

February 2012

Wednesday, February 8

Berrybrook Board Meeting 7:30 pm

Wednesday, February 15

Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm

February 20-24

Winter Break



Notes from the Headmaster

The Reading Mother

You may have tangible wealth untold:
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.

Richer than I you can never be –
I had a mother who read to me.

- by Strickland Gillilan

From *Best Loved Poems of the American People* (Gillilan, cited in Trelease, 1986, p. vi).

I might change the above poem to include Fathers and others, but I love the sentiment. Early childhood experts agree that literacy begins at birth. Before children enter Berrybrook they have already had years of early literacy in their every day lives at home. A clear strength of the home environment is that it can offer children opportunities for uncontrived learning situations. Achieving literacy includes interacting with books and writing materials, but it also is about skills acquired in the ordinary activities of everyday life. Berrybrook parents will be able to identify many examples of literacy learning at home. These include children selecting items while shopping by recognizing familiar labels, writing shopping lists, following a recipe, operating the washing machine, sorting laundry, writing cards to friends, drawing on steam on a window, reading along side a parent, using a computer, singing, listening to music and looking at pictures and photo albums. In addition, children are surrounded by environmental print - on packages and clothing, on streets, in stores, in catalogs and newspapers. Berrybrook students have regular opportunities to see their parents read for pleasure, for practical purposes, and to find information. When children see parents reading and writing they learn unconscious lessons about what it is to be a reader or writer. Parents also show their children that reading can be enjoyed and shared by reading to them. Reading together is an important way to build intimacy among family members.

At Berrybrook, teachers supplement and support the literacy experiences children have already had by helping children investigate the real world with numerous and varied literacy activities. We accept and extend what children already know and we understand that literacy is a process that occurs in natural ways in meaningful contexts. Teachers use the standards of the NAEYC as well as the Massachusetts Department of Education *Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences in Language Arts* to plan literacy activities. The following are some specific activities we use to promote early literacy at Berrybrook:

LANGUAGE

- Observe and use appropriate ways of interacting in a group (taking turns in talking; listening to peers; waiting until someone is finished; asked questions and waiting for an answer; gaining the floor in appropriate ways).
- Participate actively in discussions, listen to the ideas of others, and ask and answer relevant questions.
- Communicate personal experiences or interests.
- Engage in play experiences that involve naming and sorting common words in various classifications.
- Listen to and use formal and informal language.

READING AND LITERATURE

- Listen to a wide variety of age appropriate literature read aloud. Develop familiarity with the forms of alphabet letters, awareness of print, and letter forms.
- Listen to, identify, and manipulate language sounds to develop auditory discrimination and phonetic awareness.
- Link letters with sounds in play activities.
- Engage actively in read-aloud activities by asking questions, offering ideas, predicting or retelling important parts of a story or informational book.
- Listen to several books by the same author or using the same illustrator.
- Listen to, recite, sing, and dramatize a variety of age-appropriate literature.
- Relate themes and information in books to personal experiences.
- Recognize and supply rhythm and rhyme in poetry.
- Listen to, recognize, and use a broad vocabulary of sensory words.

COMPOSITION

- Using their own words or illustrations to describe their experiences, tell imaginative stories, or communicate information about a topic of interest.
- Add details or make changes to published or class-made stories.
- Use emergent writing skills to make letters in many settings and for many purposes.
- Arrange events in order when dictating a story.
- Generate questions and gather information to answer their questions in various ways.

Parents can incorporate all of these activities during ordinary, everyday activities as well as the special time set aside for reading at home. Children benefit from families and teachers working together to encourage the growth of language and literacy.

Pat Keeley

First Year Program News

The New Year has begun! We are glad to have the children back in the classrooms. Most are now comfortable with the daily routine and just eager to play and see their friends. They have enjoyed and explored Bears, Birds and the Berrybrook Hospital. Your children have discovered different types of bears including where and how they live. Some classes enjoyed a Teddy Bear Picnic! The children have created birds, fed the birds and played bird games ...“Blue Bird, Blue Bird Thru My Window”. Learning is such fun! The Berrybrook Hospital provided a comfortable opportunity for your child to touch, feel, try and ask questions about a hospital or doctors office environment. The Veterinarian Hospital was also very popular with the children.

February means hearts, hearts and more hearts, pink shaving cream, red glitter and painting with marbles. A Berrybrook Post Office in each classroom will provide a new environment for your children to explore. Each class will also take a field trip to a local Post Office to mail a Valentine to their family.

3 Day - Room 1
wednesday, February 8th @ 9 am

3 Day - Room 3
Tuesday, February 7th @ 9 am

2 Day - Room 3
Thursday, February 10th @ 9 am

(please look for notices in your cubby
about this field trip)

Valentine's Day will be celebrated with a special snack and an opportunity for

children to deliver valentines made at home to each of their friends. We ask that each child provide a valentine for each member of their class. However, for ease in distributing the valentines, children may sign their own name but *please leave envelopes blank*. This provides children with "success" in delivering to each friend without the pressure of matching a name from an envelope to a cubby, etc.

The last week in February is time for exploring Music including making instruments!

February vacation can mean fun family time, play dates and just time to relax.

Our school year continues to move right along. So much growth and learning for everyone in the Berrybrook community. Thank you for your support.

Happy Valentines Day to all!
First Year Teachers

Mrs. Capasso
Mrs. Delano
Mrs. Dunn
Mrs. La Forest
Mrs. Piccuito
Mrs. Rosen



*When you send a valentine,
That's the time for fun.
Slip it underneath the door,
Ring the bell,
And run, run, run!*

Welcome

Owen Hudson Cooney
Congratulations to Jack
(3 Day - Room 3)
and to the Cooney family!

and

Scarlett Hartman
Congratulations to Lily
(3 Day - Room 3)
and the Hartman family



Some Things Don't Make Any Sense at All

*My mom says I'm her sugar Plum,
My mom says I'm her lamb.*

*My mom says I'm completely perfect
Just the way I am.*

*My mom says I'm a super-special wonderful
terrific little guy.*

*My mom just had a baby,
Why?*

- Judith Viorst

Snow Cancellation

Berrybrook will cancel school if
Duxbury Schools or the
Silver Lake School District close due to
a snow emergency.

Because many Berrybrook families and staff travel from outlying communities, it is our policy to cancel classes whenever Duxbury Public Schools and/or Silver Lake Schools are closed. Parents should watch news reports for cancellation of these school systems. The voice mail system at Berrybrook at 781-585-2307 will have a snow cancellation message if we are closed due to a snow emergency.

Second Year Program News

February is a short month, but still full of learning activities and opportunities at Berrybrook. Groundhog Day starts us off - will he see his shadow? The children will be making a special puppet to explore the meaning behind this day. Other topics to be introduced throughout the three classes include presidents and space.

Valentine's Day will give us opportunities to discuss emotions and being a kind friend. Children will be having celebrations in class, and will be busy working on decorations for February 14th. We ask that, due to our allergy policy, ALL candy remain at home. The children will help bake a delicious treat for the celebration. The children have been working so hard on letter and word formations, and sending heartfelt valentine notes to their classmates will give them another opportunity to practice their writing and reading skills. We are asking everyone to bring in valentines that are signed and addressed to each classmate. We suggest that these be worked on over the span of several days, as it is a big undertaking for four and five year olds! Class lists will be put in everyone's cubbies to assist with names.

January has come and gone in the blink of an eye! These past weeks we have been busy! Now that more seasonable temperatures have made an appearance, the children have been working hard on bundling up in all that cold weather gear with much personal success! In the classrooms, we have been measuring a paperwhite plant; watching the plant's progress and marking the growth on a chart. There was a large emphasis on health this past month.

We learned about eating healthy and keeping our bodies healthy. We also learned about hospitals, nurses and doctors through our dramatic play.

Stay Healthy,

Second Year Teachers,

Miss Bent, Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Fosdick,
Mrs. LaForest, Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Neal,
Mrs. Piccuito and Mrs. Swan

HEART

I put my hands together,
That is how I start.

I fold my fingers right around,
And now I made a heart.



Berrybrook
discover | play | learn

Summer Enrichment

The Berrybrook Summer Nature Program will be offered again this year during June and July, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 – 1:00.

Children must be 4 by September 1st to register. Current Berrybrook families will have the opportunity to register first, and then families from the community will be invited. All families will receive complete information about the program and registration the week of March 19, 2012.

Parent Discussion Group

Many topics were discussed at our January **Dad's Night Out** Parent Discussion Group such as encouraging independence, validating original ideas, providing cues for successful transitions and having realistic expectations when setting boundaries and limits with children. Handouts were made available.

Please join us for our next Parent Discussion Group on **Wednesday, February 15th** as we will discuss a very important topic among families, **The Discipline Puzzle**. To “discipline” means to “teach” our children. Come and learn how to put all the puzzle pieces of love, respect, validation, and consistency together and conquer your most common discipline problems.

Refreshments @ 7:00pm

Discussion @ 7:15pm

See you then!

Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Delano, Mrs. LaForest

Berrybrook Parents Association

Well we finally had some snow and now we enter the dark days of February. I am sure we will be ready for spring by the next newsletter. But to be sure we enjoy the snow while it is here, be on the lookout for emails about impromptu sledding parties as we hope to get the children together when the weather cooperates. We may even get it together for a Mom's Night Out one of these days.

Family Fun Friday!

Thanks to all those who attended BPA's Chinese New Year's Celebration! The children had a great time hearing stories, coloring dragons, and eating oranges for good luck! Check out the photo spread at the BPA table from the January 26th issue of the Duxbury Clipper.

Mark your calendar for this month's Family Fun Friday on February 10th for **Pizza and Puppets** as Pumpnickel Puppets visits. We will be serving pizza at 12 and the show will begin at 12:30. Look for full details in your cubby as well as at the BPA table. The cost will be \$10 per family to cover the cost of pizza and the show. Please sign up at the BPA table by February 7th!

Enrichment

February will be a busy month for enrichment activities as yoga gets up and rolling (or bending!), Eddie Spaghetti continues his music classes, & **Big Ryan the storyteller visits on Feb 8th & 9th**. We have been busy planning for the remainder of the year which in addition to our re-occurring events will include an Irish Step Dancing demonstration in March, Soule Homestead with wool spinning and chickens in April, and hopefully some sea creature visits in May!

Memory Books

For those parents that are new to the memory book tradition, every year at Berrybrook parents put together a book of memories for each child. These books are meant to be simple reminders of the year and usually include some of the child's work as well as photos and things like favorite songs or recipes. The key to these books and what makes them so special is that they are

all unique and different. In reality even every classroom handles the books in a little different way. Some books are very simple and sweet, others are more elaborate, and others are unique to that parent's talents. Some parents like to finish the books by the end of the school year and others enjoy finishing them with their children over the summer. The message is that your memory book is up to you! The BPA will be meeting with the classroom parents and teachers in early Feb to discuss the process and any needs. We talk about the books now not to stress anyone out, but to let people know what is coming up in the hopes of reducing stress! Thanks to those that attended the January BPA meeting and giving us great and honest feedback about the memory book process. **Look for updates from your classroom parents by mid-month.**

BPA Spring Fling 2012

Save-the-date for the annual BPA Spring Fling, a casual thank you celebration for Berrybrook families! Come celebrate the year & have some dinner and fun on **May 23rd with a rain date of May 30th from 4-6 p.m.**

As always please let us know if you have questions, comments, or concerns for the Parents Association at berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com or 617-458-1621.

And it's not too late to support the work of the BPA with dues. We ask each family to donate \$30 or whatever is appropriate for your family. Thanks!

Allyson

Nut-Free

(Katie Szczesny - Kyle '11, Sam 3 Day - Room 1, Berrybrook Board Member)

I debated for a long time what to include and what not to include in this article.....in the food allergy world, there is so much to discuss! I hope that you find this informative if you are not yet familiar with food allergies. If you are the parent of a child with a food allergy, I hope you find some comfort in knowing that you are not alone, as I walk in those shoes every day too.

My son Kyle had peanut butter for the first time shortly after his 2nd birthday in 2008. He didn't want to eat it; but he was two, he didn't want to do a lot of things. So, I snuck a tiny piece of bread with a touch of peanut butter on it into his mouth. He spit it out immediately and several minutes later his mouth was surrounded by hives. Our pediatrician taught us how to use an EpiPen the next day and we visited an allergist several weeks later.

By some medical mystery, his first skin test (a tiny amount of peanut protein is injected into the skin with a small needle) was negative. I asked the doctor what the chances were that this was a false negative. He said it was rare, but possible; we would retest in two months. The second skin test produced a big fat hive, the telltale sign of an allergy. And so, our journey into the food allergy world began.

As you all know, Berrybrook is a "nut free" school. In my opinion, it was a safe haven for Kyle, and a food allergy mom's dream. Mrs. Keeley, Mrs. Watts, and all of the teachers work so hard to stay up to date on what food products are safe and what's not safe. They are diligent in checking lunches and reminding everyone that all food brought onto school grounds must be nut free. They are so good at this in fact that my son, the one with the allergy, had a homemade cookie sent home once uneaten because I had forgotten to write "nut free" on its bag!

I've learned over the past three years that educating friends and family about the seriousness of food allergies is extremely important. When I tell someone Kyle has a peanut allergy, they often ask, "Well, how serious is his allergy? Is he really allergic or just a little? What would happen to him if he ate peanut butter?" The answers to these questions are the scariest part of living with food allergies. There is no way to determine "how allergic" he is. If he accidentally ingested a peanut, he could get a few hives as he did the first time, or he could suffer from anaphylaxis.

The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN – www.foodallergy.com) defines anaphylaxis as "a serious allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death. An anaphylactic reaction may begin with a tingling sensation, itching, or a metallic taste in the mouth. Other symptoms can include hives, a sensation of warmth, wheezing or other difficulty breathing, coughing, swelling of the mouth and throat area, vomiting, diarrhea, cramping, a drop in blood pressure, and loss of consciousness. These symptoms may begin within several minutes to two hours after exposure to the allergen, but life-threatening reactions may get worse over a period of several hours."

The best, if not only, way to stop an anaphylactic reaction is to administer an EpiPen, a dose of epinephrine. It reverses the symptoms of anaphylaxis and helps prevent it from progressing further. We never, ever, go anywhere without Kyle's EpiPen. Kyle is in Kindergarten now; no longer at the safe-haven of Berrybrook! To say the transition was scary and stressful would be the understatement of the year for me. He has EpiPens in all the rooms he's in at school and sits at the "peanut free table" at lunch.

For over a year (while Kyle was still at Berrybrook), I worked closely with the Duxbury Superintendent and the Schools Business Manager to revise the policy for EpiPens on the school buses. Prior to this year, children were not allowed to carry an EpiPen on the bus, and not all drivers were trained on how to administer one. Now, all drivers are trained and children with food allergies can carry their EpiPen in their backpack onto the bus. Drivers are made aware of food allergy children, and some kids have a designated seat behind the driver, so they can be watched closely.

Every day brings new challenges for a family that has a child with a food allergy. Birthday parties, holidays, beach picnics, school parties, restaurants – What food will be there? Will it be safe? Will someone serve peanut butter? We would not attend a function where peanut butter or peanut products are served. Kids are not the neatest eaters; and we don't take the chance that Kyle could end up with peanut residue on his hands and then accidentally get it in his mouth.

Kyle is old enough now to know that he only takes food from a trusted adult, never share food, and that sometimes, he's not going to get to eat what all the other kids eat. If we can, we prepare him in advance for those situations, and most of the time, he takes it all in stride, happy with his own treat made safely in our kitchen. Don't get me wrong, tears have been shed, but keeping him safe is the number one priority.

With age comes the ability for him to observe more and take in what's going on around him. He came home from school one day and said, "Mom, do you think one day my peanut test will show I'm not allergic anymore and I'll get to sit with all the other kids at the peanut table for lunch?"

One of our most recent challenges came about when I learned that General Mills now makes MultiGrain Peanut Butter Cheerios. We eat plain old Cheerios in our house, but now I wonder if they are made in the same facility or on the same line as the peanut butter flavor. Possible cross contamination could be a problem. Customer service at General Mills has been less than helpful providing details to date, so the research will continue for me. I will likely find another product and brand that can confidently tell me their food is safe for my child to eat.

Aside from not being able to eat peanuts, Kyle is just like any other 5 year old. He is a happy and healthy kid, and I am grateful for that every day. In writing this article I am by no means trying to suggest that you shouldn't give your child peanut butter just because mine can't have it. But I would ask you to please think twice the next time you're hosting an event that includes a child with food allergies, or you're going somewhere where there will be a ton of kids. What if it was your child with the food allergy? One in 12 kids today has some sort of food allergy, and the numbers are growing. Asking questions and staying educated makes us all better prepared to handle the next challenge, whatever it may be.

10 Things Children with Food Allergies Want You to Know - By Gina Clowes

From www.thelivingroom.marthastewart.com - September 2011

1. I long to be included.

I would like to look, act and eat like everyone else. I'd like to buy my lunch and sit wherever I want. I know I can't, but I'm happy when someone cares enough to provide a safe potato chip, cookie or Popsicle for me. It's nice when I can have something similar to what the other kids are eating and I love it when I can eat the same thing as everyone else. Whenever it's possible, please think to include me!

2. I'm scared I could die from my food allergies.

I've heard my parents and teachers mention "life-threatening" food allergies and I remember having some reactions where I felt very sick and really scared. I saw how frightened my parents were too. Sometimes, I could use a little reassurance that I will be okay.

3. I feel like I'm the only one sometimes.

If you have a support group or know another way for me to meet other children who have food allergies, I would really like that. It would be nice to know that I'm not the only kid who has food allergies. Having another friend with food allergies in my classroom or to eat with me at lunch would help me too.

4. I get confused when grown-ups offer me food.

I know I'm supposed to be polite and listen to grown-ups, but my parents have told me I should only take food from them. When you offer food to me (especially candy), I'd like to take it but I'm unsure and don't know what I should do.

5. If grown-ups kiss me, right after they've eaten something I'm allergic to, I'll get itchy spots.

If your dog licks me, I'll get itchy spots too. I don't feel quite brave enough or know how to tell you this, but I'm hoping you will remember; if you've just eaten something that I'm allergic to, I may get hives so please don't kiss me right after you've eaten that particular food.

6. I'm embarrassed when people fuss over what I'm eating.

I know I have to eat my own safe food, but it's easier for me when I'm not singled out. Sometimes, I feel very embarrassed when grown-ups ask me a lot of questions. More than anything, I just want to fit in.

7. I hear all adult conversations about my food allergies.

My ears perk up when I hear grown-ups mention my name or my food allergies. Please don't pity me or act terrified because that will cause me to feel frightened. Food allergies are just one part of me. Instead, let me overhear you list all the wonderful things about me!

8. Sometimes I'm sad about having food allergies.

It's hard to be the only kid in the class not having a birthday cupcake and having to eat something different from my box of "safe treats". What makes it worse, is knowing this will happen a lot throughout the year because there are 20 or more other birthdays in my class. I know it's not the end of the world, but from my perspective, it's pretty tough at times.

9. I'm watching you! You may think that I'm too little to notice, but I know when you forget my EpiPen® and return home to get it.

I watch you every time, when you're reading the list of ingredients on my bag of Skittles. You are my role model and I'm learning how to manage my food allergies from you!

10. I will do about as well as you do.

My parents and other grown-ups "can-do" attitude will help me cope with the challenges of living with allergies and ensure that food allergies don't stop me from being everything I was meant to be!



Separating, Settling, Surveying, Singing, Snowing...Sharing!

Joanne LaForest

To share or not to share? That is the question. Or is it? It is nice to share. It is polite to share. What if you're using what someone else wants but you're still learning how to honor yourself and others? What if you want what someone else has and it's hard for you to be patient or you're still learning to trust that they actually will give it to you when they are finished?

Something is unable to be learned unless it is experienced. Children need to practice the words "May I have that when you're finished?" or "I'm still using it but I'll give it to you when I'm done." Teachers model words such as, "At Berrybrook, we have many things so everyone can play" yet also honor a child who may like to work on a puzzle independently. To have to always share would build frustration, and perhaps anger and resentment. For adults it often helps to imagine how they would feel if they had to share all the time. What if you had to give up your cup of coffee just because your friend wanted a cup of coffee, right then? Or at yoga class if someone else wanted your yoga mat? It sounds funny but the same holds true for a child who has worked diligently all morning building a block tower using all of the triangular shaped blocks and now another friend needs some triangular shaped blocks. Is it fair to say "We need to share?" It is important, rather, to validate the builder's feelings that they have worked so hard and see how important those triangular shaped blocks are. Just as important is to encourage the friend who now needs some blocks to express to their friend their intention and the two can problem solve together many solutions, that they would need to agree upon, to satisfy both friends' needs and wants.

To children, even friends and people need to be shared...or, most often, not shared. "He's my best friend. I get to sit next to him every day. *You* can't." Both first and second year students are learning the basic concepts of friendship. It is our role as adults to model and involve them in daily experiences that

- *friends may have things in common
- *friends may have different ideas
- *friends listen to each other
- *friends sometimes feel angry with each other
- *we're all friends together
- *friends respect each other
- *at Berrybrook, everyone is included

Along this road to learning it must be remembered that children demonstrate different behaviors while learning how to be a friend. According to Michael Thompson, author of Best Friends, Worst Enemies, children may anticipate responses from others, therefore affecting their own reactions towards them. For example, those who "expect rejection (or) neglect may respond to peers with passivity, withdrawal or aggression." That is why it is important to help children by naming feelings, validating ideas, talking through problems with others so they can 'fill their cup' with experiences to help them better navigate their way on their journey.

So, learning to share with others **is** part of friendship. However, Thompson believes that is only one goal for a child's social development. The others are:

- *to enjoy the company of others
- *to empathize with others
- *to regulate aggressive impulses
- *to cooperate
- *to "read" emotions
- *to trust and believe that others hold him or her in their minds

Finally, Thompson ends with what I believe we're all working towards daily at Berrybrook from September to May in both first and second year classes:

"We must prepare our children for what might be a rough voyage with an uncertain destination. Rather than trying to beat back the waves, we need to concentrate on building sturdy boats with stout sails for our children and provide them with the skills to choose a crew of congenial fellow sailors. Those friendships will serve them well as they weather the storms of growing up."

Happy Valentine's Day!