Dear Oak Grovers!

Does anyone else feel like this school year has flown by!? We have just over six weeks left! It is always exciting around here in the spring. These weeks will be filled with so many exciting activities for the children. The teachers truly understand how important this time of the year is and they work so hard designing these weeks in way that brings such a rewarding, invigorating and comforting sense of closure. As a parent you can feel the excitement! Each of the classrooms has a unique approach to the end of the year. Your teachers will update you often on plans, dates and times of events happening specific to that classroom. Below are some updates and reminders of all school activities. Please let me know if you have any questions. Enjoy this glorious weather!

Free tuition!!?? What! Yes, buy your raffle tickets. Buy your raffle tickets. Buy your raffle tickets! And if you really cannot imagine how it feels to win a year's tuition, ask John Toedt, last year's winner! The drawing will be on May 29th. Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, Friends...are all welcome to buy the raffle tickets. Support our school and take a chance at winning a year of no tuition at Oak Grove!

Parents, please return the surveys that were sent out early last week. The information that we gain from these really helps so much.

As you start preparing for the summer and all the activities that come along with summer, please remember to go through the Oak Grove web site if you are purchasing on Amazon. We receive 6% of all purchases made, but you must enter Amazon through the OGMS web site. Since September when we started this, we have made $1,240 for our school. Believe me, the 6% adds up fast! So, tell your friends and relatives and pass on the word!!

This Thursday, May 8th, from 6-8pm at the Kerri Gallery on Main Street in Willimantic, renowned children's book author and illustrator, Sergio Ruzzier, will be attending the opening reception for his show that the gallery is running through May 24th. Ruzzier is hopeful that many many children will come to the opening reception! It will be very much fun for kids of all ages. For more information about Sergio Ruzzier, go to http://www.ruzzier.com. I know that you will recognize the books and the illustrations. And please join us for the opening from 6-8pm!

May 15th at 5:30 will be the last PA meeting of the school year. Una Berry will be our guest speaker. We will have a signup sheet in the lobby next week and we will provide daycare if it is needed. I recommend coming to hear Una, she is an incredible speaker with so much information and inspiration to share.

Bon voyage! Seniors! Enjoy your well deserved and well earned trip to our Nation's Capital!
Dear Parents,

The second part of my newsletter is in the form of a letter. (I am not sure why, it just felt right that way) I am writing as the Head of School, but more as a fellow parent and friend. I have been thinking a lot lately about how much life has changed between my generation and my children's generation. My childhood experiences and my children's experiences are not even comparable. The gap is as great, as if we were comparing our daily lives to the lives of our great great grandparents. In just a short few years, the way our children live their daily lives is barely recognizable to how you and I navigated through elementary, middle and high school. And experts predict that this pace of change will not be slowing down anytime soon. These experts predict that by the time a young child today is a young adult, there will be no primetime television, no phone numbers (only usernames), no desktop computers, no mouse, no movie theaters, no remote controls, no 3D glasses, no landline telephones, no hard drives or windows operating systems, and no cameras, camcorders or fax machines. Again, the change is inevitable, it is the pace of the change that is remarkable.

So. So what? We need to recognize and remind ourselves that our children's playground looks very different than our playground looked when we were that age. Our (young and older) children are very tech savvy. And part (depending on the child) of their playground is an "on-line playground." Our children are faced with the inherent dangers that come with going online.

Social networking is now woven into the fabric of our society and will continue to grow and dominate how we all communicate in the future. Younger and younger children are using social media to communicate. There are social networking sites marketed specifically for the younger tween and child. As parents, we all need to understand what this means and how to both prepare and protect our children when using social networking media like Facebook, Instagram, Instant Messaging, Texting and the over 25,000 other sites that market themselves as social networks.

As parents we need to be "socially aware," and that requires an investment in time by each of us as parents to understand what social networking is, what it is not, which networks our kids are using and making them aware of some simple rules that will protect them in the future. Kids need to know how to respond to intimidation, bullies, predators or other internet social threats and you need to be proactive to help protect them.

We are all well aware that children are playing games on computers and handheld devices. Many of these games have the capability to connect with other users through the internet. Whether it isMinecraft or Clash of Clans, Temple Run or Club Penguin, these games are designed for the player to play with or against anyone else online. Many of these games are marketed as educational, and some of them or parts of them are educational. However, most of these games
also feature a multi-player mode, where you can play with other users on the internet. There are also several chat rooms, a more generic social media, associated with many of these games.

It’s harder than ever for parents to keep track of what their kids are doing online. Young people are increasingly living their lives online, and their digital devices are some of their favorite toys and tools. This reality is forcing parents to parent in a world that is very different than their own world. As parents we need to get to know the games and the social sites our children are using. We need to get to know the technology, checking history folders and internet logs, installing the needed filters. We need to learn the jargon and take an active interest in your child's computer interests and learn where they go. As much as our children say they "need" to be online for school work, remember that the parents set the rules. And just as my father grounded me for coming home late (and I lost the use of the landline telephone for a week), we need to remember that the computer, the games, the social network, the tablet, the smart phone are nothing more than an earned privilege that parents control. Now, believe me when I say, this is much easier to say than to do. I know that all too well from personal experiences.

Here are a few statistics to put this into focus:

- US kids ages 8-18 spend an average of 45 hours per week on screens (tv, computer, smart phone, tablet)

- There are hundreds of apps designed for babies and toddlers (ages 0 to 5)

- The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Canadian Society of Pediatrics state that children ages 0-2 should have NO exposure to technology, 3-5 year olds should have 1 hour per day, and 6-18 year olds no more than two hours per day.

- Children use 4-5 times this

- The escalating usage comes from handheld devices, smart phones, tablets and electronic games

- Many researchers, teachers, and occupational therapists are calling for a ban on all handheld devices on children under 12 years old

The following are the 9 reasons why these professionals are fighting so hard for this ban:

1. Rapid brain growth Between 0 and 2 years, infant’s brains triple in size, and continue in a state of rapid development to 21 years of age (Christakis 2011). Early brain development is determined by environmental stimuli, or lack thereof. Stimulation to a developing brain caused by over exposure to technologies (cell phones, internet, iPads, TV), has been shown to negatively affect executive functioning, and cause attention deficit, cognitive delays, impaired learning, increased impulsivity, and decreased ability to self-regulation e.g. tantrums (Small 2008, Pagini 2010).
2. Delayed Development Technology use restricts movement, resulting in delayed development. One in three children now enter school developmentally delayed, negatively impacting on literacy and academic achievement (HELP EDI Maps 2013). Movement enhances attention and learning ability (Ratey 2008). Use of technology under the age of 12 years, is detrimental to child development and learning (Rowan 2010).

3. Epidemic Obesity TV and video game use correlates with increased obesity (Tremblay 2005). Children who are allowed a device in their bedrooms have 30% increased incidence of obesity (Feng 2011). One in four Canadian, and one in three U.S. children are obese (Tremblay 2011). 30% of children with obesity, will develop diabetes, and be at risk for early stroke and heart attack, gravely shortening life expectancy (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention 2010). Due to obesity, 21st century children may be the first generation many of whom will not outlive their parents (Professor Andrew Prentice, BBC News 2002).

4. Sleep Deprivation 60% of parents do not supervise their child’s technology usage, and 75% of children are allowed technology in their bedrooms (Kaiser Foundation 2010). 75% of children aged 9 and 10 years are sleep deprived to the extent that their grades are detrimentally impacted (Boston College 2012).

5. Mental Illness Technology overuse is implicated as a causal factor in rising rates of child depression, anxiety, attachment disorder, attention deficit, autism, bipolar disorder, psychosis, and problematic child behavior (Bristol University 2010, Mentzoni 2011, Shin 2011, Liberatore 2011, Robinson 2008). One in six Canadian children have a diagnosed mental illness, many of whom are on dangerous psychotropic medication (Waddell 2007).

6. Aggression Violent media content causes child aggression (Anderson 2007). Young children are increasingly exposed to rising incidence of physical and sexual violence in today’s media. Grand Theft Auto V portrays explicit sex, murder, rape, torture, and mutilation, as do many movies and TV shows. The U.S. has categorized media violence as a Public Health Risk due to causal impact on child aggression (Huesmann 2007). Media reports increased use of restraints and seclusion rooms with children who exhibit uncontrolled aggression (Vancouver Sun 2013).

7. Digital dementia (ADHD) High speed media content causes attention deficit, as well as decreased concentration and memory, due to the brain pruning neuronal tracks to the frontal cortex (Christakis 2004, Small 2008). Children who can’t pay attention, can’t learn.

8. Addictions As parents attach more and more to technology, they are detaching from their children. In the absence of parental attachment, detached children attach to devices, resulting in addiction (Rowan 2010). One in 11 children aged 8-18 years are addicted to technology (Gentlie 2009). Never in the history of humankind have there been child addictions.

9. Radiation emission In May of 2011, the World Health Organization classified cellphones (and other wireless devices) as a category 2B risk (possible carcinogen) due to radiation emission
(WHO 2011). James McNamee with Health Canada in October of 2011 issued a cautionary warning stating “Children are more sensitive to a variety of agents than adults as their brains and immune systems are still developing, so you can’t say the risk would be equal for a small adult as for a child” (Globe and Mail 2011). In December, 2013 Dr. Anthony Miller from the University of Toronto’s School of Public Health recommend that based on new research, radio frequency exposure should be reclassified as a 2A (probable carcinogen), not a 2B (possible carcinogen). American Academy of Pediatrics requested review of EMF radiation emissions from technology devices, citing 3 reasons regarding impact on children (AAP 2013).

While I was writing this letter today, my husband emailed me a youtube video. (It is now confirmed that he is psychic—as he had no idea that I had been thinking about this). So, even if you have only skimmed this letter, please take the 4 minutes and 58 seconds to watch this video.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7dLU6fk9QY

In peace,

Sue