

BERRYBROOK NEWS

February, 2008

WINTER MORNING

Winter is the king of showmen, turning tree stumps into snowmen
And houses into birthday cakes, and spreading sugar over lakes.
Smooth and clean and frosty white, the world looks good enough to bite.
That's the season to be young, catching snowflakes on your tongue.
Snow is snowy when it's snowing, I'm sorry it's slushy when it's going.
-Ogden Nash

Friday, February 15	Last Day Before Winter Break
Monday, February 25	School Resumes
Monday, February 25	Berrybrook Board of Directors 7:00 pm
Tuesday, March 5	Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm

Notes from the Headmaster

Last Wednesday, Berrybrook Staff had a Professional Day. We started the morning with a tour of the new school house where we were able to see that things are moving along nicely. Teachers were able to visualize how to best arrange materials and Berrybrook activities in the new spaces. We are very excited about the amount of light coming through the windows and the spectacular view. The easy access to the outdoors and the availability of the multi-purpose space will add a wonderful dimension to our curriculum. The little kitchen area for our many cooking projects is just a few steps from every classroom and it will be so great to have those aromas wafting through the school house. The amount of storage space available had us practically in tears! I feel that parents will really appreciate the extra room for cubbies and the areas available for parents to sit for a moment and socialize. It was wonderful to see the new facility and imagine our community inside, but by 10:00 we were back in the temporary classrooms moving on to the essential focus of our school - the children and what happens in our classrooms every day.

Some of the topics we discussed during the morning were NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) standards for early childhood

programs and how Berrybrook will work to maintain NAEYC accreditation in the new school house. We talked about the “Core Competencies” from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. Core competencies reflect the core body of knowledge and observable skills and attitudes that educators working with young children need to facilitate child learning and development. There are 8 core competency areas:

- Understanding the growth and development of children and youth
- Guiding and interacting with children and youth
- Partnering with families and communities
- Health, safety, and nutrition
- Learning environments and implementing curriculum
- Observation, assessment, and planning for individual needs
- Program planning and development
- Professionalism and leadership

In my opinion, Berrybrook teachers possess all of these competencies and they continually work toward increasing their understanding in all of these areas. At Berrybrook there is no end to learning for teachers. Professional Development is taken seriously and teachers are constantly learning through workshops, periodicals, books, classes and each other, and teachers agree that we learn the most from the children we work with every day.

By 12:30 we were ready for lunch and a little social time. I must say that Berrybrook co-workers enjoy each other very much. We appreciate the humor that comes with working with young children and have a lot of fun when we get together and we laugh a lot. The enjoyment our teachers derive from their work is obvious. I remember reading a quote by Aristotle that I think describes the Berrybrook staff – “Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.”

At 1:00 the staff met with the personnel committee of our Board to talk about school issues with teachers. I must say I have worked at many schools and in my experience, the relationship between staff and the Board at Berrybrook is one of the best I have ever encountered. There is a mutual support and appreciation that benefits the entire school community. By the end of the day, we had identified specific strengths and weaknesses in our organization and we will use our discussion to set goals for the future that will benefit children, families and teachers.

All of the staff would like to thank parents for supporting the 3 days we set aside each year for professional development. The genuine partnership between Parents and staff is very important to the quality and vitality of our school. It will be heaven to have a sparkling new school house, but it is truly our relationships with each other, our respect for young children and our commitment to Mrs. Mann’s vision that make our shared experience at Berrybrook so special.

Pat Keeley

Classroom Activities

February is the month that has a special day to send thoughtful notes to people we love and care about. Valentines bring warmth and joy to an otherwise cold and dark month. At Berrybrook, Valentines arrive not just on February 14th, but all during the year. Generally, the first word children write is their name. We ask children if there is something on their work so we know it is theirs and slowly but surely they master their signature. Almost without exception, the very next word children want to know how to spell is LOVE. Along with L-O-V-E they want to know how to spell MOM and DAD and then the names of brothers and sisters followed by the names of their pets. Then of course, they move on to a complete sentence - I LOVE YOU. I am always amazed that once children get the mechanics of how words work, the first thing they want to communicate is love. But, even before they are forming letters they are creating Valentines. Every painting, every scribble, every playdough creation and block building that they present to us is a Valentine. Children manage to convey the same love and affection found in traditional Valentines throughout the year in their unique and individual words and creations.

Independent choice time is the children's favorite time of the day. It is wonderful to see the productive and creative ways children learn through play during this time. It's a pleasure to see them come together as a group of friends, continually learning to understand and respect the feelings and rights of others. Their conversations on

settling differences are a sure sign of growth in the social area.

Also in February housekeeping areas will become the "**Berrybrook Post Office**" (save your junk mail and Clearing House stamps for us). We will be making very special Valentines for those that we care about. Our focus will be on thinking about our family, friends and their feelings.



Valentine's Day

The children look forward to celebrating Valentine's Day with their Berrybrook friends. Please have your child bring in a Valentine to give to each classmate. Let us know if you need a class list. The 4 and 5 Day classes would like their Valentines addressed with names, but it would be best for the 2 and 3 Day classes if the envelopes do not have any names on them to enable the children to distribute one to each classmate independently.

Sometimes children will 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 tasty treats here at school for the celebrations.

Promoting Friendships

Recognize that children differ widely in terms of their sociability.

Allow children time to be with friends informally; to talk, to play, or simply to be together.

Carry out small group discussions to help children discover similarities.

Take children's friendships seriously.

Help get children involved at the beginning of a play episode so they won't feel like or be viewed as interlopers.

Give children on-the-spot information to help them recognize the friendly overtures of others.

Help children recognize how their behavior affects their ability to make and maintain friends.

Help children endure the sorrows of friendship.

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."

Kindergarten Adventures

One of the goals in the Berrybrook's Strategic Plan was to offer some programming for alumni. This year, we are piloting an afternoon program on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:00 - 4:00 pm for our youngest alumni. The idea behind the program is to provide kindergarten age children the opportunity to have a fun, relaxing, and interesting afternoon with plenty of outdoor time. Berrybrook teachers are planning activities including art, science, creative writing, drama, and relaxation. This spring, the program will start on Monday, March 3rd and run for ten weeks.

If you or someone you know might be interested in this new program and want more information, contact the school at 781-585-2307.



Summer at Berrybrook

The Berrybrook Summer Nature Program will be offered again this year. The program will run during June and July. As in the past, children must be 4 years old to register. Also, as in the past, 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 24, 2008.

Calendar Correction

The Berrybrook School Calendar distributed last September lists April 4, 2008 as Good Friday. **That date is incorrect.** Good Friday actually falls on March 21, 2008 and there will be no school on that day. Also, a professional day that had been scheduled for that same week on Wednesday, March 19 has been canceled and we will have school on that day.

The plan is to reschedule the March professional day for teachers to coincide with our move into the new school house so that teachers may have that day to prepare our new environment. Parents will know as soon as possible when that day will be. Thank you for your understanding, apologies for any inconvenience. Please call the office if you have any questions.

CHILD FIND FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

The Duxbury Public Schools will be conducting a special needs screening program for 3 and 4 year olds. Children will participate for about thirty minutes in a series of developmentally appropriate activities designed to screen their fine and gross motor control, speech and language skills, and cognitive development. Parents will receive a copy of the assessment results. Children exhibiting problematic development may be referred for further testing with parental permission.

When: Tuesday, 2/ 26,/ 2008

Where: Chandler Elementary School
Room 304B

Call: Nancy Armstrong at
781-934-7672 to schedule
an appointment.

A springtime Tradition

Painting "blown eggs" is a spring tradition at Berrybrook. Children have been creating these beautiful works of art for many years. It is a precious project that requires help from families. Classrooms need "blown eggs."

If you are interested in donating a few eggs (brown or white) that you have "blown" at home we would appreciate it very much. It is tricky but easy to do. Simply poke a hole in both ends of the egg. A turkey skewer or push pin work well. Each hole should be about the size of a paper punch hole. If you break the yoke it is easier to blow. Blow into one hole and the egg comes out the other! Please rinse egg shell inside and out. Experienced Berrybook parents will tell new parents that the end result is worth the effort.

Because Easter is coming early this year, we are asking that eggs come into school the first week in March so that teachers have enough time to prepare them for painting. Teachers put pipe cleaners through the eggs for hanging, and all eggs are sprayed with a bleach solution and air dried before children paint them.

Thanks for your time and good luck!

Tuition payment # 7 of 9 is now due

2 Day \$197.00

3 Day \$290.00

4 Day \$359.00

5 Day \$424.00

Thank you.

Family Fun and Fitness

by
Babbie Swan

It's hard to believe that February is already here, with the continuing cold weather and snow. At Berrybrook, teachers strive to go out every day for play and exercise, weather permitting. What does "weather permitting" mean? First and foremost, teachers factor in the safety of the children. We check the outdoor temperature, the wind chill, sun or clouds, and time of day. We also ensure that children going outdoors are dressed appropriately. Teachers and parents alike know that children are happier, eat better, sleep better and are able to concentrate better when they have been outdoors, running and playing.

The February vacation is just a couple of weeks away. Instead of having a sedentary vacation (or even life style) how about doing some fun activities with your child? Even though it's cold outside, there are lots of engaging activities to do. If everybody has fun, children will want to do the activity again. Children then begin to associate an active life style with having fun. As parents, you'll be building good, healthy habits and good childhood memories!

To get children motivated, ask your child what he/she would like to do. Everyone has different fitness capabilities and interests. A few winter outdoor suggestions are sledding, making snow angels, or, see who can shovel the furthest path in the snow. Creating snow people is creative and is a good workout.

If there is too much snow, or it is too cold out, try mall walking. Going to the ice skating rink or the bowling alley are two good options if weather doesn't permit outside activities. For home bound activities, turn on your child's favorite music and dance. Incorporate going up and down the stairs into the dance. Or do 10 jumping jacks, at random times, 3 times a day. It's OK to do something silly so that children can experience along with you how much fun exercise and activity can be. Leap like a deer, pace around like a monkey, or hop like a bunny. Old time movement games such as Simon Says, or Red Light, Green Light and "Twister" are a lot of fun and laughs, and it is always fun to invent your own games. Another great activity to do alone or together is yoga. Children in the 4 Day class often request to do some of the poses. Some of the poses are easy and some are challenging. To hold a yoga posture, muscles really have to work hard to keep the body steady and to support one's weight. Yoga workouts also help to keep children (and adults) energized and focused. The yoga movements include strength, flexibility, and balance. I would be happy to demonstrate some simple poses for interested parents and there are many good yoga DVDs to try. One DVD I like is *Yoga Kids for ages 3-6 with Marsha Wenig*

All recent research indicates that the two biggest reasons children participate in exercise and sports is for fun and socialization. So try turning off the TV and get your family moving!

(Mrs. Swan teaches in the 4 Day Classroom)

Berrybrook Board of Directors

January arrived and I excitedly filled out an application for my youngest son to enroll at Berrybrook. His older brothers, my husband and I are all excited for him to begin his Berrybrook journey in the fall. As I filled out the application I reflected back on why our family chose Berrybrook six years ago.

The wonderful teachers, old farmhouse, rocketship, playground and the reputation of the school were all factors in our choosing Berrybrook. What clinched the deal was the interactive curriculum that allows for child-initiated exploration, discovery, and learning. Berrybrook's focus on developing the child's intellect and not on "teaching" academics sounded like a perfect fit for our son. It felt right.

Our oldest son thrived at Berrybrook and yet, two years later when Kindergarten enrollment crept up on us we worried. Was our son prepared? Had Berrybrook provided him with the social, academic, and intellectual skills he would need to be successful in school? Not surprisingly, the answer was YES. What triggered this anxiety? Were other parents worried that their children weren't ready? Society seems to put increasing pressure on parents and schools to introduce children to academics at earlier ages. Several generations ago most children did not attend any type of preschool and Kindergarten was optional. Today most children attend two years of preschool and Kindergarten is full-day in many communities.

Is the Berrybrook philosophy that feels so "right" for our children outdated or is it working as well today as when Katharine Mann started the school in 1954? Numerous studies confirm that

the early instruction of literacy and numeracy skills results in only short-term gains that do not last more than a year or two. As early as 1942 Dorothy Gardner, a pioneer in child development, conducted a comparative study of preschools and found in favor of schools that emphasized creativity and spontaneous play. In the past twenty years similar studies have shown that children enrolled in preschools like Berrybrook fare better in school in the long run. The experiences our children get at Berrybrook allow them to make observations, theorize about cause and effect, seek solutions to their problems and develop as curious individuals. Berrybrook is giving them a foundation for life not just for school.

I sent in my enrollment form this January without hesitation. My older boys and their classmates were well prepared for Kindergarten and beyond. Berrybrook is unique and we are so very lucky to be members of its community. Thank you Mrs. Mann, Mrs. Keeley, and all the teachers for guiding our children as they become confident, curious, empathetic, and intellectual individuals.

Betsy Davenport, Berrybrook Board

Resources:

Gardner, Dorothy E.M. (1942). *Testing Results in the Infant School*. London: Methuen.

Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (1983) *As the Twig is Bent: Lasting Effects of Preschool Programs*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Miller, Louise B., & Bizzell, Rondeall P. (1983). Long-term Effects of Four Preschool Programs: Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades. *Child Development*, 54(3), 727-741.

Berrybrook Parents' Association

BPA enrichment programs began in the new year. Big Ryan, the storyteller came to visit classrooms last month and the reports from children and teachers were very enthusiastic. I want to remind parents that all BPA dues you contributed back in the Fall and the revenue from the Fall Family Picnic make all of the enrichment programs possible. Thank you Berrybrook families!

Other BPA enrichment programs are being planned for the coming months and information about them will be in each newsletter. If you have any ideas about enrichment programs, you can leave the information for Mrs. Stravin (Teddy's Mom) in the 3 day class who is coordinating the programs this year.

I've noticed that the books left in the school entrance for the BPA Book Swap have been coming and going! Please remember to bring in any books you would like to share with other Berrybrook Parents.

Happy Valentine's Day

Nancy Cooney,
President, BPA



Duxbury Kindergarten Registration

March 28, 2008
Kindergarten Orientation
7:00PM
Chandler Cafetorium

March 17 through the 20th
Kindergarten Packet pick up
& sign up for a time for registration
9:15AM to Noon everyday & March
19, 2008 4:30PM to 6:30PM
(Wednesday Night)
Canty Office

April 7-10
Kindergarten Registration
By appointment only
Canty Office

May 19-20-21
Kindergarten Visiting Days
(All 4 & 5 Day students will take a
bus ride to Chandler School and
have a brief tour.)

Snow Cancellation Policy

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.

Thank you

