

Odyssey Day School Newsletter

OCTOBER 2009



From the desk of *Lori Conway*

Dear Parents,

This section of the newsletter is ideally a place where I can address any topics in education, child development, parenting, and so forth that you as parents would like to read about. I invite you to drop me an email if you have anything you'd like to suggest. When there are no suggestions, I'll pull a topic out of the ether.

As this is my first newsletter of the year, I thought I'd devote this section to a topic I addressed once last year, but which has surfaced again this year in a number of ways. It is perhaps a subject I should habitually discuss, since every year brings new parents, and children rise through the grades every year, encountering new school experiences and expectations.

When I was raising my daughter, Charlotte, now a high school Senior deep in the college search process, I sometimes had worries about her, despite my professional training, and perhaps a better way of putting it would be that I had unrealistic expectations of her. For example, she grew up in a literature-rich home. We had a home library, I read to her every night, she saw her parents constantly modeling reading for her, she had a book collection in Kindergarten that would rival your local public library, and she LOVED books. And yet, despite it all, it was mid-first grade before she finally cracked the code and read on her own. She was also old for her grade—over 7 by that point. But, she finally understood that “pig” was made up of three sounds: “p” plus “i” plus “g,” and run together, that made p-i-g, PIG!

No amount of excellent teaching at her Concord public elementary school, no amount of drilling by me at home, no amount of concerned questioning of her teacher could make Charlotte's brain be able to do that any sooner than it did, or when other kids were doing it—it happened when she was developmentally ready. It bothered Charlotte that some of her friends were reading well before her, but you know what? In the end, it didn't matter at all, because by the end of first grade, and to this day, she is one of the strongest readers in any class she attends. That was her destiny, and each child has their own destiny of strengths and weaknesses, and the path and pace to most of them are genetically encoded to some degree. No amount of pressure put on a teacher or a child will get that child reading before they are neurologically wired to read. It really is that simple. Parents of Infants through Grade 8, I encourage you to ask your teacher how their curriculum is teaching vital skills. In the preschool, finger painting and imaginary play are just as important to your child's cognitive development as number and letter exposure. Each has its place in proper measure. Odyssey is all about the whole child, and preparing children for academic success in the proper way, a process that requires much research, training and collaboration among our faculty.

I credit several of Charlotte's early teachers with teaching me what true wisdom is. It is not being smart or being well-educated. Wisdom is the combination of intelligence and experience. It is something someone older and more seasoned can give to someone who is just stepping onto a well-trodden path. Although I can't claim that I or other faculty members are certified dispensers of wisdom, I can tell you this: Odyssey will give your child all the tools he or she needs to read (or do math, or draw, or memorize Shakespeare) but the ultimate result of when and how your child passes these milestones will be up to more than this one thing. In addition to quality teaching, your child will need to be developmentally ready to master various tasks, and will need the right kind of loving,

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Oct. 12: Columbus Day, school closed
- ◆ Oct. 14-16 school pictures
- ◆ Oct. 26-27: Fall Trip for grades 3-8
- ◆ Oct. 28: Harvest/Halloween Fun Night 6:00-7:30 pm

Kid News



*"The little world of childhood with its familiar surroundings is a model of the greater world. The more intensively the family has stamped its character upon the child, the more it will tend to feel and see its earlier miniature world again in the bigger world of adult life."
-Carl Jung*

*"It is never too late to be what you might have been."
George Eliot*

unpressured support at home. Pressuring a child to achieve a cognitive milestone before they are mentally ready to do so will often backfire, leaving children struggling with low self-esteem, a lack of confidence in themselves, occasional anger at the parent pressuring them, and so forth, all of which, in the long run, can be much more damaging than allowing development to simply take place in its own time.

I encourage all parents to encourage their children, inspire them, and be their greatest supporters, giving them the environment, nutrition, and tools needed for success. But the best gift we can all give our children is the gift of slowing down the train during crucial periods of growth. This is what is needed to for students to begin to reach their own potential, not whatever standard was set for them by virtue of chronological age or peer accomplishments.

What I want, and what I always hope all parents want, is the happiest, most self-assured kids possible. Isn't that what we all want for our children? It is certainly what I want for all of yours. As we work together in the coming years, you will always have my compassion, my help, whatever little shreds of wisdom I may have accumulated, and my kind but unvarnished honesty. May it be the most rewarding of journeys.

Lori

Preschool News

Infants, Toddlers, Preschoolers and Kindergartners have started off the year meeting new and old friends in their classes, PLUS a few students that look a little too big to be in an Early Childhood classroom! Once again, "Reading Buddies" are visiting the younger children's classrooms to read books with them. The Reading Buddies are students in 1st through 8th grades. They visit the Early Childhood classes once a week and read with the children for 20 minutes. The younger children get one-on-one or one-on-two devoted reading time from their older friends down the hall. During October, fall favorites like *When the Leaf Blew In* and *The Apple Pie Tree* are off the shelves and into the hands of the buddies every week. Happy reading young and old!

Elementary School News

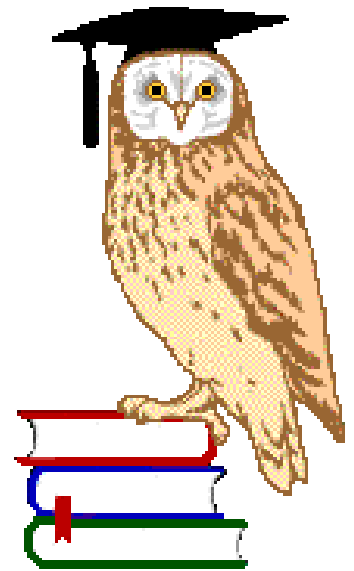
Very soon, students in grades 5-8 will be given the opportunity to select their own Advisor from among all of the adult staff in the building. Like in other independent schools, students are assigned Advisors as special "go-to" people in their lives in addition to their homeroom teachers. If a child has a school-related or personal issue he or she would like to discuss with an adult other than their own teacher, with whom they share a close and trusting relationship, that child will know that he or she can always have someone to approach for advice, or even just a relaxing chat during a stressful time. The students will be asked to list, in order of preference, three adults they would like to have as their Advisor, and hopefully that will allow the administrative team to give each student an Advisor off their list, and to distribute the students more evenly. As parents, you might want to talk to your child about the process of selecting an Advisor, and what traits, such as being a good listener, make an adult a good choice for them.

Community News

Faculty & Staff News

I am pleased to announce that we have two new members of the staff to welcome: 1) Erica Lenners is our new Director of the Early Childhood Program. 2) Joining our Preschool program is Sara Roldan, Head teacher for the Preschool 2 classroom.

Congratulations to Brian Carpenter and wife Mary on the recent birth of their first child, a son, Jake!



For Parents

- ✦ With cold and flu season around the corner, we are always looking for names to add to our “sub list” so that we have people to call upon to help with class coverage on short notice. If you know anyone with teaching experience who would like to be considered for subbing, please let me know.
- ✦ We are still looking for donations of 50-lb bags of sand to fill our new sandbox.
- ✦ The Fire Trailer is coming! The Fire Trailer is coming! Yes, on November 2, Odyssey will be visited by Fire Chief Mike Sullivan and his notorious Fire Trailer. Students will have the opportunity to learn about fire safety and what to do if a fire breaks out while you are inside a building. I have never witnessed this spectacle before, but word has it that I will be treated to the escape artist-like talents of some of our students and faculty as they escape out of the Fire Trailer. Stay tuned for reports from the front lines next month!
- ✦ Thanks to all who volunteered for various committees and tasks on Back-to-School Night. There are still plenty of volunteer opportunities. Please be in touch with Kimm Sovie, our new Parent Volunteer Coordinator, if you feel you can donate a little bit of time to Odyssey.
- ✦ Maura Herson and Helen Webb have been hard at work on the Facilities Committee putting together a survey for parents. Please take a few moments to fill it out. While running a tight budget this year, we do want to continue moving forward in a steady way with improvements to our building and grounds, and your help and opinions count!

***“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.”
Charles Darwin***



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teachers as
partners”***

We're on the Web!

www.odysseydayschool.org

From O.P.A.

Thank you to Tom Maloney, father of Collin, and Jenn Sovie, teacher and mother of Jack, Alex, and Owen, for generously volunteering to be co-Presidents of the O.P.A. this year. Many thanks to Annie Barr for her dedication in serving as President of the O.P.A. last year. Meetings and events will begin soon. Come one, come all!

From the Board of Directors

From new Board member Linda Tinkler: "The newly formed Marketing Committee is setting the groundwork for promoting ODS to communities that are waiting to hear and to see more about us! The Committee will be meeting twice a month to discuss ideas and align resources and talents with various marketing projects. Endless opportunities are out there for marketing ODS. Some are simple and can be executed by one person, and others will require many volunteer hands to move projects from planning to fruition. Special thanks to Stephanie Wilkins and the countless parents, faculty, and administrators who started the grassroots marketing initiative last year. Some will continue on the formal committee this year. They have put the ball in motion with their enthusiasm and energy! But they will need our help. Please contact me if you'd like to get involved!"



I've never known anyone yet who doesn't suffer a certain restlessness when autumn rolls around... We're all eight years old again and anything is possible.
- Sue Grafton