

BERRYBROOK NEWS

December, 2008

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| Friday, December 5 | BPA Children's Tea Party 11: 45 - 12:30 |
| Friday, December 19 | Last day of school before holiday break |
| Monday, January 5 | School resumes/Enrollment begins |

Notes from the Headmaster

Tradition. So much of what happens during the holidays is tradition. What we eat, songs we sing, people and places we visit are often the same year after year. Traditions keep us connected to each other. At Berrybrook we rely on many traditions throughout the year. Last month, the 2 & 3 Day pinecone turkeys, the 4 & 5 Day Plimoth Plantation re-creations and the children's home made butter were all traditional Berrybrook activities. Over the years Berrybrook traditions have evolved with the children and the times. For example, in the past, the children made beach plum jelly every September. As the enrollment grew and beach plum bushes disappeared, the children started to make grape jelly. The flavor changed, but the jelly making tradition was preserved. The landscape plan for the new building included more beach plum bushes so the jelly making tradition may change again in a few years!

Another traditional activity that has evolved through the years is the annual December walk in the woods to cut down a tree. In the beginning, when the school had fewer children, they would go in to the woods behind the school and cut down a small tree to decorate. As the years went by, each group cut down a tree and brought it in to decorate until it got to 5 young trees each year. A few years ago, teachers started talking about changing the tree tradition. Cutting down that many trees this day in age just did not make sense. So, teachers began to dig up a very small tree in the woods and care for it in the classroom until it could be re-planted. This was a good idea, but the chances of the young trees surviving that process were less than 100%. At Berrybrook we teach children to take care of themselves, to take care of each other and to take care of the earth. Teachers felt we really needed to think about this tree tradition.

At a recent staff meeting we had a long discussion about this tradition. We discussed having the children go to the woods to decorate a living tree. That was appealing for a moment until Mrs. O'Neil reminded us that the decorations might hurt animals – so we thought, what if we decorated with seeds and berries? Once again, Mrs. O'Neil reminded us that once humans start leaving food, birds or animals would rely on us to continue. It would be irresponsible to provide food and then take it away. (Traditionally, Mrs. O'Neil has been our nature expert!)

We had quite a dilemma. At Berrybrook, traditions are important. But since 1954, we have become much more environmentally conscious. We no longer use food in art projects – we have eliminated macaroni necklaces, and we do without rice or beans in the water table – entire cultures survive on such food, why would we have children play with it? We recycle paper and plastic and glass. Even our new school house was designed to be as “green” as possible with good insulation and other energy saving devices.

Many children have holiday trees at home and the tree decorated for the Festival of Trees at Plimoth Plantation will be on display at Berrybrook in December, so is it really necessary to cut down trees from our Berrybrook woods for sake of tradition? It is important to note that the children currently in our classrooms are not particularly aware that they are engaging in traditions. Every activity they experience is brand new. It is their parents and older siblings who let them know that things like the jelly and latkes and ice cream they make at Berrybrook are traditions. I realize parents look forward to Berrybrook traditions and cherish them. I know families who have four pine cone turkeys made by each child that come out every year for Thanksgiving! Parents and teachers look forward to the special projects and activities that happen every year and I have my favorites too. It is difficult to change something that has been a lovely memory for so many, but as people responsible for educating young children we have to be sure that the lessons we are passing on reflect our values.

At the end of our staff meeting we decided that the really important element of the tree tradition was the excitement the children felt decorating it and then sharing it with their families. After much discussion, we decided to have a one “community” tree for the entire school to decorate, but it will be different, not one cut from our woods. Our goal is for the tree to reflect the light and warmth of the holiday season. Look for the tree to appear soon.

Of course, December contains many other Berrybrook traditions. Take time to enjoy the Berrybrook crafts, songs, decorations, snacks and gifts that happen during the holiday season and our most important year round tradition - of caring for ourselves, caring for each other and caring for the earth.

*Best wishes for a restful holiday season,
Pat Keeley*

2 & 3 Day Classroom Activities

The month of November sure did have us thankful for many things! We showed how thankful we are for our families by bringing in family photos. Puppets and stories told of how we can be thankful for friends by listening to one another and talking through our problems. Our classroom "Textured Turkeys" were quickly covered with feathers formed at home by friends who had very creative ideas for decorating! Traditional Berrybrook projects were of importance in November such as painting and filling assorted canisters with corks to create drums, as well as our pinecone turkeys which always make a memorable addition to the dinner table on Thanksgiving Day! Our Thanksgiving Feast was celebrated with our favorite foods and topped with the butter we made and we all enjoyed creating ornaments for the Berrybrook Holiday Tree that will be on display at The Festival of Trees at Plimoth Plantation.

We are quickly reminded that the month of December is upon us as we planted bulbs on the Berrybrook grounds...they will endure a long winter's nap and surprise us one day in the spring with a "pop" of beauty and color! Other hints of December's arrival are that of holiday cheer and spirit surrounding us everywhere we go: friends' and families' homes, grocery stores and especially the shopping malls. December at Berrybrook will focus once again on family and tradition as the children

think of others while making meaningful gifts, and making decorations fitting to the season.

Just before the holiday break arrives and we part from each other until the New Year, families will join together for our 2 and 3 Day Class Holiday Sing-A-Long. This is a wonderful, relaxed and joyous time of being together to sing some holiday songs and enjoy a special snack made by the children. We hope to see you there!

4 & 5 Day Classroom Activities

Thanks to all of you who chaperoned our visit to Plimoth Plantation. Although our plans to bypass the movie fell short it turned out to be a valued addition after all. The film was of shorter duration than the ones we had viewed in the past so we were still able to get ahead of the other visitors. We had the place to ourselves for quite a while! As in the past, we always learn something new each year. We have been reminiscing at circle time, with the help of the talking feather, about our visit. The children also worked very hard to create their miniature replicas of Plimoth Plantation.

All through the school year the children learn about nature both in and out of the classroom. Currently, they are studying trees, observing various shapes, sizes and colors of different types of leaves. This nature study will be ongoing.

December is a busy month at Berrybrook. The 4 & 5 Day classes learn about family holiday traditions through song, dance, baking, art and literature. They will take part in decorating the classroom as well as learning the importance of giving whether it be a helping hand, kind gesture or word, or actual handmade gift. Both classes prepare a special holiday performance for their parents. This performance will be a gift of music from them to you. After the performance, there will be a holiday snack prepared by the children.

SIMPLE GIFTS

'Tis the gift to be simple,
'Tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down
where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves
in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley
of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
to bow and to bend
we shan't be ashamed.
To turn, turn, will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning
we come 'round right.

The holiday performances will be presented at the following times.

4 Day class – December 18th
at 1:00 p.m.

5 Day class – December 19th
at 9:00 a.m.

**Happy holidays to you and your families.
Enjoy your time together.**

Hannukah Latkes

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

Potato Latkes

6 Potatoes
4 Tablespoons flour
1 Teaspoon Salt
1 Egg

Peel and shred potatoes into a bowl. This can be done with a cheese grater or food processor. Add flour, salt, and egg and mix together. Form mixture into table-spoon sized patties. Cook in hot oil until golden.



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.

Toys of Value

Making decisions about what toys to purchase during the holidays gets more difficult each year. Children and parents are inundated with television ads from thousands of toy makers trying to convince them that their toy is best. Parents are under tremendous pressure to buy the “hot” item that may be sold through films, TV ads and even fast food restaurants. Play is essential for children and toys are the tools of play. Healthy toys promote imaginative, creative, interesting, and long lasting play. A group called TRUCE (Teachers for Resisting Unhealthy Children’s Entertainment) has some hints for choosing healthy toys. They recommend the following:

- Choose toys that can be used in many ways
- Choose toys that allow the children to determine the play
- Choose toys that appeal to children at more than one age
- Choose toys that are not linked to video games, TV or movies
- Choose toys that can be used with other toys for new and more complex play
- Choose toys that promote respectful, non-stereotyped, non-violent interactions
- Choose some gifts to make at home with your children to give to others. Berrybrook Playdough is always a nice gift!

Berrybrook School Playdough Recipe

4 cups flour
2 cups salt
4 cups water
4 tbsp oil
4 tbsp cream of tartar

Mix all in a large pot. Cook on medium heat until dough forms. Cool, knead, and store in an air-tight container.



Enrollment 2009-2010

During the holiday break, all current Berrybrook parents will receive re-enrollment information for 2009-2010. 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. All donations received through the Annual Appeal go directly to this fund. If you are interested in receiving information about financial assistance please contact Mrs. Keeley.

Berrybrook Parent's Association

Happy Holidays! There are many exciting programs, events and fundraisers at Berrybrook this December. We hope you will join us for our Children's Holiday Tea Party on Friday, December 5, 2008 from 11:45 am - 12:30 pm. The children will gather around for a festive tale about The Gingerbread Baby and then enjoy sugar cookie tea and warm apple cider, veggies and fruit, and sugar cookies (which will be peanut, milk and egg free). Our signup sheets, which are located on the BPA table, are filling up quickly, and we look forward to kicking off the holiday season together!

For our holiday outreach, we are making great progress on our Berrybrook holiday tree for the Festival of Trees. Our theme is "Gateway to Discovery," and our children have been creatively decorating the ornaments for the tree in their classrooms. Thank you to the many volunteers who attended our November 5th meeting and worked hard to construct the gates being used. Another worthy cause is the Pilgrim Hope Shelter. This week everyone received a flyer identifying needed supplies, and we hope you consider giving to this great community center! A collection box will be located in the lobby by the BPA table. Thank you to Stephanie Handfield for organizing our efforts!

Our next gathering will be a social event on Monday, December 8th from 8:00 pm to 9:30 pm at the Toy Box (1376C Washington Street, Hanover). Join us for our Chocolate and Wine Tasting

Party, which is also a fundraising opportunity for the BPA. The Toy Box will donate 20% of all purchases to the BPA plus offer 20% off any one item to party goers! Please RSVP to tammyakirk@yahoo.com, and also let us know if you are willing to bring a chocolate dessert or wine. If you cannot attend, but wish to purchase any items on the 8th, the Toy Box will still donate 20% of your purchases to the BPA! All the proceeds of this event will go directly to our children's enrichment programs. Thank you to Mollie O'Hara leading for arranging these educational offerings (Big Ryan and Hop, Skip, Jump)! Look for more information in our next newsletter! Also, we will be adding more Berrybrook apparel to the BPA table, which make for great stocking stuffers (check out the adorable fleece vests, hats, and bags).

In January, we will be hosting a Memory Book meeting, launching our BPA-sponsored library, and beginning plans for our first community event. We welcome all participation! If you are interested in helping, please contact us. Thanks to Denise Sundstrom who spent many hours pulling the family directories together! Finally, we hope you enjoy the Holiday celebrations in each of the classrooms. We are grateful to the teachers who work extremely hard to host these adorable events (don't forget your cameras)! THANK YOU for making our children feel special!

We wish you and your families a joyous holiday season!

Warm Regards,
Tammy Kirk, BPA President

Berrybrook Board of Directors

In 1954, Katharine Bailey Mann gave Berrybrook its start and its focus. In 1957, she created a separate trust to honor her mother, and to further support Berrybrook, her life's work. She created the Lucretia Prentiss Bailey Trust of Massachusetts to ensure that Berrybrook would survive, and thrive, forever.

In July, 2008, the Trust sold 40.57 acres to the Town of Duxbury for conservation purposes. The 40.57 acre purchase consisted of two parcels; a 27.23 acre open field on the south side of Winter Street, and a 13.3 acre open field and woods on the north side of Winter Street. This scenic agricultural streetscape is rare in Duxbury and the region, and also contains rare species habitat.

The sale of the land enabled Berrybrook School to build for the future and at the same time the sale ensured that the beautiful and historic landscape would be preserved forever. The town of Duxbury has named the conservation land ***Berrybrook Fields***. Recently, you may have read in newspapers about activities organized by Duxbury's Open Space and Recreation Committee to increase awareness about the newly acquired conservation land on Winter Street.

The Lucretia Prentiss Bailey Trust continues to hold 27.33 acres of land for Berrybrook School, including the land surrounding our school buildings and our beautiful woods and trails.

The Board of Directors will foster strong communications between Berrybrook

and the town and will help to spread the word about future events held on the land. The newly established Berrybrook Fields are the perfect neighbor and a fitting compliment to Berrybrook School. We encourage all Berrybrook families to take advantage of both resources so generously provided by Katharine Mann. It's a gift for all seasons.

Thank you

Berrybrook Teachers would like to thank parents for all of the thoughtful, generous words and deeds we receive so often from parents. Your support and goodwill make Berrybrook a place where teachers and children can do their best work.

We appreciate all of the parents who volunteer in so many ways - by helping in classes, assisting with a cooking project, accompanying classes to the Plimoth Plantation, making playdough, or bringing in recyclables.

We find Berrybrook parents to be cheerful, understanding and flexible and your hard work with children at home makes our jobs at Berrybrook a pleasure.

*Miss Bent, Mrs. Caddle,
Mrs. Capasso, Mrs. Delano, Mrs.
Dunn, Mrs. Fosdick, Mrs. Keeley,
Mrs. La Forest, Mrs. Neal, Mrs.
O'Neil, Mrs. Piccuito, Mrs. Pisani
and Mrs. Watts want to wish all
Berrybrook Families a happy and
healthy holiday season.*

Random Acts of Kindness

By Joanne LaForest

The gift of giving.
Doing for others.
Joyful celebration.
Fond family memories.

Are these the thoughts and feelings that come to mind for you in this month of December? Or does the holiday music that begins on the radio November 1st, Santa Claus arriving at the mall by this very same date and invitations to holiday parties being delivered in late October make you think of these instead:

Busy, busy, busy!
Too much to do!
So many people to remember!
Not enough time...

How is it that the time of year that we should slow down to be thankful, grateful, kind and giving towards others becomes the busiest time of year where instead we feel overwhelmed, stressed and choose not to live in the moment? It helps to remember the feeling one has when they are at Berrybrook and how its meaningful life lessons are so appropriate to this time of year.

Sometimes life in general, not just during the holidays, can feel overwhelming and stressful as mentioned above. I, personally, can have so much on my mind on my way to Berrybrook every morning and every morning it is the same. I turn off my engine, reach for my work bag and walk across the parking lot to the schoolhouse. The sheep sometimes greet me with a "baah" or two then soon realize I'm not Mrs. O'Neil so continue grazing. The sun shines on the layers of trees and grass to the right of the schoolhouse as my breathing slows and my mood calms. I look out at the playground where later that morning the children will be playing and sharing ideas. Lastly, before entering the schoolhouse, I look to the farmhouse and remember that each day we try to carry on Katharine Mann's dream.

So many people say, "There's just something about Berrybrook!" that it's almost a cliché but it's true. There is an almost magical happening that occurs when people are here. They speak kindly to one another, respect each other and are thoughtful, considerate and compassionate. I finally figured out why this is. One could say "It's the way they speak here, turning everything around to be in a more positive light." This undoubtedly has an effect. In the book [The Power of Intention](#) by Wayne Dyer it is said, "research has shown that a simple act of kindness directed toward another...stimulates the production of serotonin...a naturally occurring substance in the body that makes us feel more comfortable, peaceful, and even blissful... in both the recipient of the kindness and the person extending the kindness."

It all makes sense. One person speaks kindly, the other responds kindly and so it continues. When children hear teachers speaking to them with kindness and respect they automatically feel good and important, not to mention respected and cared for. But children, as well as adults, don't always remember to be positive, respectful and kind. Guess what? Dyer goes onto say that "...even more amazing is that the persons OBSERVING the act of kindness have similar beneficial results. Imagine this! Kindness EXTENDED, RECEIVED or OBSERVED impacts physical health and feelings of everyone involved!"

If only we could remember all of this during the busyness of the holiday season. If only we could remember all of this every day of the year. Although at times I forget, being at Berrybrook helps me to remember.

The other day my daughter came home from school with a treasure in hand. She hugged me, told me to close my eyes and placed the treasure on the table before me. "Open!" she said and I looked down to see a small business card type note that read "SMILE! You've just received a random act of kindness! Pass it on!" After hugging my daughter in return I thought, "I'll pass it along through my actions at Berrybrook tomorrow...and I won't even need the card."

Cut along the dotted line -----

