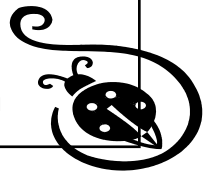




April 2012

Wednesday, April 4	Berrybrook Board of Directors 7:00 pm
Friday April 6	Good Friday, No School
April 16-20	Spring Vacation
Tuesday, April 24	School Pictures, 3 Day & 4 Day
Thursday, April 26	School Pictures, 2 Day & 5 Day
Thursday, April 26	Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm



Notes from the Headmaster

We plan our school pictures for the end of the year because we know by April the children will be right at home at Berrybrook and very comfortable having their pictures taken. We have the added advantage of having a Berrybrook alum photograph the children. Sandy Krupa and her children Maddie and Will attended Berrybrook and Sandy is well versed in our Berrybrook philosophy. I love picture day. I have the honor of watching the entire process. First the children gather for their class picture, and then each child has their individual picture taken. It is an opportunity for me to look upon each of our 99 children and to reflect on how unique and wonderful each one is. My position at Berrybrook includes a wide variety of responsibilities. Every day is busy and every day is different. But picture day is special. For me it is very moving and emotional. It is a day that I feel so rewarded for what I do. Each child sitting for the photographer is perfect. I would love to freeze each one just as the camera does. And in a way I am able to do that. Each child and each year is unique at Berrybrook. There will never again be a class exactly like the 2011-2012 2 Day Class, or the 3 Day, or 4 Day, or 5 Day classes. I will be able to remember each particular child and each class just the way they look on picture day and that instant will be part of Berrybrook forever. Every child and every parent and every teacher who has come to Berrybrook has made the school what it is today and all of that energy lingers in the school and on the fields and makes Berrybrook more a state of mind than a place. Thank you for sharing your children with us and thank you for your support of our school and its philosophy. I am so happy all of you were here to participate in the dream Katharine Mann had for Berrybrook School.

We have lots in store for April and May. Please take the time to enjoy every last minute of this school year!

Pat Keeley

First Year Program News

The First Year classrooms are coming alive with spring activities including Berrybrook traditions like tapping the maple tree. All the classes have made their way over to the sap bucket, and may have tried a drip or two. The children who have tasted the sap usually come to one of two conclusions: the sap tastes like water or the sap tastes like syrup. The sap was put on the stove to boil down and turn into syrup. First year students enjoyed their syrup on pancakes!

Another spring time tradition at Berrybrook is carefully painting blown eggs. This is always a delight for children and parents to see. Many thanks to the parents who donated blown eggs. Teachers appreciate the time you took to prepare the eggs (it's not easy!) We hope they will add to the spring time decorations in your home.

April activities will include wind-related projects - it's always fun to fly a homemade kite! - and your children will be planting seeds and watching for new growth outdoors, which seems to have started early this year. We will be identifying forsythia and pussy willow and other flora and tending to the raised beds on the playground.

Thank to all parents for attending our spring parent conferences. We enjoy these meetings and sharing all of the wonderful growth we have seen in our students this year.

Happy Spring!

First Year Teachers

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

Pussy Willow

I know a little pussy,
Her coat is silver gray.
She lives down in the meadow,
Not very far away.

Although she is a pussy,
She'll never be a cat.
For she's a pussy willow,
Now what do you think of that?

Meow, Meow, Meow,
Meow, Meow, Meow, Meow,

SCAT!



Second Year Program News

Having an exceptionally warm month of March has everyone ready for the spring season. The first day of spring was March 21, 2012. We are all ready to get outside and begin observing the changes in our environment as it comes to life after a long winter rest.

Berrybrook's early spring activity is the traditional tapping of the maple tree. This activity marks the beginning of the children's observations about nature this time of year. Teachers know to tap the tree when the days are above freezing, and the nights are below freezing. With such an unusually warm March, we wondered how well the sap

would flow and as it turned out, we had a lot less sap this year to boil down to syrup on the stove. (Approximately 40 gallons of sap are needed to make 1 gallon of maple syrup) All of the tapping, tasting, collecting, filtering and boiling resulted in only a small amount of syrup. To celebrate spring with our delicious traditional "Sugar on Snow" party, we had to purchase maple syrup at the supermarket. That celebration, is based on a book, "Sugar On Snow", written in 1964 by Nancy Dingman Watson. The "sugar" was the maple syrup, the "snow" was vanilla ice cream. In case you didn't know, donuts and sour pickles are also served at an authentic Sugar on Snow party!

Another traditional activity reminding us of spring is the painting of the eggs. Thanks to all the parents who prepared the eggs for this project. We hope everyone has a special place at home to display the beautifully painted eggs.

As the weather continues to get warmer, we will observe and discuss the growth of seeds that we will plant in the classroom and the changes in the flowers and bushes in our community and in our flower beds at Berrybrook. Forsythias and pussy willows are some of the first plants to bloom and we encourage the children to find them in the Berrybrook environment as well as their home environment.

SPRING

Spring is coming,
Spring is coming,
How do you think I know?
I saw a pussy willow
And that is how I know.

Another sign that spring is surely here is the return of birds to our bird feeders.

Who will come to feast at Berrybrook this year? We will be watching for hummingbirds, perhaps they will arrive during the second week of April.

Parent conferences have started and will continue over the next few weeks. Please make arrangements for your conference with your child's teachers.

The Second Year Teachers,

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



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.

Information and applications are available on our web site and in the office.

*Welcome Nathaniel Sama Ayres!
Congratulations to Christine
in the 3 Day Room 1 Class and her
family on their new addition!
Also, welcome to Voss Sullivan,
new baby brother to Esja in our
2 Day Class.*

Parent Discussion Group News!

Please join us on **Thursday, April 26th** for our next discussion focusing on

TRANSITIONS.

The following will be discussed:

- *school days to summer days
- *summer vacation to kindergarten
- *first year to second year at Berrybrook
- *family transitions such as a new baby, new home, new job

As always, bring whatever is on your mind and find helpful hints and tips from other parents dealing with the same questions and concerns.

Refreshments at 7:00

Discussion at 7:15

Berrybrook Parents' Association

April showers bring May flowers. Well, usually but maybe with the March's heat wave we can go right to sunshine. I can't believe this is the April newsletter, but here goes the BPA update!

Family Fun Friday!

Mark your calendar for this month's Family Fun Friday on April 27th for an afternoon at Soule Homestead for "Meeting the Animals!" We will get to know the farm animals, and learn how they help farmers work, provide food, create fibers, and more. If you haven't made it to SH before it is truly an idyllic spot. The 90-minute program will start at 1:30, but head out early for a picnic on the grounds and explore the hiking trails. Find the sign up sheet and directions at

the BPA table. Please sign up by April 20th. Cost will be \$6 a child payable at the event to Soule Homestead.

Enrichment

Soule Homestead staff will also be visiting the children at Berrybrook this month! Look for the children to bring home new knowledge of chickens and spinning wool! And the Eddie Spaghetti music program continues as the children compose their own music. We are hopeful that May will bring some sea creatures. Stay Tuned.

BPA 2012-2013

We are currently recruiting for BPA officers for next school year! BPA is only successful through the participation of parents like you! It is a great way to get to know the community better and I can attest to the fact that you get way more back than you put in! If you're interested, please let Mrs. Keeley or me know.

BPA Spring Fling 2012

Save-the-date for the annual BPA Spring Fling, a casual thank you celebration for Berrybrook families! Come celebrate the year & have some dinner and fun on **May 23rd with a rain date of May 30th from 4-6 p.m.**

And it's not too late to support the work of the BPA with dues. We have yet to reach 50% family participation and I really hope we can make that benchmark. We ask each family to donate \$30 or whatever is appropriate for your family. As

always please let us know if you have questions, comments, or concerns for the BPA at

berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com

or 617-458-1621. I hope you are having a great start to your spring!

Allyson

Yoga at Berrybrook

Melissa Caddle

This February and March I have been teaching yoga classes to the Berrybrook children in the “Big Room”. I first of all wanted to say that your children are so fortunate to have this space available to them at Berrybrook! We have experienced yoga with snow falling all around us and turkeys in the trees. Each child also has their own mat to use during our class.

For the first year students, I kept it very simple. Our sessions were with half the class at a time and ran for fifteen minutes each. The first few classes consisted of a morning stretch followed by each student having a turn to come up and pull a stuffed animal out of a bag. We then learned a pose that went along with each animal and ended the class with some deep belly breathing. After learning all the poses we moved on to connecting a few of the poses together and also moving off the mats for freeze dance/yoga. When the music stopped and the children froze, I would hold up an animal and they would remember the pose that went with it.

The second year children came all together for a half hour. Thinking back, we learned a lot in the four classes that we had! Like the first years students, they learned some poses using animals and different ways to connect them together so they flowed from one pose to the next. We practiced more challenging balancing poses as well. Each class had a little yoga experiment in the middle such as creating a downward dog tunnel the children could crawl through or creating their own yoga poses. They came up with some really interesting ideas! At the end of class we had a guided relaxation where the children had the opportunity to rest their bodies and work their imagination.

When I was creating these classes I had a few goals in mind. I wanted the children to have fun but also to learn and take skills with them that they could use everyday. Most people when they think of yoga think about strength and stretching. This of course is a big part of yoga but breathing, body awareness, and focus also play a part and are such important skills to learn. We talked about picking a spot in front of you to look at while trying to balance in “tree” or noticing certain muscles working to hold our bodies in a pose. I have found it interesting to see more than one child in the classroom doing the breathing part of our lion pose while standing in line or waiting at circle time.

I have heard that a lot of students are teaching their families yoga at home which is fantastic! I’m glad they could share some of what they learned. If you haven’t received a yoga demonstration at home yet and would like to, ask your child what their favorite yoga pose was. Be prepared, however, to be on your belly hissing like a snake or wrapped up and balancing on one foot in eagle pose!

(Miss Caddle has been Berrybrook’s in house substitute teacher this year. She has helped out in all of our classrooms, the office, and has led yoga classes for our students. She is the daughter of Mrs. Caddle who teaches in our 4 Day Room 2 Class.)

BREAKING DOWN AT BERRYBROOK!

Cynthia C Dunn

Very recently, some things at Berrybrook have begun to break down. Now to most, this would seem to be a negative. However, there are many smiling faces as we watch the deterioration, which is occurring. What is happening?

In early February, five teachers attended a workshop held at Berrybrook. During this workshop, we learned about vermicomposting. Vermicomposting is the process of turning kitchen waste into nutritious compost for our plants. Worms, called red wigglers eat our scraps and other household waste such as newspaper or napkins, and turn it into rich worm castings, which are then put on houseplants and other garden plants as compost.

Each classroom now has a worm bin. The teachers and children are learning how to feed and nurture these little creatures. We are learning what to feed them, how much to feed them and we are learning about their behavior, by observing them.

Some vermicomposting info:

- Worms have a mouth, but do not have eyes, ears or noses

- Worms eat vegetable and fruit scraps, but do not eat bananas or banana peels

- Worms eat leaves

- Worms eat newspaper, napkins and shredded paper, but not glossy paper

- Worms like to be in the dark

- Worms need air and moisture

- Worms can eat about a pound and a half of scraps a day if the bin is working well

We have been able to look through the bins a couple of times, and children have been able to find a number of things inside the bin.

Some observations from one session:

- White bugs (these are helpful to the decomposition)

- Baby worms

- Eggs with 1-3 worms inside

- Grapes, which we put in yesterday

- Black soil (compost)

- Newspaper

- Sprouted seeds

We were so excited about this whole process of breaking down our left overs, that the staff noticed we still had left overs which the worms cannot use. We are in the process of learning how to use a compost tumbler to break down other food waste from Berrybrook snacks and lunches and make compost to apply to the beach plum and berry bushes in the courtyard. Stay tuned for more info as we learn and explore this process.

(Mrs. Dunn teaches in our 3 Day Room 1 and 2 Day Room 2 Classes.)

The Season of Second Chances

Martha Dennison, Berrybrook parent and member, Board of Directors

This crazy warm weather has me oh-so-ready for spring! Ah, spring – the season of rebirth. The flowers bloom after a long cold winter – yellow daffodils and purple crocuses pop out of the brown grass in a burst of color. It's the season for second chances -- maybe this is the year that I'll: learn to ride that Harley in the garage; enjoy our beautiful town beach to its maximum potential; grow the garden of my dreams; become the runner that I was meant to be... well, I can dream, can't I?

I wonder, given that we didn't get into the full swing of winter, if spring will be different this year. It seems like we never had the complete shutdown of nature – I saw buds trying to burst out of branches on random warm days in February. Can this work? Don't we need a complete freeze in order for the fantastic rebirth of spring to occur? But I guess that other parts of the world don't have the winters that New England normally does – so perhaps it doesn't all have to stop and reset in order for new growth to begin?

It's funny - whenever I have a free moment at Berrybrook, I find myself gravitating toward the parenting hand-outs that Mrs. Keeley and the teachers so thoughtfully identify, copy, and leave for us. So much information on what I should or shouldn't be saying to my children; how to best tap into their full potential as they grow and learn; what to feed them, literally and figuratively – I'm often overwhelmed. The one piece that kills me is the research that shows how too much praise can actually undermine persistence - the single character trait most successful people share.

God knows, I want to be a good parent. I don't want my children to be afraid to try new things or give up on tasks because I've over-praised them or have been too distracted to properly reward them. But my habit of saying "good job!" is one that has become ingrained. "Awesome! You spelled that word without any help!" "Good job! You can really swing that thing around!" And, of course, the ever-popular "great pooping, honey!" But, of course, my 1st grader is a natural speller; my Libby has loved to spin in the flower on the playground since her first day at Berrybrook; and really, everyone in the house should be pooping without fanfare.

But those phrases come out of my mouth without a single conscious thought – "Good job!" "Awesome!" "You're so smart!" Could I ever change that subconscious behavior that emanates so naturally from the love for my children?

Aha! So this is where spring comes in for me -- now is as good a time as any for my second chance. So, no – there has been no deep freeze; there's no reset button. I don't get a 'do-over'. I still have the same children – their warranties have long run out and there are no returns. But I'm pretty sure that it's not too late to change the way that I parent them – and I know that they are resilient enough to change course.

So how do I go about making a change? How do I embrace this 'second chance'? Well - how would I learn to ride that Harley in the garage? I'm assuming mindfully – being present in every minute while I learn to control it. How would I be sure to enjoy our beautiful town beach to its maximum potential? I'm thinking pro-actively – planning activities with family and friends. How would I ever grow the garden of my dreams? I'm guessing patiently – looking for a little growth each day. And how would I ever become the runner that I was meant to be? I'm pretty sure (although I've never actually tried it!), it's just one step at a time.

So if you see me on the playground this spring biting my tongue – or worse, saying 'good job, honey!' and then cringing – offer me a smile of encouragement as I struggle for new growth in this season of second chances. And good luck striving for your own new growth -- Happy Spring!

Suzanne Billingham will be presenting a kindergarten (full-day and half-day) presentation and Q&A for Duxbury families at the next Chandler PTA meeting, and the meeting is open to anyone who wants to hear her presentation. The meeting is Thursday, April 5 at 9:30 am in Canty Room 303 (where we went to Kindergarten registration.)

Kindergarten Already??!!

Last month was all about making plans for next year. Our second year families were registering for Kindergarten, the next big milestone for children after Berrybrook. Naturally it is an anxious time for parents. "Readiness" is a big topic of discussion for parents this time of year. For Berrybrook teachers, "readiness" is an ongoing topic. What is readiness? What does it look like? Can it be measured? Recently, I asked local kindergarten teachers for three or four skills they would like children to have before entering kindergarten. Their response was, "letter recognition; rote counting to 10; write first name; proper pencil & scissor grip; and independence with belongings (ex. put coat on, zipper; pack & unpack backpack)." These are skills that Berrybrook children work on daily in school and I know parents also work on them at home. Beyond those skills, Berrybrook teachers are working on skills that will prepare children for life. We want our students to be "ready" for *all* of their milestones and to be self-sufficient, self-confident and to have the true ingredients of a well prepared mind. I would like to reassure all parents that their children will do well beyond Berrybrook. They will do well because they have attended a developmentally appropriate preschool, and they will do well because they have parents working hard at the toughest job there is - raising children.

The following is an interesting article about "readiness" and what parents and teachers can do to expand and strengthen "the skills and habits of mind that will undergird a lifetime intellect."

Mrs. Keeley

Impacting readiness: Nature and nurture

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by Jane M. Healy

Jane Healy, Ph.D., is an educational psychologist, teacher, and internationally- recognized author and lecturer. This article is adapted from her new book, *Different Learners: Identifying, Preventing, and Treating Your Child's Learning Problem* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

I first got seriously interested in 'brain readiness' many years ago, when, as a psychologist-in-training, I was asked to conduct admissions observations and testing for a private preschool. I readily observed what any teacher knows — that even though the children were all near the same chronological age, their developmental readiness was, quite literally, all over the charts. Whereas some four year olds could draw a person with five fingers on each hand and a full set of facial features, others could barely hold a pencil. Some sat quietly in a small group, intently listening to and understanding a story, while others wiggled, fidgeted, and couldn't focus their attention.

In those days, before the explosion of developmental neuroscience, my professors explained individual differences in readiness with the term 'neural ripening,' a catchphrase for the notion that individuals' developmental timetables differed biologically — and that there wasn't much we could do about it. Yet I kept wondering, "Can that be the whole story? What about these kids' previous experience? Had some parents been coaching Draw-A-Person? Were the unruly ones truly immature — or just undisciplined?"

Another standard belief in those days was that the child with a more leisurely pace of development — the 'late bloomer' — was probably of inferior intelligence. And later, as the mother of some late-blooming sons, I had personal reasons for pondering this subject!

We have learned a lot since I started in this field, and we have clearer answers to these perennial questions:

- How and why do some youngsters' brains seemingly develop so much faster than others?
- Is this phenomenon due to innate differences in intelligence?
- Is it purely a question of biological maturation?
- Or should we place the responsibility on differences in home environments and the quality of caregivers' interactions?
- And even more important, what can we do about it?

Genes or environment?

This Nature/Nurture debate is important because if intelligence, for example, is genetically programmed, it might be futile to try and change it. A cynic might phrase the question bluntly: "Why spend time and money on kids who are pre-programmed for failure?" An important question, indeed.¹

For decades researchers tried to pin down what percentage of I.Q. is attributable to genes and what percentage to the child's environment. After thousands of studies, they declared the answer to be approximately 40-60, the only problem being that no one could agree on which was the 40 and which was the 60. Although no similar body of research exists for 'readiness,' we might guess that the results would be similar. Now the new science of Behavioral Genetics is answering this question in a more useful way. Nature and nurture are so intertwined from the moment of conception that it is impossible to separate them. It's a waste of time to try and determine an exact percentage of influence on any behavioral trait (such as intelligence or academic readiness). It is much more practical — as well as scientifically accurate — to accept the fact that a child's genetic endowment profoundly affects every aspect of development, BUT — and this is the big one — both brains and genes can be altered substantially by environmental experience. The issue is no longer Nature *vs.* Nurture, but rather Nature *plus* Nurture. These new findings place far more importance on early environments and have profound implications for both educational policy and what happens every day in a teacher's classroom.

Biological maturation: Developmental stages, and why late bloomers may be the smartest of all

The general outline of human development is genetically programmed. The brain develops in a sequence of maturational cycles which open up new systems for development, practice, and eventual competence.² Children vary in their timetables for maturation of the connections that enable increasingly complex types of thinking and learning. Three points are important here:

1. • Earlier maturation does not necessarily mean greater intelligence.
 - Each child's brain has its own pace and style of development, with more complex skills building on earlier stages. Pushing skills for which the brain is not prepared risks botched neural connections and a 'learning disabled' child.
 - Instead of trying to speed up development, we should enrich each stage with interesting, challenging, and developmentally appropriate activities. In this way, we not only help intelligence and academic readiness grow, but we also lay solid foundations for the brain's higher-level abilities for reasoning and creativity. I cringe when I see parents — and even a few teachers — so gullible that they purchase electronic toys, videos, and gadgets to "Make Your Child Smarter Faster." The only smart ones in this scenario are the adults reaping the profits. Unfortunately, the kids become the losers — both in 'smarts' and in brain readiness for the cognitively complex skills such as attention, self-regulation, language, independent problem-solving, creativity, and imagination that undergird real academic readiness.

Malleable brain, malleable genes

The brain's neuroplasticity — its ability to change, grow, and adapt itself as a result of experience — has been recognized for some time. There is absolutely no question that appropriate enrichment and a variety of challenges stimulate brain function and enhance related brain structures. (Translation: Good teaching builds brains.) Now, a recently discovered phenomenon termed *epigenetics* shows that the genome also responds to experience.^{3, 4}

One of the most dramatic examples to date is found in animal studies of genes which influence a behavior pattern comparable to attention deficit disorder in humans. (Who knew that chimps could be ADHD?) Surprisingly, the troublesome genes could be 'switched' on or off by the way the infant was nurtured. At-risk babies raised by competent, calm mothers did not show the troublesome behaviors as adults, whereas at-risk babies raised by jumpy, inconsistent mothers had persistent difficulties.⁵ As educators, we can expect to hear a lot more about this rapidly-growing field of research with its strong message about the lasting power of the environments we create for young children.

Activities, lifestyle choices, and curricula change both brains and genes — for better or worse. They can nudge a child's development toward more or less ready, and even cause or prevent learning disorders. If the child is at genetic risk for a learning problem such as dyslexia or an autistic spectrum disorder, the environment can make a significant difference in outcomes. Unfortunately, in the hurry-up, 'push-down' curriculum now in vogue, a slower schedule of maturation has become a major risk factor for a diagnosis of a learning or attention problem. These findings have profound implications for teachers, and especially for those who work with young children at an age when brain processes are most malleable to experience.

Can we accelerate brain readiness? Should we?

Parents (and many policymakers) need to understand that 'accelerate' is not a nice word when it comes to the brain. New studies have shown that the real key to intelligence is not how fast the brain develops, but rather how well. Especially important is its connectivity, the white matter connections that link one brain area to another. These critical systems conduct and facilitate all brain activity; their volume, especially in certain junctions where many senses come together correlates closely with I.Q. For example, studies of Einstein's brain show that he had unusually well- developed white matter (specifically glial cells) in such brain areas.⁶

White matter connectivity takes a long time to grow, and it is doubtless facilitated by a lot of varied, multi-sensory challenges that engage the child's body, mind, and active curiosity. (Certainly not a reductive electronic product simply named after a genius!) In fact, later mental maturers may have the highest potential of all *if allowed enough time to realize it*. A fascinating study published in *Nature* in 2006 looked at brain development from childhood to adulthood by periodically scanning the brains of over 300 'normal' children. The researchers measured age-related changes in cortical thickness related to intelligence and reasoning ability. What they found suggests that the children who ended up with 'superior' intellectual abilities were the ones whose brains took longest to mature — as much as four years longer — possibly because the extra time helped them develop richer neural networks. The moral: As far as the brain is concerned, later maturation may be better.

What can we do?

Accepting the reality of developmental readiness does not mean simply sitting back, delaying instruction, and waiting for the brain to magically mature. Muscles can become weak and even atrophy if they don't get any exercise — and so can brain networks for un-exercised skills. Thus, our job is to give every child an enriched curriculum focused on expanding and strengthening the skills and habits of mind that will undergird a lifetime intellect. The best way to do this, of course, is by 'brain food,' which, for preschoolers, is active multi-sensory engagement with intellectually valid content.

Intellectual readiness for techno-kids

Many young children today are developmentally handicapped as a result of too much screen time. Two areas of particular importance in readiness for school (and life) are language and self-regulation. Savvy preschool educators realize that a child without basic language skills is in for trouble. They also realize that although the plastic synapses of their students are primed by nature to acquire one or more languages, the higher-level language skills — intelligent listening, understanding, using complex grammar (syntax) to formulate (speak or, later, write) sentences, mastering a wide vocabulary, and soaking up the social conventions of language and the facial expressions and gestures that go with it (the 'pragmatic' uses of language) — can be and need to be taught both by example and by direct experience.

Children who lack the stimulation, models, or opportunities to absorb and practice lots of human language with human models come to school with these important systems already in decline — a strong predictor of serious learning and behavior problems. Contrary to marketing hype, screen time not only fails to improve language use but also retards overall development of language, attention, and related learning skills. Listening to electronic voices is no substitute for human conversation in which the child formulates ideas in sentences. In many homes the television is on from morning to night even when no one is watching, and family meals are conducted with a minimum of conversation. New research indicates that even this background level of noise has significant negative effects on development of both language and attention. Unfortunately, children from disadvantaged homes spend by far the most hours with screen time.

Wise preschool administrators and teachers make a priority of language development, even if it means slowing down the more 'academic' program elements to focus on these critical building blocks. (P.S. Nothing is more 'academic' than language!) They also realize that the ability to use language in 'self-talk' is the foundation of self-regulation. ("Careful, careful, Mr. Block, don't make this tower fall over;" "If I hit Johnny back, the teacher will make us both stay in, so I'd better walk away.")

Teaching success

Self-regulation is the newest kid on the block in terms of formal research recognition, but it turns out to be the strongest predictor not only of school achievement, but also of lifetime success. Also known as 'executive function,' it is mediated by the brain's prefrontal cortex, and is related to attention, motivation, planning, and general management of one's own mind — and life. And it is seriously endangered in a point-and-click childhood.

Research clearly demonstrates that self-regulation is learned, both at school and at home. Yet many homes provide poor models; children's media is generally designed to elicit quick, unreflective sensory response; and schools have been intensely focused on teaching formal academic skills, which activate the posterior (back) parts of the brain while seriously neglecting these frontal control systems. One of the most urgent tasks of preschool administrators should be to inform themselves about research and new programs (e.g., "Tools of the Mind")⁸ that teach teachers how to incorporate skills of self-regulation into the everyday curriculum.

Clearly 'brain readiness' is an old idea that is newly relevant in a world where indiscriminate 'brain stimulation' assaults children from every side, but the true ingredients of a well-prepared mind are in very short supply. Given the promise that the preschool years can literally re-write a child's lifetime prognosis for success, it behooves all of us to pay attention.

Endnotes

¹ For a modified version of this argument, see Herrnstein, R. J., & Murray, C. (1994). *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. New York: Free Press.

² Healy, J. M. (2004). *Your Child's Growing Mind: Brain Development and Learning from Birth to Adolescence* (3rd edition). New York: Random House.

³ Owen, M. J., & O'Donovan, M. C. (2004). Schizophrenia and Genes. In Plomin, R., et al. *Behavioral Genetics in the Postgenomic Era*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

⁴ Rutter, M. (2006). *Genes and Behavior: Nature-Nurture Interplay Explained*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

⁵ Suomi, S. J. (2004). How gene-environment interactions influence emotional development in rhesus monkeys. In Coll, C. G., Bearer, E. L., and Lerner, R. M. *Nature and Nurture: The Complex Interplay of Genetic and Environmental Influences on Human Behavior and Development*. Mahwah, NJ: L.E.A.

⁶ For a more complete explanation of brain connectivity, Einstein's brain, and how this information applies to raising and teaching children today, please see: Healy, J. M. (2010). *Different Learners: Identifying, Preventing, and Treating Your Child's Learning Problems*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

⁷ Shaw, P., et al. (March 2006). Intellectual ability and cortical development in children and adolescents. *Nature*, 440 (30), 676-679.

⁸ "Tools of the Mind" program can be referenced at: ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/early_ed/tools/

BRAIN READINESS
MARCH/APRIL 2011 EXCHANGE

All-Sports Tag Sale to Benefit Crossroads For Kids

Spring cleaning out any old sporting gear? Please consider donating to the All-Sports Tag Sale. The sale is for ANY and ALL types of sports equipment and gently-used clothing with all proceeds going to Crossroads for Kids, a camp for at-risk youth located in West Duxbury.

Please start checking your closets now for used equipment that you would like to donate and call Selden Tearse at 781-934-5452 with any questions. Drop-off is at the Duxbury Senior Center parking lot on Thursday, April 5th from 9 am – noon & Friday, April 6th from 9 am – noon and 6 – 7 pm. Then join us on Saturday, April 7th from 8 -11 am at the Senior Center to get some great equipment at fantastic prices and help send a deserving kid to camp.

Shed the Coats. Shed the Pounds.

Group Training Exercise Classes for Berrybrook Moms.

BPA Fundraising Event.

Tuesday Mornings at 9:30am
April 10th to May 22nd
at Athletic Republic, Kingston
\$15 per class

Summer is around the corner. Come connect with Berrybrook Moms while getting in shape during a 6 week group training program for all fitness levels. This is a great way to get back in the gym while supporting the Berrybrook Parents Association. Half of all proceeds will be donated back to the BPA.

Carrie Couto, a Mom from the 3 day class, has lost 85 pounds in the last 5 months exercising with Andy at Athletic Republic and has never felt better.

Don't miss out on this great opportunity.

Contact Carrie at ccouto@comcast.net or 781.424.7678 with questions or to reserve your spot!

