



January 2014

Monday, January 6	2014-2015 Enrollment begins
Monday, January 20	Martin Luther King Day, No School
Wednesday January 22	Berrybrook Board Meeting 7:30 pm
Saturday, February 1	Admissions Open House
Wednesday, February 5	Professional Day, No School

Notes from the Head of School

This month, Berrybrook will begin enrolling families for the 2014-2015 school year. A very enjoyable part of my job is conducting tours and helping families through the preschool decision making process. Mrs. Watts and I often comment that no sooner have we gotten everyone settled into school, than we start planning for the next group to join our community. I enjoy admissions because I love talking about our school and I love to watch families fall in love with Berrybrook. I also love welcoming a child that I knew even before birth because an older sibling attended. It is an amazing experience to first meet a child in an infant carrier, and then in a blink of an eye, that child is walking into the school to attend our 2 or 3 Day program. This current enrollment period has a special meaning for me, because the start of school in September 2014 marks the school's 60th anniversary. Every year is different at Berrybrook. Every year we have a unique mix of children, parents, teachers, and board members and the particular qualities that each individual brings to our shared experience makes the year remarkable. Next year, however, our community has an opportunity to focus on the past 60 years and on all of the ways those years have been alike. The world has changed dramatically since the 50s, but the essence of the Berrybrook philosophy and values remain the same. The wide open fields have given way to playground fencing, but children still enjoy lots of outdoor play in a beautiful environment. The old farm house that was the original home of Berrybrook has been replaced by our lovely modern school house, but Berrybrook environments continue to be warm and inviting. Our families arrive in SUVs instead of "automobiles" but still know that it is "safety first" in the parking lot. Today, families can view unforgettable images on our Shutterfly sites - memories just as moving as the black and white photographs taken with a Brownie camera. Our staff possesses the same standards of training, experience, commitment and caring set by Katharine Mann and Helen Wheeler. Many classroom activities they began are now Berrybrook traditions incorporated into a curriculum supported by contemporary standards of best practice, delivered by teachers who have a combined 183 years of teaching experience at Berrybrook.

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In 1964, Mrs. Mann placed legal responsibility for the welfare of Berrybrook in the hands of the Berrybrook Board of Directors and they continue to be dedicated caretakers of her legacy and to provide an early childhood experience that families have loved for six decades. The Board keeps a close eye on expenditures while sparing no cost to ensure children have a safe, quality, early childhood education delivered by trained, experienced and professional educators. Because of Katharine Mann's foresight, the school is very fortunate to have an operating budget that is not 100% tuition driven. Her ongoing charitable gift through the Lurcetia Prentiss Bailey Trust enables Berrybrook to set tuition rates 27% below the true cost of our programs. For example, next fall the true cost of the 5 Day program per student is \$7,550.00, but because of the Trust, the 5 Day tuition rate for families is \$5,480.00. The Board strives to keep tuition competitive while maintaining low student-teacher ratios, plentiful resources, competitive salaries, and one of the most stunning settings on the South Shore.

When people ask me about Berrybrook, I often say that Berrybrook is more a "state of mind" than a preschool. The families, teachers, and board members that the school attracts share values about young children, relationships, and the environment that are unique. I hear people say, "That is so Berrybrook!" when describing certain wonderful, simple things. What we share here is not easy to put into words, it's just the Berrybrook Way. It is something you feel the first time you walk through the gate and decide this is the school for your child. This month, many of you will have the opportunity to choose Berrybrook again. Our goal is to work with parents to develop capable, confident, interested learners the Berrybrook Way. Thank you for choosing our school and thank you for sharing your children with us. Happy New Year.

Mrs. Keeley

Beginners News

Happy New Year to one and all from the ever-growing Beginners Class! Hope your holidays were filled with joyous family time and cherished memories.

Our December was filled with holiday activities and songs, including our Holiday Gathering with friends and family. In December we learned about darkness and light...water coloring our own candle...a Berrybrook tradition. We created our class evergreen tree and an individual tree to take home. Lastly painting with holiday cookie cutter shapes...oh so colorful!

January will bring fun exploring our bodies... head, shoulders knees and toes! We will learn about taking care of ourselves by dressing warm, and exploring with the

Berrybrook Hospital in our dramatic play area. Weather permitting we will enjoy time in the snow and making a snowman both indoors and out!

Our Beginners Class has developed into quite a delightful group of friends. We look forward to further developing our friendships and exploring new activities in the New Year!

Watch us grow!
Mrs. Delano, Mrs.
LaForest and Miss
McNulty



Life is Good

by Laura McNulty

Many people have heard of the Life is Good clothes, seen the products in stores or perhaps at the location in Boston. Some may be aware of summer music festival that they host each year. However, it is important to know that Life is Good is not simply a retail company. They have formed a charity to “heal and strengthen children” across the country and internationally. It is called Playmakers, and I am so proud to be a part of it.

“The Life is Good Playmakers partner with professionals such as teachers, social workers and child life specialists who dedicate their lives to helping children. Playmakers use the power of play to build healing, life-changing relationships with the children in their care. To date nearly 5,000 trained Playmakers have cared for more than 310,900 children throughout the United States and Haiti.” Playmakers place a great deal of emphasis on helping children who have experienced trauma, poverty, and illness. This is an important cause, however I have found that the goal of supporting overall development through play is something that all children can benefit from.

I began by completing *Playmaker 101: Foundations of Playmaking*, which introduced the basic concepts of the training. “Playfulness is the single most important quality that we can nurture in children. Through joyful play, children experience greater connection with their caregivers, parents, and peers. They develop a sense of competence and self-worth. Kids learn to express their feelings in healthy, productive ways.” There are many important components of childhood, but Playmakers views playfulness as the single most important trait of childhood. The Basic Training Manual defines it as, “Playfulness is the motivation to freely and joyfully engage with, connect with, and explore the surrounding world.” It goes on to say that it is

“a spirit with which one can approach every aspect of life - the good, the bad, and the ugly.” This was the first introduction I had to my personal connection with playfulness.

After completing a weekend long *Playmaker 202: Education*, I am in complete support of this movement. It has renewed my sense of why I want to teach, and what kind of teacher I want to be. I learned that being an effective teacher requires personal reflection. This training has been a personal journey for me. I learned that I need to be an example of playfulness for children. The Playmaker trainers told us, “You can’t give what you don’t have.”

The best part of the Playmaker approach is playing. They provide a number of games that are not only fun but can help children express themselves, self regulate and build relationships. The Playmaker trainers encourage all professionals at a training to play the games, taking the active role of children. After Playmaker 202, we are given materials to encourage even more playfulness. I am so excited to play these games with children at Berrybrook, and even more enthusiastic about sharing all I have learned with my coworkers.

Resources: Life is Good Playmaker Basic Training Manual, www.ligplaymakers.org

Snow Cancellation

Berrybrook will cancel school if **Duxbury Schools** or the **Silver Lake School District** close due to a snow or other emergency. Please watch 7NEWS (NBC) for cancellation notices. Parents may call the school to check the voice mail message if they are unsure about a snow cancellation.

First Year Program News

The month of December provided us all with the excitement and beauty of the season's first snow! Pride was on children's faces as they dressed to brave the outdoors. Pure joy was obvious as their boots crunched the snow, their snow pants and coats helped to make snow angels, and many tried to catch snowflakes on their tongues!

The early snow created a beautiful backdrop for children's creations celebrating the holiday season. Great care went into the creating of gifts for families and also into the preparation of our Class Sing-a-Longs. We hope you enjoyed our gift of story and song!

We now ring in the New Year with the creation of New Year's hats and the fun of colors. We begin to observe and create projects that reflect how some animals behave in the outdoors in winter. It is in mid-January when the Berrybrook Hospital will evolve in all classroom dramatic play areas where children can role play as doctors and nurses and learn about keeping their bodies healthy.

Later in the month the Berrybrook Hospital becomes an Animal Hospital where our classes filled with "veterinarians" will care for (stuffed) animal friends.

We look forward to a fun filled New Year as our class communities will become even stronger as we share even more experiences together!

Happy New Year!

Mrs. Barlow, Mrs. Capasso, Mrs. Delano,
Mrs. Dunn, Mrs. LaForest, Miss McNulty and
Mrs. Piccuito

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.**

Enrollment 2014-2015

All first year families should have received enrollment information over our holiday break. January is the month reserved for all current and alumni families to enroll at Berrybrook for the 2014-2015 school year. The second year program offers one 5 Day morning group and two 4 Day afternoon groups. When submitting an application, parents should circle their program preference. The placement of children into classes is a process which takes into account individual needs of children, balance in the composition of each class, and parent preference. While we would like to honor every preference, space or other factors may limit the number of children assigned to an individual class.

The Berrybrook Board of Directors sets aside funds for tuition assistance through the Helen Wheeler Scholarship Fund. **Starting with the 2014-2015 school year, The FACTS Grant and Aid Assessment system will be available for families to apply for tuition assistance.** Families will be able to apply online quickly and easily on the FACTS web site that is completely safe and secure. If you are interested in receiving information about tuition assistance please contact Mrs. Keeley.



Open House

Please let your friends and neighbors know that on Saturday, February 1, 2014 Berrybrook will be having an open house for new families. It will be a chance to tour our school and ask questions about our philosophy and programs.
All Welcome!

Second Year Program News

Welcome back! We hope you had a happy, healthy and safe break. The second year holiday celebrations were a delight and we thank all who volunteered in the classroom to make latkes, bake cookies, and help with other preparations. We would like to thank all of the children for their wonderful gift of song at our holiday Sing-a-Long. You may have noticed the children using sign language during some of our songs. We get our signs from the American Sign Language dictionary and the children worked very hard to learn each sign.

As the New Year is upon us, so is the chillier weather. We will begin our discussions of cold weather, snow, wind chill factors, and most importantly, how to dress appropriately for the cold weather. As you know, we ask the children to dress all by themselves when getting ready to play outside. This includes zippers, snaps, and buttons. It is helpful for the children to practice getting dressed at home and we thank you for encouraging them to do so. One way to practice that difficult zipper is to lay your child's coat on the floor where they can sit in front of the zipper and practice working the small parts at the bottom. They feel very proud to be able to zip, snap, and button by themselves!

In the month of January we begin our study of health. During this study children explore different ways to live healthy lifestyles and they create a book about themselves. Toward the end of the month, we will begin a study on space. We will cover planets, comets, asteroids, and the moon.

For upcoming projects we will need be collecting shoeboxes of any size.

Thanks again for all your help!

The Second Year Teachers,

Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Fosdick, Mrs. Neal, Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Piccuito, Mrs. Rosen, Mrs. Swan, and Mrs. Worley.

Parents Association News

Happy New Year, hope you all had a joyous holiday season! We can't believe we are entering the second half of the school year. The BPA has had a great start to the school year and we certainly look forward to what is in store!

We wanted to thank the entire Berrybrook community for its support of our giving tree for the Carolina Hill Homeless Shelter. We filled their list of holiday wishes and more! A special thank you to Erin Martin for heading up the project. Giving such a generous amount to the shelter made us feel proud to be part of the Berrybrook community and offered an opportunity to reflect upon what is important during such a hectic time of year. Thank you again.

Family Fun Friday

Be on the lookout for a January Family Fun after the New Year. We are hoping to get some sledding days in at Berrybrook this winter.

Enrichment

January is the beginning of some exciting enrichment. Inspire Kids Yoga will be beginning their monthly yoga program, which will focus on not only yoga, but self-esteem and body awareness. Also Eddie Sorrentino (a.k.a Eddie Spaghetti) will be coming in to talk about music/percussion.

BPA Dues

We are happy that about 40% of families have already contributed support to the BPA through dues this year. It is 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.

Here's to a Happy 2014!

Donna and Karoline
berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com

Berrybrook Board of Directors

CHILDHOOD IS NOT A RACE

By Katie Szczesny

Member and Treasurer of the Berrybrook Board and Mom to Kyle & Sam

I don't know about you, but sometimes I feel like the months go by in minutes. It's January 2014 and my kids are almost 6 and 7 ½ years old – how the heck did that happen?? As the time is flying by, I'm also trying really hard to remember that their childhood isn't a race. The world has such high expectations for today's children, and we do as well as their parents. Maybe your child just started Berrybrook, or maybe it's their last semester; either way, they learn so much every day. They learn to be kind to each other, they learn to be helpful, and they learn to share.

Several months ago, I saw a blog called "A Magical Childhood" with an article written about what a 4 year old should "know." I read it and said to myself, *that's* what my Newsletter article is going to be about. I have included a portion of the blog in the points below.

Let's try to remember what's really important for a pre-school child to know:

- She should know that she is loved wholly and unconditionally, all of the time.
- He should know that he is safe and he should know how to keep himself safe in public, with others, and in varied situations. He should know that he can trust his instincts about people and that he never has to do something that doesn't feel right, no matter who is asking.
- She should know how to laugh, act silly, be goofy and use her imagination. She should know that it is always okay to paint the sky orange and give cats 6 legs.
- He should know his own interests and be encouraged to follow them. If he could care less about learning his numbers, his parents should realize he'll learn them accidentally soon enough and let him immerse himself instead in rocket ships, drawing, dinosaurs or playing in the mud.
- She should know that the world is magical and that so is she. She should know that she's wonderful, brilliant, creative, compassionate and marvelous.
- She should know that it's just as worthy to spend the day outside making daisy chains, mud pies and fairy houses as it is to practice phonics. Scratch that– way more worthy.

But more importantly, here's what parents need to know:

- That every child learns to walk, talk, read and do algebra at his own pace and that it will have no bearing on how well he walks, talks, reads or does algebra.
- That the single biggest predictor of high academic achievement and high ACT scores is reading to children. Not flash cards, not workbooks, not fancy preschools, not blinking toys or computers, but mom or dad taking the time every day or night (or both!) to sit and read them wonderful books.
- That being the smartest or most accomplished kid in class has never had any bearing on being the happiest. We are so caught up in trying to give our children "advantages" that we're giving them lives as multi-tasked and stressful as ours. One of the biggest advantages we can give our children is a simple, carefree childhood.

- That our children deserve to be surrounded by books, nature, art supplies and the freedom to explore them. Most of us could get rid of 90% of our children’s toys and they wouldn’t be missed, but some things are important– building toys like Lego and blocks, creative toys like all types of art materials (good stuff), musical instruments (real ones and multicultural ones), dress up clothes and books, books, books.
- That our children need more of us. Our children don’t need Nintendo, computers, after school activities, ballet lessons, play groups and soccer practice nearly as much as they need US. They need fathers who sit and listen to their days, mothers who join in and make crafts with them. They need us to take walks with them and not mind the 0.1 mph pace of a toddler on a spring night. They deserve to help us make supper even though it takes twice as long and makes it twice as much work. They deserve to know that they’re a priority for us and that we truly love to be with them.”

While we are all looking forward to what the future holds, try to enjoy today for what it is! Appreciate your child’s time at Berrybrook as much as they do – you will both have memories to enjoy for years to come. Just today I was in my son’s kindergarten class, which in addition to him has two other Berrybrook alumnae. I was helping with a project where the kids had to stuff a paper bag with newspaper and turn it into a luminary. Two Berrybrook-ers (who were at the table at different times) said to me, “You know, we did a project like this at my old school, except it was pumpkins.”

These are the memories that matter; the ones that make us smile.

Berrybrook Book Review

Joanne LaForest

The True Gift by Patricia McLachlan, Illustrated by Brian Floca

The time always comes after the holidays when I pack up the ornaments that were once so carefully placed on our tree. I vacuum up its remaining pine needles that linger on the floor after it gets hauled outside to provide a new home to the birds. I walk around my home and take down our traditional decorations and notice I’m humming Johnny Mathis’ rendition of O Holy Night. The final step to completing my ritual for welcoming in the New Year is when I collect my favorite books that are holiday treasures and put them in a special box from which I will welcome them again next December. The books always contain childhood favorites I’ve read to my children over the years as they snuggle next to me on Christmas Eve and try hard to stay awake to hear. Lately, however, newer additions have been added that are my own personal wake-up call to the importance of the season. The latest book I speak about here. It is a story about a girl, Lily, and her younger brother, Liam, who visit their grandparents’ farm for Christmas and discover that where there was once a few animals, there is now just one cow, White Cow, all alone. Liam noticing White Cow and becoming obsessed with helping her interrupts the constant traditions and routines that Lily is used to. These traditions and routines create the meaning of Christmas for Lily and although she is just a child, she fights hard to keep them.

I can relate to Lily. I like to do things a certain way. I love to relish in meaningful traditions so that it really feels like Christmas...and New Year's Day...and birthdays...and Monday morning...or Friday afternoon!

Liam helps Lily to see things differently just by following through on what he believes in. He doesn't force her to help him. He doesn't place hard on her his belief about what he thinks is the right thing to do. He doesn't even go against her most valued traditions. Liam, by being himself, makes Lily see there is an even deeper meaning to Christmas; a deeper meaning, really, to any holiday or tradition that families everywhere may honor. A deeper meaning that actually *adds to* treasured traditions. At Berrybrook the children, their families, the teachers, Mrs. Watts and Mrs. Keeley continuously show me that each and every one of us has something to add, has a new way to see things, or has a small yet profound way to just "be"... and make us all better for it.

I won't give away the story. It is a quick read. The author Patricia MacLachlan has truly written a treasure that you just can't put down. It made me cry joyfully at the end and has stayed with me this entire holiday season. It has made me realize that we each are a very important part to the whole. And most importantly, no one should be left alone.

Remember how I said I even have traditions and rituals for Monday mornings and Friday afternoons? Friday afternoons have always been for me preparing for the week ahead so I can enjoy as much of the weekend as I can. Lately on Fridays a *new* tradition has started. I have to prepare a little bit faster, schedule my time a little bit better to allow for it, but like Liam for Lily it has added so much joy to my life. Some teachers at Berrybrook now come together on Friday afternoons and share a treat, a lunch, laughter and even games! We are now not each of us alone preparing for the following week, but we prepare then *gather* and it has added so much to our day! I feel so connected before I leave for the weekend that I can't help but think of White Cow and how perhaps she will no longer be alone.

If you read the book now, *before* the holiday season of 2014, just think how "in the spirit" you'll be! You won't be disappointed!

Happy New Year!

These are the Years

by Barbara Burrow

*These are the years, the gentle years,
the soft and sentimental years
when wee little fingers
reach and touch
and little eyes gaze
with wonder and trust,
when you love so tenderly
and so so much,
these are the gentle years.*

*These are the years, the rainbow years, the
quiet, walk-on-tiptoes years,
the years of laughter
and smiles and sighs
when both of you watch with misty eyes
the tiny bed
where a cherub lies,
these are the rainbow years.*

*These are the years, the tender years, the
blissful, sweet-surrender years,
when your little treasure from above
is the soul and purpose
and center of
your plans and dreams
and dearest love,
these are the tender years.*