

Odyssey Day School Newsletter

MARCH 2010



From the desk of Lori Conway

Dear Parents,

I recently assigned my Grade 7/8 writing class a rather abstract topic for their weekly journal entry: *What does silence mean to you?* The result was fascinating to me, enough so that I've chosen to write about it this month, if for no other reason than to process my own thoughts...and I thank you for now reading them!

A notable majority of the students wrote to some extent, and sometimes to a large extent, that silence is "awkward." That word came up again and again, often multiple times within a single entry. The kids explained the different ways that silence can feel awkward to them, including gaps in interpersonal conversation, gaps in phone conversation, and even gaps while *texting*, to name just a few. Some of the students also wrote that sometimes silence can be welcome, such as when they want to daydream, but the categorization of silence as awkwardness was predominant. A couple of students took an altogether different approach, focusing on what silence means scientifically—the absence of sound waves. But they were the minority.

After I commented in and closed the last journal, I sat in my office for quite a while—with the doors shut, in silence—and contemplated why this pervasive interpretation of silence was so surprising to me. It was possible that the students had talked among themselves and contagion was afoot! However, each student described the reasons that silence was awkward in a different way. I wondered, when do today's children have opportunities for silence in such a noisy world? When I was their age, there was no technology to constantly stimulate me. I watched t.v., talked on the phone sometimes, and played records on my stereo, but more often I read, walked in the woods, did homework, or painted...in silence. Was that because there was not yet a cultural tendency towards perpetual stimulation, or because I was an introvert? If *Silence is Golden* has become *Silence is Awkward* among the teenage set, is this related to the awkwardness inherent in adolescence itself? Lots of questions but no real data!

As an introvert in an extrovert's job, and indeed an extrovert's world, I need silence and lots of it. After a noisy day at school, there is nothing better than some solitude at home to relax, unwind, reflect, problem-solve, and most importantly, recharge my social batteries. What about today's kids? Twenty-five percent of them are introverts like me. That statistic in the human population has never changed. Do they not need silence, or are they simply used to not getting it? I remember, long ago, feeling that silence was awkward in certain situations, such as between strangers in an elevator. But now, there are fewer and fewer silent elevators, and most of them exist in old or small buildings. I keep encountering newer elevators that play muzak or even have CNN blaring from a built-in screen beside the numbered floor buttons. The message is clear: Silence is awkward.

Recently I had dinner with a friend at a local Indian restaurant. I'd eaten there many times before and always enjoyed the ambiance as well as the food. But suddenly, right in the middle of the dining room, a flat-screen t.v. had appeared that was drowning out any hope of a quiet conversation. I couldn't help myself. Quietly seething, I asked the waiter, "Excuse me, but why is there a television in here?" He looked at me in bewilderment, thought for a moment, and then replied, "Why? You ask why? For the entertainment. Of the customers. The customers, they like entertainment. You see?" I asked him to please turn it off.

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Tuesday, March 2, OPA Meeting
- ◆ Mar. 22-26 Science & Technology Week
- ◆ Thur., March 25, Science Fair/Admissions Open House

Kid News



"What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

My generation notices these things...the proliferation of t.v.'s everywhere you shop, eat, or wait to get your teeth cleaned; the omnipresence of ringing cell phones, beckoning iPhones, and large television screens dominating living room walls. But this generation of children knows of nothing else. Their brains are wired from a young age to not only tolerate, but to seek out, lots of sensory stimulation. Perhaps their brains are also wired to struggle with silence—the absence of this constant stimulation—and thus to feel that there is something amiss with quiet, or at least to feel perturbed by it.

Ah well, it is all theory, all dots connected in my mind during one moment of solitude, and written out for you in another. I suppose I will have to ask the students. I will do that during our next class together. The amateur sociologist in me simply can't wait for their answers! I'm also curious what you parents think. Do you feel your kids get enough technology-free down time? Do they seek or avoid it?

The mystery preoccupies me, but in the meantime, I will continue to savor my solitude whenever I can get it. A good start will be turning off this computer so I can escape the beeps of incoming emails! Time for a good book.

With quiet regards,

Lori

Preschool News

Dear parents, as you know we have had a number of cases of strep throat in the early childhood program. As a reminder, if your child has become ill with strep throat or any other sickness please remember to send in a new tooth brush. If your child is taking medication, recovers from the illness, and then comes to school and uses the contaminated tooth brush, he or she could become ill again. We want to be sure we do everything in our power to keep your child safe, happy and healthy.

Elementary School News

March 3rd Ski Trip: We will make our annual trek to Crotched Mountain. The field trip rate is hard to beat! Student price of \$25 includes lift, beginner lesson, rental and lunch! Adults are \$35. (All inclusive). Since both Janice and Kimm will be on the trip students not attending will have a non-academic child care day. We are usually lucky enough to have enough parents join us that rides are not an issue. I will put up a sign-up sheet tomorrow. Those who sign up will get further info regarding rentals, lessons, and lunch choice.

Tuesday March 16th: W.I.S.E (Women in Science and Engineering) Conference at Salem State College for girls in grade 6-8. Margaret and Kimm will transport the girls by car. We will leave school at 8:15 and return by 3:00. Janice will be at school and the grade 5-8 students not attending will have a regular (more or less) school day. Each classroom will post a field trip permission slip.

March 18th: Field trip to the Martin family's sugar shack in Weare, NH. We will be taking a bus to Ben Martin's (grade 8) family sugar shack. Students should bring a bag lunch. The trip will include a tour of the property and a look at how sap becomes maple syrup. Yum! Yum! we will leave around 9:00 and return in time for dismissal at 3:10. Each classroom will post a field trip permission slip.

~ Kimm Sovie



Community News

Faculty & Staff News

No news—an uneventful month!



For Parents

- ✚ Students in PS-2 and Pre-K/K have been taking turns over the past few weeks having “Move Up” days to the Kindergarten room and Grade One, respectively. You will be notified when your child has had his/her special day! So far it has been a huge hit with the kids!
- ✚ The Annual Fund is still open for parent donations. Please remember that participation is what really counts. No amount is too big or too small. To date I believe we have received donations from about 15% of current parents. This fund is crucial to the financial health of the school. Please consider donating—no amount is too small.
- ✚ Thanks in large part to Heather Russell, website redesign is well under way. This has been a long project that we hope will culminate in launch of the new site in the next month or two. We will need parents to “test drive” the site and give us feedback on aesthetics, navigability, user-friendliness, content, photography, and much more. Let me know if this is of interest to you. I’d love to get as much input as possible—while the primary purpose of a school website is outreach, it is also a valuable internal tool for the school community, so I need your feedback!
- ✚ A new, much-needed fundraising committee has been formed and is being Chaired by Donna Sovie. Thank you, Donna!! Donna and her committee will oversee and manage all of the school’s fundraising efforts, big and small...everything from auctions to box tops. If you have any ideas or want to get involved, please contact Donna. I’m sure she’d appreciate the help. I am thrilled to finally have someone willing to take this one for the school. We need it so badly, and I’ve very grateful!





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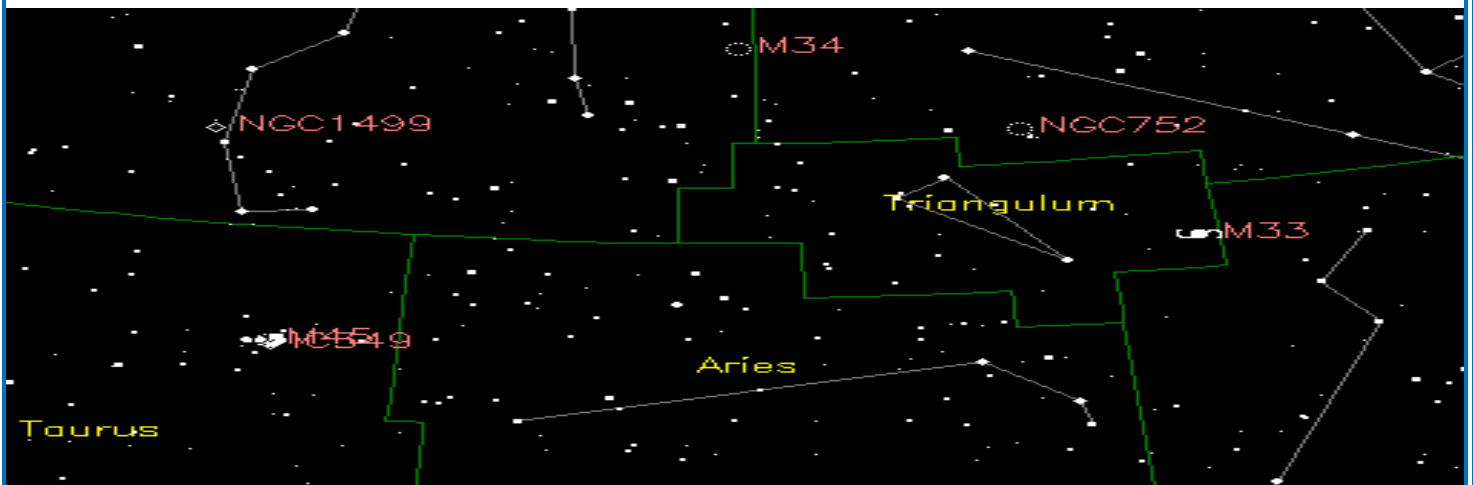
From O.P.A.

OPA meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 2nd at 7pm at ODS. Please join us for a brief meeting to decide on and plan upcoming events. Some suggestions are movie night, an Odyssey swim party and a dining-out fundraiser at the Dockside or Fuddrucker's. All input is welcome and attendance is sincerely appreciated. Our last event, Glow Bowling at the Woburn Bowladrome, was a strikingly good time enjoyed by students, parents, teachers and friends. There's more fun to come - be a part of it!

Teacher Appreciation Breakfasts: This past week saw a double dose of teacher appreciation, as both preschool class 1-A and grades 5-6 treated the Odyssey staff to a delicious breakfast. Many thanks go out to all of the parents who coordinated and/or contributed to these much-appreciated feasts. Help running remaining breakfasts sponsored by grades 1-2, kindergarten, and other preschool classes is needed. If you have the time to send a couple of emails and spend an hour at Odyssey on the morning of the breakfast please contact Tom Maloney at 617-791-2435, ttpmaloney@comcast.net.

From the Board of Directors

The Olympics are over. When I think of them, I ask, *who thought up some of these crazy sports?* Biathlon – shooting and cross-country skiing--I just don't know how those two got put together. The people I know who shoot are hunters and all the people I know who cross-country ski would never hunt. Skeleton, curling, short track speed skating, boarder-cross and ice dancing...they all are interesting in their own way and admittedly, I watched each of them doing my best to figure them out. Each competition had individuals with great passion and family or friends to support and share their dreams. I do think what I love the most about the Olympics are the stories of how people end up in the games following their dreams. I compare this to everyday life and wonder where else can you see such passion. For me this is easy. I see it each time I drop my kids off at school. No cameras, no reporters and no endorsements that follow the games. Just teachers who love what they do and do it because it is their passion. Cheer them on! ~Joe Jutras



“ March comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb.”

Internet searching could not identify the author of this quote, but the following information is interesting: *The phrase apparently has its origins with the constellations Leo, the Lion, and Aries, the ram or lamb. It has to do with the relative positions of these constellations in the sky at the beginning and end of the month.*