

BERRYBROOK NEWS

November, 2009

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| Thursday, November 5 | 4 & 5 Day Classes visit Plimoth Plantation |
| Saturday, November 7 (rain date 11/ 8) | Berrybrook Quest 9:00-11:00 Sponsored by the Board of Directors |
| Wednesday, November 11 | Veteran's Day, <u>No School</u> |
| Thursday, November 12 | BPA meeting 7:00pm |
| Tuesday, November 17 | Parent Discussion Group 7:15 pm |
| Wednesday, November 18 | Berrybrook Board Meeting 7:30 pm |
| November 25, 26, 27 | Thanksgiving Break, No School |

Notes from the Headmaster

A portion of our Professional Day in October was dedicated to a staff workshop on "Assessments." We had a long discussion about *why* we do assessments. We brainstormed about all of the reasons assessments are important. Some of our comments were:

"Assessments help us learn about individual children"

"Assessments help us set goals for individual children"

"Parents want information about their child's progress"

"Assessments help us determine if children are ready for the next step"

"It makes me a better teacher."

After agreeing on why we do assessments, we reviewed and improved the child assessment forms we share with parents. When you meet with one of your child's teachers this month during your parent conference, teachers will be sharing information about your child's development across seven domains. At Berrybrook, teachers observe and document children's behavior regularly to focus attention on each individual child. Reviewing the information gathered and reflecting on it helps teachers prepare the written assessment shared during parent conferences. The written reports serve as a basis for discussion, and parents are encouraged to share comments, questions or concerns.

The October Professional Day provided teachers with the time to thoughtfully review how we assess children and how we use that information to build a partnership with parents that will support the growth of each child in our program. Berrybrook has a wonderful combination of teachers who are eager to learn, a board who provides time and funding for professional development and parents who support these efforts. Professional Development has a direct effect on the quality of the program we provide for children and families. I think it is important to note that one of the reasons cited for why it is important to complete child assessments was "It makes me a better teacher." Berrybrook teachers constantly reflect on their work with children and are always looking to improve. Thank you to the community for valuing and supporting our professional development.

Pat Keeley

2 & 3 Day Activities

The month of October was filled with learning about fire safety, what we do in case of an emergency at school and at home, and role playing with authentic firefighter gear and equipment. The children learned so much from the kind firefighters who visited from the Duxbury Fire Department and so enjoyed seeing an actual ladder truck with all its lights, sirens and tools. Pumpkins, spiders and ghosts filled our rooms and the month ended with a Harvest Celebration of treats. Our carved Jack-O-Lanterns made their way outside for the coming winter months as we will be able to observe what happens to a pumpkin as it decomposes. Such fascination and wonder surround this traditional "experiment"!

The month of November begins with wood working projects and tools necessary for building as we discuss different types of homes. With Thanksgiving approaching we realize how thankful we are for our homes, families and friends, as well as all that

nature has to offer. Traditional seasonal projects will be of focus this month such as a pine cone turkey, shakers, drums and beaded necklaces. We will also be working on ornaments to be hung on our holiday tree that will be on display at the Festival of Trees in December at Plimoth Plantation. November would not be complete without our traditional Thanksgiving Feast where we all try and taste new and familiar foods. Fall Parent Conferences have begun 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. During the conference teachers will share observations of your child and touch on specific areas of development. We all look forward to meeting with our Berrybrook families.



4 & 5 Day Activities

You may be wondering why the children put the classroom jack-o-lantern in a special place outdoors after Halloween is over. As you know, tradition plays an important part in the Berrybrook curriculum and putting the jack-o-lantern outdoors is a long time tradition.

First we read "Mousekin's Golden House," by Edna Miller. It is a story of the seasons changing from autumn to winter and a mouse finding a home in a jack-o-lantern. It is with great anticipation that the children find a particular spot outside of Berrybrook in hopes that Mousekin will move in. As they watch for Mousekin they will continue to observe changes as the jack-o-lantern decays and returns to the earth.

Election Day is also a Berrybrook tradition. While adults are voting at the polls, the children are voting, by secret ballot no less, for crackers! Round or square? Years ago on Election Day we were explaining to the children about choosing a president. After we finished the discussion a child spoke up and said, "Just think, a cracker for president!"

We will be visiting Plimoth Plantation on Thursday, November 5th. Before our visit we will have a group discussion to help the children understand that the people in the village are only pretending to be Pilgrims and will answer questions as though it is the year 1627. We also explain that the people in the Wompanoag homesite may actually be descendents of the Wompanoag tribe and will answer questions in the

present. They prefer to be called Native People. At Plimoth Plantation the children will have the opportunity to experience a glimpse of life in 1627. They will learn what their homes looked like, what food they ate, what their clothing looked like, what games they played and if they went to school. This visit helps children to begin to understand and appreciate our local history.

When we return to Berrybrook we will participate in activities that will help summarize all that was learned. The children will be creating their own individual dioramas displaying both the Pilgrim's and Wompanoag tribe's lifestyles. This takes many days to complete resulting in a project that the children feel very proud of.

Throughout November, we will be talking about family traditions and being thankful. We will also be preparing for our "Feast" including another tradition at Berrybrook – freshly made butter. The children will chant these words as they shake the cream into butter.

Shake, shake, shake the cream,
Shake and make it flutter.
Shake, shake, shake the cream,
And turn it into butter.

From the Lunch Bunch teachers!

Thank you to parents for carefully packing lunches that are safe for everyone. We appreciate your cooperation, understanding and your attention to ingredient labels.

Berrybrook Board of Directors

As a 37 year old mother of 4, an accomplished business woman, an organizational leader – I am still constantly learning to be a parent...

My son came home the other day from school with work that he had completed that clearly was not in any way his best effort. I looked at it and said my usual canned response – “A job worth doing is a job worth doing well” I explained to him that school was his job and he needed to do his job to the best of his ability every day and that I would not accept this kind of work from him. He shook head, said he was sorry and he promised to try harder next time. Feeling like I had done my parental duty well, I patted myself on the back and moved on.

But then that evening, I was supposed to be working on a project but I was tired, so I decided it was a better idea to sit and watch TV instead. The next morning, I decided I didn't feel like making lunches and asked if the kids wanted to buy that day. Laundry needed to be done – but I figured the kids had plenty to wear and the laundry wasn't up to the ceiling yet, therefore, I decided I didn't really need to do it immediately. Then it dawned on me with all of these “decisions” I realize that sometimes, even though these were my “jobs”, I was not putting my best effort forth. I was not doing my job to the best of my ability every day. Then inevitably, I thought back to our Berrybrook days and how Berrybrook taught me valuable lessons in parenting. I began to think how I would feel if someone was so kind as to point out my failures or came up to me every time I didn't exactly do my best to say – “you know, a job worth doing is a job worth doing well”. I would probably be extremely annoyed because sometimes when I am tired or I don't feel 100% well, I don't put my best effort forth. I realized that just because I have these “off” days, it doesn't mean I don't care about the work or that I am a slacker. It just means that I am having just that - an “off” day. And if I, a 37 year old mother, could have these days, couldn't a 9 year old boy too? Did I need to call him on every worksheet that came home that did not portray his best effort? Was there a better way to teach my son the importance of doing his best than a trite phrase about jobs done well? Wouldn't it be better if I was more empathetic and asked my son why he thought he hadn't put forth his best effort that day and help him make a plan to fix the situation? Wouldn't have that response made him feel more valued, appreciated and understood? Dealing with his work by asking questions, showing compassion and empathizing with him would have been a much better lesson learned than the actual worksheet itself.

Sometimes I get so wrapped up in an effort to make my children conscientious little beings, I forget that they are human. I so want the best for them and I want them to want the best for themselves, that I get caught up and lose sight of the long journey. Please, do not get me wrong – I am in no way saying I am going to accept sloppy work and mediocrity whenever my son “feels” like it's o.k.. But I just need to remember those Berrybrook days and remind myself if I show him patience, understanding, insight and empathy versus just demanding he does a better job, he will more likely want to put his best effort forth and a better lesson will be learned. And although he is young and sometimes does not understand that the effort he puts forth today directly correlates to the effort he will put forth in the future, I will try to explain to him why it is important and be more understanding when he does miss the mark a little. And if I stay on this path, hopefully he will grow up and have the attitude like the US Airways Captain of flight 1549, Chelsey “Sully” Sullenberger, who successfully landed a plane in the Hudson River, when he wrote, “We need to do the right thing every time, to perform at our best, because we never know what moment in our lives we'll be judged on.”

Carrie Couto

2nd Annual Berrybrook Tag Sale

We are pleased to announce that The Berrybrook Board of Directors will be hosting its 2nd Annual Tag Sale in March of 2010. All proceeds will benefit the Helen Wheeler Scholarship Fund. This scholarship provides financial assistance to families that wish to attend Berrybrook but do not have the financial means to do so. We will be accepting donations of larger children's items immediately such as strollers, pack & plays, ultra-saucers, bouncies and ride on toys.

After the new year we will begin accepting smaller items such as clothes, books, games, and more. We truly appreciate anything that you can contribute. We will be accepting donated items starting December 1st. In addition, we invite you to join our planning team for this successful annual event. Please contact Christina Rouleau at csrouleau@aol.com if you are interested. Thank you all in advance for your contribution of time and items. Your donations can positively impact the life of a child.



Parent Discussion Group

"Dad's Night Out"

Fathers, please plan on joining Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Delano, Mrs. La Forest and others for an open discussion Tuesday, November 17th at 7:00 pm

First Ever Berrybrook Quest!

Turn your family walk into a fun treasure hunt while you explore the beautiful Berrybrook grounds. Berrybrook School will hold its first ever Quest on Saturday, November 7th from 9-11 am (rain date Sunday, November 8th). Quests start at a marked beginning point and include several clues hidden along the way. The Berrybrook Quest will bring your family together outdoors where you can enjoy the scenery and look for nature themed clues. The Quest will start in the Berrybrook parking lot and will take you along a wide, easily walked path behind the Berrybrook School – all the while gaining clues as to where the quest box is hidden. Your family is self guided and can walk as slowly or quickly as you wish. Afterward, we invite you to enjoy refreshments on the beautiful Berrybrook playground. A donation of \$10 per family will benefit the Helen Wheeler Scholarship Fund. This fund provides financial assistance to those in need and allows many children the ability to experience all the wonders of Berrybrook. No pre-registration is required. This event is sponsored by the Berrybrook Board of Directors.

Welcome

It seems every month we have some happy news about new members of our community!

Ella Crotty in 3 Day-Rm 1 has a new brother and sister,
Johnathan and Samantha

Mae Ceesay in 4 Day Rm-2 welcomes her new sister,
Pia

Berrybrook Parent Association

The Harvest Festival was a big success because of all the helpful parents that made it happen. We thank you!

Mother Nature worked in our favor so that the children could enjoy face painting, a hayride, music by the *Resonators*, popcorn, cider, apples, and more! Thanks to all the parents who helped set up, decorate, grill and serve the food, donate cider and popcorn, work at the apparel/raffle table, and clean up after the event. In addition, we would like to thank the Bizzozero Family (North River Plumbing and Heating) for their generous donation towards the hayride. We also extend our thanks to the Zaniboni family for co-sponsoring the band. Our thanks to the middle school students (some former alumni) who came to help us with face painting! This community effort was felt by our children.

The Berrybrook Parent Association would also like to thank the local vendors who supported this event: BJ's, Foodies, Stop and Shop, Duxbury House of Pizza, Hannaford, and Roche Bros. all made generous donations toward the food and supplies needed. Nessralla Farm in Marshfield and Kingston Nursery provided all the beautiful decorations!

In November, the BPA will be finalizing the enrichment programs for the children, discussing potential parent programs and fundraising efforts, and discussing our community service efforts. Our participation in the Festival of Trees, which benefits the Cranberry Hospice, at Plimoth Plantation is already underway. Thanks to Brooke Lovett and

Karen Gallagher for heading up this event. The Festival of Trees is scheduled for Dec. 4th through Dec. 6th at Plimoth Plantation. Our donations to the Pilgrim Hope Shelter will also begin this month and Fleur Pang will be assisting us with this.

Again, thank you to all the parents who have already paid the BPA dues. We are hoping to make a final collection by November 13th in order to properly schedule our children's enrichment programs for the year. The dues can be left in the basket by the BPA table. Also, the BPA Parent Directory is close to completion. They will be placed in the cubbies soon.

Our next BPA meeting will be on Thursday, November 12th at 7pm. We hope that you will join us and get involved in the upcoming events as well as share your ideas and thoughts with us!

Jane Redman, President
Devon Kohler, Vice-President
Trisha Stravin, Secretary
Stacy Watts, Treasurer



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!

After mother nature sent a hard frost teachers stopped applying insect repellent. 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.

As you know, Berrybrook Parents are always welcome to stay after dismissal and play on the playground. It is a great way for children and parents to get to know each other and this fall weather has been especially conducive to time outdoors.

During the first weeks of school, teachers take Berrybrook children on a tour of the playground and explain each piece of equipment and how to use it safely. The children know these rules and only occasionally need a reminder from teachers during their outdoor time. However, when we have older or younger siblings visit after school, they of course, may not know the rules and sometimes even Berrybrook students need a reminder from parents after teachers have left the playground.

All Berrybrook parents should feel comfortable using any of these short and simple statements to help any child on the playground.

It is helpful to start your words with "**At Berrybrook**",....

At Berrybrook, we use kind and respectful words.

At Berrybrook, the gate is locked at all times.

(you get the idea)

At Berrybrook.....

parents sign children out and check cubbies before playing after school.

parents supervise children, including brothers and sisters, at all times.

children play where an adult can see and hear them.

children walk up the ramp to the slide and sit feet first coming down.

children do not bring objects onto any climbing structure.

children sit on the swings.

children know it is not safe climb on top of the horizontal ladder.

we take care of living things - people, plants, insects and animals.

Thank you for making Berrybrook a school where we share responsibility for a safe and happy environment.

The Value of Parent/Teacher Conferences

By Kris Delano

Berrybrook strives to provide a positive, nurturing and open environment for its community of children, parents, staff and administration. Day to day interactions provide an opportunity to address questions and concerns, however individual parent/teacher conference time is valuable.

Why make time for a Conference?

Conferences are an essential ingredient for quality early childhood education.

Conferences provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to discuss a child's progress, identify concerns and to set future goals.

Conferences help to identify your child as his or her own person, with unique strengths, weaknesses and attributes.

How to make the most of a Conference

Plan on having both parents attend the conference.

Tell your child in advance about this time for the teacher and parents to talk.

Prepare in advance your thoughts, questions or concerns. Alert the teacher in advance about a particular topic or concern you wish to discuss. Bring in and/or take notes.

Follow-up with teachers on any agreed upon school/home approaches.

Follow up with your child with an age appropriate discussion about the conference.

Remember

Relax...parents and teachers work as a team - being open minded, respectful and honest while supporting each other for the benefit of the child.

Stay focused on the child. A child's well being and strengths are most comfortable to discuss. Conference time provides an opportunity to address any areas of concern. Through open communication a strategy can be agreed upon. Children respond best when they receive similar responses in both their school and home environments.

Preschool is a time to begin to build life skills such as separating from parents, cooperating with teachers, sharing with peers, developing conflict resolution skills, participating appropriately in group activities and beginning to discover oneself.

Parent/Teacher Conferences is time well spent!

(Mrs. Delano teaches in the 2 and 3 Day program)

Community Service

With Thanksgiving approaching and the start of the holiday season, the Berrybrook community puts emphasis on helping others. There will be two service projects starting in November.

The Berrybrook Parent Association will be sending out information about their community service project with the Pilgrims Hope Shelter in the next few days.

Also, the children in the 4 & 5 Day classes will coordinate donations for the animals at the Kingston Animal Shelter. All Berrybrook children may bring in donations for the animals and place them in the decorated boxes in our lobby. Mrs O'Neil has spoken to the shelter to find out what items the animals really need. If you could donate just one of these items it would be greatly appreciated.

2009 ANIMAL SHELTER WISH LIST

- Litter, Litter & More Litter
- Purina Kitten Chow
- Canned Cat Food
(Small 6 oz. cans, (not beef)
No diced or sliced, they don't like it)
- Baby Food (chicken/turkey)
- Paper Towels
- Laundry Soap
- Q-Tips
- Palmolive anti-bacteria dish soap

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 jars outside the office for the pennies.

Happy Thanksgiving

It is human nature to think about all of the things you want. Luckily, we have the month of November and the Thanksgiving holiday to remind us to be thankful for what we have. Parenthood brings frustrations as well as joys and there are moments when it is difficult to remember how thankful you are to be a parent. But oh, how wonderful your child is. How thankful you are.

Being a Headmaster means being frustrated and there are moments when it is difficult to remember how thankful I am to have this position. But oh, how wonderful the Berrybrook community is. How thankful I am.

I am thankful to Katharine Mann for creating and nurturing this school, to the board of directors for keeping us headed in the right direction, to the teachers who inspire me, to the parents who support me, and to the children who teach me something new every single day.

Have a happy and relaxing Thanksgiving,

Mrs. Keeley