

BERRYBROOK NEWS

November, 2007

Wednesday, November 7	Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm
Monday, November 12	Veteran's Day, <u>No School</u>
Tuesday, November 13	BPA meeting 9:00 am & 1:00 pm
Wednesday, November 14	4 & 5 Day visit Plimoth Plantation
November 22, 23, 24	Thanksgiving Break, <u>No School</u>
Wednesday, November 28	Berrybrook Board Meeting 7:00 pm

Notes from the Headmaster

Recently, one of our Board members, Betsy Davenport, told me about a book called *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv. In the book, Mr. Louv makes the case for "Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder." He quotes Robin Moore, Director of the National Learning Initiative at North Carolina State, who writes,

"Children live through their senses. Sensory experiences link the child's exterior world with their interior, hidden affective worlds. Since the natural environment is the principal source of sensory stimulation, freedom to explore and play with the outdoor environment through the senses in their own space and time is essential for healthy development.... This type of self-activated, autonomous interaction is what we call free play. Individual children test themselves by interacting with their environment, activating their potential and reconstructing human culture."

In his opinion, modern society is providing less and less unstructured time outdoors for children and more and more activities indoors or in front of a computer screen. I remember as a child, I would leave the house after breakfast, and go outside until I got hungry for lunch, then I would go back outside until my mother called us in for dinner, and then back outside again "until the street lights came on." I grew up in Boston, but my neighborhood had plenty of school yards, gardens and parks that brought me and my playmates in close contact with nature. Today, children need to be supervised more closely, but it doesn't mean that we cannot provide safe experiences for them in natural settings.

At Berrybrook, children have always been able to enjoy a rich, open outdoor environment that presents many choices for creative play and engagement.

This year, our new schoolhouse building plans have provided us with an additional outdoor space on the lower playground. I feel that the number of trees and the proximity to the woods brings children and families even closer to our natural environment. I don't know about you, but every time I take the walk down the hill to spend time in the lower playground, I get a very peaceful feeling. In the *Last Child in the Woods* the book states,

“The quiet wisdom of nature does not try to mislead you like the landscape of the city does, with billboards and ads everywhere. It doesn't make you feel like you have to conform to any image. It's just there and accepts everyone.”

I agree. There is something about the natural beauty of Berrybrook that makes you feel welcome and relaxed. Even though the lower playground added a degree of difficulty to the planners of our recent picnic – moving everything up and down that hill! – the wooded setting also generated a slightly different feel than other festivities we have enjoyed at Berrybrook. If you were here that day and enjoyed a hayride in the field, you also experienced that peaceful feeling of being in nature in a different way - enjoying the outdoors on a wagon pulled by powerful animals. Even parking in the field is a unique experience, very different from a paved parking lot. Thank you so much to the BPA officers and all of their volunteers to plan an event that made the most of our beautiful, natural environment.

Two weeks ago, Mrs. Delano and I walked the nature trails that we bring the children on to make sure they were passable and safe. We looked at every rock and root and had to make the hard choices to keep the trail safe for children but still natural and authentic enough for them to feel like they are exploring. I would invite parents to walk the trail on one of these beautiful fall days. It is a great way to clear your mind, get some exercise, lower your blood pressure and enjoy the great outdoors all at the same time. It would be a nice treat for yourself after you drop your child off for class, or before picking up.

November is a special month for giving thanks. I am so thankful for the abundant resources available at Berrybrook; for our beautiful natural setting, for Katharine Mann's vision, for the board of directors who keep Berrybrook headed in the right direction, for the teachers who inspire, for the parents who care, and for the children who teach us something new every single day.

I am thankful that the Berrybrook setting and philosophy so closely reflects the natural world – “It doesn't make you feel like you have to conform to any image. It's just there and accepts everyone.”

Happy Thanksgiving, Pat Keeley

Classroom Activities

Coming up this month, classes will be focusing on Harvest themes, including Pilgrims and their long trip on the Mayflower, Native Americans and how they worked and lived, and why we celebrate Thanksgiving.

For many years, older Berrybrook children take a trip to Plimoth Plantation. This year, the trip will take place on Wednesday, November 14, 2007. Parents of our 4 & 5 Day children will be volunteering to drive and chaperone. The trip will take place in the morning for both classes and there will be no lunch bunch that day. Children and parents will be meeting and checking in with teachers at the Plantation. Complete information will be in 4 & 5 Day cubbies.

November is a natural time to talk with children about being thankful for family, friends, and the abundance of good things nature provides. Each class will arrange a Thanksgiving observance appropriate for their group.

Fall Parent Conferences have started and will continue through the month of November. The meetings are a wonderful opportunity for teachers and parents to share information and to make plans for the best possible experience at Berrybrook. Individual classes will post sign up sheets for parents to arrange a convenient time. During the conference teachers will share observations of your child and touch on specific areas of development. Most conferences will be held during the school day.

Berrybrook Outdoors

This month, the outdoor temperature will start to drop. Please remember to dress children ready for outdoor play. We plan on going outside every day. Warm layers are a good idea, so children can remove clothing if they get too hot. The weather changes so rapidly in New England, children should have hats and mittens available. Also, it is a good idea to check your child's change of clothing at school. Clothing dropped off in September may not be a good match for November weather!

Teachers have been applying insect repellent since September, but we will be ending that procedure November 1st. With the cooler weather children have been coming to school well covered and we have had a few below freezing nights, so the mosquito population is down.

Repellent will still be available at school if parents would like to apply it to their own children. We will inform parents in the spring if insect repellent once again becomes part of our routine.

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The Acorn Song

I'm an acorn small and round
Lying on the cold, cold, ground.
People walking step on me.
That is why I'm cracked you see!
I'm a nut! (cluck cluck)
I'm a nut! (cluck cluck)

This is a popular Berrybrook song this time of year. Your children can tell you how to make that clucking sound!

Preschool Learning Experiences.

Thank you to the Kania, Donovan, Rouleau, Riddle and Bizzozero families for donating pumpkins for our Halloween Celebrations. The children enjoyed designing the jack-o-lantern faces and watching the teachers cut out the shapes that will make each one unique. Some classes also enjoyed pumpkin seeds at snack time.

Before they are through, Berrybrook teachers will integrate the pumpkins into activities in language arts, social science, mathematics, science, health and the arts; all of the areas listed in the "Guidelines for Preschool Experiences" published by the Massachusetts Board of education.

As the teachers read "Mousekin's Golden House" the children will be able to imagine a family of mice finding a pumpkin and making it a comfortable home. When the pumpkins are moved to the playground, children will be able to check them each day and make observations about what they think is happening.

Berrybrook teachers know that children learn all day, and they learn everywhere. Every activity and conversation is an opportunity to learn something new about the world or about yourself.

The pumpkins donated by parents provided many opportunities for children to experience the joy of discovery.

Thank you.

Facts about Pilgrim Children

Children in 1600s New England had to work hard. Their chores included: fetching water from the brook or spring, gathering fire wood, herding animals, gathering berries and other wild plants, and helping their parents cook, clean, preserve food, plant and harvest crops, and care for younger children.

Even though Pilgrim children worked very hard, they still had time to play. They probably played marbles, ball games, board games and running games.

Children were expected to show courtesy to adults, including their parents, by bowing and curtsying to them.

Both girls and boys in 1600s England and New England wore Gowns (dresses) until they were seven years old.

There was no school in the early years of New Plymouth. Parents who wanted their children to learn to read and write taught them themselves or had their children taught by their neighbors.

Children often slept on mattresses that were laid on the floor at night. The mattresses were usually stuffed with straw. Some children slept in their parent's bed.

Children and adults probably only took baths a few times a year. They thought bathing was unhealthy.

You've Got Mail

Everyone loves to get notes in the mail. Children especially, love to get an envelope from the letter carrier with their name on it. At Berrybrook, we ask parents to send invitations to birthdays by U.S. Mail. We ask this to ensure that there are no hurt feelings. Birthdays are a sensitive issue in preschool. Every three and four year old quickly realizes how powerful birthday invitations are and will often experiment with that power.

When conversations about birthday celebrations come up in the classroom, teachers will remind children that they should talk about their birthdays parties at home, and we emphasize that every child has a special "Berrybrook Birthday" with their class.

The social engagements of preschoolers are very important, and they are a marvelous learning experience. It is important for parents to follow the child's preferences for frequency and duration and to be sensitive to the feelings of children when extending any invitation.

Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver the other, gold.



Community Service

For the past 6 years, students in Mrs. O'Neil's class have coordinated donations for the animals at the Kingston Animal Shelter during the holidays. This year, the donations will be collected during November. Mrs O'Neil has spoken to the shelter to find out what items the animals really need. If you could spare or donate just one of these items it would be greatly appreciated.

KINGSTON ANIMAL SHELTER 2007 WISH LIST

- Litter, Litter & More Litter
- Purina Kitten Chow
- Canned Cat Food
(Small tuna size cans, no diced or sliced, they don't like it)
- Baby Food
(chicken/turkey meat only)
- Paper Towels
- Laundry Soap
- Dryer Sheets
- Palmolive anti-bacteria dish soap
- Tall Kitchen Trash Bags

Children may bring in items and place them in the boxes by the door.

Also at the shelter, the animal care fund assumes medical expenses for the cats and dogs. At Berrybrook we are collecting only pennies to help the animals. We call it, "Pennies for the Pound." There will be a jar in both classrooms for the pennies.

Thank you in advance for your donations.

Berrybrook Parents Association

Dear Berrybrook Families,

I wanted to thank you all for making the Groundbreaking Picnic such a success! Thank you to all of the families who donated their time with set up, decorations, volunteering to grill, helping with crafts, and clean up. Thank you also to the families who donated the cider and took the time to make the popcorn. It was such a beautiful day, and it was all of you who made this day so special.

I would also like to thank all of the families who have contributed dues to the BPA. With proceeds from the Picnic and parents dues we will be able to plan some wonderful enrichment programs for the children this year.

For our next BPA meeting we are going to try something different. To make it more convenient for everyone, we thought we could have a quick meeting after each of the AM and PM drop-offs. That way, any children with us can play, and we can talk about some upcoming plans. We will be discussing holiday outreach, Festival of the Trees, and enrichment programs for the year.

Our next BPA meeting will be **Tuesday, November 13**, after morning drop-off and also following afternoon drop-off.

Regards,

Nancy Cooney

BPA President

The Mist and All

Dixie Wilson

I like the fall,
The mist and all.
I like the night owl's
Lonely call –
And wailing sound of wind around.

I like the gray
November day,
And bare dead boughs
That coldly sway
Against my pane.
I like the rain.

I like to sit
And laugh at it –
And tend
My cozy fire a bit.
I like the fall –
The mist and all.

Thank you

Thank you to Mrs. Diamond, Charlotte's mother and Mrs. Dickinson, Michael's mother for picking up the pizzas the 4 and 5 Day children made for their Halloween celebrations and bringing them home to bake in their ovens. The children enjoyed their individual pizzas very much. We appreciate the time and effort it took to pick them up, bake them and bring them back!

Welcome

Please welcome Kayla Maguire. She is the new baby sister in the Maguire family. Congratulations to Matthew, Ashley and Mr. & Mrs. Maguire.

Board of Directors

As a follow up to last May's 2007-2008 Annual Appeal letter, it is our great pleasure to thank you for your continued support of Berrybrook School. Since Berrybrook opened its doors in 1954, the school has grown and benefited from the support of our alumni, parents and friends all across the community. Whether you are part of Berrybrook's past or present, your contribution has helped provide an invaluable experience to so many children and enabled us to carry on many wonderful traditions.

In recognition of our commitment to *all* children, for the past three years and for the current appeal, **every dollar raised has been dedicated 100% to the Helen Wheeler Scholarship Fund.** This fund was created to assist children who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to start, or continue on at Berrybrook. In 2006-2007 alone, the appeal provided tuition assistance to *eight* families!

The Development Committee's goal for the 2007-08 appeal is to surpass last year's total and achieve 100% participation from our current families and Board of Directors. Please join us in honoring Mrs. Mann and Mrs. Wheeler's spirit and commitment to all children...

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO PARTICIPATE! Donations to the 2007-08 Annual Appeal are welcome any time during the school year.

Clearly, something very special happens here during a child's stay that is transforming and inspirational to both the children and their families. If you are able to make a gift at this time, please know that your contribution of any amount will help a child have a Berrybrook cubby with his or her name on it. That child will experience the unique beauty of our pastures and woodlands, our kind and caring teachers, and all the wonderful things that Berrybrook has to offer – making homemade jelly, tapping the maple tree, spinning wool, making ice cream, making new friends and keeping the old!

Please consider making your contribution today.
Donation envelopes can be found in the school entrance.

On behalf of those whom your generosity touches, we extend our most sincere gratitude.

Sincerely,
The Berrybrook Development Committee



Parent Discussion Group

The following are excerpts from an article written by Mrs. O'Neil. The entire article will be the topic of discussion at the next parent discussion group on Wednesday, November 7, 2007. We hope this topic will be thought provoking! Any suggestions, questions, or comments you may have will be welcome that evening or at anytime.

MOMMY AND ME

By
Priscilla O'Neil

I'm four years old and I go to preschool. Today I hope Mommy won't be clingy when she says good-bye. She tells me to "go ahead into the classroom" but she won't let go of my hand.

When school is over Mommy comes to get me. She always asks me if I had a "good" day. If I say "YES" she will smile down at me and then visit with the other Moms and not give me any attention. But if I say "NO" she will give me lots of attention. She will even bend down to listen to my every word. I like the attention I get from saying "NO". Now I say "NO" everyday.

This morning on the way to school Mommy said if I have a "good" day that just as soon as school is over she will take me to the grocery store and I can choose any treat I want.

When I grow up I'm going to build a school for Mommies and Daddies. I want to help them better understand what they can do to make preschool a happy time for parents and children.

Being Thankful

Joanne La Forest

November. What do we think of? Thanksgiving, counting our blessings, being thankful for all that is good in our lives and being thankful for the strength to get through the hard times. We are thankful for our families, especially our children. Let's be thankful for...

Togetherness

Together at meals

- Make meals together, everyone can take part!
- Create placemats by drawing on construction paper then laminating them.
- Your child can be in charge of setting the table.
- Let everyone talk about his or her day.
- Foster independence by teaching your child to clear his or her own dishes.

Together in the car

- Sing together.
- Listen to story tapes together.
- Play “Look for a red car, blue car, etc.”
- Let your child “read” to you.

Together at bedtime

- Create relaxing, memorable rituals: bath and background music, cozy pajamas, and a great book.
- Try chapter books at bedtime. Children benefit from being read to from books above age/grade level. They’ll look forward to bedtime the next night!

Thoughtfulness

- Be thoughtful by placing a note or drawing from you to your child in a surprise place for your child to find.
- Be thoughtful by having a favorite game waiting at home all ready to play with your child when you arrive home from school or errands.
- Be thoughtful by remembering to thank your child for things you appreciate; your child remembering to clean up his or her toys, putting clothes in the hamper. A thank you from you means a lot to them.
- Be thoughtful by sharing the thoughts you have about your child with them. For example, “I thought of you today while you were at school and I was at the market. Remember that funny song you made up about apples when we went food shopping together?”
- Be thoughtful by making a surprise snack that your child loves or, better yet, make it together!

Time

- Take time to simply watch your child when they don’t know you are!
- Take time to snuggle with your child and talk about ANYTHING!
- Take time for tickling and laughing.
- Take time in the middle of the morning rush to get out the door to ask your child, “So, what are you hoping to do today?”
- Take time at bedtime to tell your child how much he or she means to you.
- Take time before waking your child up in the morning to hug them and smell their “sleepy scent”, that unique scent that only belongs to them and fills your heart within!

Togetherness, Thoughtfulness, Time...not only in November: Be thankful every day!!!
(Mrs. La Forest teaches in the 2 & 3 Day classes)