



NEWSLETTER #5

OCTOBER 2018

OAK BRIDGE ACADEMY

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony



It's Official!!! Oak Bridge Academy is OPEN!

Many thanks to all who turned out on a somewhat chilly October morning to celebrate the official opening of Oak Bridge Academy (OBA). Several Tri-City officials, parents and caregivers and many of our cherished donors witnessed the SNIP that marked the beginning of an incredible journey that will continue for decades to come.

Thank you to our donors! It cannot be said often enough! From siblings to grandparents, small businesses to corporate conglomerates and everyone else in between.... every donor and every single dollar is deeply appreciated. We could not have done this without you...Thank you!

Dr. Karen's Take

I've said it before, and I reserve the right to say it again (and again and again).... I am simply thrilled to be a part of the team that made this incredible school possible.

As a pediatrician working predominantly with families with children with special needs, I spent considerable time helping parents advocate and navigate within the school system. Heartbreaking stories - suspensions and expulsions, incompletes and stalled progress - discouraged parents felt their child was unwelcome at school.

This is NOT THE CASE at Oak Bridge Academy.

Oak Bridge Academy is truly unique.... and here's why...

- Behaviour therapy is integrated into every activity throughout the day
- Students learn how to make and keep friends
- Students learn how to be aware of and manage their emotions
- Students get the support they need to learn and succeed not only in academics but in life and in their future



Dr. Karen Backway

Board Member

"At Oak Bridge Academy, we believe, without a doubt, every student has unlimited potential and is fully capable of learning."

Staff Training Update

The only thing we care more about than educating our students is training our staff. Before the school opened, staff attended a full two weeks of training including:

- ABA (Applied Behaviour Analysis) strategies
- ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) training
- A Mindfulness and Children workshop
- Accept, Identify, Move (AIM) curriculum training



Our Professional Development (PD) days are packed! Staff leave full of inspiration, bursting with strategies and ideas to enrich student learning experiences. To date, PD training days have included a 2-day session of Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NVC) training and a 2-day session of Promoting the Emergence of Advanced Knowledge (PEAK) training which will help support some of our students to better access the ACT curriculum. Several staff chose to attend an extensive and intensive 2-day PEAK training weekend session course shortly thereafter. At Oak Bridge Academy we take training very seriously.

Holiday Children's Showcase & Donor Appreciation Evening

Tuesday December 4th, 2018
6:30 - 8:00pm

Oak Bridge Academy is hosting our first annual donor appreciation night.

Come one, come all as we showcase the many talents of our students. Artists, musicians, photographers and poets (yes poets!) Tons of hidden talent just waiting to shine.



2nd Annual Golf Tournament & Dinner!

June 11th - SAVE THE DATE!

Our second annual Golf Tournament & Dinner, at the prestigious Whistle Bear Golf Course, promises to be an amazing event!

Many of our golfers have already cleared their calendar in anticipation! We're currently searching for big-hearted sponsors. Watch for registration information that will be coming soon.

If you'd like to be involved, please contact Laura Martin at Laura.Martin@oakbridge.ca



Dedicated Supporters

Oak Bridge Academy is so grateful to its many generous supporters, including the following organizations and families:

- The Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation awarded OBA with a grant in May for \$1,250 toward our music therapy program this fall.
- The Women's Golf League at Whistle Bear Golf Club raised \$2,500 for OBA at its tournament in July.
- Barzotti Woodworking Ltd donated \$10,000 to OBA in July. These funds have been used to purchase a SMART board and four classroom tablets.
- The Mehan Family raised \$3,000 for art supplies and other resources for OBA at their Lemonade and Samosa Stand in August.
- The Ford Family hosted a "A Round Fore Ryerson", a family and friends golf tournament in support of OBA and raised \$5,600 in September.
- 100 Women Who Care Waterloo Region selected OBA as its winning charity in September. Proceeds will help us provide swimming lessons, coding and music therapy. Stay tuned for an announcement regarding the Big Cheque presentation!
- The Waterloo District Masons have named OBA as its yearly charity project and have pledged to raise funds for us over the next year. They have already donated soccer balls for our physical education program - thank you Masons!



Kathie's Corner

Oh my, oh my, oh my! There is so much to say I am just bursting! But first....

*"Dude, you might as well stop!
She is not going to send you home!"*

The quote of the century from one student to another who was having a 'moment.' Only three weeks in, and already, these amazing kids are making friends and supporting each other.

I knew Oak Bridge Academy would be transformative for these kids, but my expectations have been blown out of orbit!

Since Oak Bridge Academy opened, I have learned:

- Some students have a long history of being sent home from school - so breaking rules is their 'default setting.
- The number of students who cannot identify one single thing they can do well, is staggering and truly tragic.
- Our students are very capable, but have learned that to 'just get by' was all that was expected of them.

Well not anymore, my students, not anymore! Time to raise the bar!

Because we do not allow our students to 'just get by' or send them home when they are having a 'bad day,' there have been some new and interesting challenges.

Has it been perfect? Nope.

Are we on the right path to meet our student's needs? Unequivocally YES!



**Heather McLaughlin (Admin Assistant);
Kathie Shaw MSW, RSW, BCBA (Principal)**

Our students are learning:

- To respond mindfully rather than react explosively when triggered.
- To identify their strengths (of which there are many).
- That their challenges are not forever and certainly do not define who they are or who they will become.
- Perseverance and the power of YET. There is nothing more rewarding than hearing a student encourage themselves by saying "I can't do this... YET."

In closing, there are two things I absolutely know:

1. The commitment and dedication of each and every staff member is outstanding!
2. At Oak Bridge Academy... we are just getting started. Just watch us soar!