



October 2015

Saturday, October 3	BPA Harvest Festival 10:00-1:00
Monday, October 12	Columbus Day, No School
Wednesday, October 23	Berrybrook Board meeting 7:30 pm
Monday, October 26	Professional Development Day, No School
Wednesday, October 28	Parent Participation Orientation 7:00pm

Notes From the Head of School

Every child is unique. Over the last few weeks, Berrybrook teachers have been getting to know each child as an individual, figuring out what approaches, activities and attitudes each child will respond to best. At Berrybrook, teachers know that each child is one of a kind, having different needs and interests in the classroom. For example, some children want close physical contact with teachers and peers and others feel more comfortable having some space. There are children who like to observe for a time before trying something and others who will jump right in to every activity. Some children's "engines" run fast and others have engines that run at a slower pace. During the last few weeks teachers have been listening and observing to discover the intricacies of each personality in their classroom. Teachers spend time before and after school to reflect, revise and create activities based on the needs of individual students. What's working? What isn't? What does a particular child need to feel comfortable at circle time or in the block area? The reflection and thought process is not limited to the Berrybrook school house. The September home visits with children are an invaluable aid to teachers seeking to identify a child's temperament and teachers report that some of their best insights occur to them at home - in the morning, or at bedtime, or on the way to work. At Berrybrook, instead of molding a child to fit into our program, our goal is to adjust our program to make it the right fit for the child. Finding that key to unlock each child's natural curiosity and wonder is a challenge but when it does happen, it is tremendously rewarding for teachers.

Teachers are eager to get to know parents also. Along with wanting children to be comfortable, we want parents to feel comfortable. Because Berrybrook has caring teachers and supportive alumni parents, new families will soon feel right at home. This morning, as I observe parents feeling less anxious going out the gate and children working quietly in their classrooms, I know we are well on our way to another happy and successful year at Berrybrook.

Mrs. Keeley

Beginners Program



We are off to a wonderful start in the Beginners Class. The traditional half class days, shortened hours and home visits were helpful in making every one feel comfortable during our first few weeks together. We see friendships developing and trust levels building as we go about our morning.

Areas in our classroom such as the Water Table, Dramatic Play Area, Blocks, Playdough and Sand reflect the true interests of our Beginners. The materials used provide a backdrop of fun and meaningful experiences while students can continue to get to know their teachers and classmates.

Our daily routine provides ease of flow from one activity to the next. From Independent Choice Time, Story and Project Time to Outdoor and Snack Time, children move easily in fun and laughter. We have worked on group projects and individual projects. By doing this the children gain a sense of their own importance and the value of being part of a group. They are learning to wait their turn and show respect for others.

Our focus in September was "Me". Who am I? How do I fit in? We focused on each child being recognized for who they are and how they fit into this class. Also the children are developing a sense of pride in who they are among their peers. October will extend this idea as we focus on "FEELINGS". What are they? What do they look like? How do I feel? What makes me sad? Mad? Happy? Through play, story, song and experience we will have fun exploring the idea of FEELINGS and how we can learn from them.

We look forward to meeting with families soon as we will have sign-ups for Parent-

Teacher Conferences which will be held during class time, at your convenience.

If you haven't done so already please check out our shutterfly page. It will be updated often and is a great way to see all the fun activities your child participates in everyday.

Happy Autumn!

Mrs. Fosdick, Mrs. LaForest,
Mrs. Piccuito and Mrs. Rosen



First Year Program

Our school year has begun! The Berrybrook traditions of Parent Orientation, Parent/Child Visiting Day, shortened school hours and home visits once again have provided a smooth transition into school for the children. We thank you all for your cooperation.

September is a time for children to become acquainted with their classroom, teachers, peers and daily routine. Classroom activities may include beach projects and making applesauce or jelly. The children are eagerly exploring the classroom dramatic play area, block building, play dough, writing table, puzzles and of course the wonderful water table! Story time, snack and outdoor play are always popular.

Berrybrook emergency evacuation drills started in September and will continue during the year. During our drills, teachers discuss the necessity of being able to get all children and teachers out

of the school in case of an emergency. It is a good idea for families to talk about safety at home, and to agree on a safe meeting place. This month, children will have a visit from the Duxbury Fire Department and explore fire safety.

October will provide more fun and learning in the areas of Fire Safety, Fall nature projects and of course, Pumpkins! Halloween can be overwhelming for some children, and that is why at Berrybrook, we ask that costumes remain at home. As part of our Halloween celebration, we will carve a class pumpkin and make a special snack in school. **Because of severe food allergies, we ask that candy remain at home.** This is important to remember even after Halloween when children may want to bring candy to school in pockets or backpacks.

During the year, we will observe several types of play in our First Year Classrooms. Most common is parallel play. Children engage in play near a classmate. They each may be doing their own thing, but the children would describe this as “playing with my friend”.

Some children will be exploring group play. This type of play is characterized by mutual interactions and conversations, but children may still be working out how to play with their peers. There is much trial and error in these interactions, as children begin to negotiate with one another.

Cooperative Play occurs when children work together. All involved decide upon the theme of the play, and the play is very interactive. Children are working together, taking turns, and working toward a common goal. In essence, they are “all on the same page”.

Parent/Teacher conferences will take place later this Fall. However, if you have any questions or concerns please speak to your child’s teacher at any time.

We look forward to a memorable year together.

Mrs. Barlow, Mrs. Capasso, Mrs. Delano, Mrs. Dunn, Mrs. McDonough and Mrs. Savoy



Parent-Teacher Conferences

By Mrs. Delano

Berrybrook strives to provide a positive, nurturing and open environment for children, parents and staff. Day to day interactions provide an opportunity to address questions and concerns and starting later in October, parents of first year students will have the opportunity to schedule individual conference time with one of their child’s teachers.

Conferences are an essential ingredient for quality early childhood education. They provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to discuss a child’s progress, identify concerns, and set future goals. If possible, it’s nice to have both parents attend and parents are encouraged to prepare in advance thoughts, questions or concerns.

Through open communication a strategy can be agreed upon. Children respond best when they receive similar responses in both their school and home environments. Teachers and parents should agree on a plan to follow-up on any school/home approach discussed at the conference. Parents and teachers work as a team - being open minded, respectful and honest while supporting each other for the benefit of the child.

Second Year Program

The month of September is a time when many children begin a new school experience. They are adjusting to a different environment (classroom space, teachers, classmates). Their growing independence becomes more evident each day as they walk into the classroom by themselves, decide which activity to start with, when to eat snack, and are able to dress themselves for outdoor play. Some children adapt easily while others need more time to feel comfortable. To assist with this transition from unstructured summer to school routine, the classrooms and activities have been set up to ease children into the schedule. Home visits and shortened days help children become familiar with their new environment. One way they are learning classmate's names is through music. At Berrybrook we sing a special song with a catchy clapping rhythm.

Hello

Hello (name)
And how do you do?
Who's that sitting
Next to you?

Since we live near the coast, beginning activities relate to the sea. It is important to start with a topic that may be familiar to children, thus giving them the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences of shells, sand, fish, etc. The children have been busy watercoloring paper fish for a classroom display and have learned a song about a little fish.

Little Fishy

Little fishy went out to play,
wiggled his fins and swam away.
Down he went in the water bright,
opened his mouth and took a bite!
Mmm, Mmm,
Tastes good!

In October the students will be participating in the Berrybrook tradition of making jelly.

They will sort the fruit which is then cooked and strained resulting in juice. This juice is then mixed with other ingredients and cooked again until it becomes jelly which is poured into small jars. After setting, the jelly is ready to eat. Each child will have a jar to take home and at times jelly will be served with snack.

October is Fire Safety month. Children will be learning about fire safety through books, class discussions, art projects and dramatic play. Reading "**The Fire Cat**," starring "Pickles," is a long time Berrybrook tradition. Each month the children will practice the classroom's emergency evacuation drill to help them feel comfortable and knowledgeable about this procedure.

The study of the life cycle of pumpkins will begin this month. Children will utilize all their senses to explore and learn about this autumn vegetable; touching the outside textures of various pumpkins, visually comparing different sizes and shapes, estimating weights, observing pumpkin seeds germinating in baggies in our classroom windows, and smelling the inside of a pumpkin. After listening to a story, "Mousekin's House", the children will find a place outside to put "Jack O' Lantern" where they can watch throughout the year as it slowly decays and goes back into the ground.

As the end of the month approaches, children will be making Halloween decorations for the classroom, as well as learning some facts about bats and spiders. At circle time they will be learning songs about Halloween, listening to non-scary stories, and participating in a play, based on the story, "The Little Old Lady Who Wasn't Afraid Of Anything." Hopefully these activities will help make Halloween an enjoyable and memorable experience for everyone.

To celebrate Halloween at Berrybrook, there will be a pizza party. Each child will make an individual pizza for our group snack. The 4 Day Classes will have their celebration on Thursday, October 29 and the 5 Day Class will celebrate on Friday, October 30. We are asking that Halloween costumes remain at home for this celebration.

Have a safe and happy Halloween!

Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Fosdick,
Mrs. LaForest, Miss McNulty, Mrs. Neal,
Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Piccuito, Mrs. Richardson
and Mrs. Rosen

Arrival & Dismissal Reminders

Please remember the front door will be locked 15 minutes after arrival time. Families arriving late may ring the doorbell and Mrs. Watts or Mrs. Keeley will let you in. Thank you to parents for waiting until 9:00 in the morning and 1:00 in the afternoon to enter the classroom. Teachers need every minute to prepare for the children. Likewise, thank you for arriving on time for dismissal. Children worry if parents are late. If you have an emergency, please call the office so we can let your child and teachers know you are on your way.

- **Drive Slowly.**
- **Supervise children after signing out.**
- **Latch the gate behind you.**
- **Hold hands in the parking lot.**
- **Children must never be left unattended in cars.**

A helpful Berrybrook tradition has been for parents to meet another parent with younger children in the lot. One parent can watch younger children in the cars, while the other parent walks Berrybrook students to or from school. Please remember anytime you have an emergency or need help at arrival or dismissal, you may call the office and we will assist you!

“Say Hello to Mrs. Keeley!”

Every year, I include this topic in the October Newsletter. I want to let parents know I enjoy arrival time. I think it is important to greet every child each day and it gives me the opportunity to meet and to get to know the entire family, including younger and older siblings. Saying hello to everyone is a favorite aspect of my job, and I am not offended in the least if a child does not say, “Hello Mrs. Keeley” in return. I notice many parents encouraging their child to return my greeting, but please know that I understand that some children may not feel ready to return a greeting just yet. I know from experience that soon, children will feel very comfortable giving me a hello at arrival and a goodbye at the gate. It is such a thrill for me the first time a child spontaneously says, “Hi Mrs. Keeley!” Berrybrook teachers model and encourage polite behavior and we know through working with your children, that parents do the same at home. So, feel free to encourage your children to “Say Hello to Mrs. Keeley” but please know that I do not consider it a requirement!

Mrs. K

A Berrybrook Parent Series!

Wednesday October 28, 7 p.m
Parent Participation in the Classroom

January 2016

Berrybrook Curriculum

April 2016

Transitions: Moving on to the next
year Going to Kindergarten

Please join us for these great school-wide events. Meet new families, make new connections and rekindle some old.

**Make new friends, but keep the old,
One is silver, and the other gold!**

Berrybrook Parents Association

School is officially underway and it is wonderful to see all of the students in action! While the children have been exploring their classrooms, Mrs. Keeley, Mrs. Watts, the BPA and many parents have been busy putting the final details together for our **annual Harvest Festival**. This event would not be a success without those individuals who have also generously donated a themed basket or purchased supplies! Many Berrybrook families and local companies have donated some fantastic silent auction items as well. Hopefully many of you can attend and enjoy the crafts, hay rides and food from **10-1 this Saturday!** We will alert everyone through email if we need to reschedule the event based on the weather.

Our enrichment coordinators have been planning too. They have organized a great Family Fun Friday (FFF) for this **Friday, October 23 at Bog Hollow at 1:15pm**. Bog Hollow is one of our most popular trips as children take a hay ride to the pumpkin patch, explore the play structure and enjoy the fall air! Also, make sure to save the date for **November 6th** when the BPA will host **Lindsay and Her Puppet Pals** in the "big room" at Berrybrook. Siblings are always welcome to attend Family Fun Fridays! To register for this event and all other FFF visit the BPA table.

Enrichment is also beginning this month. The BPA is happy to welcome back Kim Spires from Inspire Kids Yoga. Mrs. Spires is a certified children's yoga teacher and has worked with Berrybrook students for the last three years. She brings yoga postures to life through music, stories and activities. The second year students will begin this month and continue where they left off from last year, while the new students will begin in January. Make sure to ask your child what they have learned this month!

Thank you to everyone who has already paid their BPA dues! If you have yet to do so we ask for a \$30 contribution which goes directly to student enrichment in and out of the classroom. Forms are available at the BPA table. Every Berrybrook parent is automatically a member of the Parents Association and welcome at all BPA meetings. We encourage you to join us at the monthly meetings to share ideas and volunteer to help in any way you can. Be on the lookout for an email inviting you to our next meeting. Thank you for your support and participation!

Jill Cooney & Danielle MacKinnon
Co-Presidents



Dear Parents,

When you arrive on Saturday for the Harvest Festival, there will be extra parking in the field. Please enter the Berrybrook parking lot and follow the signs.

The BPA has lots of fun planned for the whole family including hay rides, face painting, crafts, snacks and more. They also have some great raffle items available to help raise funds for enrichment programs.

We are counting on a beautiful day, but if we have to cancel due to weather, the BPA will email will and there will be a message on the school answering machine.

See you Saturday!
Mrs. Keeley

Berrybrook Board of Directors

I have often wished that Berrybrook was K-12 as I put my two Berrybrook alum on the bus and off to a much larger school. But since Berrybrook isn't going to be our children's school forever, I think it is up to us to work on creating environments in our new schools that build on the foundation we have provided them here. Education policy is a complicated and confusing arena, but for me it all boils down to a simple basic. A school should be a child-centric place that addresses the needs of the whole child, a place where it is safe to explore, make mistakes and find their own path.

We are seeing much greater success around the world in educational systems than here in the U.S. One particular system that has caught my attention is Finland. Finland in recent years has ranked on the top of nations around the world in education outcomes in math, science and reading. 40 years ago Finland decided to make drastic changes to the way it educates its children. Today children do not start school until age 7, they rarely take tests and don't do homework until later in their teen years, and they have 75 minutes of recess a day. Dr. Pasi Sahlberg, author of a best-selling book about the Finnish experience called "Finnish Lessons", has said "the first six years of education are not about academic success. We don't measure children at all. It's about being ready to learn and finding your passion."

And they are finding success. They have the highest rate of college attendance in Europe, they have a higher high school graduation rate than the US, and they spend about 30% less per student than we do in the United States. Much of the success is also attributed to the role of teachers in Finland where only the top 10% are admitted to teacher training programs and they are harder to get into than medical or law schools. And as professionals are viewed similarly to doctors and lawyers.

Some naysayers say we can't apply the lessons from a country like Finland which is very different than our country. But interestingly when we look at Norway, which is similar to Finland, but follows a US style of education, it is not finding similar success to Finland but rather ranks near the US in math, reading and science. I am not saying we should be creating an exact replica of the Finnish system. What I am saying is that we need to think about focusing on the child and not on standardized tests and comparing child-to-child as they begin their educational journey. That as parents we need to be more involved in the development of educational policies in our own communities. Together we can work as partners with our schools to make them safe places to grow and explore and help our children become their best selves. I guess in the simplest terms, let's bring some Berrybrook with us when we move on.

Allyson Frazier, Board President



Berrybrook Book Review

Joanne LaForest

Keeping Your Child In Mind, by Claudia M. Gold, MD

There are many parenting books today that focus on the challenges we all experience throughout the course of our child's development. Behaviors are seen during the natural phases of childhood as a child's sense of self evolves and they begin to find their place in the world around them. Parents face obstacles in situations where the need for tools to manage these obstacles effectively can benefit their children in future experiences.

Rather than being advised on "what to do", the book *Keeping Your Child in Mind* teaches parents "how to be" with children. The ideas of validation, empathy and respect for children accomplishes this, however the key difference in this book is that the focus is also on the regulation and management of *the parent's* feelings and emotions. Claudia M. Gold, MD, a pediatrician who also studied contemporary developmental theory with the Berkshire Psychoanalytical Institute states, "if a parent is given the space and time to think about (their) child's experience, it has a significant and immediate effect on the child's behavior." Therefore when the adult manages their own feelings and behaviors about a particular challenge, space is provided to validate how their child feels. After all, "being understood by the person we love is one of our most powerful yearnings," Gold reminds us.

For those of you who love how- to books, myself included, there are steps to follow when keeping your child in mind. Gold discusses the importance of first understanding where your child is at developmentally so that realistic expectations are made. Next, having empathy for how your child is feeling by validating and naming those feelings is very important. Third, help your child to contain the emotion they are feeling (happy, sad, mad, frustrated) with the goal being for them, themselves, to regulate different emotions experienced. At Berrybrook, we provide these experiences daily so that success can build as children practice these skills. Finally, Gold suggests practicing these three steps while creating the foundation of handling *your own* feelings throughout. Ultimately, your child will feel kept in mind. The book describes it in words your child would say if they could express it as, "When you think about me, I learn to understand myself."

The book uses different case studies to illustrate these ideas and techniques. Topics and challenges addressed take the reader from infancy and colic, through first separations such as bedtime and first school experiences, on up through elementary-age and adolescent parenting issues. I believe parents will find most helpful the idea of "the holding environment" – a space adults create where children are validated yet given boundaries on which limits are placed on behavior. Berrybrook is a true "holding environment", demonstrating that "discipline that accepts the feelings but places limits on behavior can teach a child to manage difficult emotions."

Let's keep our children in mind, every day, this entire school year!