



February 2013

Thursday, February 7	Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm
February 18-22	Winter Break
Tuesday, February 26	BPA Meeting 7:00 pm
Wednesday, February 27	Board of Directors Meeting 7:30 pm

***Change in school Calendar - The Professional Development Day next month has been changed from Friday March 8, to Friday, March 15 to allow teachers to attend a conference at Bridgewater State University. Thank you.**



Notes from the Head of School

I know I speak for all of the staff when I say how much we appreciate the support of our professional development. The Berrybrook Board of Directors sets aside time and funds for all of us to keep up to date with current best practice in Early Childhood Education and Parents encourage our efforts. In addition to the three professional days scheduled during the year, Berrybrook Teachers attend workshops and training in the evenings and on weekends, including offerings through South Shore Therapies, COMPASS for Kids, the South Shore Natural Science Center, the Parent Connection and the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. Because Berrybrook values professional development, it has a faculty who is informed and inspired to provide the best possible early childhood experience for students.

This past Wednesday, while children were at home, Berrybrook teachers were at school learning about brain development in young children and how the latest research shows that the brains of boys and girls develop *very* differently. Suzanne Wildman, an early childhood expert from COMPASS for Kids shared an enormous amount of information about the differences between boys and girls, and how their brain development influences their behavior. For example, boys are primarily interested in objects and things, and girls are primarily interested in people and relationships. Boys express emotions through actions and girls express emotions through words. Knowing more about brain development and how simple biology impacts behavior helps teachers design activities that will be developmentally appropriate for both boys and girls while respecting their differences and making the most of their innate abilities.

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After lunch the staff met with our mental health consultant, Marianne Reinhalter. Marianne is a child therapist who is available to staff throughout the year to talk through any issues that might arise in the classroom. She has also provided us with the names of local mental health practitioners that we may share with families if needed. Healthy social and emotional development has always been a priority at Berrybrook.

“All children need social and emotional skills so they can be successful in life. Positive early experiences promote optimum brain development, which impacts all areas of development: social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. Over the past two decades, brain research has highlighted the preschool years (ages 3-5) as a critical transition point in child development, and supports the crucial role that social and emotional intelligence play in children’s ability to learn and grow.”

- C. Willis & P. Schiller, 2011. *Preschoolers’s Social Skills Steer Life Success*; Young Children, Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The paragraph above is from an article in *Young Children*, the professional periodical that all Berrybrook staff receive monthly. In it, the authors mention seven key factors that are crucial to social and emotional competence; **Confidence, Curiosity, Self Control, Cooperation, Communication, Relatedness and Intentionality**. They feel these elements are critically important for a child to succeed in school and in life. In our developmentally appropriate early childhood classrooms, Berrybrook teachers foster the development of these skills every day. With the emphasis on academics in society today, even at the preschool level, it is important to note that Social and Emotional development goes hand in hand with academic achievement.

Looking ahead, on March 15, the staff will attend the annual conference sponsored by the Boston Association for the Education of Young Children (BAEYC) at Bridgewater State University. The keynote speaker is Susan Linn, Ed.D. the title of her address is *The Case for Make Believe: Saving Play in a Commercialized World*. Morning and afternoon sessions at the conference will offer training in Literacy, Intentional Curriculum, Brain Building and topics such as Behavior, Anxiety and Moods.

I am fortunate to be working in a community where everyone has opportunities to learn and grow. I often have discussions with parents about the latest parenting book or parenting presentation. The Parent Discussion Groups organized by teachers offer relevant topics and resources. Berrybrook parents stay informed and use everything at their disposal to raise intelligent, happy, healthy and respectful children. The combination of teachers and parents working together ensures that children have the best possible outcomes - children have appropriate, meaningful, enjoyable early childhood experiences and are well prepared for the next step in their education and for life.

In addition to the variety of professional development opportunities I’ve already mentioned in this article, there is one more that is perhaps the most important. All of us, teachers and parents, have the opportunity to learn from the children. If we are observing them carefully, they help us learn the most important lessons.

Mrs. 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 and where and how they live, and 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 6th @ 9 am

3 Day - Room 3

Tuesday, February 12th @ 9 am

2 Day - Room 3

Friday, February 8th @ 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. It is important to remember that there are children with food allergies, so please remember not to include candy with valentines.

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

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. Barlow, Mrs. Capasso,
Mrs. Delano, Mrs. Dunn, Mrs. La Forest
and Mrs. Piccuito

Snow Cancellation

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



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

That is one of the catchy tunes/movement activities that the 4 and 5 day children sing and move to during the first two weeks of February. It may be cold and overcast outside, but inside it's warm and cozy in the classrooms. Valentines Day provides us the opportunity to converse about kindness and caring towards friends and families. We will be busy creating as well! The children will decorate the classrooms, and prepare a special snack for the 14th of February.

Each child will decorate their own Valentine's box. On Valentine's Day, the children will deliver Valentines to each box. Please have your child bring in a signed and addressed Valentine for each child in the classroom. We will provide a class list and place the list in your child's cubby for reference. Please remember to leave all candy and sweets at home. We have children with food allergies and we want to be sure that everything coming into school is safe for everyone.

Currently, the children have been practicing letter recognition and how to write friends names. On the 14th, they will have the opportunity to look for their friends names on the individual

Valentines boxes, and then place the card inside. The teachers will assist the children in this endeavor. A helpful hint....if possible, begin this process a few days beforehand, as your child may get fatigued from addressing all of their valentines in one session.

Another activity that the children will be doing is mailing something special to their homes. Teachers will put out some coins and stamps. Each child will count out the correct amount of money to "buy" a stamp, and then place the stamp on an envelope. It will be fun for them to see the stamped envelope delivered to their home!

Moving forward towards the end of the month, keep an eye to the sky for the full snow moon on February 25, sometimes called the hunger moon.

Happy Valentine's Day to all!
Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Fosdick, Mrs. O'Neil,
Mrs. Neal, Mrs. Piccuito, Mrs. Rosen
Mrs. Swan and Mrs. Worley



The Berrybrook Summer Nature Program is offered 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 18, 2013.

Parent Discussion Group

The January PDG was filled with fun, simple and inexpensive activities for children and families. We shared ideas on how to make it through long winter days and Cabin Fever. Suggestions included an ice ball snowman, animal tracks, scavenger hunts, cooking, indoor forts, dusting with socks, laundry basketball, do-it-yourself laundry, etc! See the many handouts on the table in the hallway.

We also discussed behaviors children exhibit, sleeping patterns, end-of-the-day issues when everyone may be exhausted and how to redirect energy. It is always great to share ideas with other parents and show support.

Join us for the next PDG on **Thursday, February 7th, 7 pm. FRIENDSHIP...the Social and Emotional Piece of School Curriculum.** Preschool is often when children first develop the life long skill of making friends. For some it comes naturally, for others it is more of a process. Come to hear key phrases you can share with your child as they learn to *"Make New Friends and Keep The Old..."* The first year students sing this song every day at snack. Join us as we discuss the art of Friendship.

See you then!
Mrs. Delano, Mrs. Dunn and Mrs.
LaForest

Berrybrook Parents Association

Here comes 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.

The next BPA meeting will be on February 26th at 7 pm. This meeting will discuss planning the rest of the school year and the Spring Fling, our annual end of year celebration for the children and their families. **We really need your input! I hope to see you there!**

Enrichment

January was a busy month for enrichment! We started the month with a visit by Wampanoag tribe member Annawon Weedon who came and spoke to the children about native life in winter. Grow Fit Kidz by Elevate Health and Fitness also continued with focus on flexibility. I know the yoga moves from their monthly handout have been popular in my house. I hope you have heard great things from your child about the visits, if not ask! February will bring a visit from a dental hygienist to talk about oral health.

Family Fun Fridays!

Family Fun Fridays will begin to pick up as spring approaches. Please mark your calendar for Friday, March 15th to learn about the fascinating lives of bees and hold onto April 26th for a family visit to Soule Homestead. More information to come as dates approach.

As always please let us know if you have questions, comments, or concerns 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

Berrybrook Book Review

Kathy Capasso

Taking Back Childhood- Nancy Carlsson-Paige, Ed.D.

Nancy Carlsson-Paige's *Taking Back Childhood* deals with media influence on our children in today's society. It is incredible to believe that in just a generation we have allowed the media to so completely influence our social interactions. Carlsson-Paige further goes on to look at the role of our highly structured and fast paced society has on our children. Her entire book begs the question: When do our children just play?

Each chapter of *Taking Back Childhood* deals with different scenarios from media influence to dealing with a society based on "instant gratification" and constant shuffling from one activity to another. At the end of each chapter she gives, in bullet form, a helpful list of "steps you can take". These "steps" offer suggestions to deflect media influence and to reconnect with your children. This list is particularly helpful, as you can refer to it when certain situations arise.

We all know that over the past 20 plus years the media has just exploded from the commercialization of every movie, book, game, etc. to the cavalier manner in which the news is now reported. As a child, I remember watching the 6 o'clock news every night with my parents. I was never afraid of what I saw. Now I don't even like to watch the news, let alone allow a child to see the violence that is shown. Furthermore, professional sporting events used to be about sports. There were very few merchandise options, seats were inexpensive and it was about the game. Now the market is flooded with action figures, apparel and video games. Carlsson-Paige offers simple alternatives like family game night or taking in a minor league ball game. She encourages families to connect rather than turn on the TV.

Carlsson-Paige also discusses children's play today versus 30 years ago. Since the deregulation of children's TV in 1984, children's toys have become more and more specific. For example a child in the early 1980's may have had a couple of dolls and a toy car. These dolls could be a family out for a ride one day. The next day they could be used as specific characters from a movie to re-enact a scene. On another day the same dolls could be king and queen of a far away land. Add a set of basic blocks and you have a house, a movie set and a castle. In contrast today, parents are made to feel that they must buy particular character dolls or props that depict certain movies or TV shows. The danger here is that we are stifling our children's creativity and imagination. What's worse is that these companies and the media target children. In turn, parents feel pressure to buy these items for their children. The author offers many suggestions on how to deal with this and encourage creative play instead.

Recently there has been so much talk about violence in the media and how it influences our children and consequently teens and young adults. There are several chapters which deal with this issue. Some chapters deal with avoiding and limiting media exposure. In others there are tips on how to handle aggression in children. The final chapters offer tips for helping children deal with real life situations and encourage respect for others and social responsibility.

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Overall, most of Carlsson-Paige's suggestions mirror our "Berrybrook Way". The language she uses in her examples is very similar to the way Berrybrook teachers talk to students. At Berrybrook, we offer basic tools such as playdough, blocks, baby dolls and housekeeping and it is amazing to see what the children do with these "tools". Fostering our children's creativity and imagination is crucial. *Taking Back Childhood* is a great resource for ideas and support on how to accomplish this. We cannot escape all commercialization of this world. Nancy Carlsson-Paige simply enlightens us as to how wide spread it is and how we can resist at least some of it.

(Mrs. Capasso teaches in the 3 Day-Room 1 and 2 Day-Room 3 Classes)



Dear Mrs. Keeley &
Berrybrook Families,

Hello! My mom told me that you have been eagerly waiting for news about the Jumpstart book drive. Last year Berrybrook families and teachers donated 775 books! Thank you so much for your help! I am really excited that you are interested in helping Jumpstart with our book drive again this year! Starting in February, we are looking to collect gently used preschool aged books for the Jumpstart Head Start classrooms and the Jumpstart children. There is of course no obligation to donate books or go out and buy new books.

Jumpstart is a leading nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that every child in America enters school prepared to succeed. Corps Members work with low-income preschoolers twice a week for two hours at Head Start schools in Taunton and Brockton. The classroom libraries at the Head Start schools are often sparse because books are expensive, lost, or read so often that they fall apart. At home most of the low-income preschoolers unfortunately only have a few, if any, books. We have actually added four teams this year. So we now have 12 classrooms to distribute books to and each class has about 20 kids, so that is about 240 kids! It is our hope that with this book drive we will be able to donate a few books to each of the 12 classrooms and send each Jumpstart child home with several books as well.

We know that this book drive is something that Berrybrook fully supports and believes in and we are thrilled that you are interested in supporting this cause.

To learn more about Jumpstart please visit the website at www.jstart.org

Thank you! Kate Capasso

A Little Bit Of Berrybrook History from the Board of Directors

Carl O'Neil

The scenic beauty, native vegetation, and wildlife are important to Berrybrook's programs. Surely, Mrs. Mann considered this when she selected this property to develop the Berrybrook School.

Let's go back to 1900 to briefly follow what has occurred to get us where we are today, so we may guide our direction to maintain these valuable assets. Berrybrook was a dairy farm boasting prize Guernsey dairy cattle which went out of business around 1900. A large dairy barn was located at the westerly part of the present parking lot. The barn was struck by lightning and burned to the ground about 1940. The fields were left unattended for years and started to grow wild with brush and young trees.

Mr. and Mrs. Mann bought the property around 1950. Mr. Mann proceeded to reclaim the fields and fixed up the barn, that was by the pond, to accommodate a small beef herd. Some of the fields were grown in with beech plums and bayberries, which unfortunately had to be removed. At the time and for years later, the fields supported a large population of quail and pheasants. In the woods were deer, partridge, fox, rabbits, etc. but no coyotes or turkeys like we have today. A few years later, Mr. Mann discontinued the beef operation and by this time Mrs. Mann had Berrybrook School

operational and I believe there were very few preschools at the time. In the 1960s, Mr Mann had the barn by the pond removed. The cement floor still remains there. Mr Mann made sure the fields stayed active by allowing the County Farm to farm the fields, later a sweet corn grower, and eventually myself.

Years have passed with very little change to the property, except that Berrybrook sold most of the field property to the Town of Duxbury, this assures us that the property will forever remain as open space. More recently, nice trails have been developed behind the school. The wildlife are still here and some indigenous plant life are here to enjoy such as 'little and big blue stem grasses'.

In conclusion, I believe we must continue to be vigilant to protect this most important resource.

Carl O'Neil, Berrybrook Board of Directors

(Mr. O'Neil has been on the Berrybrook Board of Directors for many years. He is often the person the Board seeks out when there is a question about the history of the school and its surroundings. Mr. O'Neil was a Berrybrook neighbor long before he came on the Board. He is the farmer in charge of day-today operations of the Historic O'Neil Farm across the street and for many, many years Berrybrook children have made the short walk with their teachers to the Farm to visit and hear from him about the cows. As Mr. O'Neil mentioned in his article he worked the field next door when the school's founder, Katharine Mann first started Berrybrook and he is still the person you can see working in the Berrybrook fields all through the summer. Thank you, Mr. O'Neil for all you do for Berrybrook and the community!) <http://historiconeilfarm.org>