

2007 – 2022

CELEBRATING

15
YEARS

OAKWOOD ACADEMY



MARCH 2022

Oakwood Academy

Individualized Education JK-12



How to Support Circles of Communication

By: Hope McSwain,
Expert DIR/Floortime Practitioner

Throughout your time at Oakwood, you will often hear teachers and therapists talk about **Circles of Communication**. *Circles of Communication* are typically associated with **Capacity 3 – Purposeful Two-Way Communication**.

You might wonder to yourself, “What are Circles of Communication?” Circles of Communication involve sending a communication, receiving a communication back, responding to it, and seeing the child responding back. When first supporting your children with this shared interaction, you might start with opening and closing the same circle - taking the same turn - over and over again. For example, you blow bubbles, your child raises your hand with the wand to blow them again. Or, your child sings a line in a song and you sing the next one. However, the goal of Circles of Communication is to get a good rhythm of non-verbal, affective gesturing and emotional signalling between you and your child” <https://affectautism.com/2018/07/02/circles/> so that you can create opportunities for the interaction to grow!

Ideally, you want to keep adding to the circle to keep expanding the depth of the interaction. For example, your child holds up a ball, you gasp with excitement and open your arms. Your child then throws the ball to you, you and your child smile. You then pause and wait for your child to signal to you to throw the ball back. You have expanded the circles by using your affect and opening your hands to cue your child to send the ball and you extended the circles

DATES TO REMEMBER

April 1
Autism Acceptance
Day (wear red)

April 13
Gymnastics Sessions
Begin

April 14
Easter Spirit Day
(dress in Easter
Colours)

April 15
Good Friday
(no school)

April 18
Easter Monday
(no school)

April 22
Earth Spirit Day
(dress in blue and
green)

April 27
Casual Day

May 3
Eid Holiday
(no school)

by allowing your child time to process and cue to you to throw the ball back. The cue could be a verbal cue such as, "Throw me the ball." However, it could also be a subtle non-verbal cue such as, your child looking at the ball then back at you.

Here are some quick tips to support your child with opening and closing Circles of Communication:



Wait – Allow your child the time to process and plan how they might initiate or respond to you.

Everything is intentional - If your child glances toward a toy or item, pick up or pass the item to them and see how they respond. If your child makes a sound, imitate it or make another sound to add on to the initiation.

Playfully persist – If you are opening and closing Circles of Communication and your child walks away, playfully persist for them to stay and close the circle. For example, if you and your child are talking about cookies and you say, "I wonder what mom's favourite cookie is..." and your child walks away, you might playfully and affectively say, "Wait! I really want to know what you think! C'mon, let's think about it together! Do you think it's chocolate chip or mint?"

Playfully misunderstand – When interacting with your child, you can playfully misunderstand to expand the circles. For example, your child wants the blue teddy bear but you pass them the pink bear first.

Be present – When engaging in play with your child, be present. Do not worry about rushing through the interaction or making sure they respond to your direct question. Enjoy the moment!

Happy Playing!

Sensory Friday

This month's Sensory Friday theme is 'Friends'! The students participated in three different activities including sand art, a scavenger hunt and an activity that incorporated both tactile and visual stimulation, "hearts and showers".

The sand art included three different, vibrant colours of sand (pink, green and purple). The students were given a paper template with multiple outlines of hearts in a maze format. The students then poured their glue in-between the lines with the goal of dropping the coloured sand within the maze. The students were able to explore the texture, as well as enjoy the visual stimulation of the coloured sand falling. Once dried, the sand mixed with the glue transformed the colour into a sparkly new appearance!

The scavenger hunt was an adventure all throughout Oakwood! Our mini adventurers searched high and low to find a variety of shapes and animals with vestibular and proprioceptive tasks attached to them. The students rolled and jumped their way through the school finding as many items as they could to cross off their list. Students worked together using their communication and problem-solving skills to find every item!

The students enjoyed a celebration of their friendships at the end of February with multi-textured confetti. The materials included felt, feathers, tin foil, tissue paper and more. Some students "showered" in their hearts as the confetti poured over them. Some students used them as a sensory bin and some students watched the different colours and texture bounce in a parachute type game. Watching all of the different hearts mix together was like watching all of our **friends** at Oakwood. All unique and lovely, but also better together!



Spirit Week

The students and staff had an amazing time dressing up for Spirit Week!

Students were eager to see what everyone was going to wear every day and it was a great opportunity to support and facilitate meaningful engagements between students. Teachers supported the students to engage in shared attention with other peers and initiate and respond to conversations. In addition, some classrooms even collaborated and planned what they would wear as a group!



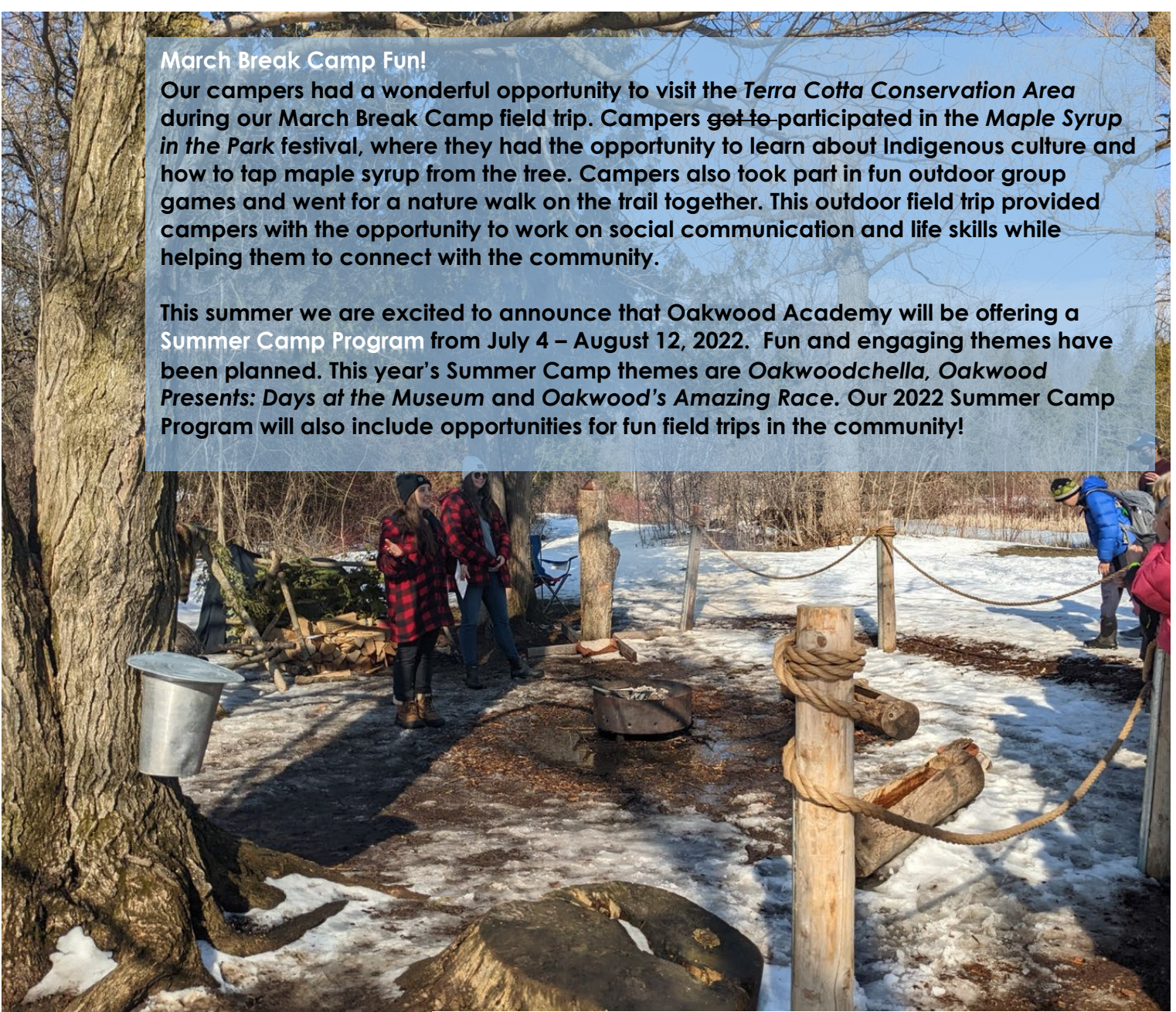
March Break Camp Fun!



March Break Camp Fun!

Our campers had a wonderful opportunity to visit the *Terra Cotta Conservation Area* during our March Break Camp field trip. Campers ~~got to~~ participated in the *Maple Syrup in the Park* festival, where they had the opportunity to learn about Indigenous culture and how to tap maple syrup from the tree. Campers also took part in fun outdoor group games and went for a nature walk on the trail together. This outdoor field trip provided campers with the opportunity to work on social communication and life skills while helping them to connect with the community.

This summer we are excited to announce that Oakwood Academy will be offering a **Summer Camp Program** from July 4 – August 12, 2022. Fun and engaging themes have been planned. This year's Summer Camp themes are *Oakwoodchella*, *Oakwood Presents: Days at the Museum* and *Oakwood's Amazing Race*. Our 2022 Summer Camp Program will also include opportunities for fun field trips in the community!



Spring Smoothie



Jump into spring with this healthy green smoothie recipe! Packed with protein and potassium, this smoothie is easy to make and can be adjusted to accommodate your child's allergies/likes/dislikes. Your child can also help make this smoothie with you - encourage them to help you by supporting their independence with gathering the ingredients/items, measuring the ingredients, pouring the smoothie into cups, offering their parent/caregivers or siblings, or helping with clean up.

Ingredients:

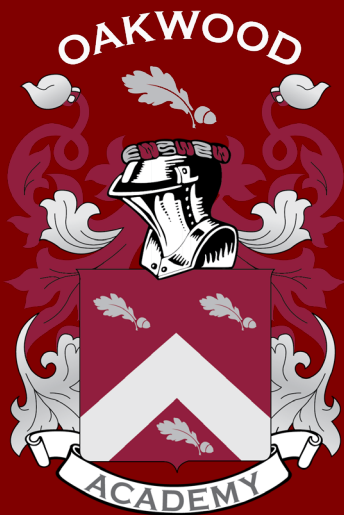
- 1 cup baby spinach (loosely packed)
- ½ cup frozen banana slices
- ½ cup frozen pineapple, mango, or strawberries
- 1 cup unsweetened non-dairy milk (can be substituted for whole milk, oat milk, soy milk, etc.)
- 1 tablespoon nut butter (can be substituted for 1 tablespoon sunflower seed butter or ¼ cup Greek yogurt)

Steps:

1. Gather your ingredients and measure according to the recipe.
2. Place all ingredients into a blender and blend until smooth (usually one minute).
3. If the smoothie is still too thick, add ¼ cup water to thin the mixture.

Enjoy!

<https://www.yummytoddlerfood.com/simple-green-smoothie-for-toddlers/>
<https://www.theconsciousplantkitchen.com/green-smoothie-for-kids/>



**OAKWOOD
ACADEMY**

OAKWOOD ACADEMY

HEAD OF SCHOOL: Trillian Taylor

PRESIDENT: Aaron Sawatsky

SENIOR EDITOR & PRODUCTION: Ann Harvey

Send Your Comments, Questions to aharvey@stjudesacademy.com

EDITORIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE:

Ann Harvey, Melissa Filion, Melanie Mendes,
Trillian Taylor, Amy Cooke, Hope McSwain

CONTRIBUTORS/CONTENT REVIEW:

Trillian Taylor, Co-Founder
Amy Cooke, Transition Program Director
Melanie Mendes, Academic Program Director
Alyssa Tsontzidis, Hope McSwain, Madeleine Mar ,
Sabrina O'Keefe, Kayleigh Gallant

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

©Oakwood Academy 2022

www.oakwoodacademy.ca