March 2, 2011

Dear Parents,

I spent the end of last week in our nation’s capital at the annual conference at the National Association of Independent Schools. Out-of-Door Academy is a member of NAIS and the conference provides a terrific opportunity to share ideas, learn what other schools are doing, and interview impressive teachers who are interested in working at Out-of-Door. It also provides an opportunity to hear speakers and presentations on unique programs and educational initiatives from around the world. In this letter I’d like to briefly share two presentations I attended before I dive into the details of Spring Parent Conferences, course selection, and the list of events slated for March.

The first presentation was by Dr. Sugata Mitra. His work on using technology to educate children led to the Hole-in-the-Wall experiments. These experiments are named after the manner in which Dr. Mitra first provided computer access to children. Essentially, he put a freely accessible computer in a hole in the wall in the slums of New Delhi, India to see what would happen. The computer was a hit, especially with children. With no training, they learned how to use the computer. Subsequent experiments highlighted how much can be learned simply with access to technology and some questions of interest. (Dr. Mitra has a video on TED that describes this work: http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/sugata_mitra_shows_how_kids_teach_themselves.html). He expanded upon the Hole-in-the-Wall experiments and his work has many interesting implications for learning, the use of technology (and how to employ it), and engaging children. I think you will find his work thought-provoking. The second presentation was by Emily Pilloton, whose work on teaching the concepts of design to students is both interesting and inspirational. She, too, has a video on TED that I recommend, especially after my discussions with our art teachers design as a systematic approach to problem solving. (http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/emily_pilloton_teaching_design_for_change.html). Both of these speakers challenge us to reconsider how we think about learning. While their ideas are not panaceas – as much as we want a silver bullet to address concerns about education – their work provides food for thought. I’ll be interested to hear what you think.

Now that we have passed February and enjoyed Mid-Winter Break, we are at the time of year where research papers and major projects, which seemed so far away at the beginning of the year, become very real. Furthermore, the third academic quarter of the school year will close on March 11th, so expect to see more tests and quizzes over the coming days. Also, students will select courses for the 2011-12 school year. You will
have an opportunity to meet with your child’s **advisor** to review your child’s academic program for the coming year. The **Spring Parent Conference** day, on **Thursday, March 17th**, provides this opportunity. No classes are held on that day. To set up an appointment to meet with your child’s advisor, click on this [link](mailto:kchait@oda.edu) and you can set up the appointment immediately. (If you have questions or need help, please contact Ms. Chait at [kchait@oda.edu](mailto:kchait@oda.edu).) If you want to speak with one of your child’s current teachers, there is no need to wait until conference day. Please call or email your child’s teachers directly whenever you have a question or concern.

The course registration process is important. As Mr. Runge or Mr. Salmon will be quick to point out, the rigor of a student’s schedule bears a lot of weight in the college admissions process. At Out-of-Door Academy, students take either six or seven courses per semester. For most students, five of the courses are the “academic core”: English, science, history, world language, and mathematics. Schedules are built around the academic core to ensure that students are scheduled into classes that they need to take. Students also choose elective courses. The number of electives we offer has increased dramatically over the years. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to schedule students into all of the electives that they prefer. We do our best, but sometimes a student will not get their first preference. Please also be advised that students who have not re-enrolled for the 2011-12 school year cannot be scheduled. If you have any questions about the re-enrollment process, please contact Mr. Carver at [jcarver@oda.edu](mailto:jcarver@oda.edu) or at 554-5954.

I look forward to seeing you at the Parent Conferences. Below is a list of events in March.

**March Events**

**100 Days Dinner **– March 3
The 100 Days Dinner is an annual event in which the Senior class pays tribute to the faculty. It’s one of my favorite events of the year.

**Junior College Counseling Seminar **– March 8
The Junior College Counseling Seminars give Juniors a jump start on the admissions process. Attendance is mandatory. For more information, please contact Mr. Runge at [jrunge@oda.edu](mailto:jrunge@oda.edu) or Mr. Salmon at [msalmon@oda.edu](mailto:msalmon@oda.edu).

**End of 3rd Quarter **– March 11
The end of the third quarter is right around the corner - let’s finish strong! If you have questions or concerns about your child’s academic performance, please call your child’s teacher or advisor. There is no need to wait.

**March Madness Basketball Tournament **– March 12
It’s a Three-on-Three Basketball Tournament in honor of the other basketball tournament that takes place in March. For more information, please contact Director of Student Activities, Tim Brewer, at [tbrewer@oda.edu](mailto:tbrewer@oda.edu).
**Spring Parent Conferences – March 17**
Please sign up for Spring Parent Conferences. It is an opportunity to review your child’s 2011-12 academic program with his or her advisor. Classes are not held on Spring Parent Conference day. To set up an appointment to meet with your child’s advisor, click on this [link](#) and you can set up the appointment immediately. (If you have questions or need help, please contact Ms. Chait at [kchait@oda.edu](mailto:kchait@oda.edu).)

**Middle School College Counseling Night – March 30**
We are fortunate to start the college counseling process early at Out-of-Door. Middle School students and parents are invited to campus to meet with Mr. Runge and Mr. Salmon. For more information, please contact Mr. Salmon at [msalmon@oda.edu](mailto:msalmon@oda.edu).

**Musical – Guys and Dolls – March 23 - 26**
Come to the Black Box theater to see this musical classic. Performances are at 7:00 pm. For more information about showtimes and tickets, please contact Ms. Evans at [levans@oda.edu](mailto:levans@oda.edu)

**Coming up – Spirit Day is on April 1.** It is a wonderful day that brings the entire school together.

Please visit [www.oda.edu](http://www.oda.edu) for a more complete listing of events on campus. If you have questions or need more information, please contact me at [blatta@oda.edu](mailto:blatta@oda.edu) or call me at 554-5953.

Sincerely,

Bruce Latta
Head of Middle and Upper School