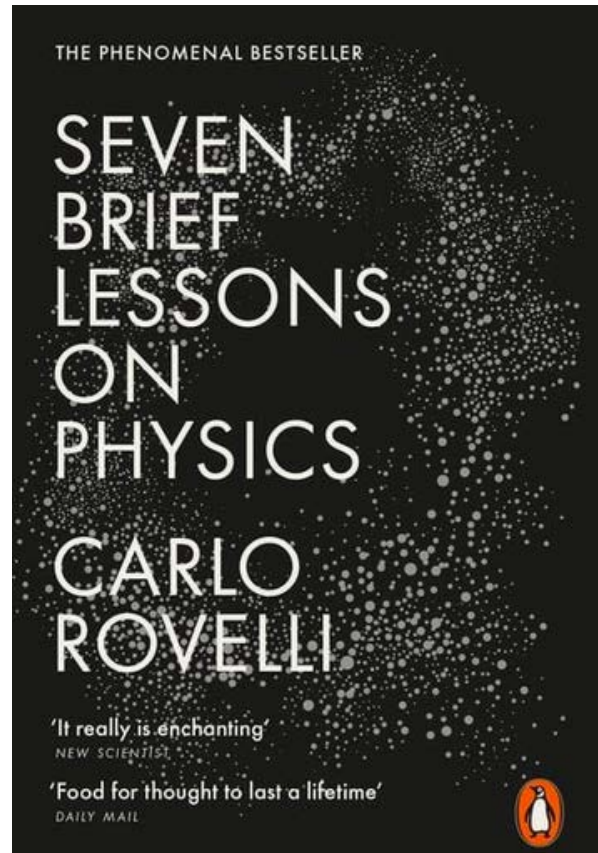
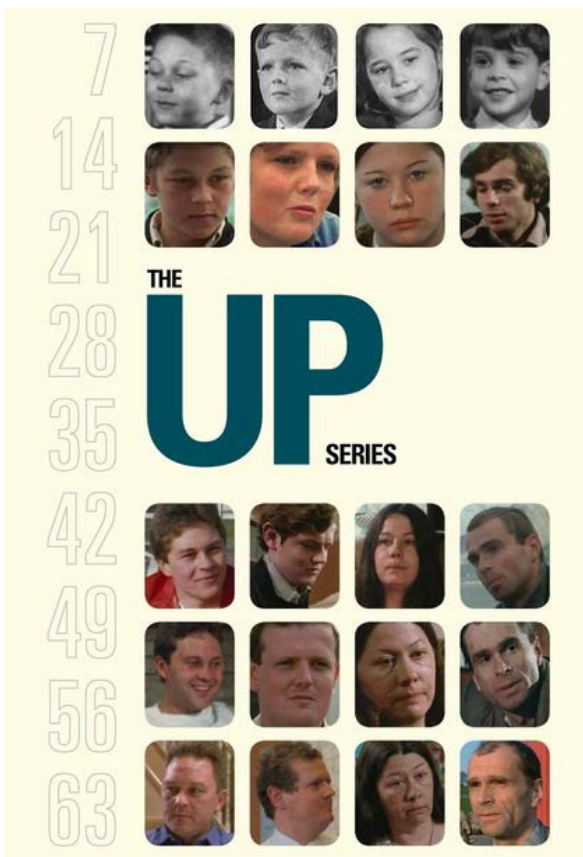
Noteworthy

The Up Series

The Up series stands as a monumental achievement in television history, surpassing the epic scale of 'The Sopranos' and offering a more personal touch than revisiting one's own family albums. This series became the most enduring work of Michael Apted, who initially joined as a young 23-year-old researcher on 'Seven Up!', swiftly locating many of the children who would be the focus throughout their lives. Assuming the director's role with '14 Up' (also known as '7 plus Seven'), Apted masterfully guided this ongoing project throughout his career until his passing. The Up series, a documentary collection, chronicles the lives of 14 individuals, revisiting them every seven years from the age of 7 up to 63, with '63 Up' being the latest edition, released in 2019.

"Give me a child until he is 7, and I will give you the man."

The first film starts with this line and while for some children, their expectations of life at age 7 turned out to be eerily accurate there are many ups, downs and unexpected turns in their lives.



"There are frontiers where we are learning, and our desire for knowledge burns. They are in the most minute reaches of the fabric of space, at the origins of the cosmos, in the nature of time, in the phenomenon of black holes, and in the workings of our own thought processes. Here, on the edge of what we know, in contact with the ocean of the unknown, shines the mystery and the beauty of the world. And it's breathtaking."

Carlo Rovelli's "Seven Brief Lessons on Physics" is an engaging exploration of modern physics, focusing on relativity, quantum mechanics, and the cosmos. Rovelli simplifies complex theories, inviting readers into existential contemplations about time and reality. His narrative blends scientific insight with philosophical musings, prompting readers to ponder the nature of the present and the elusive flow of time. The book stands out for its ability to distill intricate scientific concepts into thought-provoking ideas, reflecting on humanity's fleeting existence in the vast tapestry of the universe, making it a compelling read for both novices and enthusiasts alike.

Photo Roundup





Teaching a child not to step on a caterpillar is as valuable to the child, as it is to the caterpillar ~ Bradley Miller