

February, 2011

February 21-25

Winter Break

Thursday, February 17

Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm

Wednesday, March 2

Berrybrook Board Meeting 7:30 pm



Notes from the Headmaster

“All children need social and emotional skills so they can be successful in life. Positive early experiences promote optimum brain development, which impacts all areas of development: social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. Over the past two decades, brain research has highlighted the preschool years (ages 3-5) as a critical transition point in child development, and supports the crucial role that social and emotional intelligence play in children’s ability to learn and grow.”

- C.Willis & P. Schiller, 2011. *Preschoolers’s Social Skills Steer Life Success*; Young Children, Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The paragraph above is from an article in the latest issue of YC. In it, the authors, Willis and Schiller mention seven key factors that are crucial to social and emotional competence; **Confidence, Curiosity, Self Control, Cooperation, Communication, Relatedness and Intentionality**. They feel these elements are critically important for a child to succeed in school and in life. In our developmentally appropriate early childhood classrooms, Berrybrook teachers foster the development of these skills every day. With the emphasis on academics in society today, even at the preschool level, it is important to note that Social and Emotional development goes hand in hand with academic achievement.

It is very rewarding to watch children develop **Confidence**. For example - children gain confidence when they are able to get all the way across the overhead ladder on the playground. It is not because they did it on their first try, but because they failed at first but kept trying and did not quit. It is the same the first time a child can zip up a coat independently or master pumping on the swings. Berrybrook teachers believe that children are capable and provide many opportunities for children to show persistence and determination. Confident children will be able to tackle a math problem, complete a chemistry project or try out for an athletic team. Confident people not deterred by setbacks.

Curiosity flourishes during our daily independent choice time as teachers allow children to choose their own work and the time to concentrate as long as their interest lasts. **Self Control** is developed as teachers reinforce positive choices children make. Children are aware of classroom expectations and learn that sometimes there are situations that they must accept, such as joining circle time or using a quiet voice. Teachers work with children to help them manage their actions and emotions by talking with them and modeling appropriate behavior. Once children develop self control, **Cooperation** with teachers and peers follows. Curiosity, self control and cooperation are all necessary for children to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.

Berrybrook teachers help children develop **Communication** skills by *listening* to them. They give children their full attention when children are speaking to them. There are opportunities to communicate one to one, and also times when children practice communicating to the group. Children learn to listen to what others are saying, ask appropriate questions and respond to others. Throughout their educational careers the ability to communicate effectively will influence their success.

Relatedness describes the ability to see another person's perspective and to relate to another person's experiences. Three and four year olds are just starting to develop empathy and it is important for teachers and parents to model consideration and caring. Concern for others is necessary in developing friendships and friendships are so important to a happy life. If you cannot make a friend and enjoy all of the benefits of friendship, will you really be able to succeed in the classroom or workplace?

Many projects at Berrybrook occur over time. A first year wood collage may take three days to complete, a second year replica of Plimoth Plantation a week! Students are encouraged to keep work in their cubbies to come back to the next day, lego creations may be remodeled and revised for months. Often, when being excused from circle time children are asked to state what activity they are going choose next. All of these techniques encourage **Intentionality**, or the ability to plan and to be persistent. In the article, Willis and Schiller state, "Intentionality drives social and emotional development as well as intellect."

I wanted to share this article - *Preschoolers's Social Skills Steer Life Success* - because it reflects the Berrybrook philosophy so well. Social and emotional competence enables a child to take full advantage of learning opportunities in school and in life.

Pat Keeley

News From the Board of Directors

Greetings, Berrybrook families!

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the commencement of a Strategic Plan process for Berrybrook School!

This is now our third year in the new school house. We are very pleased with the transition, and we thank the staff and families for the success. As we have made

concentrated efforts to transition to a new building, we have recognized that the overall plan for the School will require careful thought and planning. The previous strategic plan adopted by the Board of Directors in 2003, produced an exceptional document that guided us through many steps, including moving into a new physical space. Many aspects of that plan still apply today, such as discussion about future programming and school policies. To maximize the potential of our School and community, we feel it is very important to embark on a new strategic plan now. The process will evaluate our strengths and needs, and will focus our energies to make sure Berrybrook School is healthy and aspiring today and for years to come.

After months of searching and interviewing, we are very pleased to introduce Teresa Goode to the Berrybrook community. Teresa has been hired as our strategic plan consultant. She has many years of professional consultation experience, including strategic planning and leadership development. Teresa has lived in Kingston for many years, and we are glad to have an outside professional working with us who lives within our community. Teresa stresses the importance of transparency and the importance of involvement from all and we expect these two factors will compliment each other. Please join me in welcoming Teresa to Berrybrook.

The Board of Directors has created a Strategic Planning Committee. This committee consists of eight members (seven members of the Board and Mrs. Keeley), and it will function as the steering committee for the entire process. This committee may be the core of our process, but we expect there will be a variety of opportunities for all families to offer ideas and feedback. The Strategic Planning Committee will be updating you throughout the process and you may contact us anytime. Written correspondence may be dropped off with Mrs. Keeley, and email correspondence can be sent to mlongsjo@comcast.net.

Berrybrook will remain true to its philosophy of early childhood education. Mrs. Mann developed an approach in 1954 that endures. In an era of technology unthinkable then, we are so fortunate to have a place that embraces learning through so many person-centered experiences. Our children benefit from the wonderful guidance of our experienced teachers and from the expansive opportunities of the nature that surrounds us; they benefit from a program that lets them explore and from a community that supports them in countless ways. Mrs. Mann created a very special preschool, and she was able to see the importance of maintaining Berrybrook for generations of children. The opportunities today that our children are enjoying are gifts. We have a responsibility to continue Mrs. Mann's vision, offer an exceptional early childhood experience, and care for these unique and treasured gifts that are Berrybrook School. We enthusiastically accept the responsibility, and we believe a strategic plan process is the next best step.

Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to this exciting process with Teresa, the staff, and you. We are all very fortunate to be connected to Berrybrook, and this is an opportunity to express our appreciation in the best form – to give back and help make sure Berrybrook remains healthy and true for years to come.

Sincerely,
Mark Longsjo, on behalf of the Board Directors

First Year Program News

The month of January provided many opportunities for children to explore with snow *inside* our classrooms as there were many frigid cold days! We learned a lot about temperature as we studied our thermometers outside our windows. Temperature wasn't the only thing we measured...our class paperwhite flowers have been growing and growing each and every day! Our Berrybrook Hospital gave us a chance to learn about how we stay healthy so that we grow, too, tall and strong. Many birds are seen in winter and we learned all about them - their feathers, wings and what they like to eat. We moved our bodies in the Multipurpose Room as we participated in obstacle courses! All First Year classes study bears and learn about how they hibernate for the winter and where they make their homes.

February will focus on feelings, especially love for our families and friends. Children will make a special valentine for their families that they mail themselves at the Duxbury Post Office. Our Berrybrook Post Office gives us lots of practice! Classes meet at the Post Office at 9am, purchase a stamp with money they've already counted at school, mail their valentine then meet back at Berrybrook for a typical school day.

The dates for the Post Office Trip are:

3 Day Room 1 -
Tuesday, February 8th @ 9 a.m.

3 Day Room 3 -
Wednesday, February 9th @ 9a.m.

2 Day Room 3 -
Thursday, February 10th

(please look for notices in your cubby
about this field trip)

Valentine's Day will be celebrated with a special snack and an opportunity for children to deliver valentines made at home to each of their friends. We ask that each child provide a valentine for each member of their class. However, for ease in distributing the valentines, children may sign their own name but *please leave envelopes blank*. This provides children with "success" in delivering to each friend without the pressure of matching a name from an envelope to a cubby, etc.

The end of February will focus on the theme of transportation for some classes and a celebration of Dr. Seusse's birthday for others...all in all a fun month of friends and families will be celebrated!

*When you send a valentine,
That's the time for fun.
Slip it underneath the door,
Ring the bell,
And run, run, run!*

Mrs. Capasso
Mrs. Delano
Mrs. Dunn
Mrs. La Forest
Mrs. Piccuito
Mrs. Pisani



Welcome

Fletcher Clark Sampson
Congratulations to Tucker
(5 Day, Room 2)
and to the Sampson family!

and

Michael Robert Brown
Congratulations to Alli
(4 Day Room 1)
and the Brown Family

Second Year Program News

February 2nd is Groundhog Day. Will the groundhog see a shadow or not? Watch for a little groundhog puppet, made by the children, on this special February day.

HEART

I put my hands together,
That is how I start.

I fold my fingers right around,
And now I made a heart.

This month the 4 and 5-day classes will be preparing decorations, snacks, cards and gifts to celebrate Valentine's Day. We are half way through the school year now and the children have made many new friends. Valentine's Day gives the children an opportunity to give and receive special notes of friendship from their peers. We are asking everyone to bring in valentines that are signed and addressed to each classmate by February 10th for the 4-day class and by February 11th for the 5-day class. A class list will be in cubbies to assist with names. Due to allergies we are unable to have candy brought into the school so the children will be making a special allergy free snack to enjoy that day after they have delivered all of their Valentines.

Last month in our housekeeping area, we had the Berrybrook hospital. That area will soon transform into our Berrybrook Post Office. The children will experience writing and mailing letters to their peers. They will have the opportunity to purchase stamps and to study some of the cancelled stamps we have received from families. Thank you for sending in your used stamps and

holiday cards. The children will enjoy looking at all of them.

We have started making musical instruments and will continue our explorations this month. The children will make various instruments and have the chance to try Berrybrook's rhythm instruments. If anyone has a musical talent that they would like to share, please let us know so that we can make arrangements for you to visit the classrooms. We are looking forward to another visit from Mr. Sorrentino, AKA "Eddie Spaghetti," who enhances our music studies. Thank you to the BPA for this enrichment program!

During the winter, each second year class will include a study of space. We talk about the planets, the sun, stars, comets, rocket ships, astronauts, astronomers and the different phases of the moon. A moon is an object in space that orbits around a planet. The most famous example is the Earth's moon, of course, but there are moons going around all the planets in the Solar System except for Mercury and Venus. Look for the full snow moon on February 18th.

The Second Year Teachers,
Miss Bent, Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Fosdick,
Mrs. LaForest, Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Neal,
Mrs. Rosen and Mrs. Swan

Tuition payment #7 is now due.

2 Day \$ 235.00

3 Day \$ 345.00

4 Day \$ 428.00

5 Day \$ 505.00

Payments #2 - #9
are due the first of the month from
September through April with no tuition
payment in May.

Berrybrook Parents' Association

We are excited to have started the new calendar year with lots of exciting programs. In January, the children spent a day with Eddie Spaghetti banging on "drums" and learning about their own rhythm, as well as a day brushing and flossing away the "germs" with the dental hygienist Claire Reilly.

February is a short month with lots planned as well. We hope to have the children getting up and stretching out by doing some yoga and maybe even sitting some for a storyteller. Keep an eye out for the bulletin board postings for dates.

The BPA continues to plan the next several months for the children's enrichment programs. We would like to truly thank Martha Dennison for all her hard work on organizing our enrichment programs for the children this school year. We are currently looking into our parent enrichment program and hope to have something lined up over the next few months.

Warm Regards,
Mimi Gallagher

Parent Discussion Group

The "BPDG" met on Thursday, January 13th. The evening began with the question, "What does discipline mean to you?" Answers were varied, forming the basis for discussion which followed. There was a sharing of ideas and strategies related to discipline concerns. Handouts were also available.

Continuity is key to successful implementation of strategies. Feedback to assess progress and support for parents is most helpful. Sharing and

caring is very important. There are times when one may become discouraged and think of oneself as a "failure" when strategies tried didn't bring the desired results.

Give yourself the gift of an evening out as we continue our discussion on discipline. Share your successes and disappointments as you re-energize yourself for the challenges to come. We hope you can attend our next BPDG meeting-

The Discipline Puzzle

Thursday, February 17, 2011
7 pm Refreshments, 7:15 Discussion

Looking forward to a wonderful discussion!

Mrs. Delano, Mrs. O'Neil and Mrs. LaForest



Summer Enrichment

The Berrybrook Summer Nature Program will be offered again this year during June and July, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 – 1:00.

Children must be 4 by September 1st to register. Current Berrybrook families will have the opportunity to register first, and then families from the community will be invited. All families will receive complete information about the program and registration the week of March 21, 2010.

A Long Winter... A Field of Flowers

Joanne LaForest

How amazing that Mrs. Mann had a vision for Berrybrook. How amazing that Berrybrook, from its beginning in the farmhouse, to its strengthening in the transitional building, to its becoming our current home in our schoolhouse has always overlooked acres and acres of beautiful land. I believe that nature surrounds us to constantly teach us that life is reflected in it all. As trees grow from seeds, become tall and strong and their leaves change with the seasons, so do children grow...become tall and strong...and change with the seasons. In the deepest moments of winter as the earth is covered with snow and trees are bare without their leaves, everything rests...to soon awake in spring. Even though we cannot see it, a lot is happening to the earth underneath all that snow and the trees' buds are waiting to bloom, preparing to bloom.

When I look out at the fields with its now blanket of white, I close my eyes and imagine the flowers that are present in the fields in the spring, then summer. Friends are like those flowers in the fields. Some flowers stand alone among other solitary flowers and other groups of flowers - just as children are content playing independently or observing others in their play. In a gentle breeze the flowers sway - just as children play in a group of friends when all is well and all are interested in a common discovery, perhaps exploring bubbles together in the water table or building a fire truck in the block area. Then, the strong winds come in the fields and the flowers may even lose a few petals - just like when a disagreement occurs among friends and problem solving is needed, maybe guided by the encouragement of a teacher...the same as the flower's sway is guided by the wind. Sometimes we see in the fields in spring so many flowers together they seem too many to count and you feel their beauty as you gently brush your fingers through them all...so it is an entire class of children when joining together for a game of Jump Josie, laughing along together at the listening to a great story or in singing the Thank You Very Much song to a special visitor.

Just as the winter blankets the growth and preparation of the earth, the winter season is often a time of tremendous growth in children, especially with regard to their friendships. Friendships are unable to grow without commonalities to explore, differences to discover, problems to be solved and laughter and joy to be had. All of this helps friends learn from one another.

Enjoy this preparation season of winter and in the spring when you look out into the fields, the harsh winter memories will be far away in thought, as well as the memories of the hard work that occurs among friends. And when you see the flowers sway together in the breeze the children will sway together in harmonious growth and discovery. They will be laughing and playing together on the playground as the flowers laugh and play in the fields...it happens every year.

(Mrs LaForest teaches in the 3 Day Room 3 and 4 Day Room 1 Classes.)