



May 2021

Oakwood Academy

Individualized Education JK-12

Director's Message



With April showers (and some snow) behind us, here's hoping May is full of sunshine, warmth, and growth - for both the flowers and our students! April was a month that required flexibility on the part of our staff, students and families. Even with changes to our regularly scheduled programming, you embraced our dedication to *Health and Safety*, making our hybrid schedule one of success and perseverance. With that said, we are still making every effort through our *Health and Safety* measures to ensure that Oakwood is the safest place for your child to be. We are constantly evaluating our environments and protocols to ensure safe learning is happening throughout the school. If you ever have any questions regarding *Health and Safety*, please feel free to email hs@oakwoodacademy.ca.

School Happenings

The month of May includes many events and activities such as *Apraxia Awareness Day* and the *Victoria Day* long weekend. We will also be wishing 'Eid Mubarak' to all of our staff and students who celebrate this important holiday! Additionally, practicing for Oakwood's *Spring Concert* will be a highlight of many students' days over this next month - I look forward to seeing our students' creativity and talent shine through during this special presentation!

Recipes for Development & Thank you!

I also want to say a huge THANK YOU to you - the families of Oakwood Academy - for your incredible efforts during our *Recipes for Development* fundraising

DATES TO REMEMBER

May 13
Eid Holiday
No School

May 14
Apraxia Awareness
Day

Mom's Pantry
Order Pick-up

May 21
Spring Concert

May 24
Victoria Day
No School

May 26
Casual Day
Optional

Director's message continued...

campaign. Because of your dedication and generosity, Oakwood alone raised over \$1,000 with Mom's Pantry! This money will be put right back into the school, with the purchase of sensory equipment, adaptive classroom materials and more. It is such an honour to be part of a school community with this much heart.

I look forward to welcoming May with open arms and possibilities for our students' learning! In the words of Anita Krizzan, "*Spring will come and so will happiness. Hold on. Life will get warmer*". Thank you for holding on with us, Oakwood families.

Trillian Taylor, Director of Oakwood Academy

Super Sensory Friday!

By Ms. Chantal and Ms. Melissa



At Oakwood, we emphasize the understanding of each student's sensory profile. We do this to provide individualized activities that both motivate and encourage students to climb up the developmental ladder. The last Friday of the month, **Sensory Friday**, focuses on such themed activities that stimulate many different senses and encourage peer play opportunities, and regulation. On **Sensory Friday**, students are given an array of themed activities that focus on multiple types of sensory input, including; tactile, olfactory, proprioceptive, vestibular, visual and auditory!

This year students have been exposed to new and creative themes, such as: Halloween Day, Art Exhibit, Winter Fun, Camping, and even a Spa Day! Utilizing these themes. We create activities that focus on different aspects of sensory input and peer play:

- For our *Halloween Day* theme, we created spooky sensory bins, which focused on fine motor control. The tactile input of the spider webs supported the students as they navigated the webs to collect all the spiders.
- For our *Art Exhibit* theme, students created 3-D sculptures using aluminum foil, which supported creative expression and visual spatial skills.
- During our *Winter Fun* theme, students were encouraged to get outside and build a snowman, decorating their creation using spray bottles of snow paint. This was a great activity for proprioceptive input as students had to use their muscles to roll the giant snowball. Peer opportunities were also presented, as students worked together to build the snowman.
- Our *Camping* theme was all about using our imaginations! Students built a fort using classroom materials and plastic tablecloths and were encouraged to imagine a campfire and use background sounds to create an auditory experience, e.g. hearing the crackling fire.
- For our *Spa*-theme, bath bomb activities were of interest as students watched the bath bomb fizz and were able to wonder about how it would change, touch the silky water and smell the fruity aroma - a total sensory experience!



Our Oakwood teachers and therapists do an amazing job navigating each activity and tailoring it to each student's needs and goals:

- Students can complete activities in small groups, working on shared social problem solving
- Therapists and teachers may utilize preferred activities to support a student's individual regulation such as playing music in the background, building engagement using bright and colourful materials and utilizing curiosity to build circles of communication

We encourage you to try themed evenings with your child and family at home! Themes can be as simple, as *Water Play* by bringing toys into the bathtub or, building off your child's interests such as *Superheroes* or *Robots*, and doing yoga together as their favourite character! **HAVE FUN TOGETHER!**

Math in the DIR Classroom by Ms. Sherry

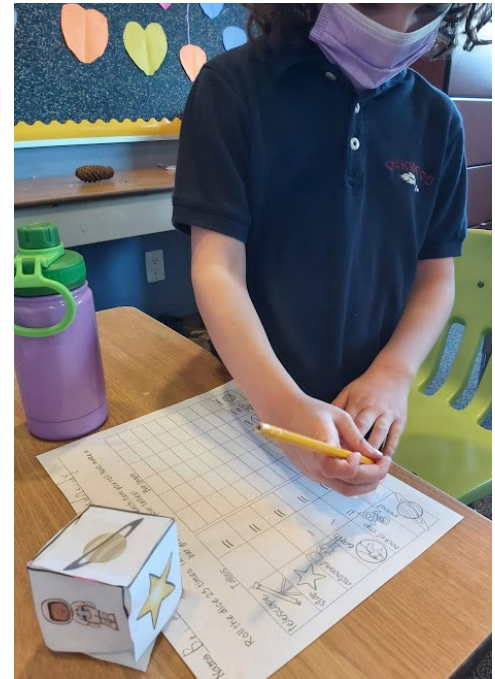
Math is all around us! It is the foundation of everything we do - from the patterns found in nature to the technology we use every day. There are many different strategies that can be used to teach the concepts of mathematics, while incorporating it into our daily routine. For example in Room 12, we line up using the ordinal numbers of the planets in our solar system - a topic of interest among our students. We also take tallies when making fair decisions about games or activities, use skip counting in our daily exercises, and use language like before, after, and rotate during the morning calendar.

Just as every child is unique, their learning styles are as well. I offer a variety of manipulatives to support their math-learning journey. Some prefer to use concrete items, like Unifix cubes or a number line, while others prefer to use their fingers when adding or subtracting. We often use nature to compare size, shape and amounts. Pinecones are great for this, and just recently, the dandelions that have begun to appear have been collected to count and sort.

It is also important to incorporate the students' interests within our math lessons. To learn about the properties of 2D and 3D shapes, students created a town and each building was made using a net of a 3D shape.

When learning to tally and graph, they created their own dice with different images relating to space, taking a tally of the dice rolls and using that data to create a bar graph.

Have fun using everyday items and your child's interests to promote math concepts at home!





Spotlight on: Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)

Sabrina O'Keefe, MHSc. SLP Reg. CASLPO, has been a Speech Language Pathologist for almost 19 years and joined Oakwood Academy in November 2020 to cover Ms. Allison Haziza's maternity leave. Sabrina is also a DIR/Floortime provider and is working on her Advanced DIR 203 certification.

What is your role at Oakwood?

As the Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) at Oakwood Academy, my role is to support the students in all aspects of their communication and swallowing development. Currently, I am coaching teachers and therapists virtually and providing some direct, virtual therapy to students to address the goals that have been established. I help support: social communication, pre-language skills, comprehension of language, expression of language, literacy, speech sound production, fluency, voice disorders, augmentative and alternative communication, and feeding and swallowing. In my day-to-day work, I do assessments (formal and informal), plan and implement treatment, consult with families and other professionals, make prescriptions for augmentative and alternative communication devices, make visual communication supports, and write session notes and reports.

Why is Speech Language Pathology important for our students? What are some skills or activities you work on with students in both the Transition and Classroom programs?

I am so lucky to be a SLP and a DIR/Floortime provider! Whenever I work with a student, I am always aware of their individual differences and FEDCs so that I can support them on their journey up the developmental ladder. Communication is not just about talking – it is about being connected with another person and growing a relationship that can support the development of spoken and non-spoken language. It is about sharing interest in something that sparks conversation and creates an inner motivation to try new words and speech patterns, engage longer in a book, and problem solve together. Speech Language Pathologists have such a broad scope of practice and I feel that my knowledge base and experiences can support all of the students at Oakwood Academy! I love to sing and read books with the students – sharing books and songs creates an energy in the interaction that supports reciprocity, shared enthusiasm and lots of creativity! In these "Covid-19 times" I am excited to be able to quickly pull up a book from YouTube, turn off the sound, and share the joy!

Our students use a multitude of communicative means throughout their school day to suit their individual differences and sensory profiles (e.g. gestural communication, verbal communication, PECs, AAC, etc.) - could you explain more about these and their benefits?

I don't think that there has ever been a day in my career that I have not used some sort of visual support with a client – speaking or non-speaking. From cartooning a social story, using articulation cards with photos, making homework sheets, using sign and gestures or augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems. We are surrounded by symbols in our environment and visuals are a natural part of our everyday experience. Think about how hard it would be to get anywhere if buildings didn't have signs, roads didn't have lights or arrows and Google Maps didn't exist! There is sometimes a stigma around using visuals for communication as they have been viewed as a "last resort". The evidence actually suggests that the use of AAC promotes spoken language in people who struggle to use speech. The push in my profession is to promote communication -by any means – when the child needs it. This only serves to enhance the child's abilities as a communicator and will support regulation. Introducing visuals at earlier ages is becoming more popular, because the relationships that can be fostered when communication competence increases is the best "R" you can possibly hope for.

With May being 'Better Speech and Hearing Month', what are some messages you and the broader SLP community are hoping to spread?

The month of May is recognized in Canada and the United States as "Better Speech and Hearing Month". The major goals are to bring awareness of the profession to the public, and to encourage people not to wait! If there are concerns about your or your loved ones' speech, language, or hearing development, seek help. Families at Oakwood Academy can learn more from our provincial and national organizations: the College of Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists of Ontario (CASLPO) www.caslpo.ca, the Ontario Association of Speech Language Pathologists & Audiologists (OSLA), Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC). I am also happy to engage in any conversations that you may have about the profession, the areas in which I practice, and your child's goals.

Easy at Home Carrot Garden

by Ms. Nicola



This easy garden is done right in a container! Gardening and growing our own food are excellent activities to try as we stay safe at home. The process of gardening gives you the opportunity to build on communication and problem-solving skills, in addition to promoting wonderment and curiosity! This process will take some patience; but it is a rewarding experience that you and your child can share, all while growing your own healthy food!

You will need:

1. **Containers** - Any container shape will work. Your container should be at least 12-inches deep, to accommodate the developing roots. Select one with good drainage, or make several holes in the bottom of the vessel of your choice.
2. **Soil** - Fill the container with organically rich potting soil. A purchased product specifically for vegetables will have a good combination of ingredients such as peat moss, sand, and vermiculite.
3. **Seeds** - Here are some examples of good seed variables to try (but any shorter/stubbier carrot will work).
 - **Yellow:** This heirloom variety produces six-inch, yellow carrots that are sweet and tender. They mature in 65 to 80 days.
 - **Amsterdam:** This orange variety grows 5-6 inch roots that mature in about 55 days.

Here are some links to Ontario Online Seed Stores:

Link: [Carrot – McKenzie Seeds](#)

Link: [Carrots – William Dam Seeds](#)

Link: [Carrots](#)

Steps:

- Place your container in a location that receives full sun (if inside, by a window or glass door which receives full sunlight).
- Fill your container with your potting soil; Water the pot or pots of soil thoroughly and let all the water drain through. Gently sprinkle carrot seeds over the moist soil. Cover them with a 1/4 inch of additional soil, and press down gently.
- You can start growing seeds in your containers outdoors as early as 2 to 3 weeks before the last expected frost date: The last expected frost date for the GTA is **May 11-20**, meaning that you can start your planting outside now!
 - ◆ However, to jump-start the process, you can start seeds indoors in biodegradable pots a few weeks ahead of time.
- Potted carrots require regular watering. Be sure to water at the soil level, and not over the leafy tops as this can cause rot on the leaves.
- Keep the soil moist, but not soggy – and never allow it to completely dry out.
- *Germination takes up to three weeks, so be patient while nature works its magic!*
- As seedlings grow, they generally begin to crowd one other. When they have their first set of true leaves, trim away the weaker ones with a pair of scissors. In another couple of weeks, thin the leaves again, maintaining a space of about three to four inches between plants.
- At this time, feed your developing crops. You can use a general-purpose vegetable fertilizer that is low in nitrogen. Excess nitrogen can promote too much foliage, and too few carrots.
- You'll know your carrots are ready for harvest when the tops of the root are just visible above the soil line!
- To harvest your carrots, carefully loosen the soil around the root, and pull gently to prevent them from breaking.
- And, voila! Delicious carrots grown by YOU!

These instructions were adapted from the following source - for more detailed instructions and tips, check out [How to Grow Carrots in Containers](#) by Nan Schiller!



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The Oakwood Academy News is a monthly communication created and distributed electronically to members of the Oakwood Academy community during the academic year.

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