

## Welcome

Dear Odyssey families,

On behalf of our Odyssey School Board and faculty and staff, I would like to welcome all students and families back to a brand-new school year, filled with promise, and, hopefully, a good dose of normalcy. If you are new to us this year, welcome to our Odyssey family. We are excited to have our students back filling our hallways and classrooms with the energy and enthusiasm required for real learning. Our desire is for each student to have a wonderful experience in our schools and be fully prepared for college and their future. We will continue to offer our students authentic academic programs that are rich and engaging. As always, we are honored to serve your student(s) and family.

The purpose of this newsletter is to introduce our new Principals for Odyssey Jr/Sr High and Odyssey Preparatory Academy, to share with you Covid news, and to inform you of new laws passed in Florida and their impact upon our schools.



Sincerely,

*Ms. Constance Ortiz*

GA Chief Executive Officer and  
Founder of Odyssey Schools

## Our Mission for Every Child

The mission of our schools is to work in partnership with the family and community, with the aim of helping each child reach full potential in all areas of life. We seek to educate the whole child with the understanding that each person must achieve a balance of intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual and social skills as a foundation for life.

Odyssey recognizes the importance of each person's quest to become whole and our role in providing the right conditions for children to reach their full and unique potential. One of these ways is through the development of spiritual potential. Spiritual potential is not linked to any religion but has more to do with universal principles that have been integrated into the fabric of societies throughout time. Steven Covey, author of the "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," defines principles as an objective reality that transcends cultures and individuals. He cites fairness, integrity, and honesty for examples. He contends that "A principle is a natural law like gravity. If you drop something, gravity controls. If I don't tell the truth, you won't trust me; that's a natural law." Some of the spiritual principles Odyssey embraces are self-reliance and independent thinking, compassion/kindness, integrity/honesty, grit/perseverance, freedom/self-discipline, courage, respect, growth mindset/academic excellence, and collaboration/unity.

## New Leaders and New Faces...

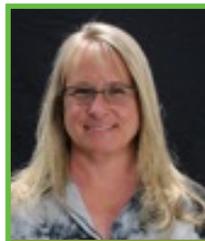


It is with great enthusiasm that I welcome our wonderful new school leaders who are joining us this July. Heading the Odyssey Jr/Sr Leadership Team is **Ms. Gayle Iacono**, who has been appointed as the new **Principal of the Jr/Sr High**. Ms. Iacono has over 25 years of school leadership experience. She has led both public and private junior/senior high schools, where she excelled at developing robust programs in academics, athletics, and the arts. Ms. Iacono has a master's degree in Reading and state certifications or endorsements in Elementary Education, Educational Leadership, and Gifted Education.

We would also like to welcome **Ms. Janee Campbell** back to Odyssey Jr/Sr High as **Vice Principal**, overseeing curriculum and instruction. Ms. Campbell has over 25 years of experience in the field of education, with 11 years in school leadership. She has a master's degree in Educational Leadership and state certifications or endorsements in Secondary Education English 6-12, Gifted Education, Educational Leadership K-12, and School Principal.



We would like to extend our appreciation to Dr. Monica Knight for her years of outstanding service as the Principal of Odyssey Jr/Sr High. She has made a significant impact in all areas of the school, and through her efforts, in collaboration with her excellent staff and school families, OCS Jr/Sr has become a recognized school of excellence. We wish Dr. Knight all the best as she transitions to her new position at Green Apple School Management as the Director of Special Projects. Dr. Knight remains true to the Titans and will be supporting the new leadership team to ensure a smooth and successful transition.



At Odyssey Preparatory Academy, we welcome **Ms. Shelly Miedona** as our new **Principal**. Ms. Miedona comes to us with extensive teaching and educational leadership experience. Ms. Miedona has worked in many leadership roles that include District Math Coach, Math Program Specialist for the Florida Department of Education, and Assistant Principal in a public school district. Ms. Miedona has an educational specialist degree in Educational Leadership and a master's degree in Education. Additionally, she has state endorsements in seven educational areas that include: Educational Leadership, Elementary Education, ESOL, Reading, Florida Certified Grants Management, Clinical Educator, and Level II Principal certification.

## New Leaders and New Faces... (continued)



**Ms. Wendi Nolder**, who has served a dual leadership role as the principal for both OCS Elementary and Odyssey Preparatory Academy, will dedicate herself solely to leading the ever-growing OCS Elementary campus but will continue to offer her expertise and support to our new principals, as we all will. Ms. Nolder's outstanding contributions to both schools is very much appreciated and valued by everyone.

Ms. Pat Carvil, our former Associate Principal at Odyssey Preparatory Academy, will be dedicating herself to her family but will transition to Green Apple School Management, where she will work part-time as a coordinating coach supporting our elementary schools in the implementation of language arts. We thank Ms. Carvil for her three years of successful leadership at Odyssey Prep and the positive impact she made in the educational program provided for our students.

## Covid-19 and CANVAS Updates

As a healthy school, it is our belief that the best way to keep children (and all of us) at optimal health is by building our immune systems through such natural elements as ample amounts of fresh air, sunlight, whole foods, and exercise. This year our schools will continue to be mask optional. If you want your student to wear a mask, please plan to provide clean masks daily. If your child has special needs for us to consider, please communicate with your classroom teacher for elementary and a guidance counsellor for all students in grade 6th and up and we will meet them to the best of our ability. Masks will be highly encouraged if children are sent to our clinics with a fever. Before and After Care, extra-curricular activities, athletics, music, and events will also be operating in as natural a way as possible.

The focus in our schools for the new school year will continue to be upon cultivating faith over fear as we determine to provide enriching and calm learning environments for your children. As the Delta variant appears to be on the rise in Florida, we understand that it may be more contagious and appears to spread more among children. We were well prepared and trained last year, so we will continue to keep our campuses very clean and disinfected and will continue with some basic social distancing, as much as feasible, all the while striving for a calm, natural learning environment. Please notify us if your child contracts the virus and be sure to follow established quarantine procedures. Please remember not to bring your children to school when they are ill and keep them home with fevers over 100 degrees.

Although we are not continuing eLearning, we will have all assignments accessible via CANVAS, a program we launched last year for all students in grades K-12. (For those not familiar with this program, more information will be provided on this application tool soon.) Students will continue to be able to access all assignments from CANVAS and turn them in to their teachers via this platform. Students who are mildly ill or quarantined, will also be able to continue learning via access to their assignments. At any given time, we will have a limited number of laptops available for temporary use, during quarantine periods, only. Our schools will continue to do our best in providing a natural and safe environment, clean, and with following some of the distancing procedures.

## New Laws Passed in Florida

### Moment of Silence

This year, in alignment with new Florida law effective July 1, our schools will be offering a two-minute period at the beginning of each day for a moment of silence. Parents and guardians are encouraged to discuss with their children how their student can best utilize the moment of silence. Teachers and students will not make suggestions to students about what to think about or do during this period.

### Critical Race Theory (CRT)

The Florida State Board of Education recently banned "critical race theory" and forbids the use of the 1619 Project from being taught in public school classrooms.

The new State Board of Education rule has not impacted the way we teach and aligns with our current practices requiring our schools to (1) teach students how to think, not what to think, (2) fosters an environment where students can think critically and for themselves, (3) protects students from being indoctrinated to think a certain way, (4) ensures students receive classroom instruction that is factual and objective, (5) helps guarantee teachers serve as facilitators of classroom instruction without making students feel pressured to think a certain way, and (6) provides a well-rounded, world-class education that exposes students to multiple viewpoints and perspectives on a litany of topics.

Odyssey embraces the Montessori Philosophy in all its schools. Maria Montessori, Italy's first female doctor, was nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize for her advocacy efforts toward a more peaceful humanity. She accomplished this through the classroom by celebrating the beauty and merits of each culture and what each culture brought forth to advance our world. Odyssey will continue to embrace this wonderful philosophy of unity, which is in alignment with our country's national motto: E Pluribus Unum, "FROM MANY, ONE."

Our United States history and civics program focuses on excellent and balanced curriculum choices like the Core Knowledge history curriculum (in elementary), original source documents for Civics, and an older textbook called "The Americans" for US history. We agree with Christopher Rufo, Director of Battlefront, a public policy research center, who has stated: "...we must promote the true story of America—a story that is honest about injustices in American history, but that places them in the context of our nation's highest ideals and the progress we have made towards realizing them."

Theories surrounding CRT are best left as a discussion between parent and child. As a school community, we deeply believe in the rights of parents and that our role is to remain neutral and to keep our opinions out of our classrooms. If you have any questions or concerns over any of our history and Civics curriculum, please contact Constance Ortiz directly at [cortiz@greenappleschools.com](mailto:cortiz@greenappleschools.com).

### Parental Bill of Rights

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis just signed into law the Parents' Bill of Rights on June 29, enumerating the rights of parents and legal guardians to "direct the upbringing, education, health care, and mental health" of their child. We support the Bill of Rights 100%. Its impact on education will be in the following ways: As a Florida parent you have (1) the right to

## New Laws Passed in Florida (continued)

direct the education and care of your minor child, (2) the right to direct the upbringing and the moral or religious training of your minor child, (3) the right to apply to enroll your minor children in a public school or, as an alternative to public education, a private school, including a religious school, a home education program, or other available options, as authorized by law, (4) the right to access and review all school records relating to your child, (5) the right to access and review all medical records of your minor child, unless prohibited by law or if you are the subject of an investigation of a crime committed against your minor child, and a law enforcement agency or official requests that the information not be released, (6) the right to consent in writing before a biometric scan of your minor child is made, shared, or stored. This includes the right to opt out of any district-level data collection relating to your minor child not required by law, (7) the right to learn about your child's course of study, including the source of any supplemental education materials. This includes the right to inspect district instructional materials, (8) the right to object to instructional materials and other materials used in the classroom. Such objections may be based on beliefs regarding morality, sex, religion, or the belief that such materials are harmful, (9) the right to withdraw your minor child from any portion of the school district's required comprehensive health education that relates to sex education, instruction in AIDS education, or any instruction regarding sexuality if the parent provides a written objection to his or her minor child's participation. This includes the right to be notified in advance of such course content so that you may withdraw your minor child from those portions of the course, (10) the right to learn about the nature and purpose of clubs and activities offered at your minor child's school, including both those that are extracurricular or part of the school curriculum.

### Civic Literacy

On March 17, 2021, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the Civic Literacy Excellence Initiative, with the aim of making Florida a national leader in civics education. The Civic Literacy Excellence Initiative emphasizes the development and support of high-quality civics education. The purpose of the new civic education initiative is to promote high-quality civic education for Florida students and reward classroom educators who choose to participate in advancing civic education in their classrooms; fully elevate civic literacy and education for Florida's students and teachers, beyond any state in the nation; lead and foster the values we hope to see in our society; and create humble, civic-minded citizens of tomorrow.

### OCS Board of Directors Opening

There is an opening on our board of directors. The position helps to guide the health of the organization and assists in maintaining the school's unique mission. It requires attendance 8-10 times annually and meets at 4:30 in the afternoons. For those that may be interested and believe they could make a solid contribution, please contact [cortiz@greenappleschools.com](mailto:cortiz@greenappleschools.com).

## Healthy Kids

Our best chance against illness is a strong immune system. We all know the best defenses against getting sick. Cleanliness and avoiding contact with illness can keep ourselves and our children well. But here are some more important things you can do to give your immune system a fighting chance when flu season comes around!



**1. Get enough sleep!** Did you know your children need significantly more sleep than you do to keep their bodies healthy? While an adult can get by with 7-8 hours, children can require up to 12 hours a night to prevent a weakened immune system! Check this handy website to see where your child's age group fits: <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/guide/sleep-children#1>



**2. Change your diet.** Here at Odyssey, much of our school culture revolves around the benefits found in feeding ourselves and our students the healthiest foods possible. A few things to remember when selecting foods to avoid illness: more whole plants, less sugar, lots of healthy fats, fermented foods, and plenty of protein!



**3. Exercise!** Just 20 minutes a day of moderate exercise can supercharge your immune system! Turn it into a family event by taking everyone for a bike ride, a hike, or running a fitness trail together.



**4. Manage your stress.** Take some time to let your body rest! Cortisol, the hormone produced in times of stress, has been shown to reduce immune function. Try a guided meditation with your children or take them to a (age appropriate) yoga class!



**5. Take your vitamins!** We've all heard that Vitamin C can boost immune function. It has been shown to reduce the length of a cold up to 15%. But there's more to it than that. Vitamin D has been shown to improve your odds of fighting off that flu, and you can boost it by just taking the family to the beach! Zinc, Echinacea, Garlic, and Elderberry are some other less-known options to make your body a flu-fighting machine.



**6. Plenty of fresh air and sunshine!** Psychological studies link time spent out in fresh air and sunshine to a greater sense of vitality. Not only does being outside benefit you with more energy throughout the day, but vitality helps our bodies become more resilient to physical illness.

(This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.)