

# BERRYBROOK NEWS

*January, 2009*

Wednesday, January 14	BPA meeting 7:30 pm
Monday, January 19	Martin Luther King Jr. Day, No School
Thursday, January 22	Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm
Wednesday, January 28	Professional Day, No School Berrybrook Board meeting 7:00pm

## *Notes from the Headmaster*

**If you were a bird, and lived on high,  
You'd lean on the wind when the wind came by,  
You'd say to the wind when it took you away:  
*That's where I wanted to go today!***

*When We Were Very Young, A. A. Milne*

Every year in January after our long holiday break, the children return to school ready to work and learn. The separation issues of September are a distant memory, the quiet "honeymoon" period of October is a fond recollection and the energy and excitement of November and December have passed. As teachers, we have experienced many years of preschoolers so we know that the children experience a big growth spurt, - both physically and in their maturity level this time of year. It is not uncommon for our 2 and 3 day students to prefer working independently during the first few months of school as they are getting to know their environments, but after the new year and as the rest of the year unfolds, they become more aware of their classmates and friendships become more important. The 4 and 5 Day students are now truly one with their environments and routines and they could pretty much run the classroom on their own. By mid April teachers will observe them magically turning into kindergarteners. The little quote from A.A. Milne above seems to me to be what our young children are experiencing right now. They are leaning into the wind – the wind that is the unconditional love of their parents and the caring guidance of their teachers and taking flight. Working together, parents and teachers provide the climate for success and the children do the rest.

*Pat Keeley*

## *2 & 3 Day Classroom Activities*

A new year, a new beginning! As we welcome the new year, we take a few minutes to reflect on some new beginnings: teaching in a new building with wonderful new spaces, welcoming new students to their first school experience and finding new ways of solving problems new and old.

During December we focused on being together as families. We talked about our own families, and our school family of Berrybrook. Children talked about a family we honor during the Christmas season, and about a special family celebration using eight candles which takes place over eight days. Children created family gifts and baked cookies. Holiday activities culminated in a sing along. Thank you to all family members who took part in that special day.

Looking ahead, we start the year off celebrating the New Year. We'll make party hats, and then we'll be talking about some winter activities. We'll take care of our wild bird friends, and then we'll learn about taking care of ourselves in the "Berrybrook Hospital". We may even learn about keeping our pets healthy!

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.

Happy New Year!

## *4 & 5 Day Classroom Activities*

To ring in the New Year we begin the month of January with discussions of cold and wintry weather. We talk about temperature and wind-chill factor and most importantly how to properly dress for this kind of weather. The children are encouraged to dress all by themselves including zippers, snaps, and buttons. Proper fitting boots, mittens, hats, snowsuits and pants are appreciated. Tight fitting clothing can be very frustrating to children learning how to dress themselves. In fact, they may give up trying. It is helpful for the children to practice dressing themselves at home. Thank you for encouraging them to do so.

In January we begin to learn about winter birds. There will be observations, stories and art projects. We talk about feeding the birds in winter and how important it is to continue feeding them once you have started. They depend on us.

In the middle of January we begin our unit on health. The children make a book about themselves and learn about nutritious foods and dental health. At the end of the

month we begin to learn about space: what is a planet? comet? asteroid? moon? There are all sorts of questions. We are fortunate to know a person who is knowledgeable about this subject and is willing to answer our questions.

Speaking of knowing a lot about one subject, if anyone has a special interest or a hobby/ collection they would like to share please let the teachers know. It would be beneficial for the children to learn from your experiences and a welcome addition to our curriculum.

For the upcoming projects we need any and all used greeting cards you may be discarding whether they be birthday, holiday, get-well, etc. We will be happy and grateful for whatever you may donate.

In February, shoeboxes (any size) are needed for our Valentine's Day celebration. Also in February we will be studying postage stamps. Please save any envelopes that have cancelled stamps. The children will be cutting these stamps off for an upcoming activity.

Thank you for all your help. It is greatly appreciated.



## *Cold Weather Tips*

The first cold weather and snow we had in December reminded us to be prepared. By now parents have located all snow pants, boots, hats and mittens that had been packed away.

At Berrybrook we will go out every day that is not freezing or raining. Children should come prepared for the outdoors. We know that some days it is hard to tell what the weather conditions will be at the end of the session, so when in doubt, you could pack snow pants and boots in a tote bag to have in the cubby.

Please remember to have your child arrive with boots, hat, mittens, jacket and snow pants. Even when there is no snow, these extra clothes allow for warm, comfortable outdoor play. Please mark each item with your child's name.

Thank you!

## *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*

Dear Parents,

Happy New Year! Hope everyone has been enjoying a wonderful start to 2009. It's great to be back to Berrybrook – the children are excited to see their friends and teachers again!

In December, we demonstrated our community spirit by decorating a tree for the Festival of Trees for Cranberry Hospice. It was a fun event visiting with Santa, working on holiday crafts, and enjoying all the beautiful creations. Thank you to all who helped with our Berrybrook "Gateway to Discovery" tree and supported the cause by attending. The tree was adorable thanks to the children, teachers and Becki Bizzozero & her support team, and thank you to Volta Oil for sponsoring the tree. Additionally, thank you to all who contributed to Pilgrims Hope Shelter Outreach Program... your generosity and kindness are appreciated.

December also proved to be a great fundraising month with two new events, our Tea Party and Chocolate/Wine Tasting. The tea party was a huge hit with over 100 participants, joyful voices, and happy tummies! Also, our Chocolate/Wine tasting proved to be a fun gathering to swap information about educational toys and raised money for upcoming activities. Finally, we thank the classroom moms for organizing the holiday gifts for our inspiring teachers.

The BPA has been busy planning the next several months starting with the launch of our BPA sponsored library. This event will be our first Storytime and

will kick off the library. A recommended list of books and a signup sheet will be available on the BPA table. Mark your calendars for Friday, January 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:45am. Our "Year in Review" calendar is now posted on the BPA bulletin board. Hop, Skip, Jump will be visiting and getting the children up and moving during the long, cold month of January. Another enrichment program scheduled is Big Ryan, the story teller, who will be coming on February 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> to share his Tall Tales.

Our next meeting is Wednesday, Jan 14 7:30 pm to review our enrichment programs and begin planning our first community event. All are welcome!

Warm Regards,

Tammy Kirk,

BPA President

*Congratulations to  
Tammy Kirk, her  
husband Stephen Elliot  
and Grayson, Nolan and  
Lochlan on the new  
addition to their family –  
baby girl Addison Rose.*

# *Berrybrook Board of Directors*

## **The 'Best Year Ever'**

By Kerry Rubin

It's January! The holidays are over. It's time to get back to the schedule. Return emails and phone calls. Schedule children's activities. Process paperwork. Plan a vacation. Organize closets. Maybe even paint a few rooms. January of most years, these are my thoughts. I make a huge list. I add my New Year's resolutions, at least one of which involves being better organized. Like many of you, I have Type A tendencies and I'm always thinking about what's next and what I need to get done. While I do try to play with my children a lot, even when I'm with them I'm often thinking about The List.

But this year is different. I had a little wake up call the other day. The kids and I had a casual social gathering at 4 p.m. My 7 year old was to get off the bus at 3:43. I was baking cookies, and my 2 year old was napping. My 5 year old was bouncing around (he's always bouncing around) – bored – wanting to start an elaborate paint and glitter project – the kind there is never a good time for. I was racing to finish the cookies, telling him that there wasn't time for paint and glitter, and, sorry, he couldn't help with the cookies this time, but maybe we could do an art project later (realizing as I said this that it would be too late). I turned on the TV, raced to the bus, pried my 2 year old out of his cozy bed, and ran about the house (in full sweat) collecting hats, coats, mittens, shouting for people to "go to the bathroom, get dressed, put the coat back on, get in the car". All the while, my 7 year old wanted to talk about his day. "Sorry, honey, there's no time to talk about your day right now" I heard myself say, "Mommy is in a hurry so we can go and have fun." WHAT? There's no time to talk about the day?! What is wrong with me? My son actually *wants* to talk about his day. How lucky am I? How important was this event anyway? Did we really need to be on time? How perfectly homemade did the cookies need to be? Here was a chance to relate to my children, to enjoy them, to be present.

Young children exist in the moment. Adults frequently do not. A University of Washington psychologist explained "[w]e don't only live in the present. It is characteristic of human beings that we engage in mental time-travel. We have present and future selves. Sometimes the needs and desires of the present self conflict with those of the future self."<sup>1</sup> But this is not the case for young children. In fact, psychological studies have shown that preschool age children do not have much capability to comprehend the future at all.<sup>2</sup> We need to be aware of this as parents. We need to live in the present more and not focus quite as much on the future or the past.

---

<sup>1</sup> Schwarz, Joel (2006). Current Desires Distort Children's Choices About The Future. *University of Washington News* (quoting University of Washington psychologist Andrew Meltzoff). Available at <http://uwnews.org/article.asp?articleid=26194>.

<sup>2</sup> Atance, C.M. (August 2008 in press). Future Thinking In Children. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. Available at [http://www.psychologicalscience.org/journals/cd/17\\_4\\_inpress/atance.pdf](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/journals/cd/17_4_inpress/atance.pdf).

I don't mean to be unrealistic. There are things we need to do as responsible adults, and it's important for our children to learn this over time. But, it seems too often in my house that it's *not* a good time to do an involved art project, or sit on the floor and play games because there is always somewhere to go, bills to pay, emails to write, or calls to return. Or when I am playing with them, I'm not really living the moment, I'm thinking ahead to what I need to do next. And, if I am honest with myself, I know that a lot of what I spend my time on does not *have* to be done that moment, and may not need to be done perfectly. I know I'll never look back in life and remember how many emails I wrote, how fast I returned calls, or how many committees I volunteered for, but I will remember special moments with my children, particularly when I've relaxed enough to enjoy them.

Taking this to heart, I played checkers with my 5 year old the other day while my youngest was napping. Just the two of us. There were bills to pay, and the phone rang 3 times, but we sat on the floor and let the answering machine take the calls. He told me later that night that it had been the "best day ever" – because we played checkers together. No fancy toys or elaborate playdates. Just time together. Not that we haven't played like this a million times before – we have – but perhaps he sensed that I was really there for him. Perhaps he sensed my presence.

So, this year I stuffed the Christmas decorations back into overfilled closets – I can organize them next year. I'm settling for a little more chaos. I know I will have to fight feelings of frustration when I feel like things are out of control, but I need to remember that I'm not going to win any contests for having the most organized house or life. In fact, the kids won't miss a thing. This year, I'm going to be present. I'm not going to say "not right now" or "mommy just has to finish this one thing" as often. I'm going to play more checkers. This year, I'm going to enjoy the moment, because that's all my children understand, and that's what they are going to remember. This year, I'm going to make better memories for the future. This is going to be the 'best year ever'.

## *The Snowman's Resolution*

*Aileen Fisher*

The snowman's hat was crooked  
And his nose was out of place  
And several of his whiskers  
Had fallen from his face.

But the snowman didn't notice  
For he was trying hard to think  
Of a New Year's Resolution  
That wouldn't melt or shrink.

He thought and planned and pondered  
With his little snow-ball head  
Till his eyes began to glisten  
And his toes began to spread;

And at last he said, "I've got it-  
I'll make a firm resolve  
That no matter what the weather  
My smile will not dissolve.