

December 2011

<b>Wednesday, December 7</b>	<b>Berrybrook Board meeting 7:30 pm</b>
<b>Wednesday, December 14</b>	<b>3 Day Classes Holiday Sing-along</b>
<b>Thursday, December 15</b>	<b>4 Day Classes Holiday Sing-along</b>
<b>Friday, December 16</b>	<b>2 &amp; 5 Day Classes Sing-along</b>
<b>December 19 - January 3</b>	<b>Holiday Break</b>



Notes from the Headmaster

I'm writing this newsletter article on November 8. I'm trying to get a head start on the December issue because it gets pretty busy at Berrybrook this time of year. I am looking out my open window and teachers and children are providing me with a delightful distraction. They are outside riding bikes on an unexpectedly beautiful November Day. It is about 3:15, the sun is low in the sky because of daylight savings, but it is warm and golden and the view of the field is gorgeous. The children are having a blast. They love it here. What exactly is it about Berrybrook that makes children excited to arrive, and reluctant to leave? Intellectually, I know that our teachers are well trained, we have a developmentally appropriate curriculum, a gorgeous setting and a beautiful building. But something tells me those things are not the only reasons children are so happy. We hear the word "joy" frequently around the holidays. There are "Tidings of comfort and joy" and wishes for "Joy to the world." At Berrybrook, teachers prioritize joy every day - our vision statement reads, "Each and every child deserves the opportunity for an early childhood education that awakens the joy of discovery and learning." But what exactly is joyfulness? According to an article titled "Rediscovering Joyfulness" by Gay Ward and Crystal Dahlmeier in the latest issue of *Young Children*, "Joy is an optimal experience that occurs when someone is making positive choices, is in control of his or her own actions, and is making connections." That is why Berrybrook children are so joyful. Our teachers focus on a child's inner developmental needs. They provide a safe environment where children can make their own choices and focus on a topic of their choice for extended periods of time. Children feel in control of their actions and interactions and they are constantly making connections with their teachers, with their classmates, with their world, and within themselves.

It is almost pick up time now, and the children are riding the bikes and scooters over by the rocket to be put away. The children are working together and are so proud to be helping their teachers. What a great way to end another joyful day at Berrybrook.

Wishing all Berrybrook families a joyful holiday season, Mrs. Keeley

## First Year Program News

During the month of November, first year students explored wood working tools. Children had the opportunity to use nails and hammers, tape measures, pliers and many other tools. We explored different uses for wood and creatively made wood collages, which were painted.

We reflected on families and celebrated with a classroom Thanksgiving feast. As part of our feast, classes made butter and corn muffins to share. We shared what we were thankful for and discussed how we celebrate Thanksgiving in our own homes.

First year teachers would like to thank parents for taking time in November for parent conferences. We enjoyed sharing news about all of the growth we are seeing in our students and appreciate your support.

As we begin December, holidays will play an important role in our classrooms. Some families will be celebrating Hanukkah some will be celebrating Christmas. We will make menorahs and play with dreidels in school. Many yummy treats like latkes and cookies will be prepared by the children. We will construct wreaths and create some special gifts at our project table. This is a special time of year for magic and surprises!

The 2 Day Class has 2 new students! Ella Arés Hanson joined us in November and Nathan Harrington will be starting in January. Please join us in welcoming the Arés Hanson and Harrington families to the Berrybrook community!

Look for your invitation to share our gift of song before our holiday break!

### **2 Day Class**

Friday, December 16.

Children arrive at 9:00 as usual, parents return at 10:30 for our sing-along.

### **3 Day - Room 1**

Wednesday, December 14

Children and parents arrive at 9:00, sing-along will start as soon as everyone arrives.

### **3 Day - Room 3**

Wednesday, December 14

Children arrive at 9:00 as usual, parents return at 10:30 for our sing-along.

Happy Holidays!

Mrs. Capasso

Mrs. Delano

Mrs. Dunn

Mrs. La Forest

Mrs. Piccuito

Mrs. Rosen



### **Cold Weather Tips**

November was exceptionally warm, but December is a good time to locate all snow pants, boots, hats and mittens that have been packed away. One of these mornings we will wake up to a snowfall!

At Berrybrook we will go out every day that is not freezing or raining. Children should come prepared for the outdoors. Please remember to have your child arrive with boots, hat, mittens, jacket and snow pants. 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.

Even when there is no snow, these extra clothes allow for warm, comfortable outdoor play.

Please mark each item with your child's name.

## Second Year Program News

Thanks to all of you who chaperoned our visit to Plimoth Plantation. Although the weather was not ideal, we learned a great deal about the Wampanoags and Pilgrims. During November, at circle time with the help of the talking feather, we shared impressions about our visit. The children also worked very hard to create their miniature replicas of Plimoth Plantation.

The holiday season is upon us and with it comes excitement, anticipation, stress, joy and exhaustion. Does this sound familiar? Can you identify with it? Children can! They may not yet know the words but they know the feelings. As teachers it is our job to create an atmosphere where children can relax away from the hustle and bustle of the holiday season while still enjoying classroom activities. Hopefully, while they are relaxing, you will have time to accomplish some of the tasks facing you at this busy time of year.

The second year program is divided into three classes with variations among them. It is for this reason that it would be difficult to list the many activities each class will be doing. However, one thing is certain. All of the children will be preparing a gift for you! A gift you will receive on the last day of school before the holiday break. It is not a gift you will take home in your hand, but a gift you will take home in your heart and keep in your memory... a gift of LOVE. The holiday sing-a-longs will be presented at the following times:

### **4 Day - Room 1**

Thursday, December 15

Children arrive at 1:00 as usual, parents return at 2:15 for our sing-along.

### **4 Day - Room 2:**

Thursday, December 15

Children and parents arrive at 1:00, sing-along will start as soon as everyone arrives.

### **5 Day - Room 2**

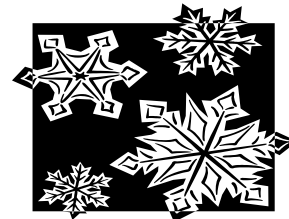
Friday, December 16

Children and parents arrive at 9:00, we will start as soon as everyone arrives.

All families are welcomed back to the classroom for a holiday snack that the children have prepared. After the snack is enjoyed together, our day will end and the holiday break will begin.

Happy Holidays!

Miss Bent, Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Fosdick, Mrs. LaForest, Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Neal, Mrs Piccuito and Mrs. Swan



## **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.

## The Reading Mother

**You may have tangible wealth untold:  
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.  
Richer than I you can never be –  
I had a mother who read to me.**

- by Strickland Gillilan

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## Separating, Settling, Surveying.....Singing!

Joanne LaForest

Thankful for our family and friends, we now enter the month of December ready to prepare our gift of song. We've been singing since September. Maybe not all of us, as some children prefer to listen rather than join in. As comfort levels increase and each class now has their favorite tunes, confidence has grown to all sing together and experience the pure joy of music.

Singing unites and gathers. This is clearly observed when a song is heard from a record album, CD or a teacher's soul...and they all come running! Singing together brings joy to all who are present. Silly songs, using a loud voice, a whisper voice, a low voice, a squeaky voice - all provide humor and happiness, and pique interest. Singing is convenient. One can sing anywhere (no instruments required!). Singing is natural. "The enjoyment of music appears to be an innate part of being human" where music and song "teach repetition, new concepts such as shapes, colors, numbers, the alphabet, proper behavior, and social skills." Singing "nursery rhymes teaches pre-reading skills in preschool." ([www.brighthub.com](http://www.brighthub.com); *The Importance of Singing In the Preschool Classroom*)

Many people say, "I can't sing!" when, really, children don't even seem to notice. Take advantage of this now! My singing is not as appreciated by my children, now ages 19 and 14, as it was when they were younger. The Berrybrook children don't seem to mind my singing at all!

Most importantly, singing is a gift. A gift of song is so wondrously given and received any time, but especially now at the holidays. First and Second Year sing-alongs are just that - a chance to sing along together. First Year students gather with families in a large circle and share their gift of song that they have been practicing. Second Year students do the same, with families as more of an "audience", however just as welcomed and encouraged to sing along, too!

We will be preparing daily during this month of December and will see you soon at all of the Holiday sing-alongs. The echo of the gift will be heard far from the Multi-Purpose Room, hallways and classrooms. It will be heard and felt within our hearts.

Happy Holidays!  
Happy Singing!

## Enrollment 2012-2013

During the holiday break, all current Berrybrook parents will receive re-enrollment information for 2012-2013. January is the month reserved for current and alumni families to submit an application.

Our goal is to meet the needs of all of our current families and every effort will be made to accommodate parent preference. However, parents should be aware that Berrybrook reserves the right to make class placement based on the needs of the children and the composition of the group.

The Berrybrook Board of Directors sets aside funds for tuition assistance through the Helen Wheeler Scholarship Fund. If you are interested in receiving information about financial assistance please contact Mrs. Keeley.

## Parent Discussion Group

The "**Curriculum In Your Child's Classroom**" discussion on Thursday, November 3rd was an enjoyable and informative evening. Many parents and staff attended and discussed the What, When, Why and How of children's projects and a follow-up discussion about a day in the life of your child in the classroom. A handout "Just Playing" was distributed and is available in a display stand above the cubbies in the hallway.

"Just Playing" is what some adults think the children are doing at Berrybrook where as in reality there is so much more going on. Your child is thinking, negotiating, planning, cooperating, learning, imaging, creating, questioning, making decisions, solving conflicts, etc. It is no wonder they are tired by the end of

their "work" day! Granted, this "work" is all done at a 3, 4 or 5 year old level but when you are young deciding on who to sit next to at snack or what colors to use on your project are big decisions.

Teachers set up the classrooms to foster your child's independence. At home you will be sending them the same message when you allow them, within reason, to make decisions. Thank you for your support as we work together to prepare the children for a fulfilling life ahead.

The next PDG is scheduled for **Thursday, January 12, 2012**. This discussion is a special discussion reserved for Dads. Please join us for the topic **"Guiding Your Child To Succeed at Berrybrook and Beyond, A Dad's Role and Perspective...valuable, important and unique!"**

Happy Holidays and all the best for the New Year!

Mrs. Delano, Mrs. LaForest and Mrs. O'Neil

Thank you so much to all of the families who donated items for the Kingston Animal Shelter. Mrs. O'Neil will be bringing your generous gifts to the shelter, but there will be a box and a jar for pennines for the next two weeks.



Thank you again for making the animals very happy!

## Parents Association News

I hope you each get a chance to enjoy some downtime this busy season and that all your holiday wishes come true. I hope you find this month's update helpful, and as always please let me know if you have comments, suggestions, or areas where you would like to become more involved.

### **Holiday Charity!**

Each year the BPA sponsors a charity event to provide an opportunity for children and families to give to others during the holidays. Check out our giving tree near the BPA table where each ornament features an item a child in a local homeless shelter has wished for. We think together we can make all of their wishes some true. To participate simply choose an ornament(s), purchase the requested gift(s), and return it to Berrybrook by December 15<sup>th</sup>. We hope it may even be a nice family activity! If you would prefer to make a monetary gift there is a box near the tree and the funds will be used to purchase additional gifts. Thanks for the support!

### **Berrybrook Cookbooks!**

The Berrybrook cookbook is off to a great and delicious start. Thanks to those that have already submitted over 50 recipes—but we need more help as we want about 150 to make the book outstanding! We would love families to submit between 3-5 family favorites! We have extended the deadline until December 15<sup>th</sup> to allow us all some additional time during the busy holidays. All the info you need is at the BPA table or shoot me an email and I'll forward it. Also all you business owners—don't miss out on the chance to advertise in the cookbook for great rates!

### **Family Fun Friday on Dec 9th!**

This month's event is an open gym play-date at My Gym in Kingston from 1-2 p.m. on December 9<sup>th</sup>. \$5 fee per child paid directly that day to My Gym. Please sign up at the BPA table or email to reserve your spot. Only 25 spots available. Join your Berrybrook friends for a warm, indoor play-date!

### **Enrichment!**

Eddie Spaghetti, our artist-in-residence, will start his programming this week. This month's session is an introduction to Native American sounds and will discuss how found objects like sticks, stones and shells can make music. The children will also learn about vibrations and the role they play in sound.

### **Festival of Trees!**

Looking for some family entertainment this weekend? Check out Cranberry Hospice's Festival of Trees Dec 2-4<sup>th</sup> at Plimoth Plantation and Berrybrook's own masterpiece with ornaments designed by the children. Thanks to Volta Oil with the help of the Garrett Family for sponsoring Berrybrook's involvement! The children's ornaments will also be displayed at the King Caesar House in Duxbury on December 10 & 11, noon - 4:00 pm.

### **BPA Dues!**

We are excited that about 35% of families have already supported the BPA through dues this year. And it's still not too late to increase that number! Each year we ask parents to support us with \$30 in dues. We appreciate any support and checks can be placed in the basket at the BPA table!

Happy Holidays, Allyson

[berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com](mailto:berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com)  
617-458-1621

## A Little Bit of Berrybrook History

Priscilla O'Neil

During December a wooden pyramid tree will be in our main hallway. You may wonder why a school, steeped in tradition and surrounded by meadows and woodlands, would have a tree like this rather than a traditional one. As we all know, "To better understand the present we must first look into the past."

This is the story of how the wooden tree came to be ~

For many years, Berrybrook children decorated real trees. Each class would go for a walk along the edge of the fields or through the woods in search of just the "right" tree (not too tall, not too small) to cut down. As we are well aware, a tree seldom looks too tall until you try to stand it up in a room and then out comes the saw. This happened time and time again until it was decided that an adult would stand beside the tree and if the tree was the same height or shorter than the adult it got the "go ahead." Now these trees were White Pines - "spindly" might better describe them with trunks no bigger than two inches in diameter. Each child had a turn to help cut down the tree... with a real saw no less!... and everyone yelled "Timber!" as the tree slowly leaned over onto the ground.

Then there was the job of dragging it back to school, a long sturdy rope was used. One end was tied to the trunk of the tree as the children lined up along the entire length of the rope, each one holding on, ready to pull. Off we went with the tiny branches bobbing up and down along the way, voices filling the air with the tune of Jingle Bells. It was a miracle that any of the branches were still on the tree by the time it arrived back at school. Then into a bucket with sand and stones and water it went and most times it was secured with string to a hook on the wall or the curtain rod to keep it somewhat upright. The branches so small and weak, the ornaments would slide off in the night and the next day would be hung back on.

The "Big Day" would be the last day of school before the holiday break and under the tree would be a big brown paper bag (from supermarkets now out of business, for ex: Angelo's) and on each bag was a child's name. Inside the bag was the traditional Berrybrook gift (we still give these gifts, so I won't spoil the surprise). The celebration ended and children and parents went home. The tree was tossed out. Once in a while a child would return for something left behind only to find the tree that had been there a short time ago had since vanished!

This ritual went on for years and years and you may be wondering why it ever ended. Well, as time passed, the vast area of land that had been part of Berrybrook was shrinking. Where the children had walked became part of "Trout Farm" and "Town and Country Mobile Estates." The four house lots along Winter Street had been a field and behind it an old mill. The number of Berrybrook classes were increasing while the availability of trees was dwindling. Berrybrook made a conscious decision to say good bye to our tree cutting tradition. The trees would be allowed to grow and be enjoyed year round rather than for a few days.

That is the story of how the "Wooden Pyramid Tree" came to Berrybrook. A lovely tradition it is...adorned with beautiful watercolored candles. Each candle created by a child and hung on the tree with care, a symbol of their own special little light, a light unto the future.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!



## Berrybrook Board of Directors

Berrybrook is a busy place all of the time, not just during holiday celebrations. Berrybrook celebrates childhood everyday. Everyday, Mrs. Keeley and the teachers design a child-centered program knowing that children need joy, laughter, caring respect, and nurturing support.

This is the time of year, when we count our blessings, and the Berrybrook family has many to count. They are manifest in each child's enthusiasm for the school, and their pride in what they create at Berrybrook. We are thankful to have involved parents who contribute time, talents and gifts. We are blessed with staff members who care deeply about the children and quality early childhood education. Berrybrook has a rich tradition, which provides cherished memories for everyone involved with the school. We are blessed.

The Board of Directors wishes every member of the Berrybrook family a happy holiday season.



### **Twinkle Twinkle**

Twinkle twinkle little star  
How I wonder what you are.  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky  
Twinkle twinkle little star  
How I wonder what you are.

### **Jingle Bells**

Jingle bells, Jingle Bells  
Jingle all the way  
Oh what fun it is to ride  
In a one horse open sleigh!

Jingle bells, Jingle Bells  
Jingle all the way  
Oh what fun it is to ride  
In a one horse open sleigh!

### **Hannukah Latkes**

Take a potato, fat, fat, fat.  
Grate it and make it flat, flat, flat  
Fry in a pan with fat, fat, fat,  
Hannukah Latkes, clap, clap, clap!

### **Hannukah, Hannukah**

Hannukah, Hannukah  
Festival of lights  
Candles glow in a row,  
seven days, eight nights.

Hannukah, Hannukah  
Make your dreidel spin,  
Round and round,  
Round and round,  
Everyone join in!

### **Oh Christmas Tree**

Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,  
How lovely are your branches.  
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,  
How lovely are your branches.

### **We wish you a Merry Christmas**

We wish you a Merry Christmas,  
We wish you a Merry Christmas,  
We wish you a Merry Christmas,  
And a happy New Year!