● On May 18, we conducted our last required lockdown drill. Chief Bachus of Fairlee, agreed to participate and audit our process. He also did a sweep of the outdoors before declaring the “all clear”, which extended the drill from the usual 4 minutes to complete, to 8 minutes. The drill went well, though the chief pointed out that we have one gym door, which can be problematic and requires some lifting to secure it. Overall, Chief Bachus was very satisfied with the swift and quiet response of teachers and students.

● On May 6-8, our sixth grade students enjoyed their culminating overnight at the Hulbert Center. This is the second year that students have raised their own funds for the trip. Back when our both our elementary schools ran through grade six, this trip provided an opportunity to get the sixth graders together prior to meeting at the Academy.

On May 17-18 our two fourth grades enjoyed days of wonderful weather and activities at the Hulbert Center, engaged in team building activities, prior to their getting together as a fifth grade class at SME in August. We are indebted to Mr. Jason Knowles and the Hulbert Center for their generous contributions toward supporting our district initiatives.

● The hovercraft project in the fourth grade is taking off. Keri Gelenian and Carmen Winchester have paired up on this project to help students understand the mechanics and physics of air pressure, design and flight. The entire process has been recorded and will serve as an example to other students and teachers as to the wide range of curricular outcomes that students can learn through doing projects. We appreciate the use of the Academy facilities, and our fourth grade parents who have volunteered to help.

● Our third graders of both schools helped improve the quality of our Rivendell Trail by building bridges over several creeks and low-lying areas recently. Mrs. Maggie Stoudnour organized this initiative with friends from the Mountain School. Mr. Metayer was a great help in showing the students how to operate a drill so that planks would be securely screwed into the supports. All agreed that despite some confusion about the student drop-off location, the day was a success.

● Our outdoor drums are close to complete installation. Given Mr. Jakubens’s busy schedule, we have had to shelve this project until recently. Students generated the revenue for this project through a grant with the Vermont Rural School Consortium. We also have a large outdoor xylophone that will be installed vertically in the covered area. This space will be used recreationally and can also be used for music instruction. I would like to thank the efforts of Mr. Christie-Maples for spearheading this worthwhile project with our student council, and Mr. Jakubens for helping to bring it to fruition.

● We’d like to recognize the combined efforts of Laina Warsavage, librarian of the Orford Library, and Joyce Russel, our elementary librarian for writing the grant and organizing the author visit on May 7. Our year began with a motivational assembly presented by Duncan McDougall, founder of the Children’s Literacy Foundation, along with a promise that each elementary student in the RISD would receive two new free books at the end of the year. Our distinguished guests included author/presenter Mr. Jim Arnosky and members of the CLiF board. Mr. Arnosky shared his inspirations and writing methods
with our students, accompanying himself on guitar and sketching as he talked. At the conclusion of his presentation, each student selected two books from a wide array provided by the generous donation of CLiF.

- With the staunch support of Elaine Arbour, we have organized a four-day Responsive Classroom professional development workshop for 28 professional members of our district. Years ago, the district made a commitment to this program and method of teaching social/emotional awareness to our students and we now have an opportunity to renew our practice. From June 19 -22, Jodi McErlane, will lead our group though the latest RC methods. We expect this professional development will go far in helping teachers help students learn important social skills.

- On May 25, Mr. Christie-Maples organized the 18th annual sixth grade trip to the Montpelier state house for a tour of the houses of state govt., and an opportunity for the students to make group presentations. A panel consisting of Mr. C., a parent volunteer and I, listened to students present their answers to questions about the circumstances leading to the birth of our nation. We assessed student presentations and responses according to a standard rubric used by many other teachers and students to gauge the quality of their answers. Overall, our students were thoughtful, well prepared and well spoken.

- The report by Mrs. Fritchie and our kindergarten students indicated that their trip to the Newmont Farm in Bradford on May 30, was “the best trip ever.” The students toured the barns and saw the milking operations. The Gladstone family generously donated milk to our school on Friday, June 1 in honor of World Milk Day. Every member of SME received a free milk.

- Our first graders recently visited their friends in Westhire to celebrate some of the great cultural features of Japan. Teachers asked the students to pick an aspect of personal interest in the Japanese culture. To reinforce their learning, each student made a presentation to teach others about their chosen topic. The event concluded with a student exhibition for classmates and parents.

- SME and WES are two of the six schools in our area taking advantage of an arts grant that has allowed us to bring in professional actors from the Northern Stage Co. out of White River Junction, to teach our students about Shakespeare. A couple of times a week for four weeks our students rehearsed an abridged edition of “Twelfth Night.” This well-known comedy is fraught with mistaken identity, plot twists and bawdy comedic moments. Student efforts culminated in a live evening performance at Northern Stage on Thursday, May 24. Coming on the heels of their recent trip to Hulbert, I enjoyed watching each class appreciate their friends’ performance. (Students from Westshire performed “A Mid-Summer Night’s Dream”.) This special performance was well attended by parents and faculty members.