

BERRYBROOK NEWS

January, 2008

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Last night while we were fast asleep,
The old year went away.
It can't come back again because,
A new one's come to stay.

Wednesday, January 2	Enrollment begins
Monday, January 21	Martin Luther King Jr. Day, No School
Wednesday, January 30	Professional Day, No School Berrybrook Board meeting 7:00pm

Notes from the Headmaster

During October, November and December, I spent many hours with parents who came to Berrybrook to look at our programs for next fall. They are in the process of deciding which preschool will be a good match for their child. Admissions at Berrybrook has turned out to be one of the most pleasurable parts of my job as Headmaster. I am always happy to share what I love about Berrybrook with visitors. Parents and children visiting the school can see for themselves the busy, happy children in the classroom and the caring teachers attending to them. They can see the activities and materials that have been carefully chosen and our beautiful natural surroundings are obvious. My goal is to convey to them the wonderful things about our school that they may not see on a first visit. I let them know that our school is a non-profit institution governed by a volunteer board of directors who have thoughtfully managed the school for over 50 years. I think it is important for visitors to know about our home visits and about our many traditions - from making jelly to ice cream day. It is important that I tell visitors about our active Parents' Association and their enrichment programs and fun family get togethers. I enjoy telling prospective parents about our families who bring snacks at pick up time and stay to play with other Berrybrookers on the playground after class. When parents enroll children at Berrybrook they may think they are simply enrolling their child in a quality preschool. All of you know by now how exceptional our program is, but you also know that Berrybrook is so much more. Thank you, parents, for helping to make Berrybrook a unique experience and for contributing so much to the success and well being of the Berrybrook School.

Pat Keeley

Classroom Activities

Teachers marvel at how much children grow after only a two week vacation. What was a short break for staff was a long one for children. Because Berrybrook is a comfortable and calming environment, it won't take long for children and teachers to re-establish classroom routines.

In January, we will spend a good amount of time discussing how to stay healthy during the winter. Many activities will focus on healthful eating and cooking, resting and keeping well and warm. Classes will be talking about appropriate clothing to wear outside in the winter to keep well and warm. Fighting germs is a topic we introduce in September and it continues throughout the year. We will remind children that it is important to wash hands before preparing food or eating it, and we will continue to emphasize proper hand washing after coughing, sneezing or using a tissue. Parents are encouraged to reinforce these lessons at home. Working together we can help our community stay healthy this winter.

Berrybrook offers a wonderful environment for enjoying winter and observing the seasonal changes the cold weather brings. We will enjoy looking for birds and filling our bird feeders and looking for animal tracks in the snow. This is an exciting activity that families can continue in their own backyards and neighborhoods. These are outdoor activities, and we will go out every day that is not freezing or raining.

Cold Weather Tips

- Please remember to have your child arrive with boots, hat, mittens, jacket and ski pants. It takes extra time to locate Berrybrook mittens or ski pants for children who don't have them. Even when there is no snow, these extra clothes allow for warm, comfortable outdoor play.
- Please mark each item with your child's name.
- Practice getting dressed at home. It takes a little extra time to have children dress themselves, but once they master it, they feel very proud and capable!
- Please remember to pack shoes or slippers for children to wear in the classroom when children come to school in boots.

Snow Cancellation

Berrybrook will cancel school if Duxbury Schools or the Silver Lake School District close due to a snow emergency. 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.

In rare situations, there may be times when we must cancel classes during the day to ensure the safety of our children, families and staff. In those cases, the teachers will phone families in their class.

Berrybrook Parents' Association

The donations we receive in BPA parent dues - which can be made anytime during the year - and funds raised from activities like our fall picnic make it possible for the BPA to provide enrichment programs for the children. The first enrichment program will take place this month! Big Ryan, a story teller will be visiting classes on January 15th and January 17th.

Thank you to all of the parents and children who contributed items to the Plymouth Area Coalition for the Homeless in December. Many items were donated and your generosity was much appreciated.

Don't forget the new "Berrybrook Parents' Book Swap" Bring in a book you've read and would like to share .The next meeting of the Berrybrook Parent Association will be in February.

Nancy Cooney,

President, BPA



Berrybrook's Hidden Treasure

Try to set aside a few extra moments at pick up or drop off time to explore the hidden treasure which lies behind the school building. Nestled in the pines, past the lower playground is a nature trail, which is an extraordinary place for you and your child to discover some of the indigenous flora and wildlife. Along the trail you'll see placards describing facts about the various vegetation.

The winter is a particularly good time to walk either the nature trail behind the school or the trail to the right of the barn. With the seasonal absence of leaves on the trees you have a great view into the Berrybrook woods. Looking skyward, you will most likely capture a sight of the large hawk, which makes its nest high a top one of the mighty oaks.

With our day to day schedules becoming so increasingly more hectic and constraining we can easily miss enjoying some of the simpler pleasures with our children. It just may surprise you how refreshing a ten-minute walk with your child can be as you relish this quiet time discovering Berrybrook's hidden treasure.

Tom Murray

Berrybrook Board,

Buildings and Grounds

Transitions

by Joanne LaForest

January. It brings to mind the idea of starting over, new beginnings, looking back on the past and planning ahead...transitioning from one year to the next. The word "transition" is defined in the dictionary as "1. a passage from one state, stage, subject or place to another : change" and "2. an abrupt change in energy state or level" (www.m-webster.com/dictionary). The two definitions are intriguing. The first referring to "a passage" the second "an abrupt change". Both definitions are fitting to us all, almost every day.

Transitioning to the New Year could be referred to as traveling from one passage of time to the next as people reflect on the past year and form resolutions for the coming one. Perhaps the same definition could apply to the transition from the 2 or 3 Day Class this year to the 4 or 5 Day Class next fall. As families fill out enrollment forms for placement next year some may not even be able to begin to imagine how their child will grow and change in the months ahead. But it will happen. It always does. Change is constant.

The second definition, referring to an abrupt change, represents many occurrences throughout a child's day. Interrupting their play at home to go to Berrybrook in the morning, clean up time at school, leaving the playground to go home and have lunch are just some of the abrupt changes children experience. To show respect for a child's hard work and joy in what they are doing, it is most important to forewarn them of a change. Daily routines provide expectation of the changes so that a reminder is usually all that is needed for a successful transition to the next activity. For example, a child knowing that he or she can expect some quiet play time, a bath and a great book from Mom or Dad every night before going to bed will probably transition easier to bed time than if the routine were different each night or it was abruptly announced "Time for bed!" while they were building with their Lego's in the living room. Respectful words such as "Soon it will be time to go to the grocery store. Would you like to play for a few more minutes or are you ready to go now?" can help prepare a child for transitioning to the next activity and give him or her the power to choose how they will transition. This may need to be followed up with "It is time to get in the car now. Should we do it very loudly or very softly?" There will be times, however, after providing much respect and opportunities for choice that a child may be unable to choose and demand he or she won't be moving on to what needs to happen next. It is respectful for a parent to say to their child, "I see you are unable to choose how you will be getting in the car. We need to go to the grocery store now. Maybe next time you'll be able to choose." Transitions can always be handled respectfully, even when met with disagreement .

I believe that everyone appreciates respect when it is necessary to "switch gears". My children appreciate that when I wake up in the morning I need (need!) my morning cup of coffee to transition into the day...to change into Mom...to change into Mrs. LaForest. I most appreciate when someone says to me, "When you're finished with what you're doing could you help me with something?" I think it's fair to say that our children appreciate it also. Whether becoming age four after being three for so long or moving from breakfast to brushing their teeth, I think respect for what they are working on, in that very moment, is what our children most deserve.

(Mrs. La Forest teaches in the 2 & 3 Day Classes)