



## June 2023

**Wednesday, June 7**

**3 Day classes Ice Cream Day**

**Thursday, June 8**

**4 Day class Ice Cream Day**

**Friday, June 9**

**Beginners, 2 Day and 5 Day classes  
Ice Cream Day**



### Notes from the Head of School

How in the world is it June already? It feels like just yesterday I was printing off apple, butterfly, and shell name tags for cubbies that had that New-Year-Clean feel. I do think as I get older time feels like it passes quicker, but in reality we all know it's the same ten month measurement tape from September to June each year. I can't put my finger on whether the year seemed to fly by quicker than usual since we weren't bogged down with COVID regulations, or if having families back in for pickup and special events marked the passage of time differently, or if there were other reasons. Could it be that the months went quicker as we had a full calendar of Family Fun Fridays, BPA provided enrichment activities, and holiday singalongs held in person?

I have to take a moment and thank three parents who stepped up when it was desperately needed. The Parents Association typically has its leadership roles in place over the summer, but it wasn't until mid-September that we had the co-presidents and Family Fun Friday roles locked up. Alex Casamassima and Stephanie McGarry most likely saw the anxiety on my face at the first BPA meeting, and also recognized that the BPA is a vital part of Berrybrook. Together they were amazing BPA Co-Presidents and I am thankful for their

willingness to jump into a situation that they weren't quite sure what they signed up for. Michelle Crowley also volunteered for organizing the monthly Family Fun Friday events with Alex. While I do not attend these, I am updated on each one and know how much work goes into the planning and executing. If you see any of these three ladies around in the last days of school, please be sure to thank them for their volunteering for Berrybrook.

In addition to building back up the BPA, our routines and traditions were tweaked. As we emerged from the COVID cocoon and all emergency regulations were lifted, we spent a LOT of time discussing and brainstorming which practices we would be keeping or modifying that were best practice for early childhood and developmentally appropriate, balanced by our Berrybrook traditions. Not everything with COVID was horrible, as it helped us examine nearly everything we'd been doing at Berrybrook for eons, and perhaps rethink what we've been doing based on the philosophy of 'because that's how it's been forever'. Some things went back to exactly how it was BC (**B**efore COVID) and other traditions were modified to keep pace with our changing needs.

I need to shout a giant THANK YOU to my coworkers. Going into the 2022-2023 school year I knew it would be a hard balance between work and home, with my oldest graduating high school and looking at colleges down South. As I mentioned before, I'm so grateful to have gone through this process with Mrs. Bonner and Mrs. Piccuito. I'm so incredibly thankful for all my coworkers ~ the culture at Berrybrook is one that we give and receive so much support from each other. In a meeting the other day, it was mentioned that one of the teachers who had worked in several other school environments had never worked with such a group of considerate women who truly cared for one another, much like a family. And it's true! I guess I tend to forget about it because for 21 years I've felt that same way so it's ingrained in me but I guess I don't realize how unique it really is. It's just The Berrybrook Way.

Have a wonderful summer! ☀️

~ Mrs. Watts

## ***Teacher's Notes***

### Mirrors, Magnifying Glasses, Magnets...and ME!

There are many tools children use all school year at Berrybrook from crayons to paintbrushes, pencils to rolling pins, tape to glue. All are useful and symbolic in themselves, however the ones most symbolic to how children learn about themselves and others have to be mirrors, magnifying glasses and magnets!

In the 4 and 5 Day Classes, children are asked three times during the year (fall, winter and spring) to look into a hand mirror and “draw what they see”, thus creating a self-portrait. It is one of many ways to allow children to really look at and see themselves. Yes, in this activity they are seeing more their physical characteristics such as eye and hair color, but it sets the stage to “seeing oneself” every day at school and learning all about oneself as we go.

Magnifying glasses are a tool children frequently use throughout the year to observe growing and changing things, among other discoveries to be made. Whether it be a tiny seed, the petals on a flower, the visible roughness of a piece of tree bark found in the Nook, or an insect we discovered and can observe more closely in the Berrybrook Bug Catcher before releasing it happily outdoors...a magnifying glass makes larger the small, magnificent beauty of things that may otherwise go unnoticed. This is very similar to how every day at school children practice seeing the world around them.

Magnets are such an interesting area of study and easily represent how children relate to one another as classmates, peers and sometimes resulting in “friends”. As the old saying goes, “opposites attract” and that is of course true with magnets yet so true with personalities ~ children and adults alike! Where commonalities are typically what bring people together, with children their friendships are often made up of those people to whom they are similar **and** those they are *attracted to* (seeing the magnet reference more now?)

At the end of each year children have not only *used* many tools but have *acquired* many tools to use when solving problems with others and managing their own emotions. Tools such as talking things through while adults listen and guide; learning to understand then express what they are feeling and experiencing; discovering what works and what doesn't through practicing different techniques; and reflecting and remembering both successes and failures that will better equip them in the next situation. With these tools they are able to build foundations such as patience, self control, resilience, determination, responsibility and compassion. Upon these strong foundations will come towers of independence, honesty, kindness, respect, cooperation, and peace.

Children can only learn through experience. We give them a multitude of daily experiences here at Berrybrook that are rooted in the all important social - emotional focus and philosophy we believe in. Keep providing experiences for them at home and

beyond so they can sharpen the tools they already have, acquire more tools to add to their tool box, and lend a helping tool to others should they need help in their life-building.

Happy Summer and Happy Building!

*~ Mrs. LaForest*

*Mrs. LaForest teaches the 5 Day and 4 Day classes*



**Berrybrook  
families  
are growing!!**



**Congratulations and welcome!**



**Wren Quinn**  
(Big sister Haiden is in the 5 Day  
class and  
big sister Nora is in the Beginners)



## ***From The Board of Directors***

Teddy entered Berrybrook's five day class a month after we moved from Philadelphia, asking city slicker questions like "what's a yard?" Amid the chaos and jitters of a big move, Berrybrook surprised us by taking such care to welcome Teddy and help him adjust to his new school community. Besides teacher home visits and shortened school days, children ease into the new environment on a visiting day with parents when siblings are asked to stay at home. With a two year old daughter and no sitters yet, I admit this seemed like a bold request at the time! But as we moved through the Berrybrook experience with Elise and then with Jesse, our youngest, we came to appreciate those ways the school challenged us in our parenting and to recognize at Berrybrook a unique integrity and commitment to do what's best for children.

From the initial welcomes, Berrybrook shows great respect for children as thinkers, creators and community members who live out and pass down traditions and a history. They are worthy of excellent art materials and capable of making beeswax candles, painted eggs and heart necklaces to be given and treasured. They hold a "talking feather" and all present are reminded to listen to this small, strong voice. Instead of completing a learning task to hear "good job!" or receive a sticker, they enjoy the inherent satisfaction of making discoveries, learning new skills, and showing kindness to friends - just as we do.

Berrybrook teachers' clear-eyed, growth-focused perspective has been a source of encouragement in many seasons with our kids. Mrs. O'Neil recommended that Teddy pick out his own clothes in the mornings, and again I felt that twinge of surprise (and defensiveness!) at her boldness. But her respect for his capability and developing thoughts and desires encouraged me to parent according to my best values instead of convenience or appearances.

Elise, who to this day observes and dips a careful toe into each new situation, did not reply to greetings from people she didn't know well. Frustrated with her silent stares, I remember my relief when Mrs. LaForest suggested I tell Elise she could just give a little wave if she found it hard to speak in those moments. Of course! Respect for her quiet nature and stage of development, and help in navigating the wide world. And before long, three-year-old Elise was trying out her new social skills with some action figures in our living room - "Hello Darth Vader, how do you do? Who's that sitting next to you?"

The high standard for respect set at Berrybrook continues to guide me in my parenting today. When 12-year-old Teddy asks for a phone and my knee-jerk reaction is "No!" I feel that same nagging conviction that I did about allowing him to pick out his own

clothes. Respect his capability and developing thoughts and desires. Teach him to wave hello and navigate the wide world.

Jesse entered his one and only year at Berrybrook in the fall of 2021. Emerging from our Covid bubble, those first welcome events for his five day class felt like a welcome home. Mrs. Connell and Mrs. LaForest had forged sweet bonds with him years earlier when he came with me to pick up Elise - offering him a shovel or truck to take part in a sand excavation project, and crouching down to connect and talk with him. Berrybrook was already a place he loved (and never wanted to leave!), and now it would be *his* Berrybrook. His painted eggs would join Teddy's and Elise's in our china cabinet. His handprint would take its place next to theirs on the wall. And he would spend his days playing, singing, dancing and learning with beloved teachers who had already been such a gift to our family.

Our children were born in three different states, but all three got to be part of the Berrybrook community. Through moves, interruptions by Covid, and years in public school and homeschooling, they have passed Berrybrook on to each other and have all felt the deep satisfaction of belonging and contributing to this caring community and special place. In our home we're surrounded and grounded by Berrybrook - handprints and footprints, school pictures, memory books, songs - drawing us together through powerful shared experiences and joy in learning.

With love and thanks to all at Berrybrook,

*Anna Reed*

Berrybrook Board of Directors

# ***Berrybrook Parents' Association***

Thank you all for your participation this year in the Berrybrook Parents' Association. Because of your generosity and enthusiasm we were able to do some amazing things and bring our Berrybrook community together! Whether it was attending a family fun Friday, the Harvest Festival, Moms Night Out, contributing to the holiday Giving Tree, children's enrichment program or the teacher lunch, each one of you helped to weave a strong social fabric here at Berrybrook. You are the glue which holds our community together and we can't thank you enough!

A big THANK YOU to all the parent volunteers, room parents, Mrs. Watts, Mrs. Piccuito, and Family Fun Friday coordinator, Michelle Crowley. We couldn't have done it without you all!

We wish you and your family a wonderful summer and look forward to seeing you around!

## **Enrichment**

The BPA was able to offer the children some enrichment opportunities this year. Miss Kim worked with the children on the many benefits of yoga and Jesse Stiglich led several percussion classes. As a reminder, the BPA dues that are collected throughout the year help fund these programs, so a huge thank you to all who contributed this year!

## **Family Fun Fridays**

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our May event at JEM Equestrian! It was a huge success, and I know many families (including our own!) enjoyed feeding the animals! We're keeping our fingers crossed for good weather on June 2nd for the ice cream cruises, so far it looks great!

## **BPA Officers 2023-2024**

Please remember that EVERY parent is a member of the parents' association. New faces bring new ideas, and your commitment can be as little or as much you'd like. If you are interested in simply joining a brainstorming meeting, fundraising, helping plan future events, or signing up as a classroom parent, please reach out to the BPA, Mrs. Watts or Mrs. Piccuito.

All the Best,  
Your BPA co-presidents,  
Stephanie and Alex