

BERRYBROOK NEWS

February, 2010

I have a little Valentine that someone sent to me.
It's pink and white and red and blue, and pretty as can be.
Forget-me-nots are 'round the edge, and tiny roses too:
And such a lovely piece of lace, the very palest blue,
And in the center there's a heart, as red as red can be!
And on it's written all in gold, "To you with love from me."

February 15th - 19th

Winter Break

Wednesday, February 10

Parent Discussion Group 7:00pm

Tuesday, February 23

BPA meeting 7:00 pm

Wednesday, February 24

Berrybrook Board of Directors 7:00 pm

***Friday, March 12**

Professional Day * (change in calendar)

Notes from the Headmaster

Valentine. Be mine. February is the month that has a special day to send thoughtful notes to people we love and care about. If only friendships were as easy as addressing a card with a heart on it. Friendships are so important to a balanced, happy life. But making and keeping friends is work. Parents often worry about their children having friends. Mom and Dad feel happy when their children are enjoying friends and experience an equal amount of pain when things go wrong. Berrybrook teachers work with children constantly to promote healthy friendships. They do this by giving children the opportunity to be with each other in a safe and interesting environment and by building a sense of community in the classroom. Preschool children are experimenting with the power of words and can very easily hurt each other's feelings. Teachers facilitate problem solving by asking questions like, "How does that make you feel?" and "What could you say to your friend?" At Berrybrook, we know that listening to someone and caring about their feelings is how friendships begin and how friendships flourish. Your children learn many lessons at Berrybrook, but how to make and keep a friend is definitely one of the most important. Happy Valentine's Day.

Pat Keeley

2 & 3 Day Classroom Activities

February at Berrybrook is a **LOVE**ly time of year! The children are comfortable and settled into their daily routines. They are eager to socialize with their classmates. They have learned to trust, respect and express their ideas with their teachers. We are truly a team. In February many expressions of love will be created with pink and red glitter, paint and paper. You will see many heart shaped projects coming home. Children will hear many stories, play games, and sing songs about love and caring. What could be a better theme!

For the 2 and 3 Day class valentines we ask that the envelopes do not have any names on them to enable the children to distribute one to each classmate independently. Sometimes children may ask to bring in valentines with candy for their classmates but because of our students with food allergies, Please remember that candy should be enjoyed at home. The children will be preparing treats here at school for the celebrations.

In the classrooms the **Berrybrook Hospital** has taken the place of housekeeping for a couple weeks. This provides a wonderful opportunity for children to show care for people (week 1) and animals (week 2). This hands on play-experience is valuable for any past or future hospital visits your child/family may encounter.

Next the housekeeping area transforms into the **Berrybrook Post Office**. During this time the children enjoy “working”, stamping, addressing envelopes, sending mail, etc. This leads up to their first field trip to a real Post Office. They will buy a stamp and mail their Valentine home to their families.

After vacation week the classroom activities may focus on woodworking and bears in winter.

Outdoor play is a valuable part of any preschooler’s day. Many children have become quite proficient at getting into all their snow gear. We appreciate your patience at home, as we do here at school, in talking them through getting themselves dressed. They are well on their way to becoming independent individuals...let’s support them best we can.



4 & 5 Day Classroom Activities

February 2nd is Groundhog Day. Will the groundhog see a shadow or not? Watch for a little groundhog puppet, made by the children, on this special February day.

HEART

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

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

This month the 4 and 5-day classes will be preparing decorations, snacks, cards and gifts to celebrate Valentine's Day. We are half way through the school year now and the children have made many new friends. Valentine's Day gives the children an opportunity to give and receive special notes of friendship from their peers. We are asking everyone to bring in valentines that are signed and addressed to each classmate by February 11th for the 4-day class and by February 12th for the 5-day class. A class list will be in cubbies to assist with names. Due to allergies we are unable to have candy brought into the school so the children will be making a special allergy free snack to enjoy that day after they have delivered all of their Valentines.

Last month in our housekeeping area, we had the Berrybrook hospital. That area will soon transform into our Berrybrook Post Office. The children will experience writing and mailing letters to their peers. They will have the opportunity to purchase stamps and to study some of the cancelled stamps we have received from families. Thank you for sending in your used stamps and holiday cards. The children will enjoy looking at all of them.

We have started making musical instruments and will continue our explorations this month. The children will make various instruments and have the chance to try Berrybrook's rhythm instruments. If anyone has a musical talent that they would like to share, please let us know so that we can make arrangements for a time that would be convenient to visit the classrooms. The children would surely enjoy seeing and listening to any type of instrument. We do have a piano in the multi-purpose room if anyone would like to play some tunes for the children.

During the winter, each second year class will include a study of space. We talk about the planets, the sun, stars, comets, rocket ships, astronauts, astronomers and the different phases of the moon. A moon is an object in space that orbits around a planet. The most famous example is the Earth's moon, of course, but there are moons going around all the planets in the Solar System except for Mercury and Venus. If the sky is clear on February 28th, we should see the full moon rise at 5:54 PM.

Don't forget!

**The next Parent Discussion Group
is February 10th at 7pm.**

**Topic- "Are You Helping Your
Child to Become Helpless?"**



Welcome !

Keegan Gallagher
(Finn, 3 Day, Room 1)

Camille Ryan
(Audrey, 3 Day Room 1)

Congratulations!

Berrybrook Parent Association

Our enrichment programs are underway. January was a fun filled month with a visit from a local dental hygienist and Ed Sorrentino, aka "Eddie Spaghetti", the percussionist from the South Shore Conservatory. This month the children will get moving with a visit from Hop, Skip, Jump!

Our BPA fundraiser begins this month. We are excited to have chosen KidsArt, Inc. as our fundraiser. Each child will have an opportunity to be an artist and design his/her own stationary. The letter for the fundraiser describing the full line of color stationary will be placed in your child's cubby shortly along with two note cards for your child to design away! Please note that all drawings should be completed using markers since we have decided to make color products only. We ask that your child return it back to Berrybrook no later than February 26th. There will be a box in the office to leave your forms. All proceeds will go to the BPA to help fund the enrichment programs for our children. We thank you in advance

for your participation in this fundraiser.

We are still waiting for Mother Nature's cooperation so that we may plan a family sledding event. Once the snowy weather returns we will notify you via email for a Saturday or Sunday event.

It is hard to believe we are already thinking of springtime. Please save the date for the annual Spring Fling. It will be held on *Wednesday, May 18th* with a rain date of *Thursday, May 19th*. This is a fun filled family event!

Thanks to all who came to the last BPA meeting. Our next BPA meeting is scheduled for *Tuesday, February 23 @ 7pm*. We look forward to discussing our enrichment programs, potential parent program, the Spring Fling, and a teacher appreciation luncheon!

Sincerely, Jane Redman, President

Office Update

Thank you for submitting your child's 2010 application. As I was entering the applications in my student database for next year, I noticed that there have been several changes to some parents' information. It is very important to let us know if any information changes. If any of your contact information changes or you have a new cell phone number, please let us know and I will make a note on your child's file. It's important that we have your updated contact information in case of an emergency. Thanks for your help!

~ Mrs. Watts

Change in School Calendar

Our last Professional Development Day for 2009-2010 has been re-scheduled from Wednesday, March 10, to Friday, March 12th to allow Berrybrook Teachers to attend a conference at Bridgewater State College.

“Personal Pathways to Professionalism” is sponsored by The Boston Association for the Education of Young Children, and has been held at Bridgewater for the last 17 years. The teachers are looking forward to attending the conference and have registered for a wide variety of workshops. Topics include, “Big Math for Small Minds,” “Using Sign Language with Preschoolers,” “Alternative Therapies for Children with Special Needs,” “Meeting All Children’s Need for Touch,” and many others.

The staff appreciates the support we receive from families and the Board of Directors in our professional development efforts. The time we spend expanding our knowledge and improving our skills has a direct impact on our work with children. Thank you for your understanding in this change to our calendar.

Outdoor Play

Children and teachers want to play outdoors everyday, but there are some days when it is not possible. Berrybrook does not have a hard and fast rule about temperature.

Teachers consider many factors when deciding about outdoor play. Some days, when the temperature is in the 30s, if the sun is shining really bright it is OK for to get bundled up and go outside for a short time before dismissal. Other days, when the temperature is in the 30s but the Berrybrook winds are whipping across the playground, it would be too uncomfortable to be outside.

Another factor that impacts outdoor time is what is going on in the classroom. During winter months the children may be working on more involved activities that require more time. Some days, teachers may plan a more extravagant snack like soup or pasta that takes longer to prepare, serve and enjoy. Berrybrook teachers know that children need their outdoor play. We try to make the best decision for all of the children every day. Soon warmer weather will make our decisions easier.



Snow Cancellation Policy

Berrybrook will cancel school if Duxbury Schools or the Silver Lake School District close due to a snow emergency. **In the case of a delayed opening, there will be no morning classes.** Please watch the news for cancellation notices. Parents may call the school to check the voice mail message if they are unsure about a snow cancellation.

Berrybrook Board of Directors

“Can you love me as I am or will socks keep us apart?” This quote is from one of my favorite parenting books and it seems particularly relevant in the cold winter months. As we struggle to make sure that our preschoolers are appropriately dressed for the weather we are bound to hit an obstacle or two. For some children it is the “puffiness” of their coat, others an itchy tag, and for many it is the wrinkle in their sock that can ruin their day. At some time or another you have probably been late for school, work, or play dates because of a wardrobe dilemma.

The quote comes from the book “Raising your Spirited Child” by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka. When I read it for the first time, I thought the author had a spy camera in my house and that she had witnessed some of my family dilemmas. It is a guide for parents whose child is more intense, sensitive, perceptive, persistent, and energetic. The quote is from a story about a father and son who are performing their daily ritual of checking the child’s sock for wrinkles, lint, and any loose thread. The father was impatient and frustrated with the child and yelled at the child to get his socks on “right now!” The child did not respond with anger but rather stated that he **needed** his Daddy’s help. Can we love our children without condition? Getting dressed can be a challenge not because the child wants to be stubborn and uncooperative but because of their temperament and sensitivities. The author has some great suggestions for predicting dilemmas, organizing the setting so that there are minimal distractions, limiting the child’s choices, and working together to avoid power struggles.

The author also has a wonderful chapter on labeling the characteristics of children so that they are positive rather than negative. The boy with the sock dilemma can be described as demanding, stubborn, and picky OR he can be described as a child who holds high standards, persists in the face of obstacles, and is selective. We can all teach ourselves to use new labels when we talk about our kids. When we hold positive thoughts it changes our behavior. The same qualities that often frustrate us as parents of young children are the same traits that will propel our children into successful adult lives.

Check it out the next time you are faced with a wrinkled sock, a twisted strap, an itchy hat, or a tight turtleneck..... Happy Winter!

Playdates

by Priscilla O'Neil

Playdates play an important part in the social development of young children. When children go on playdates they learn about other families. They observe interactions between family members and learn what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior in other households. A playdate for a child is like you attending a workshop. It's a hands-on experience in the art of compromise and negotiation.

It is unrealistic to expect your child to share every toy with the "guest" child. In advance of the visit, ask your child if there are any special toys he/she is unwilling to share. If so, tuck them away until the visit is over. It is equally important that the parent of the "guest" talk with their child so there is an understanding that a playdate at a friend's house is not a home invasion, but rather a time to respect the belonging of others. Both children need to know that the guest is not the boss. A playdate is a time for both children to engage in cooperative play. Would *you* like it if a person came to your house for the first time, touched your most treasured possessions and told you what to do for the duration of the visit?

Guidelines for Successful Playdates:

- Keep it short: 1 – 1 1/2 hours is long enough.
- Not all playdates need to be at home. When the weather gets warm, go to the beach and collect treasures from the sea, or pack a lunch and come to Berrybrook. Take a walk to the brook or enjoy the trail recently completed as an Eagle Scout project.
- Keep a listening ear. If it seems as though a conflict may occur, step in. As difficult as it may be, remain impartial. Guide the children through the verbal problem solving process rather than solving the problem for them.
- Deliver the visiting child back home at the time agreed upon. Extending the playtime may result in the children becoming tired and irritable. It is important to end on a pleasant note.

A Berrybrook parent shared helpful playdate information at a recent Berrybrook Parent Discussion Group. Her son came up with the idea of giving a tour to each first time visitor. He was very proud to show his home to his guest, and it helped his guest become familiar and comfortable with his/her new surroundings.

A playdate is a learning experience for all... your child, the visitor and you. View playdates as a time to help children develop their verbal conflict resolution skills rather than a time to get extra work done. There will be dust, dirty dishes and laundry long after your child is grown.

A Playdate is a "garden of opportunity"... tend it and flowers will grow...ignore it and it will fail to bloom.



Summer at Berrybrook

The Berrybrook Summer Nature Enrichment Program will be offered again this year. The program will run during June and July, and is 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 22, 2010.

Berrybrook Parent Discussion Group

We would like to thank all of the parents who attended the January Parent Discussion Group entitled Discipline. In a relaxed, small group atmosphere parents shared their questions such as “What do I do when my child doesn’t want to leave the playground when it’s time to go home?”, “How do I help my older sibling remain patient with their younger sibling’s frustrating behavior?”, “What does everyone think of reward systems?” as well as “How do we handle the situation of our child saying inappropriate words they may have learned from other children?”. Parents learned from other parents, teachers shared research on discipline in addition to

Berrybrook practices and a real, inspiring discussion flowed throughout the evening. Handouts are available above the cubbies in the hall. Please help yourselves!

We hope that you will join us on Wednesday, February 10th at 7pm for our next discussion, “Are You Helping Your Child to Become Helpless?” Some of the most frequently used responses start children down the pathway to failure. Learn new ways to say old phrases.

Looking forward to an enlightening discussion!

Mrs. O’Neil, Mrs. Delano and Mrs. LaForest