Dear Oak Grovers,

It is crazy how quickly summer flies by. I hope that everyone has had a chance to kick back and relax and enjoy the summer a little. It always hits me hard when Cindy tells me that she is prepping for the summer mailing and I need to write my summer letter. This is a tell tale sign that we are hitting the half way point to summer. So please, savor these lazy days of summer!

We are in full summer cleaning, organizing, and planning mode here at school. We have gotten so much done already, yet the to-do list is still very long! The playground and our outside spaces have been the priority so far, and I have to say, things are looking very good. Joe has completed the ball wall (for hand ball games) and he is close to finishing two new climbing wall elements. This past weekend the sandboxes were repaired (a huge thank you to the Dinda family)! Trees have been cut back and limbed, and the weed whacker has been working overtime! We have been able to enlarge the field area some more by all of this cutting back and trimming. The fort area has been cleaned up (but not one existing fort was touched in the process), and some needed fencing has been added. The garden is looking amazing, and we are enjoying delicious squash and cucumbers right now.

Summer camp is in full swing. The kids are having a ball with Robyn and Heather! This week they will be building fairy houses and making garden critters. The hot afternoons are spent splashing and cooling off in the sprinklers.

In this mailing you will find some very important papers that need attention. You have been emailed the new Parent Handbook (to save on paper and postage); please read it and then sign off on the paper that is in this package. We have also included a Save the Dates paper. This has all the important dates that need to get into your calendar for this upcoming school year. Note that the date for our annual auction has already been set for Saturday April 1, 2017.

We will be hosting a parent orientation and social for the 3-6 families on Monday, August 29th, before the start of the school year. There will be child care available. On the evening of September 7th, the 9-12 and the 6-9 classrooms will have their orientation. There will be childcare available this evening as well.
I did a lot of driving this past weekend (shuffling my kids to and from camps in northern New England). It was a strange weekend for me, as I was struck by the extreme contradiction between the visual beauty of the winding back roads, lakes and mountains, all while listening to the news on the radio of unrest, violence, fear and tension. I began to think more about violence and unrest. It comes in many forms and it lives in many parts of our lives. Sometimes it is a few steps removed from our daily lives and is in another country. Right now we are seeing and feeling it right here in our country. Sometimes it is loud and clear and we know it is happening and what it looks like. Other times it is festering under the surface, quietly building strength and waiting for the moment of surprise to have the biggest impact. Even closer, many people live with violence and unrest in their own homes. All of these faces of unrest and violence create a heightened state of anxiety for all of us. We learn to manage our anxiety. But what does this really do?

Last night, after returning from my weekend driving tour, my mind was spinning and my heart was heavy. I found myself searching my book shelves for help. I found just the reminder that I needed, *Education and Peace* by Dr. Maria Montessori. Maria Montessori was very clear in her beliefs that education is the most powerful and universal way to transition from war to peace. "..We must gather together all the elements of the world and organize them into the science of peace." It is necessary to think of education as peace, not education for peace.

Children are smart. They pick up on the hypocrisy around them. We must look inward and take inventory of our own beliefs and values. If we teach peace in our classrooms and we teach peace in our homes, we must strive for peace in our own lives. No more "do as I say, not as I do." We are the models of peace. As parents and as educators, we are teaching and nourishing the peace keepers of the future. We must create an environment (at home and at school) that will promote the development of peaceful individuals.

Maria Montessori recognized children as the redeeming factor in the evolution of humankind. "In order to bring about a world of peace and tolerance, where war is an absurdity, it is important to focus and teach peace early."

"Averting war is the work of politicians; establishing peace is the work of education."

From the very start in the 3-6 classroom, our students are taught about the continents of the world and the people of the world. This provides the foundation for a global view of life. As our students move up to the elementary classrooms and they begin to reason and to think abstractly, the emphasis is put on the interrelationship of all life. The students begin to see that they are not separate from the rest of the world, but that they are an essential part of creating a harmonious world.

Instead of turning off the news or finding new ways to manage our anxieties, let's all find more ways to bring peace education into our daily lives. While the Montessori curriculum teaches about peace, it cannot by itself result in peace. As Montessori educators and Montessori parents, we must remember that it is not enough to simply talk about peace. We cannot create a peaceful environment if we ourselves are interacting negatively or competitively with others. We must strive for peace in our lives, in our homes, and in our workplaces.

As you enjoy the last weeks of summer, take time to relax and recharge. Soak in the natural beauty that surrounds us and remember that our behavior and our choices affect our communities. We are citizens of the world and must all work towards greater peace.

Sue