

BERRYBROOK NEWS

October, 2007

Thursday, October 4	Berrybrook Parents Association 7:00 pm
Monday, October 8	Columbus Day, No School
Tuesday, October 16	Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm
Saturday, October 20	Berrybrook BPA Picnic 10:00-1:00
Wednesday, October 24	Berrybrook Board of Directors 7:00 pm
Friday, October 26	Professional Development, No School

Notes from the Headmaster

This past September was my eighth “back to school” at Berrybrook, and the first one that has not taken place in the farm house. Starting the school year in the temporary classrooms was new for me, so I was a little apprehensive. In addition to the new classroom spaces, there were other changes at Berrybrook – a new parking lot, and a construction site for the new school house being built. I wondered about how these changes would impact the children starting school. But after the first few weeks, I am amazed at how familiar the start of school has been. Children were excited to come through the gate. Parents came and took pictures. As usual, there were a few tears and as always, teachers and parents worked together to ease the transition. Home visits were conducted - a Berrybrook tradition that has proven to be an excellent opportunity for children to develop a more personal relationship with teachers. Watching the children adapt so well to their peers, teachers and classrooms, I realized that the essential Berrybrook experience doesn't change. What seem like big changes for teachers and parents may not be recognized by children simply eager to get to their classrooms and enjoy all of the good things that happen at school. Berrybrook School was founded in 1954 by Katharine Mann, to provide a place for children to learn by trying, to develop their own ideas and to find their own answers. In 2002, the Berrybrook Board of Directors started a strategic planning process to “focus our attention and our work together.” One of the outcomes was a Vision, Mission and Values statement approved by the Board on April 30, 2003. Through out the changes in our physical spaces, our Board, Parents and Teachers have remained true to those values, and our commitment to those values means that this school year will have the same child-centered, wonderful qualities and experiences that children have enjoyed since 1954.

A Statement of Purpose: Why Berrybrook Exists

Our Vision

Each and every child deserves the opportunity for an early childhood education that awakens the joy of discovery and learning.

Our Mission

Berrybrook provides a special environment for young children, their families and their communities.

- ☒ At Berrybrook, young children learn, are supported and are nurtured. They prepare themselves for future success, form cherished lifelong memories, and discover their own path to greater independence.
- ☒ Families are given opportunities to promote healthy relationships with children, one another and the natural world around them. And,
- ☒ Child educators pursue and advocate for a greater understanding of childhood. These professionals continuously improve our collective ability to guide children as they grow and flourish.

Our Values: The principles that guide us

In the Berrybrook tradition, we are guided by and committed to these fundamental principles and practices:

Child-Centered

- ☒ Celebrating childhood and nurturing the whole child.
- ☒ Understanding and attending to the full range of each child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs.

Respect and Caring

- ☒ Respecting and caring about individuals, families, relationships and cultures.
- ☒ Respecting one another's words, contributions and opinions.
- ☒ Respecting our planet, its seasons and all its wonders.

Fun

- ☒ Letting children be children;
- ☒ Children deserve and need joy, laughter and merriment.

Professionalism

- ☒ Respecting and valuing those who work with and nurture young children.
- ☒ Building, maintaining and supporting a fully engaged, deeply satisfied and passionately committed community of early childhood educators.

Interconnectedness

- ☒ Appreciating the complex and wonderful web of life into which we are born, we live and we die.
- ☒ Honoring the crafts, trades and professions that allow our society to function successfully.
- ☒ Celebrating the varied traditions that together reflect the richness of individual cultures and the collective beauty of the human experience.

I would like to welcome new and returning families and thank all of you for sharing the vision, mission and values that make our community so special. I look forward to another successful year.

Pat Keeley

Classroom News

Berrybrook curriculum for September was planned to assist in school adjustment and to introduce the children to class routines and expectations with a focus on getting acquainted. During September, simple activities were planned. For example, children explored summer memories, made seashell collages, created watercolor fish and experimented mixing colors and finding out what two colors when mixed make purple (red & blue!).

Some days were spent making jelly - sorting, boiling, smushing, grapes to get lots of juice. This year, volunteers took ingredients home to turn the juice into jelly on the stove. Thank you so much to those hard workers! We hope families enjoyed the jelly sent home. Children certainly enjoyed the jelly at school for snack.

Some September songs were:
"Hello, (classmate), How do you do?
Who's that sitting next to you?"

"Open Them, Shut Them"

"If You're Happy and You Know It"

"Make New Friends"

As we move into October, children are starting to feel more comfortable. Each day, teachers prepare the environment based on a child's natural curiosity and desire to learn. The goal is to promote independence, concentration and creativity. During October children will be learning about fire safety.

Experiences include dramatic play with lots of fire fighting equipment, and a visit with the Duxbury Fire Department. Fire Trucks are scheduled to visit Berrybrook on Wednesday October 5 for the 3 & 5 Day classes and on Friday, October 7 for the 2 Day and 4 Day classes.

Berrybrook fire drills started in September and will continue during the year. During our drills, teachers discuss the necessity of being able to get all children out of the school in case of an emergency. Children are reminded that we all stay together and that teachers will make sure that no one is left behind because we check all areas, even the bathroom. Once outside, children gather along the fence behind the classrooms and teachers take attendance. It is a good idea for families to talk about fire safety at home and to agree on a safe a meeting place.

Halloween will be celebrated in October. There will be Halloween songs and stories, a Jack-o-lantern and a special snack. Halloween can be overwhelming for some children, and that is why at Berrybrook, we ask that costumes remain at home. A Halloween notice with more details will be in cubbies later this month.

This month, each class will be carving a large pumpkin. If you would like to donate a pumpkin to your child's class, please talk to your child's teacher. Thank you!

Classroom Calendars

Each month, teaching teams meet to discuss what activities will be appropriate for their particular group. After their planning session, all classes post activity calendars in the classroom to let parents know what activities will be included during the month.

Parents should know however, that activities listed for each day may be changed from time to time for a variety of reasons. Teachers, as their first priority, must plan each day based on the needs of the children. It is not uncommon to reschedule an activity because another approach is more appropriate for the group. As a general rule, all activities happen during the month, but the curriculum remains fluid to meet the needs of the children. That is also why teachers refrain from sending home calendars. We would not want to disappoint children who are expecting an activity that has been rescheduled. In addition, we want to accentuate the joy of discovery a child experiences by reaching their own conclusions about what they see each day in their classrooms.

Animal Care

It is important not to feed anything at all to the sheep. Mrs. O'Neil feeds the sheep daily. The sheep always appreciate attention and kind words

Thank you.

Arrival & Dismissal

Teachers need every minute to prepare for the children so we appreciate parents waiting until the clock in our entryway says 9:00am or 1:00pm before entering the classrooms. A quick good bye is best. The longer parents linger, the less time children have for friends and activities. Time goes fast at Berrybrook!

Likewise, teachers appreciate parents picking up on time. Children may get anxious if parents are late. Morning parents should pick up at 11:45 and afternoon parents should arrive at 3:45.

We ask parents going down to the lower playground to sign out children to please remind their children that they should wait for you to come all the way down. We are lucky to have such a wonderful playground and families are welcome to take advantage of our space by staying to play with friends after school. We ask that you sign your child out and empty your child's cubby as soon as you arrive. We want to be sure children have all of their belongings and creations to take home.

Thank for your cooperation.

Thank you to the Couto family for a generous donation to purchase an additional picnic table for our playground.

Berrybrook Parents' Association

Welcome to all Berrybrook families! We would like to thank all of the families who have already made a BPA dues donation. We appreciate your participation and generosity. The BPA has traditionally collected dues to enhance the learning experience for the parents and children. This year, the suggested donation is \$25, but any amount is greatly appreciated. Dues may be placed in the BPA envelope in the entryway of the classrooms.

September is such a busy month, and getting back into our usual schedule has been hectic! Due to a change in schedule, our first Berrybrook Parents Association meeting will be on Thursday, October 4th, at 7:00PM. Please look out for the little blue invitations in your child's cubby, and mark it on your calendar. We will be making plans for the BPA ground Breaking Picnic scheduled for Saturday October 20th from 10:00 – 1:00. Berrybrook families are invited to bring a picnic blanket and enjoy refreshments, music and each other! More information will be in cubbies soon.

Being involved with the BPA will really enhance your Berrybrook experience. This is such an exciting time in the history of Berrybrook. Please come to the meeting and show your support!

Sincerely,

Nancy Cooney, BPA President

Berrybrook Parent Discussion Group

On Tuesday, October 16th, at 7:00 pm, Mrs. Delano and Mrs. O'Neil will hold the first Parent Discussion Group of the year. It will be a great opportunity to find out more about the Berrybrook philosophy. The discussion that evening will focus on Parent Participation in Berrybrook environments and how parents can prepare themselves to be effective helpers in the classroom.

The 2 & 3 day classes will post a "volunteer sign up sheet" on the classroom bulletin boards for parents to sign up for a time to volunteer.

The 4 & 5 day classes have a different approach to volunteers. Because the older children are so capable and independent, they do not require as much assistance as the younger children. For this reason, teachers arrange for volunteers when help is needed with a specific activity. There are many opportunities for parents to participate in the 4 & 5 Day classroom environments. Interested parents should speak directly to their child's teachers.

Parents who would like to share a special talent, occupation or hobby with a class should feel free to speak to teachers and parents who may not have lots of time during the school day may volunteer in other ways such as baking, sewing or making a batch of fresh playdough. Parent participation enriches our program. Thank you.

Welcome

The Berrybrook community welcomed many new members over the summer -

Quinn Edwards

Reed Garret

Gabriel Kent

Caroline Kinsherf

Teddy Mullin

And a new arrival just last week –

Leo Kirk

Congratulations to those Berrybrook families!

Tuition Payments

Tuition payment #3 is now due. Payment #1 was made over the summer and the second payment was due on September 1st.

Monthly tuition is:

2 Day	\$ 197.00
3 Day	\$ 290.00
4 Day	\$ 359.00
5 Day	\$ 424.00

If you have any questions, please feel free to call 781-585-2307 or email me at berrybrookbilling@adelphia.net.

Thank you!
Mrs. Watts

Hurt No Living Thing

Hurt no living thing;
Ladybird, nor butterfly,
Nor moth with dusty wing,
Nor cricket chirping cheerily,
Nor grasshopper so light of leap,
Nor dancing gnat, nor beetle fat,
Nor harmless worms that creep

Christina G. Rosetti

Throughout the year, teachers work with children to build respect for living things. "Living things" include themselves, their classmates, other people, and all plants and animals. We encourage children to use words when settling differences, and to be thoughtful and kind to each other. Teachers make sure even insects in the classroom are carefully released to the outdoors. Outside, worms and other creatures can be observed, but should be left right where they are. Trees and bushes are also living things, so you would never pull on their branches, berries or leaves. We appreciate parents reinforcing these lessons to "Hurt No Living Thing."



“the Given”
by
Priscilla O’Neil

The older I get, the more I realize how little I know. But there is one thing I know for sure and I learned it from years of experience teaching preschool. I call it, “the Given.”

Definition: “the Given”

Every child (even the ones with wings and halos) will bring a challenge he or she is working through and with every child, comes parents who are working through the challenge with the child.

Challenges are many and varied. Separation, sharing, verbal problem solving, developing self esteem, or just making a conscious effort to use a softer or louder speaking voice are only a few of the challenges children face on a daily basis.

I would like to tell you a story... a true story. Many years ago there were in my class two boys who had a great deal of difficulty cooperating with each other. Everyday one or the other would come to me to report that his building had been knocked down or the toy he was playing with had been grabbed away. Everyday one of the mothers would come to me to report what had happened to her child. Nothing seemed to help the situation. Then it came time for parent-teacher conferences. I remember sitting at the desk when one of the mothers arrived. She came in and sat down facing me. “I’ve decided what I am going to do,” she said. Immediately before my eyes passed an invisible ticker-tape. On that tape were the words, WITHDRAW, WITHDRAW, WITHDRAW. “I’ve decided,” she said, “to invite the boy over for a playdate!”

The day came and I could barely sleep that night wondering how things had gone. The next morning there arrived at school two happy children and two happy mothers and as the year progressed they became the best of friends. The mother could have withdrawn her child or told him to stay away from that classmate, but NO, instead she reached out to the child and his mother and that reaching out made all the difference.

Times have changed. Gone are the days when we could say to our children, “If you don’t like what that person is saying or doing, find someone else to play with.” Isolation is not the answer. It is very lonely for a child to be excluded and painful for the parent to witness. Parents worry that their child won’t be invited to playdates or birthday parties and often parents are excluded because of their child’s behavior. Drop off and pick up at school can become a nightmare for these parents, BUT this need not happen. All we need to do is reach out as that mother did so many years ago.

Invite children for playdates. Talk with other parents. Acknowledge that you are working on a parenting issue. Be honest. Be sincere. Exchange ideas and suggestions. Children are everyone’s responsibility. If we reach out and work together we can make a difference.

(Mrs. O’Neil teaches in Berrybrooks’ 5 Day Morning Program)

Berrybrook Board of Directors

We all have our share of anxieties, especially as they relate to return-to-school issues. Our children's feelings are no different, yet they do have their own ways of displaying them. Anxiety about separation, performance, and socialization is normal, and parents have been finding ways to deal with it for years and years. I understand that each child's transition is his or her own, but sometimes general guidelines can be helpful. I have found one resource to be particularly helpful in reminding me of things I can do as a parent to help my children overcome stressful times. The following excerpt is from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and is offered to you only as a guideline – some suggestions on how to help your child with this transition to a new school year.

Let your children know you care. If your child is anxious about school, send personal notes in the lunch box or book bag. Reinforce the ability to cope. Children absorb their parents' anxiety, so model optimism and confidence for your child. Let your child know that it is natural to be a little nervous anytime you start something new but that your child will be just fine once he or she becomes familiar with classmates, the teacher, and school routine.

Do not overreact. If the first few days are a little rough, try not to over react. Young children in particular may experience separation anxiety or shyness initially but teachers are trained to help them adjust. If you drop them off, try not to linger. Reassure them that you love them, will think of them during the day, and will be back.

Remain calm and positive. Acknowledge anxiety over a bad experience the previous year. Children who had a difficult time academically or socially or were teased or bullied may be more fearful or reluctant to return to school. If you have not yet done so, share your child's concern with the school and confirm that the problem has been addressed. Reassure your child that the problem will not occur again in the new school year, and that you and the school are working together to prevent further issues.

Reinforce your child's ability to cope. Give your child a few strategies to manage the situation on his or her own. But encourage your child to tell you or the teacher if the problem persists. Maintain open lines of communication with the school.

Arrange play dates. Try to arrange get-togethers with some of your child's classmates before school starts and during the first few weeks of school to help your child re-establish positive social relationships with peers.

Plan to volunteer in the classroom. If possible, plan to volunteer in the classroom at least periodically throughout the year. Doing so helps your child understand that school and family life are linked and that you care about the learning experience. Being in the classroom is also a good way to develop a relationship

with your child's teachers and classmates, and to get firsthand exposure to the classroom environment and routine. Most teachers welcome occasional parent help, even if you cannot volunteer regularly.

Resources:

Clark, L. (1996). *SOS: Help for parents* (2nd ed.). Berkley, CA: Parents' Press. ISBN: 0935111204.

Dawson, M. P. (2004). Homework: A guide for parents. In A. Canter, L. Paige, M. Roth, I. Romero, & S. Carroll (Eds.), *Helping children at home and school II: Handouts for families and educators*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Rimm, S. (1996). *Dr. Sylvia Rimm's smart parenting: How to raise a happy, achieving child*. New York: Crown. ASIN: 0517700638.

Websites:

National Association of School Psychologists – www.nasponline.org
Parent Information Center – www.parentinformationcenter.org

Not all of the above suggestions apply to Berrybrook, and some are more relevant to the first weeks of school. I hope it provides you with a guideline, though, to help you help your child with all his or her transitions.

We are very fortunate to have such a remarkable staff of caring and devoted teachers at Berrybrook. Not only do they instantly reduce anxiety just by being there when you arrive, but they find a way to always turn a stress into a positive life experience for our children (and us!).

As the Board of Directors, we have important decisions to make for our School and its future. Our job is easier knowing the School is so much more than a building. Mrs. Keeley and the entire staff are absolutely wonderful, and they remind us daily with their expertise and compassion that Berrybrook is about the children, the families, the staff, and our experiences together. I am forever grateful to Berrybrook School – its past and present – and I am proud to be on its Board of Directors as we take steps to assure its future for generations to come. On behalf of the Berrybrook community, I want to thank Mrs. Keeley and the entire staff for easing our anxiety during this time of transition. We appreciate all that you do. And, by working together, we will have another very special year.

Mark Longsjo

President, Berrybrook Board of Directors