



November 2021

# Oakwood Academy

*Individualized Education JK-12*

## How to use your 'I' (Individual Differences) to engage with your child

By: Hope McSwain, Expert DIR Practitioner & Training Leader



This month, I attended a variety of presentations at the 2021 International DIRFloortime® Conference. I was inspired by a particular presentation by Mike Fields, ICDL Training Leader and Daria Brown, Founder of Affect Autism, called 'A Journey in Self-Reflection in Supporting

Your Child'. The part that I want to share with you that I think will be extremely helpful in your journey and interactions with your own child(ren) is learning your own Individual Differences. This can seem overwhelming or confusing to do, so in this article we are going to look at and focus on your sensory system strengths! How can you use your strengths within your sensory system to engage and interact with your child? Think about each sensory system and find which ones are your strengths!

- ✓ Olfactory (sense of smell) – you enjoy scents and fragrances so you can engage in play with strong scents, such as essential oils in water play

### DATES TO REMEMBER

December 9  
Virtual Winter Concert  
(video available to view)

December 15  
Casual Day (optional)

December 13-16  
Holiday Spirit Week (Spirit Day Activities)

December 17 - January 4  
Winter Holiday (no school)

January 5  
Return to School

- ✓ Visual (sense of sight) – you love the visual of forests and tall trees, so you go for walks in the forest
- ✓ Auditory (sense of hearing) – you enjoy music and various sounds, so you seek and engage in dance parties or being together listening to music and sounds
- ✓ Gustatory (sense of taste) – you enjoy eating different foods, so you use this as time to engage and try different foods with or around your child
- ✓ Tactile (sense of touch) – you enjoy different textures, so sensory bins are a great way to engage
- ✓ Vestibular System (sense of balance) – you love swinging, spinning and jumping so a trip to the park is a great way to enjoy these activities
- ✓ Proprioceptive System (feeling of muscles, tendons and joints) – you like deep pressure, so physical play or cuddle sessions are a great way to engage with your child

## **Some questions you might ask yourself:**

*Which of these systems might be my strengths?*

*How do I feel when I am doing this?*

*Do I feel joy and happiness?*

*Does it make me feel overwhelmed and anxious?*

*Do I feel calm and relaxed while I am doing something within this sense?*

Once you have figured out what your strengths are, think about which one of these systems your child enjoys. You can ask yourself the same questions about them. Once you find a match, think about an activity you can do together. While engaging, just be present - don't feel pressured to be teaching them or correcting them, be present and feel the joy! Affect Autism is an amazing resource for parents and the website is [www.affectautism.com](http://www.affectautism.com) if you would like more information on DIRFloortime®! We also have bi-monthly Parent Support Groups that are also a great way to learn more about the DIRFloortime®

***Happy playing!***



# Yay for School Spirit!

We would like to thank our Oakwood Academy school community for participating in this year's first School Spirit Activity for the month of October.

We are thrilled to share that this month's most fun and emotional pumpkin goes to Damian G's family! We cannot wait to see the pictures and submissions for November's School Spirit activity – Acts of Kindness!

# SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

**By: Sabrina O'Keefe**

As Oakwood Academy's Speech Language Pathologist, I joined the team mid-year in 2020-2021 and I am excited to be starting a new school year at Oakwood. I am responsible for the assessment, goal writing and consultative treatment for all the students who are registered for Speech and Language programming; and I also assess and treat Oakwood and St. Jude's students who meet the criteria for services through the Local Health Integrative Network (LHIN).

I have been a Speech Language Pathologist for 20 years and fell in love with DIR/Floortime® in 2010. SLPs are trained to deliver child-centered care, but there was something special about DIR that really spoke to me. I continued my education and training in the model and earned my Advanced Level Provider designation in the Spring of 2021.

When I work with a child, there is no time when my SLP brain shifts to a DIR brain – they are one. I work with children and caregivers as a DIR-informed SLP (or a SLP-informed DIR practitioner!) With each student at Oakwood, I am looking at individual differences that affect communication, play and thinking -- tailoring goals and interactions from a strength-based lens. My favourite interactions are ones where we can really have those lower FEDCs cooking in a beautiful relationship and then I can support a brilliant experience in FEDC 4/5/6. Those higher levels are so fun and rewarding – but hard work for both our students and therapists! It's so exciting to see critical thinking take place and I am honoured to share those types of meaningful experiences with the students.





# Circle Time Magic at Oakwood Academy

By: Cassandra Flurey

Our students (and therapists!) have been looking forward to Circle Time every day as it has become a pivotal part of morning routines. Circle Time has been and continues to be a meaningful time where we strengthen developing positive relationships between therapists and students, as well as between peers. Through various activities, peer-focused games, and music and movement, our students get the opportunity to develop and strengthen a wide range of skills such as social interactions, attending to and following instructions, sustaining engagement, and promoting meaningful shared attention and two-way purposeful communication. Circle Time activities can be implemented at home as well,

especially on the weekends! When thinking about where to start with introducing Circle Time at home, first you must establish a routine. Perhaps this means setting up some chairs in a particular spot of the house or choosing a couple of relevant songs that also have a valuable learning piece attached (i.e., 'Hello, how are you', 'Days of the Week'). Once a routine is established and expectations become familiar, then you can begin to incorporate songs, themes, other learning components and even have your child lead the Circle Time. Some common materials we utilize during circle time include a calendar, a teacher pointer stick (i.e., any object that allows the students to point to the days on the calendar), chairs, or instruments. Through Circle Time, we strive to help our students enjoy learning and instill confidence in them! Circle Time or Morning Meetings are also a great way to discuss and bring awareness to important or exciting events that will take place that day, further setting the tone and excitement for the day! When beginning a circle time routine at home, reflect on your child(ren)'s individual differences to support their regulation to create an accommodating and inclusive environment/opportunity within the home!





# School Uniform & Embracing the Winter Months!



As we approach the cold winter months, please ensure to provide appropriate and suitable warm clothing for your child(ren) as we continue to participate and enjoy recess and gym class outdoors! This may include extra gloves, hats, scarves, or splash pants/snow pants. Oakwood Academy's students are encouraged to continue to wear their school uniform and we thank all the families who continuously ensure their child(ren) are dressed accordingly and ready to learn. Ensuring your child(ren) continue to respect and wear the school uniform further strengthens their self-help skills when dressing, creates a sense of community and uniformity amongst the students, and furthermore, provides one less decision to be made in the morning while redirecting their energy towards other school day tasks for the day. The school uniform includes black shoes, grey pants, and Oakwood polo-shirts, t-shirts, or Oakwood sweaters.

By: Dorota Leja

## Seeking Donations!

Oakwood is continuing to build a love of reading and is seeking new or used donations of levelled reading books to add to our collection. These books will support emerging to advanced reading levels, strengthening student fluency, comprehension and social-emotional goal areas. Please let your child's teacher know if you would like to donate. We thank you in advance!

*"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you'll go!" -Dr. Suess*



# Indigo

Indigo Fundraiser

As you begin your holiday shopping, we ask that you consider purchasing items through our fundraising partnership with Indigo. Every time you shop online using our [groups fundraiser page](#), Oakwood earns cash back- **15% of all purchases of Indigo e-gift cards or 3% of any direct purchases on [indigo.ca](https://www.indigo.ca)**. If you purchase an e-gift card and then use it to pay for your purchase, Oakwood receives 18% in cash back! Please also share the link with your family and friends to help us with our fundraising mission! We appreciate the support! Happy shopping!



# World Kindness Day at Oakwood Academy

In honour and recognition of **World Kindness Day**, students participated in Oakwood Academy's Art Project on November 15 by bringing in \$2 and creatively expressing kindness with peers across a canvas! Not only did students wear pink and utilize a variety of modalities to create their art work, students ensured to spread kindness and compassion towards each other through acts of kindness.  
By: Jeena Choi



## Outdoor Classroom Day

Students participated in **Outdoor Classroom Day** on November 4. Teachers/therapists implemented a variety of activities to promote learning in the great outdoors! Outdoor education supports our students in practicing a variety of skills, such as gross motor and motor planning skills, fine motor skills, and visual performance skills. Additionally, students worked together to complete a variety of tasks which promoted teamwork, problem solving skills and abstract thinking. These activities were a great way to support our students' sensory systems, especially their tactile sense! Some activities included parachute games, rolling dice to determine what exercise or yoga pose to participate in, painting the outdoors and a fall scavenger hunt!  
By: Stefani Baird





# Remembrance Day



Oakwood Academy  
participated in  
and recognized  
Remembrance Day  
during a variety of  
art and history activities.



## OAKWOOD ACADEMY

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