

March 2022

Friday, March 18
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Professional Day - no school
Enrollment Contracts Due



Notes from the Head of School

community [kuh-myoo-ni-tee], use = noun

1. a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.
2. a locality inhabited by such a group.
3. a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists:

the business community;

the community of scholars;

diversity within a college community;

London's Jewish and Muslim communities.

opinion [uh-pin-yuhn], use = noun

1. a belief or judgment that rests on grounds insufficient to produce complete certainty.
2. a personal view, attitude, or appraisal.
3. the formal expression of a professional judgment:
to ask for a second medical opinion.
4. Law. the formal statement by a judge or court of the reasoning and the principles of law used in reaching a decision of a case.
5. a judgment or estimate of a person or thing with respect to character, merit, etc.:
to forfeit someone's good opinion.
6. Archaic. a favorable estimate; esteem:
I haven't much of an opinion of him.

respect [*ri-spekt*], use = verb (used with object)

1. to hold in esteem or honor:
I cannot respect a cheat.
2. to show regard or consideration for:
to respect someone's rights.

(source: dictionary.com)

Berrybrook School, and the Principles that Guide Us, use = a way of *being*

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.

(source: Mrs. Mann's vision)

As we move into the newest phase of living with COVID, my goal is that all members of our wonderful Berrybrook community respect each family's opinion regarding masks when the requirement to wear one inside our building expires. No one truly knows another person's reasons for why they are choosing to wear or not wear a mask in our Berrybrook setting. As this month marks the TWO year anniversary of COVID/preschools, it's hard not to feel bitter about the past. I will never forget when a Board Member was in my office on March 11 and said that the rumor was that schools were going to close for two weeks to mitigate transmission. I thought she had lost her marbles and there was NO WAY schools would be able to shut down for two weeks. Here we are two YEARS since that fateful day, and while I am still looking for all the lessons in what we've dealt with these days, months, and years, I also know that in the end I hope I was kind and respectful, and upholding Berrybrook's principles along the (long) way.

~ Mrs. Watts

Teacher's Notes

Simple Joys

My son Jack turned 14 in January, and in the weeks leading up to his birthday, I was very hesitant to ask him how he wanted to celebrate. There had been so many disappointments, canceled parties, trips, and holidays in the past two years. With the recent surge in Covid cases, I was unsure what my comfort level was as far as hosting anything, or going out to a public venue. I had no idea how to even approach his upcoming birthday for fear of not being able to meet his expectations.

I finally asked Jack what he wanted to do for his birthday, one early morning before school, when it was just the two of us at the kitchen table. He took a few moments to think about it, and said, "What I really want is to play Monopoly together. We haven't played in so long. And for my Birthday dinner, can we get Royal Garden take out?" I was stunned. That's it? That's all you want kid? When I questioned him, making sure that was truly his birthday wish, he looked as if he had disappointed me, like his simple wishes weren't enough to please me. I realized immediately, I was wrong to question him. He was confident and hopeful when he made his request, why was I making him feel like it wasn't enough? What's wrong with me? It was my perceptions and expectations that were out of line. And why would I expect anything different from Jack? He's my son, and I know who he is. He is genuine. Of course all he was looking for his birthday, was simple joys, why was I questioning that?

Jack's birthday happened to fall on MLK day, so we were all home from work and school. We broke out the Monopoly immediately after breakfast and all four of us played a very lengthy and competitive game. I stepped back from the game a few times just to soak up the experience. The smiles, the laughter, the eye contact, the playful teasing... We were living in the moment, no devices at the table, no background noise, just the 4 of us and the board game. What Jack was asking from us for his birthday was the gift of time, time together, moments spent connecting with each other. A simple joy! His simple joy became a simple joy for all of us, and that was his gift to us.

Jack ended up winning the Monopoly game, but for the first time in his 14 years, the winning wasn't what mattered to him. He sat there all smiles taking pleasure in the fact that we all stopped the hustle and bustle of our lives and our minds, to sit and play a game with him for HOURS. Later I watched Jack as he ate his Peking Ravioli (his most favorite food of all time). He kept thanking me for the Chinese take-out as if it was some rare delicacy I had painstakingly acquired for him. He took so much pleasure in eating his "dumplings" that I was literally feeling his JOY right through him. His gratitude was overflowing that day, and he was spreading it to all of us.

After Jack's birthday I spent a great deal of time reflecting on it. How was my baby 14 years old? I thought about his pleasure in the simplicity of his special day. I thought about how he had given us all the gift of re-centering ourselves and connecting with each other. But mostly, I thought how lucky I am to have him in my life, to keep reminding me of what's really important.

Human beings crave happiness but we are confused about how to find the real long lasting kind. We tend to seek happiness in material things. Society encourages us to accomplish and obtain. But true joy isn't found there, because when you are on that path, it's never enough. There is always something else to buy or achieve. It's about the "getting" and not about what you already have. We confuse status and materialistic ideas of success with happiness. There is no peace to be found in that. Unlike the quest for material goods and a higher status level, losing yourself in a simple pleasure, fills you up entirely with joy and forces you to be present in the moment, engaging all your senses.

Simple joys bring us a sense of inner peace like nothing else can. They ground us, bringing us back to what really matters. Getting lost in a simple joy forces us to be present and allows us to honor the time we've set aside for this appreciation. Making the time for simple joys is a true act of self-love.

I am blessed to be a preschool teacher, working with young children who are experts on simple joys. They experience them regularly with ease, always aware of the beautiful moments available to them. I learned a long time ago that the gift these children give me is the chance to see the world through their eyes. They look with wonder at so many things we take for granted. This is why they are joyful. They appreciate the small things (which are really the big things) in a way that we adults have forgotten. The crunch sound the snow makes when you walk through it, the way a furry caterpillar feels on your finger, the smell of something sweet baking in the oven, the color of a beautiful spring tulip blooming on the playground. The children notice these things and in that moment of noticing, the whole world stops for them, and they relish in that moment, happy to share it with whoever is nearby. Simple joys have the power to connect us.

Simple joys are all around us, but unlike the preschool children, us adults need to be more intentional about finding them. To notice them we have to be mindful, and be living in the moment. They are easily overlooked when we are rushing, busy, or overwhelmed. The more moments like this that we experience, the more impact they have on our overall happiness. Time with Jack forces me to slow down and go at his pace, and I have learned how beneficial this is for my well-being. Jack has always had his own way of looking at things. We joke at home about it, calling it "the world according to Jack". But it's no joke, and I hope he stays that way forever, always true to himself. That is why this boy is joyful by nature. A fun Jack fact: If Jack had been a girl, we were going to name him Gioia, which in Italian means "joy."

I would encourage us all to learn from our children, quiet our minds, live in the moment, and be aware of all the beauty that's around us. The moments are there just waiting for us to make them our own.

~ Mrs. Kelley

Mrs. Kelley teaches in the 5 Day class

Parents Association Notes

Hello Berrybrook Families!

I hope everyone had a wonderful February vacation! I'm not sure about you, but I am happy to be back and am looking forward to some warmer weather in the coming months!

The BPA has been busy this year coordinating enrichment opportunities, organizing Family Fun Fridays, and thinking ahead to events and activities for the Spring! Last month we had the students color Valentines pictures which were brought to the Senior Center and distributed during their Meals on Wheels visit! It was such a thoughtful gesture which was appreciated by all!

Enrichment

In January we kicked off our monthly yoga sessions with Miss Kim. This has always been a student favorite, and if you haven't already, check out your class Shutterfly page to see them in action! We are also excited to announce that the "Tooth Fairy" is back! Berrybrook will have a dental hygienist visiting the classes on February 28th and March 3rd to teach them about proper dental hygiene in a fun and engaging way! New to Berrybrook, we have Jesse Stiglich coming the first week of March to engage the students in a fun drumming class!

Family Fun Friday

Our next Family Fun Friday will take place at American Cadre Karate in Kingston on March 11th, at 1pm. Students are invited to participate in a "Tiny Tigers" class which will be a 40 minute introductory to martial arts. To sign up, please refer to the email sent a couple of weeks ago which included the sign up genius link and payment information. If you have any questions or need assistance locating the registration information, please don't hesitate to reach out to one of us! Stay tuned for information regarding our April Family Fun Friday!

BPA Dues

As always, we would like to thank all of the families who have paid their BPA dues. We could not plan these fun events for our children and families without your help. It is not too late for your family to support our work! All donations are very much appreciated. We suggest \$30 per family, but all amounts are certainly welcome. Please don't hesitate to reach out to any members of the BPA if you have any questions, comments, new ideas or concerns.

- Kim Joyce & Molly Buchanan
BPA Co-Presidents

From The Board of Directors

Late winter gets a bad rap.

Sure, New England winters can be very harsh. January, February and March can feel very long. February vacation tickets anywhere are expensive. Walking on the ice is a nightmare...

But the Berrybrook parking lot is always miraculously cleared thanks to Mr. Murray and the persistently hardworking and protective staff. Valentine's Day with young children is a wonderful celebration of platonic and familial love. We get to celebrate and focus on Black History. Chinese New Year and Tet signal new beginnings. This year, Berrybrook welcomes a new family into our community after the break. The days lengthen. My kindergartner, last off of her bus, doesn't arrive home at dusk. The earth spins us closer to Spring every day.

I don't know what the end of this winter brings, but I'm grateful to the hope the natural world and the world of childhood education provide. I look forward to seeing what lies ahead.

*~ Lucy Weilbrenner
Board of Directors*





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, (or Berrybrook Beginners!) to register. We also welcome siblings up to 7 years of age. More information can be found on the Berrybrook website or stop by the office.