

BERRYBROOK NEWS

April, 2010

Spring Rain

The storm came up so very quick
It could not have been quicker.
I should have brought my hat along,
I should have brought my slicker.

My hair is wet, my feet are wet,
I couldn't be much wetter,
I fell into a river once,
But this is even better.

- *Marchette Chute*

Friday, April 2

Good Friday, No School

Wednesday, April 7

Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm

Tuesday, April 13

School Pictures, 3 Day & 4 Day

Tuesday, April 13

Pat Hague, Nutritionist 7:00 pm
"What do we feed our Kids?"
Parent Enrichment sponsored by the BPA

Thursday, April 15

School Pictures, 2 Day & 5 Day

April 19-23

Spring Vacation

Tuesday, April 27

BPA Meeting 7:00 pm

Wednesday, April 28

Berrybrook Board of Directors 7:00 pm

Notes from the Headmaster

"Children are natural explorers and scientists. They are intrinsically drawn to construct meaning from their own direct experience and from their interactions with the environment: the place, the materials, and the exchanges that occur with other children and adults." (Sullivan, G. & Banning, W. 2010, *the experience of childhood as hanami- Celebrating the special moments in time*. March/April Exchange pp 14-18.) I wanted to share this statement with parents because I think it represents the Berrybrook philosophy of learning by doing. At Berrybrook, teachers arrange the environment to allow children the time to process each activity at their own pace.

To the untrained eye, children in Berrybrook classrooms appear to be “just playing,” but our teachers know that children learn best through play and hands-on experiences. Teachers build curriculum based on a child’s natural curiosity and delight in discovery. By observing and documenting behavior regularly, teachers focus attention on each individual child. Reviewing the information gathered and reflecting on it helps teachers to know each child better and to draw appropriate conclusions about the child and the program curriculum. It gives teachers information needed to tailor program activities to meet and extend the skills and the interests of each child.

I often tell parents who visit our school, one of our goals is to have children engaged but not rushed. Children need time - time to think, time to respond, time to work on a skill. Often, children will choose the same activity over and over. Occasionally, a parent will ask, “When will he choose something besides the water table?” or, “All she wants to do is paint at the easel.” When children choose the same activity day after day they are working on a specific skill. They will continue with that activity until they are satisfied. Parents might notice this behavior at home. I’m sure many of your children have a favorite book that they ask to be read repeatedly. Parents get tired of reading the same story long before children are willing to give it up. Children are getting what they need from that story each time it is read. At Berrybrook we allow children the time to process each activity at their own pace, and again and again, if necessary.

Another paragraph from the Sullivan & Banning article speaks to the idea of allowing children to spend the time they need in hands-on exploration:

“Making the time children need to explore and have authentic experiences of discovery and learning is challenging in a society like ours, which is increasingly hurried and stressed. No one is exempt from the time pressures exerted by the productivity model which insists on doing more, better, faster, and which presumes a linear pattern of learning and growth. Wise and experienced teachers know that this model is flawed and incomplete and that much of children’s learning is accomplished by revisiting concepts and ideas many, many times and applying their understandings in a number of contexts. It is only in this way, over time, that children are able to test and refine their ideas and mastery of concepts in ways that are meaningful and that they can generalize to other areas of their learning and lives.” (Sullivan, G. & Banning, W. 2010, *the experience of childhood as hanami- Celebrating the special moments in time*. March/April Exchange pp 14-18.)

The following page lists some of the activities found in Berrybrook environments and our goals and objectives for learning and development. It is true that the activities may be described as play, but they are also opportunities for children to develop, explore, organize, build, compare, practice, reflect, sort, regulate, and experiment. Given plenty of time to engage in these activities at their own interest level, Berrybrook children will translate these experiences into skills they will build on their entire lives.

Pat Keeley

Activity

Easels

Two or three easels are available with Large paper, different colors and brushes

Table Activity

A new activity is planned each day linked to the current curriculum focus that stimulates interest and requires little teacher intervention.

Blocks

The block area contains a large variety of building blocks, often presented with accessories that are linked to current curriculum focus.

Dramatic Play Area

The environment is set up for "housekeeping" and dramatic play. It changes several times during the year with materials linked to current curriculum focus.

Manipulatives

Teachers arrange smaller manipulatives for independent or small group activity including puzzles, legos, pegs, etc.

Playdough

Teachers encourage independent or small group activity with playdough or other substances (goop, clay, putty.) with changing accessories linked to current curriculum.

Quiet Area/Listening Center

Comfortable seating is available in the classroom, set up in an out of the way area, with different books available on a rotating basis

Goals and Objectives

Children build upper body strength which is important in developing fine motor skills. They express themselves, experiment with space, line formation and color and develop creativity.

Children build small motor skills by gluing, cutting, painting with multiple tactile elements. They build self-confidence, creativity and concentration. Projects provide opportunities for emergent reading and writing.

Children experiment with size, length, quantities, balance, and relationships. They work with individuals and groups creating and problem solving, and develop and expand their imaginations.

Children develop positive self-image, role-play other people and environments, and cooperate with peers. They work to understand social roles of family members and other adults.

Children develop fine motor skills and concentration, practice matching, discriminating and sorting skills. The activities stimulate cooperative play and problem solving.

Children develop muscles that will build motor skills and experience different tactile sensations. They create 3 dimensional objects. When children help to make playdough, they practice measuring, mixing and kneading.

Children explore the written word and images in books and magazines. Children also use this area for self-reflection and self-regulation.

Sand Table

In first year classes, a small table at children's height with sand and accessories linked to current curriculum is available.

The sand provides a calming transition activity, and an opportunity to practice pouring, measuring, and sorting.

Science and Discovery Area

Nature items linked to the current curriculum focus available for observation and examination.

Children observe properties, experiment with volume and weight. Practice hand and eye coordination, and experience different tactile sensations.

Water Table

Small table containing water, but also occasionally other substances such as shaving cream, snow, soil with varying accessories linked to current curriculum topics.

Children experiment with hands on assessment of natural objects. They practice powers of observation, classification, and discrimination.

Group Time

Teachers plan large group activities, catch up on news, classroom issues. There are songs, games, finger plays, and books linked to the current curriculum focus.

Circle time encourages understanding of self and others through movement, music, rhythm and sharing of ideas. Children participate in games and dramatic play while taking turns and listening to others. They participate as a member of a community.

Snack time

Sharing of food activities include cooking and food preparation, hand washing and the pleasure of sharing a meal with others.

Children build social skills and manners. They practice counting, cutting, spreading and pouring, and cleaning up and learn about healthy foods.

Outdoor Play

Children go outdoors everyday weather permitting. Other outdoor activities include nature walks, sledding, and kite flying.

Children build gross motor skills, balance, strength, and confidence and they have multiple and varied opportunities to explore natural surroundings.

All areas and activities provide opportunities for emergent reading and writing at the children's ability and interest level.

It is better to ask some of the questions than to know all the answers

- James Thurber

2 & 3 Day Classroom Activities

During the Month of March we enjoyed creating and learning about dinosaurs and transportation. The school was alive with the sound of music as various instruments were introduced and enjoyed in our classrooms. St Patrick's Day was celebrated with Irish soda bread and lots of green food!

The children enjoyed a few favorite Berrybrook traditions during March. Teachers tapped the Maple trees as soon as we had warm days and cold nights – which means the sap will be running. The children enjoyed watching the tapping process and checking the buckets to see how much sap was being collected. You may have noticed the sap boiling on the stove. It takes a while for sap to turn into syrup! The 2 & 3 Day Classes enjoyed their syrup on pancakes. Another tradition children enjoy every spring is the painting of blown eggs. Thank you to parents for donating eggs. The painted eggs were very beautiful. Our traditional chocolate *Wacky Bunny Cake* was a special snack at the end of the month.

As the weather gets warmer we will be watching for signs of spring. Children will see the forsythia blooming and will be growing their own plants in class. Our activities will include exploring with kites, wind catchers and rainbows. The warmer weather invites us to explore the many outdoor trails and environments Berrybrook has to offer.

We look forward to having our class picture taken on picture day because so many true friendships have formed and memorable activities were shared during our time together.

It is a pleasure having parents in the classroom and children are so comfortable at this point in the year that they enjoy sharing Mom or Dad with their classmates. If you wish to come in for a morning please sign up on the volunteer sheets on the classroom bulletin board.

Happy Spring!
2 & 3 Day Teachers



4 & 5 Day Classroom Activities

As the March winds disappear hopefully April will be warm with very few showers! April is a time to watch the changing of the season from winter to spring. The children will be watching and learning about some of the early blooming bushes such as pussy willows and forsythia. They will be watching carefully as they travel around town to see if they can spot these bushes as they miraculously change.

Pussy Willow

I know a little pussy,
Her coat is silver gray.
She lives down in the meadow,
Not very far away.

Although she is a pussy,
She'll never be a cat.
For she's a pussy willow,
Now what do you think of that?

Meow, Meow, Meow, Meow,
Meow,
Meow,
Meow,
SCAT!

In April, we will be focusing on the arrival of spring flowers and insects. We will be observing and learning some interesting facts about insects. Throughout the year we teach children to respect all living things, even small creatures. Our classrooms have bug catchers which we use frequently to save any insects that find their way inside. We have also been working on friendship and the children have attended friendship meetings where they discuss and agree on the proper way to speak to and respect a friend.

At Berrybrook each day we have the opportunity to drive by Thelma, Mrs. O'Neil's sheep who lives in the "goat house." The 4 & 5 day children will be learning about sheep this month and discover what they can do with the sheep's wool. Watch for a project that the children will be creating relating to these animals!

BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP

Baa, baa black (white) sheep
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full.

One for my master
And one for my dame,
And one for the little boy or girl
Who lives down the lane.

Baa, baa black (white) sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full.

Reminder from the 4 & 5 Day Classes!



Check for the full moon
this month on April 28th!

School Pictures

Please mark your calendars with the dates for school pictures:

Tuesday, April 13, 3 Day & 4 Day

Thursday, April 15, 2 Day & 5 Day

Sandy Krupa Photography will be taking pictures this year. More information about packages and pricing will be sent home soon.

Berrybrook Parents' Association

Spring has finally arrived and we can now look forward to spending more time outdoors!

In March, we launched the BPA fundraiser where children designed their own stationary, note pads, stickers, and gift tags. This successful fundraiser raised almost five hundred dollars! Thanks to all the Berrybrook families who participated in this fundraiser. Your support is greatly appreciated. The orders should be in by the end of April and we will place them in your child's cubby when they arrive.

April is filled with many wonderful enrichment programs. We look forward to having the Spinner visit the classrooms to share with the children her unique talent of spinning wool! Jennie Mulqueen from Metro Music Together will also be visiting the classrooms and sharing her musical talents. In addition, storyteller Lady Laura will visit after April vacation.

Please save the date for the annual **Spring Fling**. It is scheduled for Tuesday, **May 18th from 4-6pm** with the rain date scheduled for May 19th. It is a family event sponsored by the BPA to say thanks for all your support this year. Dinner will be provided and a special outdoor performance by Mama Steph will make the afternoon event even more special!

And finally, we will be looking for new BPA officers for the next school year. If you are interested in getting involved please let us know! Being a BPA officer

is a wonderful way to get involved and give back to Berrybrook!

Please join us at our **next BPA meeting** scheduled for **April 27 @ 7pm**. We will be planning the Teacher Appreciation luncheon (held in June), finalizing our Spring Fling plans, and discussing how to recruit new BPA officers. We look forward to seeing you there!

Jane Redman,
BPA President

BPA Parent Enrichment
Sifting Through the Nutrition
Hype: organic, natural, local,
sugar, fiber, fat -
What do we feed our kids?
Find Out Tuesday,
April 13 at 7:00 pm
Speaker: Pat Hague,
Nutritionist of 25 years
and local foodie.

Memory Books!

Memory Books have been a tradition at Berrybrook for many years. As you know from the classroom photo albums going home, teachers take many photographs during the year. At the end of the year, those photographs will be used to create a "memory book" for every child at Berrybrook.

In April, classroom parents are asked to work with teachers to coordinate the creation of the memory books. Every year, the books are unique to each

class. Classroom parents gather supplies and come up with a general format – a cover, how the books are assembled -, but each parent will create a unique book for their child. The books are meant to be a nice keepsake for the children, and they may be very simple. Individual parents will spend more or less time on the books, depending on their interest. It is much like what we expect of the children in class – every interpretation of the daily project is appropriate!

Classroom parents usually organize a meeting to invite parents in their class to come together to create the books. Berrybrook can supply glue sticks, tape, three hole punches, scissors and markers. We also have ribbon and yarn on hand, and a laminator that classes may use if they like. Teachers will provide photos and other items such as poems, songs, recipes, class lists, etc. Classroom parents may gather additional items; colored paper, stamps, fancy scissors, ribbon, and other materials based on input from their class.

Classroom parents will be contacting families soon with plans for assembling the books. Making memory books is a Berrybrook tradition, but *how* they are made is up to parents. Be creative, be relaxed and have fun!

Your 9th and final 2009-2010 tuition payment is due April 1.

2 Day	\$ 222.00
3 Day	\$ 325.00
4 Day	\$ 404.00
5 Day	\$ 476.00

Thank you!

Parent Discussion Group

The Parent Discussion Group met on Thursday, March 18th. The topic was “Defiant Behavior” which led to a sharing of the trials and tribulations of parenting along with suggestions and tales of success.

How fortunate Berrybrook children are to have dedicated and devoted parents (whether able to attend the Parent Discussion Group meetings or not) who strive to expand their parenting skills.

This past meeting Mrs. Fallon, parent of a 5 Day AM child, introduced us to a book “Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline” by Becky A. Bailey, Ph.D. This book is now in the Berrybrook Parent Library located in the lobby.

Perhaps you have read an article or book about parenting that you would like to share at the Parent Discussion Group meetings. If so, please let us know. We welcome your input.

Please join us on Wednesday, April 14th at 7pm for our next discussion entitled “**Movin’ On**”. We will discuss preparing you and your child for transitions such as a new classroom, new school, new teachers, new home – in addition to the transition from spring to summer and summer to a new school year. We hope you join us, along with experienced parents who will share their stories of expectation, preparation and success during these transitional times.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Mrs. O’Neil, Mrs. Delano, Mrs. La Forest