

"Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."
~ Charles Dickens

School Calendar

This Week

Friday, November 30

Spiral of Light – In-school festival

Looking Ahead

Tuesday, December 4

*7th Grade to Philadelphia Museum of Art
Grades 1, 2, 3 Parent Evening 6:30-8:30 pm*

Friday, December 7

Early Dismissal – Winter Fair Set-up 1:00 pm

Saturday, December 8

*River Valley Open House 9:45-11:00 am
Winter Fair 11:00 am-3:00 pm*

Friday, December 14

Holiday Candlelight Concert 6:30 pm

Thursday, December 20

Shepherds Play 7:30 pm

Friday, December 21

*Early Dismissal 1:00 pm
Shepherds Play 1:30 pm*

Monday-Friday, December 24-January 4

Holiday Break – No School

Monday, January 7

School Resumes

How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org
lc@rivervalleyschool.org
bot@rivervalleyschool.org
pc@rivervalleyschool.org

December Lunch Forms Due Tomorrow

The December lunch form is attached to this week's Current. Orders are due by tomorrow, Wednesday, December 28th

Crystals Needed

If you have any crystals or beautiful stones that you would be willing to lend us for the spiral, please put your name on them and leave them in the faculty room. They will be returned to you after the festival. Thank you.

Spiral of Light

With quiet anticipation we mark the longest nights of the year and the approaching holiday season with a candle-lit journey inward at the Spiral of Light.

The Spiral is a peaceful, meditative experience for children (and adults). The elements of this festival and the theme of light growing and expanding within darkness speak to us on many levels and is found in most cultures around the world. The Spiral of Light is a simple, yet reverent tradition at River Valley Waldorf School.

We will be celebrating it this year as an in-school festival this Friday, November 30th with time for the kindergartens and all eight grades to participate. Everyone is welcome, but please arrive on time. No one will be admitted later than the noted time.

Spiral Schedule

8:30-8:50 Advent Assembly

9:00-9:25 5th grade	11:30-11:55 7th grade
9:40-9:55 3rd grade	12:00-12:20 6th grade
10-10:25 Star Room	1:05-1:25 1st grade
10:30-10:55 Moon Room	1:30-1:50 2nd grade
11:00-11:25 8th grade	1:55-2:35 4th grade



Celebrate the whimsy of the holiday season at River Valley Waldorf School's most magical festival of the year.

Featuring activities & crafts for all ages, food & desserts, live music, an artisan market and King Winter, himself!

And before Winter Fair, join us for our

OPEN HOUSE | 9:45AM-11AM

(Nursery, pre-k, kindergarten & grades 1-8)

Learn about our programs, meet teachers, alumni and parents past & present.
RSVP to 610-982-5606 or info@rivervalleyschool.org



Art Program Update

Dear Members of RVWS Community,

I want to share with you some exciting news about the growing art program at River Valley Waldorf School. One of the many goals of this program initiated three years ago was to create opportunities for the students to work collaboratively on school-wide art projects that reinforce diversity and unity among our students, teachers and the broader community. The arts can serve as the ideal bridge for collaboration while creating interdisciplinary projects between our various classes. To facilitate this, a school may adopt "Visiting Artist" programs designed to welcome artists from the community into the classroom. In turn, these artists share their expertise in their particular medium and work alongside the students to educate them, and the wider community, about the value of art in our society. This program can also provide opportunities to address social issues in unique, enlightening ways that otherwise might be challenging to weave into our daily curriculum. Hence, the benefits of visiting artist programs are not only limited to the arts but extend to the humanities, the sciences and the general health of our school community.

This year we are excited to announce that our school will host local fiber artist, Mallory Zondag, to work with our students during this week, November 26-30. Mallory is a Mixed Media Fiber Artist located in the Lehigh Valley who graduated from Pratt Institute with honors and a degree in Fashion Design. While at Pratt, Mallory focused on creating handmade textiles through felting, weaving, and printmaking for her fashion collections. Since graduating, she has pursued a career as an independent artist and arts educator. Through her unique, custom created felted vessels, wool monsters, and forest floor wall hangings, as well as her initiatives as a visiting artist with a variety of schools, Mallory shares her knowledge and love of fibers and passion for creating one of a kind pieces from scratch with as many people as possible. Mallory will be working with our 1st through 8th-grade students to create a collaborative felted wall piece that will be displayed and celebrated until auctioned off at the Auction Gala on March 23rd. Part of this year's Auction Gala will celebrate the centenary of Waldorf education, this piece will contribute to the celebration. The hope of the International Forum for Steiner/Waldorf Education's Waldorf100 Anniversary is that this centennial will be an occasion to further develop Waldorf education for contemporary times and focus more consciously on its global dimensions. The inherent nature of Mallory's work beautifully reflects the aesthetic values of our community and will incorporate one of the Waldorf100 core projects of "Bees and Trees" into its theme.

To help fund this and future visiting artist events, RVWS is teaming up with Artsonia, an online children's art museum providing an elective, free, educational resource for children, families, and schools to create art projects. Artsonia develops multi-cultural understanding through art and increases family involvement in children's education as well as providing an online outlet where family members and friends can see their child's art, as well as the art of children from all over the world. If desired, your student's artwork can be printed on a large variety of items for your purchase. 15% of all sales will come back to our art program at River Valley. More detailed information on how you can participate in Artsonia will be coming in the next week.

I am truly excited about this new opportunity to grow our art program and collaborate across grades with this very talented resource, our new friend Mallory. If you have any questions about the program, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely
Sharon Ferguson

From Administration

School Pictures are Now Available!

Hopefully by now you've had a chance to see the portraits hanging in the school lobby. You can purchase your child's portrait and class picture by visiting: <https://hsmphotography.smugmug.com/Other/RVWS-School-Portraits-Class-Pictures-2018/>. The password for this protected gallery is: rvws2018

Please order by December 15! Hilary will be donating a portion of the order proceeds to the school's Annual Fund and will include a digital image of your child's individual portrait for sharing online with your friends and family when you order by December 15.

There's a lot of Buzz in the Hallways of River Valley

In addition to the work the students will be doing with our visiting artist, Mallory Zondag, a school-wide collaborative project to raise awareness of diversity, equality, and inclusion in our community is now on display in the hallways of RVWS. Students participated in an activity together to understand that although racial color-blindness may be a way to cope with discomfort around issues of diversity, it comes at the cost of denying someone their identity and obstructs empathy for racism that still exists. The honey bee theme of this project reflects AWSNA's Waldorf100 celebration and their efforts to promote honeybee conservation. Please visit our hallways to see first hand the inspiring results of this important initiative.

OPEN HOUSE – We need your help!

At 9:45 am on December 8th, (before Winter Fair) RVWS is holding an Open House. Please invite your friends and family who might like to learn more about our school to attend. If you have a young child and would like to learn more about the grade school program – please plan to attend. The morning will segue perfectly into Winter Fair for ongoing family fun. Faculty and staff will continue to be present in the Open House/Model Classroom space during Winter Fair, so questions and conversations can happen throughout the day.

RSVP to info@rivervalleyschool.org.

- Share the event on social media
- Distribute flyers and postcards in your community
- Take a set of yard signs to display
- Invite family and friends

Thank you and see you there!

Substitute Cleaner Needed

We are looking for a substitute evening cleaner to pitch in every once in a while if one of our regular cleaning team is out. The cleaning shift is typically from 5:30 pm-8:30 pm, but the times can be flexible. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Pat Janssen at (610) 982-5606 or by email at pjanssen@rivervalleyschool.org.

RVWS is hiring

Kindergarten/Nursery assistant position open for the 2018/2019 school year. We are taking applications now, to start as soon as we find the right candidate. Hours are from 11:30 am until 3:30 pm, Monday through Friday. No teaching experience is necessary, however a love for children, interest in and appreciation for Waldorf education and willingness to learn and take direction from the lead teachers are absolute requirements! Experience working with young children is a plus. Please send a letter of interest and resume to: lc@rivervalleyschool.org.

Lehigh Valley Charter Arts High School Open House

Tuesday 11/20, 5:30 pm

Home Heating Help is now Available for Pennsylvania Families

Colder weather is quickly approaching, and the PA Department of Human Services wants to let Pennsylvanians know that there is assistance available if they cannot afford to keep their homes warm.

LIHEAP, which stands for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, helps families living on low incomes pay their heating bills in the form of a cash grant. Crisis grants also are available for households in immediate danger of being without heat.

To find out more about the program go to: <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/heatingassistanceliheap/>

From The Faculty

What the Children are Learning:

First Grade – The Wonder of Numbers
Second Grade – Math
Third Grade – Language Arts
Fourth Grade – Norse Myths

Fifth Grade – Math
Sixth Grade – Geology
Seventh Grade – Physics
Eighth Grade – Algebra

From The Board



The Centennial Celebration of Waldorf Education asks us to learn to the change the world by embracing diversity. This call to action acknowledges the power of educating our youth by promoting individual freedom, equality and brotherhood, and the peaceful coexistence of humanity as the starting point and objective of all activity.

The Waldorf 100 Celebration emphasizes conservation of the honeybee. Honeybees work collectively for the good of the hive. Their health is based on the health of the hive, not the individual bee. Our individual health and success relies heavily on the connections within our community – and consequently between groups within the greater society. Through these connections, we intend to inspire curiosity and awareness of our diversity while celebrating the power of human connection.

We are all one hive.

In the spirit of building community, please join us at our annual gala to celebrate 100 years of Waldorf education and our 24 years as the **River Valley Waldorf School** community at Durham Springs in Kintnersville, PA, on March 23, 2019. The 1730's stone farmhouse and barn overlook acres of rolling fields and spring-fed ponds, a truly picturesque setting for our gala.

More information to follow!
Your auction chairs,
Jef Betz and Jennifer Kovach

From Development



NOVEMBER 27TH IS
GIVING TUESDAY

Please encourage your friends and family on social media to help us reach our \$40,000 goal this Giving Tuesday.

Donations can be made online at rivervalley.waldorfschool.org



River Valley Waldorf School is a 501(c)-3 organization. Contributions may be tax deductible.

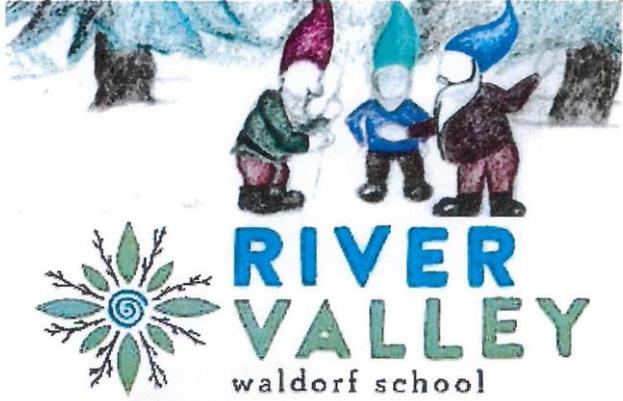
Class Fundraisers

Let the 8th Grade make your Secret Garden Items
\$25 for 20 handmade giftable items

Order by 11/28 at: RVWS.8thGrade@gmail.com

Pay online at: <https://squareup.com/store/rivervalleywaldorfschoo>

Checks payable to RVWS with "8th Grade Fundraiser" in the memo



8th Grade Class Fundraising

The 8th grade students will have a table in the lobby on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons where you can sign up for these services to help raise money for their 8th grade trip:

- Hire the 8th grade to complete your Secret Garden items – 20 items for \$25 - deadline for orders 11/28. Sign up in the lobby OR email RVWS.8thgrade@gmail.com. Payment can be made in person at the 8th grade fundraising table, OR through our website rivervalleywaldorfschool.org through the Give Now!
- Baked goods for sale on Fridays or pre-order holiday breads and pies and cookies.
- Hire an 8th grader for babysitting! The class is offering in-school babysitting during parent/teacher conferences - \$5 per child per conference, 8 children max at a time, both conference days, sign up at the 8th grade fundraising table.
- Hire an 8th grader - or two - for odd jobs - leaf raking, cleaning a closet, assisting with a party!

Thank you,
RVWS 8th grade class

From the Community

Getting to Know You:

An Afternoon of Syrian Food, Culture and Fun.

Celebrating two Syrian families who have settled in Bucks County. Saturday, December 1st, 4:30-6:30
Congregation Kol Emet, 1360 Oxford Valley Road,
Morrisville, PA

Order tickets online:

<https://celebratesyrianfamilies.eventbrite.com>

Sponsored by Bucks County Interfaith Coalition for Refugee Resettlement For further information, contact BCICRR@gmail.com or phone 978-621-7297

Handyman Needed

Mary K Till is looking for a handyman who can give her about two days of work for assorted small jobs around her house. If are such a person or have a recommendation for such a person, please call her at 267-897-0225.

Looking for Storage Space

Looking for indoor space to rent to store a 22' pontoon boat. Will pay cash up-front for 6 months of storage. If interested, please contact Stacy at srobustelli3@comcast.net or 908-625-6023.

STUDENT POTTERY SALE PRESENTED BY KISSIMMEE RIVER POTTERY

Don't miss a chance to shop for unique and beautiful hand-made pottery just in time for Christmas.
Friday Dec. 7th - Reception 6-9 pm, Saturday Dec. 8th & Sunday Dec. 9th 10am - 5pm.

Don't Discard your Pumpkins or Gourds

The Murphy Farm will take any unwanted pumpkins, jack-o-lanterns or gourds off your hands. Their pigs and goats love them! Find Hilary at pick up or drop off or contact her at 908-674-0455 or hilarymurphyphotography@gmail.com to arrange pick up at the school.



Deck the halls with holiday carolers! Fa la la la la...

Having a Christmas or holiday party, or know someone who is? Spread the holiday spirit with THE COUNTRY CAROLERS, accapella vocal trio, available now for bookings in your area! Allow these three lovely ladies, Eve Sheldon, Kira Willey and Gina Ricci to spread some holiday cheer and fill your event, restaurant, store or meeting with the harmonious musical sounds of the season. Contact Gina at ginaricci@live.com for bookings and more info!

Artyard

The Unlikely Whole – September 15-December 30 – Curated by Lucinda Warchol

ArtYard is pleased to present The Unlikely Whole, an exhibition featuring the works of Mariel Capanna, Amie Cunat, Osamu Kobayashi, Amy Pleasant, Kenny Rivero, and Rudy Shepherd. The selected works explore the landscape, the body, memory, and identity as sites of disassembly and reconstruction. Through methods of fragmentation, translation, and repetition, these artists both challenge and reimagine our conception of the whole.

Poetry Confessionals – on view until December 30th

Currently on view in our project gallery are ArtYard's Poetry Confessionals which – besides playfully inverting the term confessional poetry – are spaces where a person can sit down and tell a story to a live poet who is listening on the other side, and who will make of your struggles, sorrows, and memories a little poem. Stop by our gallery to test the Confessionals out yourself or to enter our drawing for a free live session with a poet! Confessionals are open for use during our normal gallery hours.

Upcoming Events:

NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 2, 2018

Poetryyard's Intensive Residential Workshop

with Gabrielle Calvocoressi offers students of poetry a rare opportunity to work closely with a nationally known poet in a workshop-style format that includes only five participants.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 7:30 PM

Screening of **Amarcord**, a carnivalesque portrait of provincial Italy during the fascist period, the most personal film by Federico Fellini.

To learn more about these events, please visit our website www.artyard.org
ArtYard, 62A Trenton Avenue, Frenchtown, NJ 08825

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 7:00 PM

Come to ArtYard to learn how to **make your own crankie device** from cardboard, wood, or reclaimed junk with Mike Tyksinski and Eric Fiorito.

JANUARY 31- FEBRUARY 3rd, 2019

Poetryyard's Intensive Residential Workshop

with Ross Gay

A rare opportunity for a small group of only five participants to work closely with a nationally known poet in a workshop-style format.

Gallery Hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

**Come join the fun at OTAC this Fall at Ottsville Traditional Arts Center
250 Durham Road Ottsville**

OPEN MIC NIGHTS

Warm, fuzzy and friendly space to step out, reach up and share what you've got or what you're working on! Open Mic sign up list plus a featured performer/musician set . Coffee House will feature 2 or more performer/musician sets plus Open Mic sign up. Sea Shanties and sing along with Grace! ***Early sign up for kids!!! OTAC is a Great Space and has the most appreciative audience

December Saturday 12/15 Open Mic/Sing Along/Coffee House for the Holidays 6:00 - 9:00

Bring a little something for the Food Pantry

OTAC Wednesday Jam and Songs 6:00-8:00 and Open Mic Nights - \$5 per person

For updates & further details check out ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com Facebook page

Questions, interest in a fundraiser, event, performance, workshop, etc. contact Grace Morgan gracefulm@aol.com

Ottsville Traditional Arts Center is a multi generational and varied community that provides service through what we all have to share.

From: Waituntil8th.org

Middle School Misfortunes Then and Now, One Teacher's Take

By: Benjamin Conlon

Let's imagine a seventh grader. He's a quiet kid, polite, with a few friends. Just your ordinary, run-of-the-mill twelve-year-old. We'll call him Brian. Brian's halfway through seventh grade and for the first time, he's starting to wonder where he falls in the social hierarchy at school. He's thinking about his clothes a little bit, his shoes too. He's conscious of how others perceive him, but he's not that conscious of it.

He goes home each day and from the hours of 3 p.m. to 7 a.m., he has a break from the social pressures of middle school. Most evenings, he doesn't have a care in the world. The year is 2008. Brian has a cell phone, but it's off most of the time. After all, it doesn't do much. If friends want to get in touch, they call the house. The only time large groups of seventh graders come together is at school dances. If Brian feels uncomfortable with that, he can skip the dance. He can talk to teachers about day-to-day problems. Teachers have pretty good control over what happens at school.

Now, let's imagine Brian on a typical weekday. He goes downstairs and has breakfast with his family. His mom is already at work, but his dad and sisters are there. They talk to each other over bowls of cereal. The kids head off to school soon after. Brian has a fine morning in his seventh grade classroom and walks down to the lunchroom at precisely 12 p.m.

There's a slick of water on the tiled floor near the fountain at the back of the cafeteria. A few eighth graders know about it, and they're laughing as yet another student slips and tumbles to the ground. Brian buys a grilled cheese sandwich. It comes with tomato soup that no one ever eats. He polishes off the sandwich and heads to the nearest trashcan to dump the soup. When his sneakers hit the water slick, he slips just like the others. The tomato soup goes up in the air and comes down on his lap.

Nearby, at the table of eighth graders, a boy named Mark laughs. He laughs at Brian the same way the boys around him laugh at Brian. They laugh because they're older, and they know something the younger kids don't. They laugh at the slapstick nature of the fall. The spilled tomato soup is a bonus. The fall is a misfortune for Brian. That's all. It's not an asset for Mark. A few kids hear the laughter and look over, but Brian gets up quickly and rushes off to the bathroom to change into his gym shorts. Mark tries to retell the story to a friend later. The friend doesn't really get it because he wasn't there. He can't picture it. In fact, Mark seems a little mean for laughing at all.

After lunch, Brian returns to homeroom in his gym shorts. No one seems to notice the change. He breathes a sigh of relief. The cafeteria fall is behind him. He meets his sisters at the end of the day and they ask why he's wearing gym shorts. He tells them he spilled some tomato sauce on his pants. They head home and spend the afternoon and evening together, safe and sound, home life completely separate from school life. Brian doesn't think about the incident again. Only a few people saw it. It's over.

(Continued on next page.)

Now, let's imagine Brian again. Same kid. Same family. Same school. He's still in seventh grade, but this time it's 2018. When Brian sits down for breakfast, his dad is answering an email at the table. His older sister is texting, and his younger sister is playing a video game. Brian has an iPhone too. He takes it out and opens the Instagram app. The Brian from 2008 was wondering about his position in the social hierarchy. The Brian from 2018 knows. He can see it right there on the screen. He has fewer 'followers' than the other kids in his grade. That's a problem. He wants to ask his father what to do, but there's that email to be written. Instead, Brian thinks about it all morning at school. While his teacher talks, he slips his phone out and checks to see how many 'followers' the other kids in class have. The answer doesn't help his confidence. At precisely 12 p.m., he heads to the cafeteria. He buys a grilled cheese. It comes with tomato soup that no one ever eats. At the back of the lunchroom, Mark sits with the other eighth graders. He holds a shiny new iPhone in one hand. Mark has had an iPhone for five years. He's got all the apps. Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. He's got lots of followers too. He doesn't know all of them, but that's okay.

A few years ago, Mark made his first Instagram post. It was a picture of his remote control car. Mark used to really enjoy remote control cars. Mark checked Instagram an hour after putting up that first picture. A bright red dot showed at the bottom of the page. He clicked it. Someone had 'liked' the picture of the car. Mark felt validated. It was good that he posted the picture. A little bit of dopamine was released into Mark's brain. He checked the picture an hour later. Sure enough, another 'like'. More dopamine. He felt even better. For a while, pictures of the remote control car were sufficient. They generated enough 'likes' to keep Mark happy. He no longer got much joy from actually driving the remote control car, but he got plenty from seeing those 'likes' pile up.

Then something started to happen. The 'likes' stopped coming in. People didn't seem interested in the pictures of the car anymore. This made Mark unhappy. He missed the 'likes' and the dopamine that came with them. He needed them back. He needed more exciting pictures, because exciting pictures would bring more views and more 'likes'. So, he decided to drive his car right out into the middle of the road. He had his little brother film the whole thing. He filmed the remote control car as it got flattened by a passing truck. Mark didn't bother to collect it. He just grabbed his phone and posted the video. It was only a few minutes before the 'likes' started coming in. He felt better.

Now it's eighth grade and Mark has become addicted to social media. Sure, he needs a lot more 'likes' to get the same feeling, but that's okay. That just means he needs more content. Good content. Content no one else has. That's the kind that gets a lot of 'likes', really, really fast. Mark has learned the best content comes from filming and posting the embarrassing experiences of classmates.

When he notices that water slick at the back of the cafeteria, he's ready. Each time someone walks by and falls, their misfortune becomes an asset for Mark. A part of Mark wants them to fall. He hopes they fall. Brian walks across the cafeteria with his soup, minding his own business. Suddenly, his feet slide out from under him. The tomato soup goes up in the air and comes down on his lap. He's so embarrassed, that when he stands up and rushes off to the bathroom, he doesn't notice Mark filming.

Mark's fingers race over his iPhone screen before Brian is out of sight. That was a great video he just took, and he wants to get it online. Fast. He knows he's not supposed to have his cell phone out in school, but the teachers really only enforce that rule during class. They all use Twitter and Instagram too. They understand. Mark doesn't know who he just filmed, and he doesn't care. It's not his fault the kid fell on the floor. He's just the messenger. The video is a kind of public service announcement. He's just warning everyone else about the water spot in the cafeteria. That's what Mark tells himself.

He gets the video uploaded to Snapchat first. No time for a caption. It speaks for itself. He has it up on Instagram seconds later. By then, the 'likes' are already coming in. Dopamine floods into Mark's brain. There's a comment on Instagram already! "What a loser!" it says. Mark gives the comment a 'like'. Best to keep the audience happy. This has been a rewarding lunch. The bell's going to ring in a few minutes. Mark sits back and refreshes his screen again and again and again until it does.

Meanwhile, Brian heads back from the bathroom, having changed into his gym shorts. He's still embarrassed about the fall. It happened near the back of the cafeteria, though. He doesn't think many people saw. He hopes they didn't. But when he walks into the classroom, a lot of people look at him. One girl holds her phone up at an odd angle. Is she...taking a picture? The phone comes down quickly and she starts typing, so he can't be sure.

(Continued on next page.)

Class begins. Brian is confused because people keep slipping their phones out and glancing back at him. He asks to go to the bathroom. Inside a stall, he opens Instagram. There he is on the screen, covered in tomato sauce. How could this be? Who filmed this? Below the video, a new picture has just appeared. It's him in his gym shorts. The caption reads, "Outfit change!" Brian scrolls frantically through the feed trying to find the source of the video. He can't. It's been shared and reshared too many times. He notices his follower count has dropped. He doesn't want to go to class. He just wants it to stop. He meets his sisters outside at the end of the day. Several students snap pictures as he walks by. Neither sister says a word. Brian knows why.

Home was a safe place for Brian in 2008. Whatever happened in school, stayed in school. Not now. Brian arrives at his house, heart thundering, and heads straight to his bedroom. He's supposed to be doing homework, but he can't concentrate. Alone in the dark, he refreshes his iPhone again and again and again and again. Brian's family is having his favorite dish for dinner, but he doesn't care. He wants it to be over so he can get back to his phone. Twice, he goes to the bathroom to check Instagram. His parents don't mind, they're checking their own phones.

Brian discovers that two new versions of the video have been released. One is set to music and the other has a nasty narration. Both have lots of comments. He doesn't know how to fight back, so he just watches as the view counts rise higher and higher. His own follower count, his friend count, keeps going in the opposite direction. Brian doesn't want to be part of this. He doesn't like this kind of thing. He can't skip it though. It's not like the dance. And he can't tell a teacher. This isn't happening at school.

He stays up all night refreshing the feed, hoping the rising view count will start to slow. Mark is doing the same thing at the other side of town. He has lots of new followers. This is his best video ever. At 3 a.m., they both turn off their lights and stare up at their respective ceilings. Mark smiles. He hopes tomorrow something even more embarrassing happens to a different kid. Then he can film that and get even more 'likes'. Across town, Brian isn't smiling, but sadly, he's hoping for exactly the same thing.

From the Author

I started teaching in 2009. At that time, public school was very much the way I remembered it. That's not the case anymore. Smartphones and social media have transformed students into creatures craving one thing: content. It's a sad state of affairs.

But there's hope.

Over the last few years, my students have become increasingly interested in stories from the days before smartphones and social media. In the same way many adults look back fondly on simpler times, kids look back to second and third grade, when no one had a phone. I think a lot of them already miss those days. Smartphones and social media aren't going anywhere. Both are powerful tools, with many benefits. But they have fundamentally altered how children interact with the world and not in a good way. We can change that. In addition to the "Wait Until 8th" pledge, consider taking the following steps to help your children reclaim childhood.

Propose that administrators and teachers stop using social media for school related purposes. In many districts teachers are encouraged to employ Twitter and Instagram for classroom updates. This is a bad thing. It normalizes the process of posting content without consent and teaches children that everything exciting is best viewed through a recording iPhone. It also reinforces the notion that 'likes' determine value. Rather than reading tweets from your child's teacher, talk to your children each day. Ask what's going on in school. They'll appreciate it.

Insist that technology education include a unit on phone etiquette, the dark sides of social media and the long-term ramifications of posting online. Make sure students hear from individuals who have unwittingly and unwillingly been turned into viral videos. Tell your children stories from your own childhood. Point out how few of them could have happened if smartphones had been around. Remind your children that they will some day grow up and want stories of their own. An afternoon spent online doesn't make for very good one. Teach your children that boredom is important. They should be bored. Leonardo Da Vinci was bored. So was Einstein. Boredom breeds creativity and new ideas and experiences. Cherish boredom.

Remind them that, as the saying goes, adventures don't come calling like unexpected cousins. They have to be found. Tell them to go outside and explore the real world. Childhood is fleeting. It shouldn't be spent staring at a screen.

Benjamin Conlon is a public school teacher and author of *The Slingshot's Secret*, a middle school mystery for anyone trying to find old-fashioned adventure in the digital age. Benjamin grew up in New England and spent much of his childhood exploring the woods surrounding his hometown. After college, he began teaching elementary school. He wrote *The Slingshot's Secret* as a reminder that even in a world filled with technology, adventure abounds.