



January 2012

Monday, January 3	2012-2013 Enrollment begins
Wednesday January 11	Berrybrook Board Meeting 7:30 pm
Thursday, January 12	Parent Discussion Group 7:00pm
Monday, January 16	Martin Luther King Day, No School
Tuesday, January 17	BPA Meeting 7:00 pm
Saturday, January 21	Admissions Open House
Wednesday January 25	Professional Day, No School

Notes from the Headmaster

If you are a regular reader of this Newsletter, you will have had the good fortune of reading a series of articles written by Mrs. LaForest - "Separating", "Settling", "Surveying" and "Singing." The articles describe different stages children go through as they begin their first school experience and become part of a community that is outside of their immediate family. Reading those articles, I was reminded about of research that says adults working in groups pass through four stages called "Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing." Upon reflection, it occurred to me that groups of all ages, including our young children in their classrooms, go through their own versions of those four stages.

"Forming" happens as we start the school year. After the initial bouts of separation anxiety the children are happy to come to school. First year students begin to notice each other, but they are most interested in exploring their new environment and materials. Initially, they work independently, or "parallel play." During this stage, teachers help children become familiar with routines and classmates including learning each other's names at circle time through songs and games. Second year students are already familiar with Berrybrook, but as the group forms, they will keep old friends, begin to "make new friends" and get to know their teachers.

"Storming" occurs as the children become comfortable in their classrooms and with their peers and often results in children feeling so comfortable they express exactly what is on their mind without regard to others. During the fall and into December you will hear teachers saying, "How does that make you feel?" or "What could you say to your friend?" and "Do you know what saying sorry means?"

(Saying you're sorry means you will change your behavior!) First year students may be very emotional during this phase and struggle with initiating friendships - sometimes thinking physical contact is the best way to impress a friend. Second year students often experiment with strong language - "You're not my friend anymore," or "You can't come to my birthday party." Helping students navigate friendships and become part of a community is one of the most important tasks of Berrybrook teachers and they do it very well.

"Norming" showed its first signs in December, and will become commonplace as we resume school this month. Berrybrook teachers know through many years of experience that children return in January a few inches taller and ready to learn. All of the work teachers did in the fall to provide children with the words to be kind and solve problems comes to fruition as children learn to get their own needs met without imposing on the rights of others. First year students will often be heard stating rules - "Buildings can only be as high as your chin," or "Running is for outside." They will also feel confident saying "I don't like that," as well as "Do you want to play with me?" Second year students now understand that if a friend wants to sit beside someone else at circle time, it doesn't mean your friendship is over. They have the ability to ask anyone in their class to join them at the snack table, and find common ground for an interesting conversation. Now that's a skill that lasts a lifetime!

"Performing" begins early in the new year, and builds through the spring. During the first three stages, when children are working so hard on emotional and social development, they are also learning in many other areas. Language, Math, Social Studies, Science, Art, and Motor Skills have all been developing since September, but now during the "Performing" stage they really take off. First year students come through the gate already knowing what their plan is for the day. Through cooperation, piles of blocks now become buildings. Complete, legible first names are showing up on projects and art work. Children are suggesting their own experiments for the water table and many other classroom activities. All this is possible because our environment fosters self discipline, encourages children to be independent and responsible for their own behavior, and to follow basic rules of safety and courtesy in the classroom. In the performing stage, children will manage the behavior of the group with minimal teacher control.

And of course, during this stage we see our second year students turn into kindergarteners right before our eyes. Over the past two years at Berrybrook, they have become confident, interested and hardworking learners. Observing them in the classroom, teachers know they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. They have the academic skills to succeed, but more importantly, they have learned to manage their emotions, communicate their feelings, get their needs met, and be a contributing member of a group. Through the spring and right into ice-cream day the second year groups become very close. It is a very special experience for the children and their teachers.

It may seem like I am predicting the future. How could I possibly know now, how the children will be performing in June? It's because I know the Berrybrook philosophy and how our teachers prepare children for life in a manner that respects them and preserves their childhood. Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing the Berrybrook way.

Happy New Year, Pat Keeley

First Year Program News

December was a busy month at Berrybrook, and the focus was on families. We learned about some different ways families celebrate the holidays. Children created special gifts for their families and baked cookies for family members to enjoy at our sing-a-long. The children worked hard to prepare their gift of song. Thank you to all the families who joined us on that special day.

Each first year class has a family photo bulletin board. Children enjoy looking at their own and each others' photos. If your child has not had a chance to bring a family photo, you can still send one in. Please feel free to add to or update photos, as we will keep them through the end of the school year.

January brings a new year and a new beginning. We will start by celebrating the New Year with party hats. Next we will spend time talking about some animals, such as birds and bears. We will end January by transforming our housekeeping areas into the "Berrybrook Hospital." During this time we will learn about keeping ourselves healthy. We will even talk about ways to keep our pets healthy. Nature walks will resume in January. Perhaps we will be lucky enough to see some tracks from our animal friends!

Although January typically brings colder weather and even snow, we will continue to go outside every day. Please be sure to send you child with hats, mittens, snow pants, and boots.



Playing in the snow is a favorite outdoor activity at Berrybrook. We may even have the opportunity to go sledding if conditions are just right!

We wish all our Berrybrook families a happy and healthy 2012!

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

Enrollment 2012-2013

All first year families should have received enrollment information over our holiday break. January is the month reserved for all current and alumni families to enroll at Berrybrook for the 2012-2013 school year. The second year program offers one 5 Day morning group and two 4 Day afternoon groups. All groups are limited to 18 students and all have 3 teachers. When submitting an application, parents should circle their program preference. The placement of children into classes is a process which takes into account individual needs of children, balance in the composition of each class and parent preference. While we would like to honor every preference, space or other factors may limit the number of children assigned to an individual class.

The Berrybrook Board of Directors sets aside funds for tuition assistance through the Helen Wheeler Scholarship Fund. If you are interested in receiving information about tuition assistance please contact Mrs. Keeley.

Second Year Program News

Welcome back! We hope you had a wonderful break and holiday celebration. As the New Year is upon us so is chillier weather. We have planned some wonderful activities for January. We will begin our discussions of cold weather, snow, wind chill factors and most importantly how to properly dress for the weather. We encourage the children to dress all by themselves. This includes zippers, snaps and buttons. It is helpful for the children to practice getting themselves dressed at home and we thank you for encouraging them to do so.

In mid January we begin our study of health. During this study children explore different ways to live healthy lifestyles and create a book about themselves. Towards the end of the month we will begin a study on space. We will cover planets, comets, asteroids, and the moon. Keep your eyes open for the full moon on January 9th.

The second year holiday celebrations were a delight and we thank all who volunteered in the classroom to make latkes, bake cookies, and help with other preparations. If you have a special interest or hobby/collection that you would like to share please let the teachers know. The children, as well as the teachers, are always excited to have visitors and they benefit greatly from your experiences.

For upcoming projects we will need greeting cards that you may be discarding (especially holiday cards) and shoeboxes of any size.

Lastly we would like to thank all of the children for their wonderful gift of song at our holiday sing-along.

You may have noticed the children using sign language during some of our songs. We get our signs from the American Sign Language dictionary and the children worked very hard to learn each sign.

Thanks again for all your help!

The Second Year Teachers,

Miss Bent, Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Fosdick,
Mrs. LaForest, Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Neal,
Mrs. Piccuito and Mrs. Swan

Snow Cancellation

Berrybrook will cancel school if
Duxbury Schools or the
Silver Lake School District close due to
a snow emergency.

Because many Berrybrook families and staff travel from outlying communities, it is our policy to cancel classes whenever Duxbury Public Schools and/or Silver Lake Schools are closed. Parents should watch news reports for cancellation of these school systems. The voice mail system at Berrybrook at 781-585-2307 will have a snow cancellation message if we are closed due to a snow emergency.

Beyond a formal cancellation, we urge parents to use their best judgment about driving young children to school in inclement weather. In the event of a severe snow storm, power failure, loss of heat or other emergency, the school may be required to close early. Parents will be contacted to pick up children. Children will remain with Berrybrook staff until released to a parent or emergency contact.

Parents Association News

Happy New Year! I can't believe we are entering the second half of the school year. The BPA has had a great year so far and we can certainly look forward to what is ahead! **Please plan to join us for the next BPA meeting on Tuesday, January 17th at 7 p.m.** One topic we will be discussing are the Memory Books that have been a Berrybrook tradition for many years. I hope you can make it, as we need your help and ideas to plan for the rest of the year!

I wanted to thank the entire Berrybrook community for its support of the Carolina Hill Homeless Shelter in Marshfield. Not only did we ensure that each child had something special for the holidays, but each child received a few items of clothing, a pair of shoes, at least 2 toys as well as some small gifts for their moms. Dropping such a generous amount of items at the shelter made me proud yet again to be a part of the Berrybrook community. Thank you.

Family Fun Friday on Jan 20th!

Save-the-date for this month's event: A Celebration of Chinese New Year. Block the 20th on your calendar and look for more details at the BPA table and by email as soon as we firm up some details.

Enrichment!

Look for the launch of our yoga programming for the children this month brought to you by the BPA and Miss Caddle!

BPA Dues!

We are excited that about 40% of families have already supported the BPA through dues this year. And it's still not too late to increase that number!

Each year we ask parents to support us with \$30 in dues. We appreciate any support and checks can be placed in the basket at the BPA table!

Happy 2012 (can you believe it!) and see you at school soon.

Allyson

berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com

617-458-1621



Open House
January 21, 10:00-noon

Please let your friends and neighbors know that on Saturday, January 21, 2012, Berrybrook will be having an open house for new families. It will be a chance to tour our school and ask questions about our philosophy and programs.

All Welcome!

Parent Discussion Group

The next PDG is scheduled for **Thursday, January 12, 2012**. Dads only! Please join us for the topic **"Guiding Your Child To Succeed at Berrybrook and Beyond, A Dad's Role and Perspective...valuable, important and unique!"**

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

Separating, Settling, Surveying, Singing...Snowing!

Joanne LaForest

"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...la, la, la, la, la..." We sing this if there is ever snow in December. When snow comes in January we should sing, "It's beginning to look a lot like...SCIENCE...la, la, la, la, la..." That is because so many scientific concepts can be studied with snow. Observing snow in the water table for the morning provides first hand experience with melting and demonstrates how a solid turns into a liquid. When we experiment with leaving water outside overnight, voila! Ice! The process of liquid turning into a solid is observed.

What else can we do with snow? We can shovel it, sweep it, shape and mold it, even color it! Is it cold enough to snow? Discussions about temperature and checking our thermometer help us understand if it's too cold to go outside or that "the temperature today tells us that we need our coat, hat, mittens and boots!" And what about putting on all that gear? It may not be science but it sure is a lesson in patience, perseverance, and increases confidence and self esteem.

Once we have all our outdoor clothes on, let's explore! What do animals do in the winter? Some hibernate, some travel about in the snow and we can follow their tracks! What do animals like birds and squirrels do for food in the winter? Maybe we can do our part to help them. What happens to trees and plants in the winter? We can observe them on our monthly nature walks. We can even learn how plants can grow *inside* in winter as we observe our paperwhite flowers grow taller and taller, and then bloom into beauty.

Finally, and this may not be scientific, what about the pure fun of snow? Making snow people, snow angels, falling into the snow with a friend, working really hard to walk in deep snow, sledding on the hill perhaps...fun, fun, fun! So, here's hoping for LOTS of snow this January, right? (Well, maybe just at Berrybrook!)

The Snowman's Resolution

Aileen Fisher



The snowman's hat was crooked
And his nose was out of place
And several of his whiskers
Had fallen from his face.

But the snowman didn't notice
For he was trying hard to think
Of a New Year's Resolution
That wouldn't melt or shrink.

He thought and planned and pondered
With his little snow-ball head
Till his eyes began to glisten
And his toes began to spread;

And at last he said, "I've got it-
I'll make a firm resolve
That no matter what the weather
My smile will not dissolve.

Thank you!

Last month, our community demonstrated our common goals and values in a number of ways:

The Berrybrook Parents Association under the leadership of its officers, Allyson Frazier, Heather Canty, Karen Gallagher and Stacy Watts provided many opportunities for families to participate in the spirit of the holidays. Thank you to everyone who donated items for the Carolina Hill Shelter. Taking a star or two from the giving tree on the BPA table meant so much to so many families.

Thank you to the Garrett family and Volta Oil for sponsoring our participation in the Festival of Trees, and thank you to the BPA for coordinating all of the trimming of *The Great Kapok Tree* ornaments made by the children. Thank you to Cheryl Kilduff from the BPA for installing Berrybrook decorations at the “Christmas at the King Caesar House” event in Duxbury.

Special thanks to the BPA for the AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) that is now hanging in our hallway. Participation and donations from families through BPA events and dues made it possible for Berrybrook to have access to that life saving equipment.

Thank you to the volunteers who came in to make latkes and cookies with the children. Yum!

I know the animals at the Kingston Animal Shelter are very grateful for all of the pennies, food, and other items provided by Berrybrook families.

Thank you to the children for preparing the entertaining and charming sing-a-longs for their families. Thanks to all of the parents and friends who stopped to appreciate the children’s art work hanging in the classrooms. Thank you to parents who lingered in the hall to catch up with one another and send best wishes for the holiday season.

Thank you to our dedicated teachers for keeping a calm atmosphere for the children in their classrooms during the excitement of December.

Thank you to Berrybrook families for the thoughtful and generous holiday gifts for the staff.

Thank you to the Strategic Planning Committee of the Berrybrook Board of Directors for meeting through December to complete over a year’s work on a long range plan for our school.

All of this could not have happened without Katharine Mann. Thank you, Mrs. Mann for creating Berrybrook for children and families.

Mrs. Keeley