



March 2018

Thursday, March 8

Wednesday, March 28

Friday, March 23

Friday, March 30

Connections Night 7 pm

Board Meeting 7 pm

Enrollment Contracts Due

Good Friday - no school



Notes from the Head of School

Lately I seem to be hearing and reading more about resilience. Resilience is the power or ability to bounce back from adversity, trauma, or other significant sources of stress. What people perceive as stress, as well as their reaction to the stressor, varies from person to person. Resilience is also not considered a trait that people either have or don't have, but instead it involves behaviors, thoughts, actions, and choices that can be learned and developed by anyone.

My predecessor, Mrs. Keeley, and I would often question each other in moments of being overwhelmed: "Is this a pencil or a tsunami?" Many years before, her then college-aged daughter had taken a class where they discussed that concept and how some people can overreact to what seems like small issues . . . are you reacting as if a pencil was rolling off a desk ("Oh well"), or are you reacting as if there was a tsunami in the forecast ("Batten down the hatches, our lives are at stake!)? In moments of stress, when we might be feeling frustrated Mrs. Keeley and I would look at the other and ask which we were dealing with - a pencil or a tsunami . . . we had such a great relationship and were so comfortable with each other that after a while we would just look at each other with a small smirk and say, "Tsunami?" This often took the other person down a notch to remember that in the grand scale of things, what we were upset about really wasn't as big of a deal as we first thought.

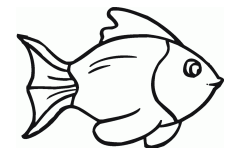
As a mom, I try to remember that my children are always in the position to observe my actions. Sometimes they may not seem like they are paying attention to me, but then I will overhear them say something that tells me that they certainly were listening. Thankfully I haven't had too many major adversities in my life to bounce back from, but I hope that my children see my reactions to the 'pencil' problem and know that when I am faced with a 'tsunami' situation I will have the means to choose resilience. This does not mean I am a doormat and will allow others to treat me badly, it just means that I am constantly evaluating and deciding if it is worth a tsunami response. Dunkin' Donuts gave me a multigrain rather than a plain bagel? No need for a temper tantrum, in my opinion, as I am thankful that I have access to food. Someone is rude to me in a store? No need to be curt back, I will plan to smother them with kindness to perhaps turn their day around. I'm still very much working on a pencil rather than a tsunami response if someone cuts me off in traffic but then I remember - our children are always watching, even when we think they aren't.

~ Mrs. Watts

The Berrybrook Staff would like to thank the Parents Association for arranging snacks for our monthly after-school meetings. Each month we have a 2 hour meeting to discuss curriculum and other matters. These meetings are scheduled from 4:15-6:15 and we appreciate having a snack to fortify us. We are thankful for all of the support and encouragement we receive from parents. It is very thoughtful of parents to take time from their busy schedules to prepare refreshments for us.

Thank You Very Much!!





Beginners Notes

The Path to Friendship

When Beginners enter the classroom in the fall there is so much for them to discover and so much for their brains to process. There may be initial anxiety about separating from a parent, and there are unfamiliar routines to be learned. So much of the day is spent “practicing” - learning how to sit for story, how to find a mat at circle time, or simply choosing which area of the classroom in which to begin their day. A Beginner is initially using so much focus and energy to adapt to their new surroundings that there is not a tremendous amount of social interaction taking place. Beginners typically engage in parallel play early on – meaning they may choose to play next to a classmate, but may not choose to necessarily INTERACT with that classmate. This is a normal part of childhood development.

Then something amazing happens. It begins slowly, like the growth of a flower in the spring....suddenly skills that have been practiced become easier. Sitting for story is no longer such a challenge. Stopping play to participate in a music parade is not quite as difficult because the children have learned that they are able to go back to their play once the parade (or outside time, or play in the big room) is complete. The Beginners are BEGINNING to trust their teachers and take comfort in the day’s routine. They are BEGINNING to take notice of others. They are becoming curious about classmates, and they BEGIN to connect and engage with each other. They are developmentally ready to bloom and to focus on relationships....those good old glorious FRIENDSHIPS!

At this point in the year we are observing a great deal of relationship building and trust between classmates. Beginners feel secure in their environment and can now take “risks” and invite friends to play. They can refer to their classmates by name and they notice very quickly if a friend is absent from school on a given day. It is not uncommon at this point in the year to hear “can I have that when you are done?”, or “do you want to play animals together?”. These early interactions set the foundation necessary for relationships that are rich in cooperation and trust. A memorable moment occurred a few weeks ago when a child left his story time mat for a parade and upon returning, another classmate accidentally sat down on this child’s mat instead of his own. Rather than pushing or becoming angry, the child simply said “Hey, he is on my mat.”. Having noticed the mistake, the friend kindly moved and allowed his friend to sit on the right mat (a small accomplishment for adults, but very meaningful in the life of a Beginner). The child who got his mat back beamed and proclaimed “He gave me back my mat because he is my friend!”.

The trust between classmates/friends can bring conflict as well. At Berrybrook we view conflicts as opportunities to learn and grow. “HE GRABBED THAT FROM ME!!” is a common response from a frustrated child. With gentle guidance teachers suggest “how can you tell your friend that you would like your toy back?”. Beginners practice using their words to solve problems that commonly present themselves, and along the way they are often rewarded with a friend’s smile, a hug, or a reciprocated gesture. With plenty of patience and practice and time, Beginners come to learn what it means to be a FRIEND.

~ Mrs. Pisani

Mrs. Pisani teaches in the Beginners class



First Year Notes

Making and Sending a Valentine

February was a very busy and special month at Berrybrook. All the first year families received a handmade valentine in the mail; a tradition that has carried over for many years at Berrybrook. Before that envelope appeared in the mailbox, however, there were many steps that had to be carried out by the students.

The process started with the children making their own personalized Valentine. They chose what color paper heart to use and wrote their name on the back. Then they took their heart to the project table and placed it in a tin container. They then added marbles that were sitting in cups of paint. They used spoons to carefully place the marbles into the tin and then picked up the tin with both hands and moved the marbles to create a marble painted heart. These masterpieces were all one of a kind.

The next step was to count out the exact amount of money that they needed to buy their stamp at the Post Office. One of the teachers helped each child count out their money with them and placed it into an envelope with their name on it. (This envelope was given to the child when they arrived at the Post Office). The child was then given an envelope that has been addressed to them. The teacher read their name and address and talked to them about where they live, why their address is written on the front and where the stamp would be placed.

The teachers also created a Post Office in the classroom to give more meaning to the process and we talked about what it meant to send mail. We talked about what happens at the Post Office, what the workers there do and most importantly what happens to their letter when they mail it.

We then took a field trip to the local Post Office to mail their Valentines. The children with their parents met the teachers who handed out to them their two envelopes. They then went to the postal counter and bought the stamp with their counted money. Once they placed their stamp on their addressed envelope, the child had their picture taken while putting their envelope into the mail slot.

The process was then completed when the children came back to school after vacation week and started telling us all about how they received their Valentine and how it made them feel. They were so proud to share their Valentine with their family and share their stories with us.

~ Mrs. Knight

Mrs. Knight teaches in the 3 Day Room 1 class.



Second Year Project Notes

“Are you seeing this behavior at school?”

The above question has been asked by many families about their children recently, not only in the Second Year program but in the Beginners and First Year programs as well. Typically, the behavior is something new and undesirable and the response from teachers is often no, they have not observed it at school. Conversations always follow and helpful advice is given based on what we do in the classroom to address certain behaviors and this hopefully offers some comfort.

We as teachers find that often when a new and undesirable behavior is occurring, there is a new level of growth and development a child is about to reach. Handling this period of time on the “bridge” to new growth can be challenging however you can still meet your child with respect and validation. A book review I wrote back in November 2013 may help to explain it a bit better...

The Berrybrook Way

No, the above is *not* a title of a book I read...oops! I should rephrase that: I read a book with a title other than The Berrybrook Way. Did you catch that? I recreated the tone of my opening sentence from negative to positive. We do that often at Berrybrook:

Don't run! becomes ***Please walk.***

Don't whine! becomes ***Please use your regular voice.***

Get off the table! becomes ***We sit in chairs at the table.***

Respect and validation become the focus when speaking to children this way. When we consciously choose to speak in a respectful manner we create a teachable moment filled with opportunity for children to learn rather than space for resentment and failure to exist. Teachable moments lead to success and understanding of the desired behavior. Feelings of failure and resentment can actually lead to repetitive instances of the behavior you are trying to correct.

In the book I did read, *The Explosive Child*, author Dr. Ross Greene emulates Berrybrook's way of speaking respectfully to children when providing teachable moments as opportunities for the greatest learning and understanding. Dr. Greene focuses on children who strongly lack the necessary skills of flexibility and tolerance in daily life experiences such as disappointment and frustration. As a result, children often become “explosive” in their behavior and may need a unique way of perceiving, interpreting and therefore reacting to these stressful situations. I believe if we were to try his ideas when children are at the developmental level of learning about their feelings and how to deal at a young age with frustration and disappointment, then we will be preparing them for when they get older and frustrations and disappointments undoubtedly become larger.

Dr. Greene refers to “the explosive child” when discussing his Collaborative ProblemSolving, or CPS, Approach. This approach involves families and educators working together (a common goal for Berrybrook), sharing the understanding that “children do well if they can” (an important element of Berrybrook's philosophy), and offering empathy while children learn life skills (a daily occurrence at Berrybrook). Although Dr. Greene creates this approach to help “explosive” or “non-compliant”

children, I would suggest that whenever a child feels too tired, too hungry, strongly needs a toy the very instant they desire it, or so enjoys a friend that they will do anything to be able to sit next to them at snackthat they may feel explosive or choose to be noncompliant. Adults, too, can feel over tired, easily frustrated, starting with a cold, needing to meet a work deadline, be expected to cook dinner while caring for a crying child ... and, with the right circumstances presenting themselves, can also feel explosive or want to be non-compliant.

Our reactions and responses to a child's "explosions", no matter how large or small, can make a world of difference to the prevention of future explosions. Dr. Greene asks us to visualize the choices adults have in their reactions to children as if they were contained in different baskets. At Berrybrook, we use baskets daily. Ironically, they are for children to choose materials for a project, a popsicle at a birthday celebration, or a book they may want to look at with a friend. It's all about choice.

Here are Dr. Greene's choices (parentheses mine):

Basket A	Basket B	Basket C
Imposing your own will ("Because I said so!")	Empathy/Validation (Invitation: "Let's...")	Do Nothing ("Choose Your Battles")

Basket A, Greene says, contains commands such as, "No, you must, you can't".

Basket B allows for solving the problem together with words such as "Let's think together on this, because you are feeling so angry right now...".

Basket C involves ignoring the behavior, which at times can be appropriate, but can also be a way of giving up on the opportunity to teach our children.

An adult example I often use when speaking to families about validating a child's feelings is about my morning coffee. My morning coffee is very important to me. One morning, as a result of not preparing for my day the night before such as ironing my clothes, making lunches, having work and school bags ready to go, etc...I was running very late and in a very irritable mood. My husband had many choices in his response to my irritability: Basket A : "Well if you just prepared yourself as you should have last night, like I always do before an important work trip..." (Imposing his will/ideas/opinions)

Basket C: Going about his morning and leaving for work without saying a word. (Doing nothing)

Basket B: "You must be so frustrated you're running late. I put your morning coffee in a travel mug to take with you to work. I know how much you love and need your morning coffee. I hope your day gets better. I love you."

I am very happy and proud to say that my husband chose Basket B and it made all the difference in the world. I was met with love and understanding and as a result I am (usually!) well prepared now for getting out the door in the morning. With love and understanding our children will be better prepared for life. Although it is uncommon to experience truly explosive behaviors daily at Berrybrook, The Explosive Child has reminded me of the profound effect we have on children by the choices we make in our responses to them.

So, from which basket will you choose today?

~ Mrs. LaForest

Mrs. LaForest teaches in the Beginners, 3 Day, and 4 Day classes

Parents Association Notes

Welcome to March, Berrybrook families! February vacation is now behind us and although we have had a few snow days, we are hoping that spring is near. March is turning out to be a very busy month for BPA programming.

Enrichment Update

March will bring quite a few enrichment activities to the children sponsored by the BPA. Yoga will continue for all classes this month with Kim Spires. To help celebrate St. Patrick's Day, the Haley School of Irish Dance will be sending dancers to demonstrate their skills the week leading into St. Patrick's Day.

We are also fortunate to have Claire Reilly visit us as well. Mrs. Reilly is a Community Dental Health Educator from Dentistry for Children in Weymouth. Mrs. Reilly has visited Berrybrook for many years and is wonderful with the children. She presents great information about dental health in a developmentally appropriate way.

Be sure to ask your children to share their thoughts about these fun visits!

Family Fun Friday

Thank you to all the families who attended Rosalita's Puppets in February.

Our next Family Fun Friday will take place on Friday, March 16th at Goldfish Swim School in Rockland.

It might be cold outside, but it's warm and sunny inside Goldfish Swim School in their tropical atmosphere and 90-degree water. Goldfish Swim School is generously opening their pool to Berrybrook at no cost, so come join us for a fun afternoon of splashing in the pool! The pool will be open to Berrybrook from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. and this event is open to siblings as well.

There is no cost for this event, but we would like to have a headcount so please sign up at the BPA table to let us know you plan to attend.

To learn more about Goldfish Swim School check out their website: www.goldfishswimschool.com/rockland

Save the Date Spring Fling

Each year the BPA sponsors a casual end of year celebration for all the families. Please save -the - date for this special event on Wednesday, May 16th from 4 - 5:30 p.m. with a rain - date of Thursday, May 17th. Be on the lookout for additional details regarding this fun afternoon!

BPA Dues

The BPA has been very busy this year and we would like to thank all of the families who have paid their BPA dues. We could not plan these fun events for our children and families without your help. It is not too late for your family to support our work! All donations are very much appreciated. We suggest \$30 per family, but all amounts are welcome. Please don't hesitate to reach out to any members of the BPA if you have any questions, comments, new ideas or concerns.

Thanks,
Jenna O'Donnell & Diana Stewart Co-Presidents

Connections

Transitions

Please join the Connections Team

Thursday, March 8, from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Strategies and techniques to help
guide your family through some of
life's transitions:

- *Moving to a new class with new teachers
- *Going to kindergarten
- *Riding the school bus
- *Moving to a new house
- *Others you may have questions about

This is a great opportunity to discuss these upcoming changes
with teachers and other parents

Mrs. Capasso, Mrs. Dunn, Mrs. LaForrest

From The Board of Directors

My son was 4 when we moved to Duxbury in July of 2013. One of my first calls was to Berrybrook to check on their availability for the fall. I had so many wonderful memories from when I had attended Berrybrook that I wanted my children to create their own memories at the school I loved so much.

I was in luck, there were openings in the afternoon class. Afternoons at Berrybrook were exactly what my son needed. We had just moved to a new house in a new town and now a new school, that's a lot of change for a 4-year-old! When he was younger, separation for my son was hard.... very hard. I was that parent whose kids were always crying as I was walking away, but the longer I stayed the worse it was on both of us. So, we had our routine; hug, kiss and "I love you" at the door and then a wave at the window. As soon as I was out of sight he would be fine and have a great day. I think the afternoons made the drop-off easier, Berrybrook is just a bit calmer in the afternoons. My daughter was in the mornings, so I know how hectic drop-offs can be, not to mention trying to get out of the house on time!

One of my favorite parts of the afternoons was pick-up on the playground. How many times in our kids lives do they get to end their school day playing on the playground? Unless it was raining or freezing, we would stay and play longer. Many days other families would stay and play too. Sometimes it was just an extra 15 minutes but other times we stayed until the sun would start to set.

I miss those Berrybrook afternoons, he had such a wonderful time and has so many great memories from that class. On the very first day my son met his closest friend. They met while looking for toads under the tree stumps over by the play structure, and they found many!

Luckily, we live close to Berrybrook, so we drive by often. When we do I always hear "I remember this" or "Do you remember when" from both of my kids about their days at Berrybrook and every so often they get to hear an "I remember" story from me about my days at Berrybrook.

~ Molly Hollister
Board of Directors



The Berrybrook Summer Nature Program is offered during June and July on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9:00 – 1:00. Children must be 4 by September 1st, (or Berrybrook Beginners!) to register. We also welcome siblings up to 7 years of age. More information can be found on the Berrybrook website or stop by the office.