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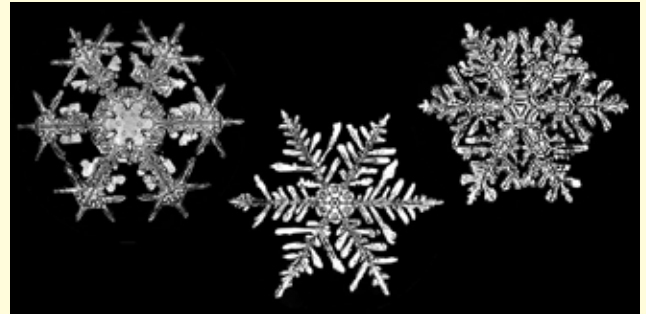
As the winter days lengthen and the January thaw in New England leads our thoughts toward spring, we bring you the next issue of Living Education. In this issue, we offer a range of readings which we hope interest and inspire you on your homeschooling journey. Homeschoolers and college? We are pleased to share with you our new college guide that was specially developed for our homeschooling and distance learning high schoolers. This issue also includes a piece about a unique educational experience from a local organization called Kroka who runs a semester-long program hiking the length of

Vermont on skis. We have a nature craft project for Valentines Day and several examples of student work that showcase the creativity of our wonderful students. We have updated an Oak Meadow article on homeschooling multiple children at once (a very common question) and Lawrence writes about a recent conference with the Dalai Lama on educating children for the future.

Here at Oak Meadow, we often have the opportunity to speak with homeschooling parents from around the world who call us with questions about everything from “What is a Main Lesson Book?” to “How do I get my child to enjoy reading?” We are happy to support all of the families using our materials, whether they are enrolled students or using the material on their own as homeschoolers. The excitement, worry, joy, concern, enthusiasm, and great sense of commitment to the education of your children that we hear in your voices every day makes our job truly rewarding. Working with our Oak Meadow curriculum is something we love to do, and we welcome your questions and feedback.

Live Oak, our online community forum, is another way to create dialog with fellow homeschoolers and Oak Meadow teachers and staff. This is free and open to all who are interested in homeschooling. During your busy week, when you sometimes feel you don't have time to comb your hair, much less craft an intelligent response to a question about the Bill of Rights, reading a few posts on Live Oak can help put things in perspective. There are other people out there just like you, and this knowledge can make everything seem a little easier. It is easy to join Live Oak from the homepage of our website.

We hope you enjoy our newest issue of Living Education. Please let us know what you think. Send us your stories, questions, and photos, and we would be pleased to include them in future issues. Please see the back cover for submission information. Everyone here at Oak Meadow wishes you well on your homeschooling journey.



Vermont native and farmer, Wilson Bentley, attracted world attention with his pioneering work in the area of photomicrography, most notably his extensive work with snow crystals (commonly known as snowflakes). By adapting a microscope to a bellows camera, and years of trial and error, he became the first person to photograph a single snow crystal in 1885. We hope you enjoy the beauty he captured as much as we do!



ely lester's story continues

In our last issue, Darlene Lester, mom to Oak Meadow's first enrolled student, Ely, shared with us her story of homeschooling with Oak Meadow in the early eighties. It was obvious Ely was destined for success, and we asked Darlene to continue his story for us.

Oak Meadow School provided the perfect vehicle to discover that our son, Ely, was inherently an artist. Each of the lessons, whether in math, English, or science, was approached with creativity and imagination. Since drawing, coloring and painting was required every single day in the form of main lesson books and journals, we soon discovered that Ely displayed more than the usual amount of artistic talent. His drawings were almost always illustrations of the countless stories I told or read to him as part of the Oak Meadow curriculum. Ely loved to hear those stories! I later thought that if he had been in a public school, he might never have developed his innate talent for art. We're so grateful for the creative start that Ely received through Oak Meadow!

When Ely was 11, we found an excellent art teacher for him. Through her guidance, Ely learned more advanced drawing skills and was introduced to color combining through the medium of oil painting. He also joined a local artist's watercolor group that got together weekly. He was the only young person in class (because all his peers were in school) but the mostly-elderly adults took him right in and were delighted to have the youthful energy of this very appealing kid among them.

At age 12, Ely's Grandpa Bob took him to the Disney Studios in Burbank, CA. Ely had been telling his grandpa that he wanted to be a Disney animator when he grew up. So, my father made an appointment for Ely to tour the Studios in order to see with his own eyes what an animator actually does. Ely brought along some of his own sketches to get feedback from "the pros". His bright nature, enthusiasm, and good manners got the kind attention of the artists and directors there and



One of Ely's drawings at about age 7. Darlene notes that it is clear Ely was already beginning to develop his own cartooning style.

they urged him to "Come back when you're 18!" Ely took those encouraging words to heart and set becoming a Disney animator as an attainable goal for himself.

When Ely was 14 he decided to attend public school. He signed up for art classes, but soon discovered that the school had an outstanding music program. Within a year, he switched his art elective to band. During his last two years of high school he became passionate about playing the saxophone and threw himself wholeheartedly into learning his instrument. He got good grades in his academic classes, but he soon excelled at playing music. He was known at school as the kid who sat out in the hall during lunchtime practicing his saxophone in a decidedly focused manner. I think Ely developed his ability to focus his attention years earlier at our kitchen table. As he worked on his main lesson books with his little brothers making noise and playing all around him, he learned to put his whole self into whatever he was doing. Though he was never particularly interested in academics, his ability to focus his attention "with intention" has made him an excellent student of any chosen subject in life.

I attribute Ely's love of music, and his desire to play it, to his constant exposure to music of all kinds and to singing at home as he grew up. Music was an important part of the Oak Meadow curriculum and we sang often. As Ely got older, he had the opportunity to act and sing in many community theater musicals, and our family often sang together on home recordings, church, and civic events. It wasn't long before the Lesters were labeled "a musical family".

During this time, Ely's artistic endeavors were mostly put on the back burner in favor of playing music. When he graduated from high school with a scholarship to a college boasting an outstanding music program, he believed that was the direction he wanted to go. But, after only a semester of college, he had his doubts. He soon realized that he didn't want to be a musician for a living, but he did still want to be an artist.

Our family's style has always been to take the most direct route toward our goals, and sometimes that means "going through the back door". Ely spent the next few months working on a portfolio to submit to Disney rather than taking the usual route of first enrolling in a very expensive art school. At times, he considered just going down to the studio and offering to empty waste baskets, sweep floors, and sharpen pencils... whatever would bring him into close contact with the living, breathing world of animators. Ely's first portfolio submissions were



Ely in the studio working on The Simpson's

politely rejected, but he didn't give up. We continued to keep our eyes and ears open for the most direct route toward his goal and maintained an optimistic attitude about his future. Within a couple of months, he heard about an experimental ROP program (now defunct)

that taught animation. For a very nominal fee, Ely signed up for the three-month course and happily made the hour and a half drive each day to classes. The purpose of the program was to assess the students' abilities and get the promising ones interviews for jobs in animation. The upshot of it was that Ely was hired as a layout artist for the TV show "The Simpsons". While he was working for the Simpson's, he continued to submit portfolios to Disney, never giving up his childhood dream. For a couple of years his work came back rejected. He continued to submit, though, and eventually Disney hired him as

an "in-betweenner." He was elated! Dream realized! He worked on feature animations such as Hercules, Mulan, and Tarzan over a five-year period. Finally, to save money, Disney let all of their hand animators go in favor of computer animation. Suddenly, hundreds of animators had to hit the sidewalks looking for work. Luckily, Ely was immediately hired back on the Simpson's TV show, and he is still there today.

When the mother of her mathematical-genius son asked Albert Einstein what she could do to further her son's progress, Einstein reputedly advised her to "Tell him stories." In effect, he was telling her to stimulate her son's right-brain in order to improve his left-brain. It seems to me that Oak Meadow School has that same philosophy... that stimulating imagination and practicing the arts from a young age are sure pathways to success no matter what field one plans to go into. It sure worked out that way for our Ely.

In addition to being the mother to five grown boys, Darlene is a recently retired La Leche League leader. She has taught the Bradley Method of Natural Childbirth for the past 15 years, and holds a regular nursing support group and a "moms at home" group. She and her husband, Steve, live in the California desert.

meet your oak meadow teachers



Kathy Bennett

Learning Support Advisor



Kathy earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education and Moderate Special Needs from Wheelock College and a Masters of Education from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education in Reading and Reading Disabilities. She

has worked in public and clinical settings as a teacher, a teacher trainer, and as a Learning Center Coordinator, as well as in private practice focusing on literacy assessment, consultation, teacher training and tutoring K-12 children. Kathy lives in Windsor, Vermont on a 40-acre vegetable farm with her husband and two teenage daughters. She also owns Braeburn Siberians, a kennel of 20 working Siberian Huskies which leads dog sledding tours, educational groups, and also participates in competitive racing. Kathy enjoys reading, sailing, kayaking and tending her perennial flower gardens.

John Solie

High School Humanities & Social Studies



John, also known as Penner, received his undergraduate degree in Creative Writing from Trinity College, and his Masters of Fine Arts in Playwriting from Columbia University's Oscar Hammerstein II Center for Theatre Studies. Penner came to

Oak Meadow in 2004, and teaches a variety of high school courses including Social Studies, English, and The Study of Music. In addition, Penner is a member of Oak Meadow's Curriculum Development team, and is responsible for much of the editing and formatting of Oak Meadow's publications. He lives within walking distance of Oak Meadow's Brattleboro office and enjoys music, reading, hiking, and taking roadtrips.

flying and learning

Lawrence Williams, September/October 1994

from the archives

I am the sort of person who has to experience something before I can believe it. Like the time my Aunt Blanche told me I couldn't fly. Any sensible person would have instantly seen the truth of that and accepted it. But I was about six years old at the time, and being sensible was not something I was known for. So I did the only thing I knew how to do: I decided to try it for myself. I had dreamed I was flying many times, and it seemed very real and natural, but whenever I tried to fly by just jumping off the ground, I always came back down. I had also tried flying with cape around my neck (actually it was a towel...) like Superman did on TV every week, but that didn't work either. I had seen planes fly over my house, though, and they had wings, so I figured that if I got high enough (like on top of a barn roof) and put some wings on my back (like a piece of plywood) then I could easily swoop down in front of the kitchen window and show Aunt Blanche that she didn't know everything after all....

In the barn, I found an old piece of plywood that looked like it would make a good wing, and it took a while to cut some holes in it to put rope through for handles so I could hang on (a pretty sensible idea...). Aunt Blanche was busy in the kitchen, so she didn't notice what I was doing in the barn. It was a warm North Carolina summer day, and by the time I dragged the plywood to the top of the barn roof I was hot and tired. But I was so ecstatic with the joy of creation - full of the thrill of achievement known only to great inventors. I surveyed the surrounding countryside—acres of corn and soybeans as far as I could see—and felt alive and proud and free and brilliant.

I put my plywood wing on my shoulders, firmly grasped the rope handles, and looked toward the house just in time to see Aunt Blanche come out the door. I leaped straight off the roof (planning to make a smooth turn toward her as soon as I gained altitude...), and for one glorious second I was flying! Then I heard her scream, and at the same time I began a slow, agonizing roll forward. I watched the ground move toward me, saw the barn, the bright blue sky, and then landed with a resounding thud on my back, my hands still tightly gripping the rope handles of the plywood wing under me.

For a few seconds I tried to grasp what had happened, and then I realized I wasn't breathing. In another second Aunt Blanche was by my side, pulling my hands from my wing and slapping me on the back. "Breathe!" she was screaming, and finally I did, in long deep, gasping breaths. "Are you alright?" she said, and in between choked sobs I managed to let her know I was. After she was sure I was okay, and after holding me tight and rocking me until I quit crying, she started laughing and said, "Lord, child, you ain't got the sense of a black-eyed pea!" That made perfect sense to me, and we both laughed for a long, long time. And I finally knew, from my own experience, that I really couldn't fly. At least not that way...

I'd like to be able to report that I'm more sensible now, but sometimes I'm not so sure. I'm a little more willing to listen to what other people have to say, but I still don't really believe something unless I experience it myself. Over the years, though, I've discovered that some of us just learn that way, and I've come to appreciate that it's perfectly okay to be that way. In fact, learning by doing is the way my intelligence functions, and the more I accept that and work with it, the happier I am, and the more I am able to express all that I am inside.

So, as the school year continues, make an extra effort to appreciate the different ways your children learn. Some children can learn from what others tell them, but other children just have to do it themselves. In fact, that's one of the great advantages of home schooling: the ability to work with your children as individuals and give them the opportunity to show you the unique genius they have inside. And the more you can do this, the happier they'll be, the happier you'll be, and the more successful you'll all be at home schooling.

But keep a close eye on the barn roof.





homeschooling multiple children.....

Families new to homeschooling often wonder if it is possible to successfully homeschool more than one child at a time. In fact, many Oak Meadow families homeschool multiple children—all the way up to six children! Some parents have several very young children or infants and are teaching one older school-aged child, while other parents are teaching several children of different ages at the same time. There are always exciting challenges to home schooling, whether it's for one child or several. The trick to homeschooling multiples with some measure of success and grace can be summed up in one word: organization. But wait! Before you throw your hands up in defeat, thinking "Well, that'll never happen!", read on for some practical advice that will help everything feel more manageable.

The trick to homeschooling multiples with some measure of success and grace can be summed up in one word: organization.

Plan ahead

Planning ahead is one of the best ways to feel ready for a new day of directing and guiding several busy minds and bodies who are all moving in different directions at once. With one child, you can plan your day over breakfast, read stories leisurely on the sofa, go on all kinds of wonderful spontaneous adventures and generally engage in a very organic kind of learning process. With two school-aged children and a toddler, however, you have to be prepared each morning when your feet hit the ground!

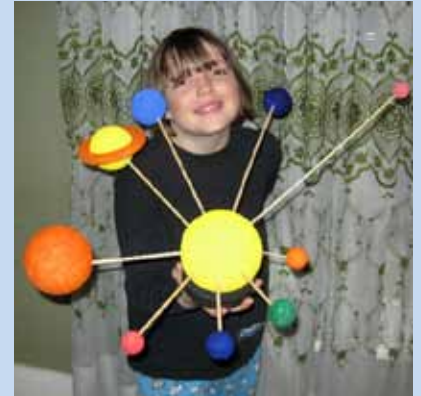
Many parents develop their daily plan the night before, after the household has settled down, or at some point late in the day when you have a few minutes alone (or at least a few minutes to think—you may very well not be alone!). Start by thinking over what worked and didn't work that day, what avenues are worth pursuing again, and which children need work in certain areas. Our curriculum is very flexible so that you can guide a specific child to a project that emphasizes a particular skill or focuses on certain knowledge.

Make your daily plan specific, but don't try to orchestrate every second of the day. Take a look at the curriculum to see what is next and consider which activities are time-specific (weather observations at the same time each day, for example) or need to happen outside the home (community service or library research). Consider what stories you might want to read or tell and what activities you can develop from that for each child. Think about how long each activity will take and which activities need concentrated attention on your part. Plan what the other children, particularly younger ones, will be doing during that time. Have a back up plan in case "make dough animals for snack" takes 5 minutes instead of 30 like it did the last time.

Make a checklist (in your head or on paper) of all the supplies that you will need for the next days lessons. After you've planned the next day's school schedule—take a deep breath and relax. Trust that the day will unfold in its own way. Flexibility is the key to making a solid plan really work in a family of lively, inquisitive, vibrant little human

continued

student submissions



SOLAR SYSTEM
Kiersten, grade 5, Vermont

*The sky is cloudy
and dirty gray,*

*It once was dark like
yesterday,*

*Happiness has fallen
and sadness comes,*

*This all happens for
lack of the sun,*

*But soon we will
be all happy and
alright,*

*When the clouds
roll back and reveal
the light.*

∞ Andreas Gromoll, grade 8

student submissions



photo taken by senior
Mikaela Lazar

.....

“Oak Meadow’s high school curriculum has truly given me a zest for learning. I never thought I’d be the type of student that would one day read for ‘fun,’ or even have a genuine interest in my schoolwork, but fortunately now-a-days I really am! Without Oak Meadow, I would be just another lost student in America’s inadequate school system. However, now in my junior year I have grown to feel intelligent, inspired, capable and prepared for my future! I count my blessings everyday that my family and I chose to enroll in Oak Meadow for high school.”

≈ Amanda Mills, grade 11

homeschooling multiple children

beings. It’s important to have a plan, both as a starting point and a fall-back position, but it’s just as important to be able to let it go without a second thought if something better comes along. That’s the whole point of homeschooling!

Schedule according to age and temperament

When you are planning your day, you will probably automatically take into account the needs of each child. The baby sleeps from 10:30am–noon, so you know that is a perfect time for the 6th grader to work on math while you sit down and work on reading with the 2nd grader. Or the middle-schooler has swim lessons on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, so that is your library research time for the older children.

Logistics aside, you also know your children, and will quickly be able to see how and when they learn best. Some need to be right in the thick of things—front and center on the kitchen counter—and others need to curl up in a beanbag chair squeezed between the couch and the window looking out on the garden. Some children are sharp and ready at 7:00am while others need to come awake slowly and aren’t really ready to think clearly until after lunch. Every child is different and you can use this to your advantage when homeschooling multiples.

Think of the activities of the day as having a rhythm, and create your daily dance accordingly. After solving math problems for 45 minutes, don’t expect your children to jump right into right into another brain activity like research or meticulous note taking. Instead, switch gears to something active or artistic. Go on a nature walk to collect science specimens (for the 5th grader), leaves for sketching (3rd grader), and bark, moss and sticks for making fairy houses (for the kindergartener, but of course the olders will want to be involved!).

Having children work in pairs can free you up to concentrate one-on-one with a child who is struggling to acquire a skill or who needs supervision with a tricky project.

In general, morning hours are best for focused activities, and the afternoons are more freeform and filled with art, music and active, outdoor time.

Make sure your schedule includes time for individual and group work. The natural focus of mornings lends itself to working together as a group, while the more relaxed quality of afternoons is more conducive to individual projects. Working together as a family can provide energized, exciting, creative exchanges, but children also need time by themselves, to ponder, reflect, absorb, and integrate. Find time each day to sit for a few minutes alone with each child. You might find that this time alone together becomes the most important teachable moment of the day, and one of the most delightful.

Let everyone have a job

Siblings naturally tend to help each other out, so homeschooling doesn’t just fall your shoulders. Called *peer tutoring* by educators, older children often help the younger ones with their work, or those who are better in a particular subject help others who aren’t as good, regardless of age. Having children work in pairs can free you up to concentrate one-on-one with a child who is struggling to acquire a skill or who needs supervision with a tricky project.



Children are often natural teachers because they are closer to the same level of development and have more of an instinctive understanding of the problems. Older children may need some coaching on how to be patient with a younger child who works more slowly through the material than they might expect. You can model the type of mentoring you'd like to see, and you can comment afterwards (or during, if necessary) on ways to make the work go more smoothly: "Try letting your brother sound out the words before you say the word for him—you might be surprised at what he can figure out on his own".

Peer tutoring gives children a chance to experience the feeling of satisfaction that comes from helping someone with a problem. It can increase their self-confidence and make them more considerate and appreciative of others. In addition, it gives them a chance to experience the frustrations of being a teacher, which can help them become more patient learners in the long run.

The one room schoolhouse

Homeschooling multiple children is exactly like things used to be: one teacher and a dozen children, of all different ages and abilities, in a single classroom. Consider yourself lucky—at least you have your whole house to use! Just as in a one-room schoolhouse, when a larger family is homeschooling, the children tend to work together with certain projects, especially the hands-on and more artistic projects, and separately on others.

You can teach several children at once by having them work on the same lesson material but at different levels. This approach, known as *integrative teaching*, can be approached in two ways: *vertical* integration and *horizontal* integration. Vertical integration involves adapting the same subject to different children's abilities. For example, if you are teaching U.S. History and you have a fifth grader and a first grader, you could tell a story about a particular segment of history to both children (perhaps the Revolutionary War), then have the fifth grader write a paragraph about some aspect of the subject (the ride of Paul Revere) while the first grader writes some words from the story (Paul Revere, tower, horse, lantern) and draws a picture. If there is also a younger child, he/she could be practicing a letter from the story (maybe "B" for British) and drawing a picture. Chances are, the fifth grader will want to draw a picture also.



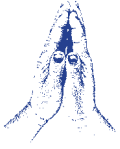
With *horizontal* integration, several subjects are integrated into one lesson. For instance, you would first tell a lesson-based story to all the children. Then you would have one child write an essay (an English lesson) about the Revolutionary War ("In three paragraphs, write the story of Paul Revere's ride, then underline all the verbs"), another child solve math problems (an arithmetic lesson) related to that story ("If there were 13 companies of British soldiers, and each company consisted of 75 soldiers, how many soldiers were there in all?"), and another could draw a map showing the relative locations of Paul Revere, the British troops and the old North Church (a geography lesson). The possibilities are limited only by your family's collective imagination and willingness to experiment.

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The joy of multiples

Homeschooling multiple children may seem daunting at first, but in reality you may find it easier than you expect. When children have a buddy to work with, they don't need you to answer every single question. Younger children have the benefit of getting a concrete idea of what is coming in future years, and older children can look back with pride on what has been done. In a lively, active group, creative juices can flow, ideas spark off one another, and many hands make light (albeit chaotic!) work

Above all, remember that children are remarkably ingenious creatures who are internally driven to learn. They may all be going in different directions at once, and they might all be vying for your attention at once. You may not be able to reclaim your dining room table for months because the Jamestown diorama morphed into a multi-grade, multi-subject project. They may not learn what we want, and they may not learn when we want. But they will learn. It is their nature. So every now and then, take a minute to sit back amid the non-stop activity and revel in the vibrant living and learning that fills your home.



cool, calm and collected: brain research, education and the dalai lama

By Lawrence Williams, Oak Meadow Co-Founder

In October 2009, I had the great pleasure of attending a two-day conference in Washington, DC entitled “Educating World Citizens for the 21st Century.” The central theme of the conference was, “How will we educate people to be compassionate, competent, ethical, and engaged citizens in an increasingly complex and interconnected world?” All of the speakers approached this question from different perspectives—some from a public policy point of view, others from the results of research studies being conducted in schools with children and teenagers to train them in mindfulness and emotional regulation, and still others from research being conducted with Buddhist monks to understand how the structure of the brain changes through years of mindfulness and compassion practice.

It is interesting that this work is not about teaching children to be “spiritual,” but about adapting centuries-old contemplative practices that result in improvements in our ability to learn and to interact cooperatively with others. As the Dalai Lama said in his introductory talk for the conference, “It’s not about making anyone ‘holy’—but just bringing greater peace and happiness to children’s lives.” And as we all know from being so intimately involved in our own children’s education, an irritated or disgruntled child can have a very difficult time entering into a lesson, no matter how well we have prepared.

The work of one researcher in particular, Richard Davidson, Ph.D., was especially relevant. Dr. Davidson is a leading researcher in the field of neuroplasticity, the ability of the brain to change and adapt. In particular, he has focused upon two factors: attention and emotional regulation, because research has shown that unstable attention and poor emotional regulation interfere with learning. Through the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalograph (EEG) technology, Davidson and others have developed an objective means of identifying the areas of the brain that relate to these skills.

With the encouragement and aid of the Dalai Lama, Davidson was able to examine the patterns of brain activity of monks who practice mindful meditation. He was able to identify the precise area of the brain that is activated during their practices—the left prefrontal cortex—which is the same brain region that is also associated with happiness and positive thoughts and emotions. The results showed clearly that these meditative practices not only had changed the working of their brains in the short term, but also had possibly produced permanent changes in the structure of the brain itself.

Based on this research, educators became interested in developing mindfulness and compassion exercises to help improve the behavior of children and their ability to learn more effectively. The children in these studies showed an increased ability to concentrate on tasks, were more cooperative with their peers, and had a greater ability to regulate their emotions. Doesn’t this sound like something we could all use from time to time?

I encourage you to look further into this fascinating work at the Association for Mindfulness in Education (www.mindfuleducation.org) and the Mindfulness in Education Network (www.mindfuled.org). Let us know what you think!



Michelle Simpson-Siegel
High School
Director

We are pleased to announce that Michelle Simpson-Siegel has joined Oak Meadow as our new High School Director. Michelle comes to Oak Meadow with twenty years of experience in secondary education in both private and public settings and brings both insight and enthusiasm to our developing high school programs. Curriculum revisions, new elective course developments, a revised independent study program, and comprehensive college and career counseling are among the many initiatives she will oversee. Please feel free to contact Michelle with your questions and ideas at msiegel@oakmeadow.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Regina Morin, admissions officer at Columbia College cites homeschoolers as “one of the fastest growing college pools in the nation” and she says that homeschoolers “tend to be some of the best-prepared” applicants. This is no surprise to us at Oak Meadow. We know that fostering a healthy balance between academic accomplishment, intellectual development, and emotional engagement is an excellent strategy that generates successful college graduates, not just competent college students.



for our juniors and seniors

Dear Oak Meadow Families,

The sun is shining in Vermont this week and the snow is turning to slush. Spring approaches, and with it, the completion of many Oak Meadow students' homeschool education. To celebrate this accomplishment we are planning commencement ceremonies for June 12. We look forward to hearing from you early to let us know of your plans and to integrate your ideas on how best to honor your unique educational journey.

At Oak Meadow, we are committed to assisting you in your continued success and learning. There are many paths in store for Oak Meadow graduates, one of which may be college. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that there are 1.5 million homeschooled students. This represents a 74% relative increase over the past eight years. Regina Morin, admissions officer at Columbia College cites homeschoolers as "one of the fastest growing college pools in the nation" and she says that homeschoolers "tend to be some of the best-prepared" applicants. This is no surprise to us at Oak Meadow. We know that fostering a healthy balance between academic accomplishment, intellectual development, and emotional engagement is an excellent strategy that generates successful college *graduates*, not just competent college *students*.

Oak Meadow students have a unique opportunity at the start of this 21st Century to use their homeschooling education to their benefit in the college admissions process. The Stanford Admissions Office website states that it is looking to admit students who have a "clear sense of intellectual growth and a quest for knowledge" and the higher education world knows that the home-educated have scored, on average, at the 65th and 80th percentile on standardized academic achievement in the United States and Canada, compared to the public school average of the 50th percentile.

To introduce our rising seniors (current juniors) to the college admissions process and to assist current seniors with maximizing their candidacy to the college of their choice, we have designed a **College Admissions Guide**. This is an introductory document to the college process and is supplemented by our faculty and staff whom will work on your behalf by writing teacher recommendations, sending transcripts, and making referrals to schools that may be a good fit for Oak Meadow learners.

Best wishes on a graceful progression in your studies. We look forward to supporting you in your work, relieving your anxieties about next steps, and celebrating your completion of the program.

Michelle Simpson-Siegel
Director of High School Program

2010 Oak Meadow GRADUATION

Saturday, June 12, 2010

West Village Meeting House
West Brattleboro, Vermont



All qualifying seniors and their families should look for the 2010 graduation information packet to arrive in mid-April. Oak Meadow hosts a two-day event, beginning on Friday, June 11 with an evening gathering, followed by Saturday's graduation ceremony. The packet contains information on travel, lodging, area activities and further details about the graduation events. We encourage everyone to come and enjoy Vermont during this beautiful time of year!

CONSIDERING ATTENDING GRADUATION?

We would love to hear from you early! Please send an email to graduation@oakmeadow.com and let us know your plans. We encourage the input and participation of all graduation attendees, and we are looking forward to creating a fun and meaningful event with you!

Oak Meadow College Admissions Guide: access it on our website at oakmeadow.com/School/courses.htm



kroka vermont semester.....



Founded in 1996, Kroka Expeditions is a non-profit earth living skills school, committed to awakening in young people a connection to nature and the spirit within, and a capacity for conscious living and compassionate service. We strive to achieve this through wilderness adventure, community living, farming, and the practice of traditional and indigenous skills.

Our spring and fall semester programs combine the academic rigor of a traditional school with the physical, social, and spiritual growth of life on a wilderness expedition. The New Hampshire-Vermont semester takes students on a 600-mile long trip by ski and canoe, from our base camp in southern New Hampshire, across the state of Vermont to the Canadian border and back again. During this semester the romance of a ski track and the song of a paddle, combined with the stroke of the pen, provides an incredibly unique educational experience that often changes the course of students' lives.

To learn more about the range of programs, refer to Kroka's website at www.kroka.org.

The following is an excerpt from an open letter written by a Kroka semester student to update everyone on their journey. We found this to be a beautiful picture of a vibrant alternative to traditional education, and we hope it inspires you to learn more about the many exciting wilderness programs which are perfect for homeschooling students.

I write to tell you we do more than survive here—we flourish. Tucked away in the nooks of the mountains, we do not witness life—we live it. Untouched by the dust of society's mistakes, we look at the land with a clear eye. As we grasp each other's hands and raise our voices in unison, we bow our heads in thanks to the gifts the earth has given us.

The snow here comes in thick layers, frosting the ground in a creamy blanket. It falls from the sky in the numbers of a child's wishes, putting the grass to sleep. We awoke this morning to a new layer, and were soon put to work. By 6:15am we all were shoveling roofs, snowshoeing paths, sweeping the solar panels, and packing down trails. After our early start, we jumped right back into our regular chores.

With all the work we do throughout the day, mealtime is no small dish. Piling around steaming pots and pans, we eagerly hold out our bowls for the long anticipated serving—thick soup filled with carrots and potatoes, seasoned with rosemary and thyme, and an abundance of creamy kasha with melted cheese and garlic. We are so lucky to always have a hot meal in our bowls. We never have to think twice about tomorrow's meal because we know it will always be there. Here we take the time to remember this.

Counting down the days till we set out feels like we'll never have enough time to finish our preparation. Project after project is presented to us, and very rarely do we find ourselves with a moment to rest. Everyone is busy finishing their knives and sewing the leather sheaths for them. We all must wax our ski boots four times to cover them completely to get a thorough waterproofing. We must also wax our skis a few times so that they get maximum glide in the snow. Among all of these projects we must find time to write all of our academic assignments. Each of us has been assigned a book about an expedition and we will all be reading them and presenting them to the group. Our schedules are filled with hub bustle, and every time we prepare to check a project off the list, we are given another. As the last of us finished stitching up our mitten shells, we dived into the next sewing project. Jane Barron has come from Maine to teach us to sew our anoraks. We started today and soon we were on our way to making the front pocket with a zipper. For the next four days we will be piecing together the very coat that will travel with us the whole way, sheltering us from wind and snow. The feeling we will achieve from making these ourselves, with our own hands, will be one of great accomplishment.

Life here continues on with the swiftness of the wind and its lonesome whistle. Each morning we are greeted with peeking tips of father Sun and his radiating warmth, and every night I look up at the stars, with their flickering drops of dew light, reflecting back at me a dream far bigger than this world.

student submissions



photo taken by 9th grader
Dana Schlieman



A Spark of Life

Roots endlessly searching
Leaves endlessly reaching
Mustn't there be a spark?

A great intelligence in the dark?

Look the way it grows

The sun shines, the wind blows

We breathe in what they breathe out

They breathe out what we breathe in

A circle ever lasting.

~ grade 8

As part of her studies on the Industrial Revolution, 7th grader Emory Hutchens interpreted the following excerpt from *Hard Times*, by Charles Dickens. She created this pastel drawing to depict the mood of the overcrowded and dirty cities Dickens described: "It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever... It had... vast piles of buildings where there was rattling and trembling all day long..."



oak meadow students at work!

~3rd grader
Kaila and the
corn husk doll
she made for a
social studies
project.



~5th grader
Coco sitting
at her desk
at home in
St. Thomas
in the US
Virgin Islands.

pine needle heart

by Margaret Fichtner

The following article is reprinted by permission from Living Crafts magazine Copyright 2009, a natural crafts magazine for the whole family. To subscribe, or to download free patterns, please visit LivingCrafts.com. One-year subscription is \$21.95. Oak Meadow community can receive a free Winter 09 issue with purchase of a subscription, type OMW09 in the Offer Code section.

My family lives on a little fiber farm in the Sierra Foothills of CA. The El Dorado National Forest is just around the corner and beautiful pine trees of every shape and size are our neighbors. Pine needles are abundant and although I had seen many elaborate baskets made from this craft medium, I wanted to make something simple so that my youngest child could help. This ornament can be made by a child as young as 6 (with a little help from a parent). The heart symbol is a simple, timeless expression of love, which embodies the season.

MATERIALS

- ≈ 6 bundles of pine needles with sheaths still attached
- ≈ a long piece of raffia approximately 36" (or ribbon for a more colorful variation)
- ≈ a clothespin or metal clip
- ≈ ribbon or string for hanging

Note: Mature pine needles turn brown by the summer sun, and fall from the trees in early autumn. This is the best time to collect needles for projects, as the surface of the needle is hard and glossy and the color is rich brown. Choose needles that are 6-12 inches long. The following trees have needles 5 to 18 inches long: Digger pine, Coulter pine, Jeffrey pine, Ponderosa pine, Long leaf pine or Loblolly pine. You can also buy long pine needles online or at craft stores.

To prepare the needles: Boil water in a large pot. Turn off the heat and place your needles in the hot water. Let them soak for 30-60 minutes until they become very pliable. Transfer them to a plastic bag or wrap them in a wet dish towel to keep them moist. Select 6 soaked pine needle bundles all of the same length. Arrange the needles with the sheaths pointing down.

Fold the raffia in half and tie the needles together just above the sheaths. Divide the pine needles into two equal sections. Begin wrapping one piece of the raffia around the bundle of needles on the diagonal and very carefully (this is where the needles might break if they aren't soaked long enough), bend the needles to form one half of the heart. Use the clothespin or clip to hold the end in place while you wrap the other half. Wrap the other piece of raffia around the remaining section of needles in the same manner.

Tie the raffia tightly, first in a double knot, and then in a bow around both ends at the bottom of the heart.

Finish your ornament by adding a hanger. Use ribbon, yarn or embroidery string. Cut a 10" piece of ribbon and thread through raffia wrap from each half of the heart. Secure with a double knot, then tie the loose thread ends together in a bow to make a loop for hanging.



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