

# The Eagle's Tale

Newsletter of Oakridge Public School

December 2010



## What Is Technology Doing to Kids' Brains?

Students have always faced distractions and time-wasters, but computers and sophisticated cell phones, and the constant stream of stimuli they offer, pose a profound new challenge to focusing and learning. Recently, I read an article published in the *New York Times* entitled "Growing Up Digital: Wired For Distraction". Researchers say that the lure of these technologies, while it affects adults too, is particularly powerful for young people. The risk, they say, is that developing brains can become more easily habituated than adult brains to constantly switching tasks – and less able to sustain attention.

In this *New York Times* article, Matt Richtel reports on the way educators are struggling to keep students focused in the face of endless cell phone calls, texting, social networking, watching YouTube videos, and playing video games. "Their brains are rewarded for not staying on task but for jumping to the next thing," says Harvard Medical School professor Michael Rich. "The worry is we're raising a generation of kids in front of screens whose brains are going to be wired differently."

One 17-year-old confesses that the computer in his bedroom is so seductive that he wasn't able to read more than 43 pages of his assigned summer reading, *Cat's Cradle*, before school began. "A book takes so long," he says. "I prefer the immediate gratification." He says that he wishes his parents would crack down and restrict his technology time.

A 14-year-old in the same high school sends and receives 27,000 texts a month, "her fingers clicking at a blistering pace as she carries on as many as seven text conversations at a time," says Richtel. "She texts between classes, at the moment soccer practice ends, while being driven to and from school and, often, while studying." Most of the text messages are little more than quick greetings, but occasionally there's discussion of a "drama" between friends or acquaintances, at which point she might phone one person while texting with a second.

Another student at this high school says, "I know I can read a book, but then I'm up and checking Facebook. Facebook is amazing because it feels like you're doing something and you're not doing anything. It's the absence of doing something, but you feel gratified anyway. My attention span is getting worse."

All three of these students are achieving well below their potential. One theory on what's going on in these students' brains was reported in a recent article in *Pediatrics*. A study done in Germany compared the sleep patterns and homework retention of 12-14-year-old boys who played video games for an hour after doing their homework with the same boys watching an exciting movie for an hour. Playing video games had a markedly more negative impact on the boys' sleep and vocabulary retention. Researchers speculate that the intensity of the game experience overrides the brain's recording of vocabulary from homework. "When you look at vocabulary and look at huge stimulus after that," said

Harvard neuroscientist Marksu Dworak, “your brain has to decide which information to store. Your brain might favor the emotionally stimulating information over the vocabulary.”

Another theory is that the brain needs downtime to process and synthesize information and make connections. “Downtime is to the brain what sleep is to the body,” says Rich. “But kids are in a constant mode of stimulation. The headline is: bring back boredom.” He’s not advocating deep-sixing technology – just getting it in perspective.

Even though there is some unease, we still look at technology in the classroom as a way to connect with students and give them essential skills. This month, Oakridge has acquired 3 new Epson Brightlink devices for our Gr. 3-4, Gr. 7 and Gr. 8 classrooms. These new systems, similar to SMART boards, can teach children on their technological territory.

“Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction” by Matt Richtel in *The New York Times*, Nov. 21, 2010 (p. 1, 20-21)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/21/technology/21brain.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=“Growing%20Up%20Digital,%20Wired%20for%20Distraction”%20&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/21/technology/21brain.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=“Growing%20Up%20Digital,%20Wired%20for%20Distraction”%20&st=cse)

### **MUSIC IN DECEMBER**



This has been a busy year so far in the Music world here at Oakridge. Classes from **KG** to Gr 6 have been rehearsing for the upcoming winter concert on Wednesday, December 15<sup>th</sup> (6:00 - 7:20pm). The Int. Choir, Int. and Jr. Orff Ensembles have been busily preparing for the concert as well as for their presentations at the Pen Centre on Monday, December the 13<sup>th</sup> (11:45am - 12:15pm). The Int. classes have been singing, moving, and playing a variety of pieces by renowned Orff presenters such as Steven Calantropio and Jo Ella Hug. All the classes have done well at taking these works and creating B sections to make them their very own. The Int. classes will showcase what they have been doing in April.

Keep up the great work! *Mrs. T. King*

### **“WEAR FOR CARE” CAMPAIGN**

Throughout the month of December, we will be collecting warm winter clothing items for our “Wear for Care” campaign. Any new or gently used coats, hats, scarves, mittens, boots, socks, or sweaters would make great donations. Stay tuned for more information regarding this

opportunity to give the gift of warmth this winter!

*Mrs. Lelievre-Rienas*

### **MOVEMBER AT OAKRIDGE**



**“Movember Men”**

(l-r): Mr. White, Mr. Munderich, Mr. Beaman, & Mr. Game

### **WINTER DRESS**

Please review appropriate winter dress with your children. Remember to label all items that the child wears or brings to school. At this time of year, it is also essential that students have a pair of indoor shoes for wear to avoid tracking outdoor snow, ice and mud into our school.



## PARKING LOT

**P** Please be reminded that our front parking lot is for the use of staff and visitor parking only. Students are not to be dropped off or picked up at the beginning or the end of the day in this area. If you are dropping off your child for daycare in the morning, please use the back parking lot. As it is, there are insufficient parking spaces for school staff at the front of the building. We are also endeavouring to minimize traffic flow in the parking lot as students are often walking in this area. With winter's snow, we need to be extra cautious in the safe arrival and departure of our students. Let's all work together and remember to keep the safety of our children and students paramount in our thinking! We appreciate your cooperation in this regard.

## TNS – Throw No Snow!

For the safety of ALL of our students, Oakridge has a “throw no snow” policy on the playground. This policy will be STRICTLY enforced.

## INTERMEDIATE BOYS VOLLEYBALL CHAMPS



The Int. Boys' Volleyball team had a very successful season this year, coming out on top in the three major competitions of the season. Earlier this season, the boys won the Niagara Invitational Volleyball Tournament, playing several tough teams from as far away as Oakville. The boys showed a superior skill level, defeating opponents which were usually taller and stronger. The final match up of the tournament was against Grapeview, which put up a good fight but could not match the Eagles. Next came the play-offs for our area, which was against the Grapeview Griffons once again. Though it was a close match, the Eagles edged out their opponents to win the champions' pennant for our gym. Finally, the boys earned a spot in the DSBN finals at the School Board's

“A” Division championships on November 29<sup>th</sup>. For the third time, the boys faced the tenacious Grapeview squad. After a slow start, the boys lost their first game by a narrow margin. In their second game, the boys rallied back to win, forcing a third set. At this point, the Eagles were determined to play their best game and they won the deciding match by a convincing score of 15-8, proving without a doubt, they are the best team in the DSBN. *Mr. Munderich*



*Front row (lt-rt): Owen Voelkner, Adam Nartiss, Liam Wilson, Jordan Pereira, Jack Loucks, & Jake Dupuis. Back Row (lt-rt): Mr. Beaman, Jarrod Camroux-Peacock, Changfeng Cheng, Hunter Osinga, Paul Goncharow, Ravi Dwivedi-Leng, & Mr. Munderich. Absent from photo: Court Rigby.*

### **From the Principal's Desk...**

#### **Be Proud of What You Accomplished Today....**

#### **We Are!**

In a world where it is easy to hear so many negative messages, it's important to remind our students of all that they have successfully accomplished over the first three months of this school year. As a staff, we are proud of our students and continue to commend them for their hard work and effort.

***From all of us to all of you, we wish you a safe and joyous holiday season.***

