

April 2024

April 15 - 19

Spring vacation week



## Notes from the Head of School

If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring? Pilgrims!

Knock, knock. *Who's there?* Orange. *Orange who?* Orange you going to let me in?

What do corny jokes and challenging behaviors have in common? **SPRINGTIME!** 'Tis the season of what we think of as inane jokes that either seem to have no punchline or make no sense to us, all while cracking up preschoolers. This often coincides with what some label as “wild” behavior especially on the playground. All of us know at Berrybrook that is the sign that spring is about to be sprung! The best part is .... it is all developmentally expected behavior! More typical of our older students, spring is often the time where our 4 and 5 Day children start to try out new behaviors as they hear more and more about kindergarten and they wonder what entails being a kindergartener. One of the best parts of Berrybrook is that it is okay for children to try out all these personalities as they figure out their next step. We are helping them manage what is socially acceptable, and trying it all out in a safe space. The opportunities for them to feel comfortable with their feelings are endless.

Last month we had a student who went from running through the door each day to really have a tough time not wanting to come to school. The change in his feelings about school spun in such a U-turn that his family and I were completely stumped. It truly seemed to come out of nowhere. The teachers and I utilized every tool in our toolbox to help him verbalize how he was feeling and perhaps uncover the origin of his abrupt change. Long story short - it seems like it was due to kindergarten registration the week before. The night of his tough day, I sent a message to mom asking how he was feeling and she said that he was doing better, that according to him he was feeling a little bit of anger about coming to school, to which I replied “I’m glad

to hear (about him feeling better). He just needed the day. As long as he knows we're here for him whether he's happy-go-lucky, feeling angry, or everything in between. We're here for it all!"

As wild as it seems, we get so excited when children express their emotions in the classroom....it shows they are comfortable with us to really show their true colors. How else can they learn to navigate the tricky world of emotions and social situations? There's no judgement here; how could we judge a little person on trying to figure out the cause and effect of their behavior? And, how boring would a classroom be with 12-18 of the same personalities?!?

Remember to smile through the jokes that make no sense to you even through they crack your child up uncontrollably, and maybe at some point you can counter with: Knock, knock! *Who's there?* Will. *Will who?* Will you stop with these corny jokes already?

Happy Spring! 

~ Mrs. Watts

A stylized tree with a brown trunk and green, teardrop-shaped leaves, positioned on the left side of the preschool advertisement.

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

There is a question my daughter, Emma, sometimes asks me that immediately spikes my nerves: "Mommy, can I bake something today?". Don't get me wrong, I love baking and all the tastiness that it promises. What makes me nervous is that what my daughter is really asking is: "Can I bake something *by myself, alone, without your help?*". Now Emma is a very responsible and capable 10-year-old. She can measure, stir, and follow directions. My nerves get a little on edge because I know that once she is done there will be a mess in the kitchen (picture flour on the counter, eggshells in the sink, lots of spoons to clean) and (gasp!) she might make a mistake. It's easier for me if I do the baking and she does the tasting; but if I always did it for her, I would be depriving her from the joy of independence.

At Berrybrook, we are teaching children the joy of independence every day. Don't worry, we aren't giving the children free rein over the kitchen! For our preschool learners we encourage simple selfcare tasks that foster independence. What does this look like? It might be encouraging a student to learn the "flip trick" to put on their own jacket, showing children how to clean up their own spots after snack, returning play dough to the proper container without the help of a teacher, or cleaning up blocks before circle time. These tasks might look small to an outsider, but to a child who is learning independence it is huge.

The joy of independence is so important because it gives our children confidence. When we jump in to do things for our kids, we are silently broadcasting the message that they aren't capable. We want to encourage our children to accomplish tasks that they can reasonably do by themselves. Will it be perfect the first time a little one is given the independence to complete a task? Of course not! There might be spilled water on the floor, a shoe might get put on the wrong foot, or a jacket ends up upside down; but that's ok – it's all part of the learning process.

As a parent it can be hard to give up these little freedoms to our children. It's not always the right moment for our kids to practice. Sometimes the clock is ticking and we have to get out of the house on time. But there are times when we can be patient with our children; allow them that extra time to put on their own shoes or take the small risk of allowing them to clear their own plate after dinner. A few minutes of tardiness or a mess on the floor will be worth it in the long run.

I read somewhere that "Childhood should be a series of small steps towards independence, but we know that letting go is an act of bravery!". So, I will try to be brave, take a deep breath, and embrace the chaos in my kitchen; and hopefully get a yummy treat (and a confident kid) as my reward!

*~ Mrs. Fagan*

*Mrs. Fagan teaches the 2 Day and 3 Day room 1 classes*

## ***PARENT ASSOCIATION NOTES***

Spring is here and we're ready to mingle! We're finalizing the details for this year's Moms Night Out in May and would love to see you there. More details to come soon!

Teacher appreciation week is May 6-10. As part of our annual tradition, the BPA will be collecting contributions for the teacher luncheon as well as gifts for Mrs Watts and Mrs Piccuito. The classroom parents will also collect contributions for a small gift for each of your child's teachers.

Please keep an eye out for the email communications regarding each of these initiatives in the upcoming weeks.

### **Family Fun Fridays**

I think it's safe to say the children had the best time listening to stories and singing with Ryan from Big Ryan's Tall Tales. The infectious laughter in the Big Room at Berrybrook is still ringing in my ears (in a good way, of course!). We hope to host Big Ryan again in the future!

We're looking forward to our next FFF in April at Duxbury Bay Maritime School! Children will first learn about whales and DBMS followed by the life-sized, inflatable North Atlantic Right Whale model, [Delilah](#). Through hands-on activities, students will learn about the whale's internal & external anatomy – focusing on adaptations for survival. Students will also explore life-sized whale artifacts, such as bones and baleen. If you are interested in joining the waitlist, please email Michelle Crowley at [berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com](mailto:berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com).

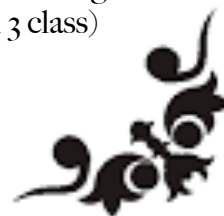
Stephanie McGarry and Alex Casamassima  
*BPA Co-Presidents*



**Berrybrook Welcomes**

**June Kerry**

(Big brother Russell is in the 5 Day class and big brother Benjamin is in the 3 Day Room 3 class)



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

Bouncing downstairs to the lobby of the Duxbury Conservatory with a gummy-smiled eight-month-old Jesse in my arms, I spotted three-year-old Elise - happily coloring and snacking with friends. Littles content for the moment, my friend Katie and I resumed our chat about her awesome snack containers and Elise's food allergies, while waiting for older sibs in their music lessons. The conversation drifted to kids' books, and because Teddy had just started first grade at the time, I'm sure I expressed concern that he wasn't really reading yet. I am forever thankful for two recommendations Katie passed along that day: Jim Trelease's *The Read-Aloud Handbook* and Sarah MacKenzie's *Read-Aloud Revival*. With persuasive arguments and impressive evidence that reading aloud to kids is the best way to nurture a love of reading, these authors calmed my frantic mother fears and inspired me to make lasting connections with my kids through books.

Thank goodness for that timely encouragement and permission to enjoy more of the best time we spent together in those days (and possibly the only time that all three children were simultaneously awake and content): six-year-old Teddy snuggled on one side of me, Elise on the other, and Jesse nursing on my lap while we laughed at Frances's woe-is-me-I-have-a-new-baby-sister antics, or Paddington's I'm-just-that-kind-of-bear messes, or Ramona's somebody- PLEASE-notice-ME shenanigans. The laughter soothed our chipped shoulders and raw feelings from the conflicts of the day, and these characters who hurt and stormed and joked and loved the way we did comforted the way few things can.

Skimming through Trelease and MacKenzie's wisdom between diapers, drives to Berrybrook, soccer and piano lessons that fall, thankfully I stumbled upon ideas for bringing stories to my kids in fun, flexible and practical ways. First: kids can be busy with their hands while they listen to me read. Playdough! Puzzles! Breakfast! Brilliant! Listening to a chapter of *Farmer Boy* or *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* became enjoyable for youngers once they had something to do alongside, and I found Elise drawn into books I never would have chosen for a three-year-old. Trelease also reminded me that "children can hear and understand stories that are more complicated and more interesting than what they could read on their own" - and thereby saved my husband and me from endless hours of Lego Star Wars easy readers. When it's 5:30 am and I have an early riser to occupy quietly until the rest of the family wakes up, I'm grateful for a novel like Eleanor Estes' hilarious *Rufus M.* or Roald Dahl's *Danny the Champion of the World* to entertain us both for a while.

Then we discovered the gift of audiobooks; readers with voices and accents much more entertaining than mine read fabulous stories to us while we cook, ride to doctor's appointments, fold laundry, or rest while Jesse naps. Incredible. Tomie dePaola's *26 Fairmount Avenue* series, the *Ramona Quimby* books, Atinuke's *Anna Hibiscus*, Jim Weiss's audiobook collection, and *Princess Cora and the Crocodile* became fast favorites and still come out of retirement for rides to hockey games or Nana's house. Now family vacations become memorable for the books we listen to on the long car rides - *Pinocchio* on the way to a Maine lakehouse, *A Cricket in Times Square* on a brilliant New Hampshire fall getaway. And slowly a shared family culture develops. Children who complain about foods touching on their dinner plates are "picky

Pinocchios.” Stormy nights without electricity are, in the words of Anna Hibiscus’s grandfather, for “traditional pursuits,” like snuggling in front of the woodstove and playing flashlight hide-and-seek. On days when my quiet Elise feels particularly stuck between Teddy and Jesse, we think of Anna Hibiscus’s twin brothers and shake our heads at “those boys...Double and Trouble.”

You’d think (I thought) with all these stories we’ve been enjoying together for years, our now school-aged kids would naturally develop robust reading lives of their own. But more frantic mother fears creep in once they know how to read. Help! Elise only reads magazines! Help! Teddy only reads graphic novels! Help! Jesse says he DOESN’T LIKE TO READ. Thankfully, wisdom from Jim Trelease - “each read-aloud is a commercial for the pleasures of reading” - lights our way through these dark days time and again. Puzzling through an Agatha Christie Hercule Poirot mystery with an edgy tween between trips to the beach on vacation, or getting caught in fits of giggles over *The No. 1 Car Spotter* with a newly independent reader before bed, or reveling in Eeyore’s delightfully morose sarcasm in *The House at Pooh Corner* with a worn out third-grader reminds all of us that great books are a gift and a delight. Once reading is required for school, kids can start to see independent reading as work, and they need to catch the reading bug over and over again. And they will catch it when we read books we love to them. Especially funny books. Lots of funny books.

During the most recent bout of low reading morale in our house, I decided to listen through a Sarah MacKenzie book recommendation: Donalyn Miller’s *The Book Whisperer*. Although Miller is a teacher and writes especially to teachers, the book offers direction and inspiration to anyone who loves a child. When she shares her conviction that becoming a reader “starts with encountering great books, heartfelt recommendations, and a community of readers who share this passion,” she is describing a classroom experience we’d all wish for our children, and one they have at Berrybrook. But our families can become vibrant reading communities that move with our children as they grow, strengthening our bonds and drawing us close as we share books together through the years.

~ *Anna Reed*  
*Board Member*