



December 2020

# Oakwood Academy

*Individualized Education JK-12*

## Director's Message



November was a seasonal surprise from one day to the next. The warmer weather at the beginning of the month quickly changed to much colder weather on a moments notice and is another reminder to us all that cold and flu season has arrived quickly too. Saying that, I am extremely thankful that our community has been vigilant in following our updated Health and Safety Policies. With COVID-19 cases on the rise, we want to continue to make sure that we are doing everything we can to help decrease transmission. I would like to thank the staff and families for their understanding and full cooperation during these months. The ever-changing circumstances may challenge us in new ways, but I am confident that our Oakwood families and team can continue in our joint efforts to work through challenges together!

**Colder Weather** As in previous years, Oakwood students will continue to go outside in the colder weather for recess, gym and peer opportunities. I would like to remind families to please dress your child(ren) with appropriate clothing and outdoor attire so they can enjoy their time outdoors safely.

**Remembrance Day** As a school community, Oakwood took pause on November 11, the day when we are given reason to reflect upon the sacrifices made in the name of freedom. Staff and students took part in Remembrance Day activities and through these lessons, took time to reflect, build empathy and express gratitude for those we lest forget.

**Holiday Celebrations** We are all looking forward to a fun-filled December! Within our cohorts, teachers have designed new and spirited events that your child(ren) is sure to remember for years to come! Though we wish we could have our annual holiday concert in person, this year's rehearsals are just as exciting to watch and I know that we're all eager to see each child shine on the big (home) screen when the time comes!

Continued...



### DATES TO REMEMBER

December 4  
Virtual Winter  
Concert  
(video available  
to view)

December 16  
Casual Day  
(optional)

December 17  
Holiday Spirit Day  
(dress in holiday  
colours)

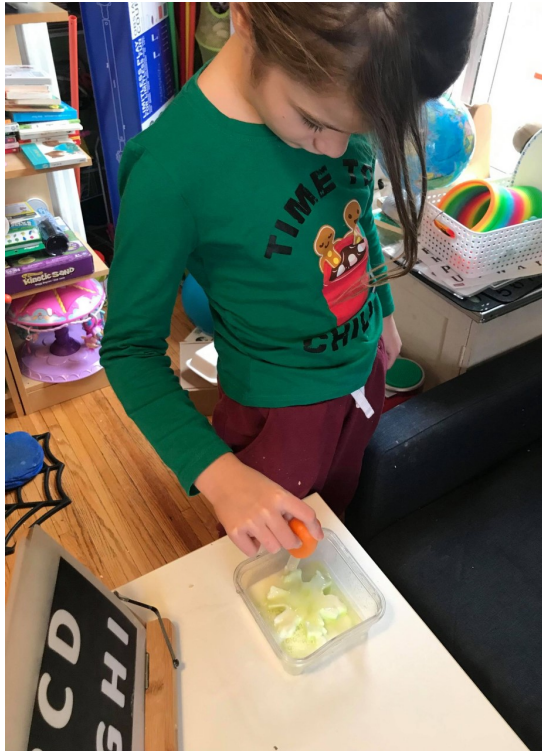
December 18 -  
January 5  
Winter Holiday  
(no school)

January 6  
Return to School

**Winter Break** Over the next few weeks, teachers will be preparing your child's individualized DIR Winter-Break package. This package will consist of new ideas, current goals, printed examples and resources for you and your child(ren) to continue to engage in over the break. Please be sure to let your teacher know if there is anything specific that you would like them to prepare and we will be sure to build those goals into their packages.

We thank you for your continued support of our teachers and therapists who are working hard with your child(ren) during this unique school year. Our main priority is the safety and well-being of our students, families and staff. Your kind words and understanding have truly meant a great deal to all of us and we look forward to supporting each other through the winter months.

Keep well,  
Trillian Taylor



# Transition Program Highlights

Our Transition students participated in a variety of **Remembrance Day** activities dedicated to remembering those who served our country. One way they showed their support was by making a poppy craft. Each child had the opportunity to showcase their creativity, fine motor and motor planning skills by painting, sticking and gluing individual poppy seeds onto muffin cup flowers. On November 10, students also listened to stories and participated in reflective moments.

Transition students showed up ready to say 'cheese' for this year's **Picture Day** in October. While following the social distancing guidelines, each student had the opportunity to take individual pictures. Every student remained regulated and engaged and found great interest in the entire process!

Being a kind friend and neighbour is something we actively promote to our students at Oakwood. This year for **World Kindness Day**, the Transition kids all participated in a variety of activities ranging from reading books about manners and friendship, to getting creative and making a canvas which will be given to frontline workers as a gift.

**Outdoor Classroom Day** was a success for our students. Students participated in crafts using natural materials, such as leaves and sticks. Students also participated in outdoor gym games with the members of their cohort including *Ring Around the Rosie*, *What Time is it Mr Wolf?* and more!

by Ms. Shanique





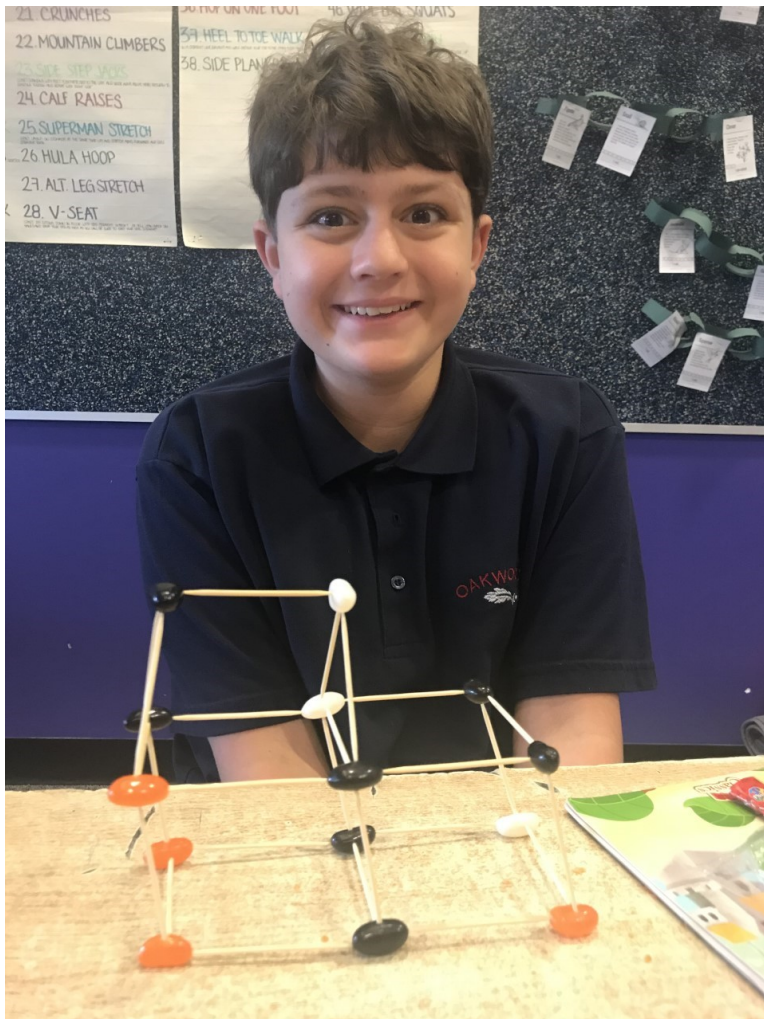
# Academic Program Highlights



Our students participated in **Outdoor Classroom Day** this month with great success! We completed nature art, a nature themed scavenger hunt, as well as classroom lessons on the outdoors. Outdoor learning encourages the use of multiple senses simultaneously, which aids in Sensory Integration, a vital component of our program.

Our students reflected on and paid tribute to the heroes who served our country on **Remembrance Day**. Students completed activities and learned about the significance of the Poppy and why we participate in a moment of silence.

Academic students participated in our annual **Science Fair** this month, using a hands-on approach, as each class completed various experiments and demonstrations to support their topics including: "Which recipe makes the best slime?", and presented their homemade projects to the class.



Our students are hard at work practicing for our first-ever **Virtual Winter Concert**. There will be singing, dancing, and maybe even a special rap! Stay tuned for more details as we approach this exciting day!

by Ms. Nancy

# Parent Support

During these uncertain times, our homes have become more than just a place to eat and rest: rather, they have become places to play, learn, grow and explore in a whole new way. This increased in-home time provides ample opportunities for parents and children to engage in excellent play and *Floortime* sessions: a couch becomes a GO Bus driving to different stations; a cardboard box becomes a lasting game of peek-a-boo. During these expanded opportunities for play and engagement, it is understandable that you may want to enhance these sessions to their fullest potential. Or maybe you have grandparents or caregivers who are looking to add to their repertoire of ways to best interact with your child(ren)! ICDL is offering a live online course on becoming a more active and involved play partner (following the *DIR Floortime* methodology).

## ***DIR 102: Play Partner Course is open for registration!***

***This is a 4-hour course for parents, grandparents, and other family and loved ones to gain insights on how to become dynamic Floortime play partners with their children.***

The next live online course is scheduled for December 14 and 17, 2020 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm US EST (New York Time Zone). Don't Delay! Add some great *Floortime* strategies to your next play session!

**By Ms. Nicola**

## Health and Safety

### Management of Students Suspected of COVID-19

People infected with COVID-19 may show little to no COVID-19 symptoms. Symptoms of COVID-19 may resemble the flu or a cold. To limit the spread of disease and minimize risk to the Oakwood community, parents/guardians of any student showing signs of sickness while at school will be notified to arrange for immediate pickup of their symptomatic child (and siblings).

- Any student who is suspected to have symptoms post-screening will be immediately separated from others in a supervised quarantine area. The student's parents/guardians will be notified by telephone for immediate pick up. If the parents/guardians cannot be reached, the emergency pick up person will be called. Parents/guardians must make arrangements for their child to be picked up immediately.
- The designated quarantine Supervisor will be wearing PPE and will maintain a distance of at least 2 metres.
- If the student has siblings at the school, all siblings must go home as well.
- Environmental cleaning of the space(s) utilized by the student will be conducted immediately.
- Students who have been exposed to a confirmed close/"high risk"/"first degree" case (as determined by Public Health) of COVID-19 will be referred for testing or be excluded from the school for 14 days or until they receive clearance from the local public health unit and medical professionals.
- Students who have been exposed to a confirmed "low risk"/"second degree" case (as determined by Public Health) may continue to attend school as long as they are asymptomatic. If symptoms begin to develop, the student will be exempt from attending school.
- Students who are residing with an individual who has been directed by their health care provider or public health to get tested and/or is exhibiting any of the 4 listed "serious" symptoms and awaiting test results are not permitted to attend school until that individual receives a negative test result, subsequent clearance from their health care provider or public health or has self-isolated for a 14-day period.

**By Ms. Abi**



## Book + Resource Recommendation by Melanie Mendes

### Resource Recommendation

Mindfulness is the ability to be present and engaged in the moment, without distraction. At Oakwood, we encourage students to participate in mindfulness activities to help achieve and maintain regulation (calm and focused state). Here are a couple of resources that we utilize:



#### **Breathe Like A Bear**

by Kira Willey

This book is a compilation of 30 "mindful moments" for children. In each activity, the speaker reads the outlined blurb in the book to the child, supporting relaxation and calmness. Children are encouraged to get comfortable, either sitting or laying on the floor (dependent on the activity) while closing their eyes to attend to the speaker. Overall, these activities are designed to help children develop self-awareness, improve their attention, extend their abstract thought and release anxiety and tension.

#### **Mindful Games: Activity Cards**

by Susan Kaiser Greenland

This card set includes 55 mindfulness games for children, focusing on strengthening attention, alertness and calmness. They include concentration games, visualization games, analytical games and self-awareness games. Children are encouraged to follow the instructions from the speaker as illustrated on the cards. These activities are devised to help children further develop shared attention, engagement, abstract thought and overall calmness.

# Service Spotlight

## Occupational Therapist Julia McKeown

By Ms. Nicola and Julia McKeown, MSc. OT Reg. (Ont.)

Julia McKeown, Oakwood's Occupational Therapist, has been supporting families and our team since 2015. In this *Service Spotlight*, Julia explains her role at Oakwood and answers some frequently asked questions you may have had about the essential work she provides to your child!

### What is your role at Oakwood?

As the Occupational Therapist (OT) at Oakwood Academy, my role is to support the students in participating in their daily programming and daily activities to the best of their ability. I help to assess and provide intervention for specific skills and individual differences that affect the way the student participates in daily activities. I support the teachers and therapists by providing analysis of these skills and individual differences and providing specific strategies to address and support them.



### Why is Occupational Therapy important for our students? What are some skills or activities you work on with students in both the Transition and Academic programs?

OTs can assess and provide intervention for a broad number of issues and concerns that interfere with daily occupations. An occupation is anything that a person wants to do, needs to do, or is expected to do. There are so many aspects of development and such a variety of skills the students need, in order to successfully participate in a broad range of daily occupations. OTs are skilled in analyzing the person and their developmental skills and how these are affecting the way they are participating in a specific occupation

within a specific environment. As an OT at Oakwood, I work with many students to address sensory processing needs and differences, fine motor skills (e.g., drawing, printing, cutting with scissors, opening containers, managing clothing fasteners), self-care and self-help skills (e.g., toileting, feeding, dressing, food preparation skills) and motor planning and coordination (e.g., postural stability, sequencing complex tasks). I also help to provide environmental analyses and suggestions on how to best support a student's participation within their specific environment.

### Many of our students follow a Sensory Diet across their day to assist in their regulation and engagement. Could you explain what a sensory diet is and why they are such a pivotal part of our student's success?

A sensory diet is a specific set of activities intended to assist the child in maintaining a calm alert (i.e., regulated) state throughout the day in order to participate in meaningful activities. We all have individual sensory needs and differences and we need to "feed" these needs throughout the day, just as we need to nourish our bodies with food. This is where the word "diet" comes into play. If you consider the metaphor of a bank: you need to keep putting money (resources) into the bank (your body) in order to maintain a balance (feeling calm, organized and ready to learn and participate in daily activities). If you use up all the money and let the balance fall to zero, you will be out of resources. For our bodies, when we are out of these "resources," we no longer have the energy or capacity to successfully participate in our daily activities. Therefore, we need to fill the "bank" with resources throughout the day to avoid the balance falling to zero. These resources are sensory input that our bodies need throughout the day. As an OT, I assess each child's specific sensory needs and make suggestions for specific sensory activities to be embedded into their day. We try to make these functional. For example, if a child needs a lot of proprioceptive input (input to their muscles and joints) to feel organized, instead of just walking down the hall to go out for recess, an OT might suggest that they carry a bin, push a cart of equipment, or wear a backpack with some weight in it to provide additional proprioceptive input to the activity of walking. If a child needs a lot of vestibular (movement) input, an OT might suggest they do writing standing up at an easel, or while sitting on an inflatable "move n' sit" cushion. By providing the type of input the specific child needs throughout the day, we increase their capacity for successful participation.

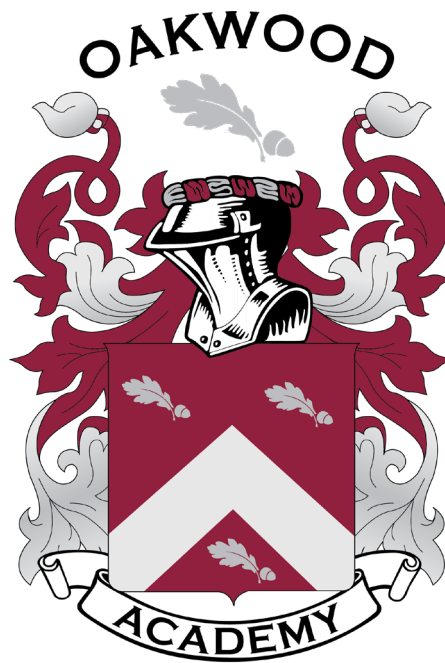
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**Do you have any suggestions for some OT recommended activities or games parents could do at home with their children?**

Children need movement to think and learn. Moving around and using their muscles and joints helps them to feel organized, alert and know where their body is in space. Try to include movement and "heavy work" (pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying) into daily routines to help your children feel their bodies in space and feel more organized. As they are willing, have them help to carry laundry bins, carry their own backpack, put their lunch bag in their backpack, deliver something to a sibling upstairs and get lots of movement both indoors and outdoors to support regulation and learning.



## OAKWOOD ACADEMY

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