

February 2014

Wednesday, February 5	Professional Day, No School
February 17-21	Winter Break
Tuesday, February 25	BPA Meeting 7:00 pm
Wednesday, February 26	Board of Directors 7:30 pm

I have a little Valentine that someone sent to me.
It's pink and white and red and blue, and pretty as can be.
Forget-me-nots are 'round the edge, and tiny roses too:
And such a lovely piece of lace, the very palest blue,
And in the center there's a heart, as red as red can be!
And on it's written all in gold, "To you with love from me."

Notes from the Head of School

For most children, the first word they write is their name. It begins in the first year program at the project table or easel when teachers ask children "Is there something on your work so we know it belongs to you?" Many young children starting school will need help from a teacher, who may ask, "Do you know any letters in your name?" and then slowly but surely they master their signature. Almost without exception, the very next word children want to know how to spell is LOVE. Along with L-O-V-E they want to know how to spell MOM and DAD and then the names of brothers and sisters followed by the names of their pets. Then of course, they move on to a complete sentence - I LOVE YOU. I am always amazed that once children get the mechanics of how words work, the first thing they want to communicate is love. February is the month that has a special day to send thoughtful notes to people we love and care about. Valentines bring warmth and joy to an otherwise cold and dark month. I find that at Berrybrook, Valentines arrive not just on February 14th, but all during the year. Even before children are forming letters they are creating Valentines. Every painting, every scribble, every playdough creation and block building that they present to us is a Valentine. Children manage to convey the same love and affection found in traditional Valentines throughout the year in their unique and individual words and creations. There is more than one way to send a valentine.

Happy Valentine's Day!
Mrs. Keeley



Babies Are Us

We see lots of babies at Berrybrook. They arrive in carriers, in slings, and in strollers, filling our hallways with happiness, hope, and optimism. One of the great things about our school is that we get to see babies on a regular basis. This year, several of our families and THREE of our Berrybrook staff will welcome new babies.

The Barlow family - Maria, Andy, Dylan, and Brayden welcomed their new baby Cole in December. Mrs. Watts, her husband Keith, and her boys Brady and Jameson are expecting a little girl in March, and Mrs. Worley and her husband Patrick are awaiting their first child in April.

Plans are being made to have our school running smoothly while Mrs. Barlow, Mrs. Watts, and Mrs. Worley are at home with their babies. Laura McNulty, who works in our Beginners class will continue to cover for Mrs. Barlow in the 3 Day Class. Carol Richardson, a familiar substitute teacher, and other Berrybrook teachers will be taking Mrs. Worley's place in her morning and afternoon classes. Berrybrook staff will be available to help out in the office through the end of the year while Mrs. Watts spends time with her baby. We are fortunate that our staffing allows children to have familiar faces in their classroom when one of their teachers cannot be in school.

I am delighted to welcome new babies in our school community. I know that Berrybrook families and teachers are especially capable of loving and raising children who will make the world a better place. Congratulations to all of our families and their new little ones!
Mrs. Keeley

Beginners News

Friends, friends, everywhere! At Berrybrook, we are all friends. In January we learned about all the things our bodies can do – move fast, move slow, balance, practice yoga poses, and be strong. During the month of February we will see that with our friends we can do all these things and more... *together!* Children have been learning all year that friends can talk to each other, listen to each other, and even share with each other by understanding that everyone's feelings are important, including their own.

The Dramatic Play Area will become a Post Office where lots of emerging writing skills will be practiced in meaningful ways when children "write" notes to friends and family. We will sing songs about all the people and pets we love and have a Valentine's Day celebration.

As a reminder, on Friday February 14, children may bring in simple valentines ***without food or non-food items attached*** to deliver to their friends during class time with their teachers. For ease of delivery, ***please do not individually address valentines.*** We will have a special Valentine's Day snack as well! Fun!

Finally, thank you to all of the parents who have had a chance to volunteer in the classroom so far this winter. Please feel free to see our Volunteer Sign Up sheet located on our class bulletin board when you feel your child is comfortable.

Happy Valentine's Day!

Mrs. Delano, Mrs. LaForest and
Miss McNulty

First Year Program News

The children have settled back into their classroom routines in these past few weeks. They are ready to take on new challenges and topics. As January progressed, the classes learned about staying healthy – eating good food, exercising, getting enough sleep, and dressing for the cold weather. We also have enjoyed a few yoga sessions which the children have eagerly participated in. They have been having fun working in the Berrybrook hospital that has been set up in the dramatic play areas. Everyone – peers, stuffed animals, and even teachers, have been declared healthy after spending some time being attended to! Bears and dinosaurs have also been discussed in some of the classes already, other classes will explore these themes at a later date.

Looking ahead to February, we will take the opportunity to explore feelings and friendship. We also will be celebrating the upcoming holiday with an assortment of projects and a special trip to the post office. The children will be creating a special surprise to mail home to their families. All classes will be celebrating Valentine's Day, passing out valentines to classmates and enjoying a special snack provided by Berrybrook. Due to allergies, please remember, ALL candy should remain at home.

We ask that each child provide a valentine for all members of the class. To make distribution easier, children may sign their name, but please leave the envelopes blank. This provides children with "success" in delivering to each friend without the pressure of matching a name to a cubby.

Each First Year class will be meeting at the Duxbury Post Office in Halls Corner for a Valentine "Field Trip".

3 Day - Room 1
Tuesday, February 11th @ 9 am

3 Day - Room 3
Wednesday, February 12th @ 9 am

2 Day - Room 1
Friday, February 7th @ 9 am

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

Happy Valentine's Day to all from your
First Year Teachers
Mrs. Barlow, Mrs. Capasso,
Mrs. Delano, Mrs. Dunn, Mrs. LaForest,
Mrs. Piccuito, and Miss McNulty



Second Year Program News

A bell is no bell 'til you ring it
A song is no song 'til you sing it
And love in your heart wasn't put there
to stay - love isn't love
'Til you give it away.

- Oscar Hammerstein

Valentine's Day at Berrybrook is a special occasion. The 4 and 5 day classes will be hard at work, preparing snacks, writing out cards, and decorating the classrooms. Writing Valentines to friends gives the children an opportunity to send and receive special notes of friendship to each other. Please have your child bring in

Valentines that are signed and addressed to each classmate. We are asking you to please have the names on the Valentines in upper case letters, so that children are able to recognize the names of classmates. A helpful hint....start working on them several days before, as this will be a big undertaking for most 4 and 5 year olds! Class lists will be placed in everyone's cubby, so that each child will be included in receiving a Valentine. Because some children at Berrybrook have food allergies, we ask you to leave all candy and baked goods at home. We will celebrate at school with a special snack, prepared by the children and teachers.

Looking for a fun family activity during winter break? The Winter Olympics will be on tv! Who knows....perhaps your child will be inspired to become a future Olympic athlete?

One last item to note....We encourage the children to bring slippers or sneakers to school. Their feet can become overheated, and snow boots are cumbersome during indoor physical activity.

Happy Valentine's Day to all!
Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Fosdick, Mrs. O'Neil,
Mrs. Neal, Mrs. Piccuito, Mrs. Rosen,
Mrs. Swan, and Mrs. Worley

Snow Cancellation

Berrybrook will cancel school if **Duxbury Schools** or the **Silver Lake School District** close due to a snow or other emergency. Please watch 7NEWS (NBC) for cancellation notices. Parents may call the school to check the voice mail message if they are unsure about a snow cancellation.

Berrybrook Parents Association

Hello February! It may be the shortest month, but we have a lot going on at Berrybrook in February.

Enrichment

January marked the beginning of enrichment programs. The children began their monthly yoga instruction with teacher Kim Spires. They learned some different movements and how yoga can be beneficial to their bodies. Miss Kim will visit Berrybrook monthly to teach yoga to all of the classes. February will also bring a visit from a dental hygienist to discuss oral health.

Family Fun Fridays!

The January FFF was a great success. The children had a blast playing the drums and other instruments alongside Tony Fonseca from All Hands Drumming. Keep an eye out for info about the next FFF.

The next BPA meeting will be on February, 25th at 7pm. This meeting will discuss planning the rest of the school year and the Spring Fling, our annual end of year celebration for the children and their families. Hope to see you there.

And it's not too late to support the BPA with dues. We ask each family for \$30 and checks can be placed in the basket at the BPA table. As always please let us know if you have any questions, comments or concerns. berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com.

Thanks,
Karoline and Donna

Berrybrook Book Review

Rose Fosdick

This month I read the book, *The Reason I Jump*, written by Naoki Higashida. Naoki is a 13 year old boy with autism who cannot speak. He uses an alphabet grid to write down his words to communicate his thoughts and feelings.

Throughout the book, Naoki answers questions that are posed to children with autism. As I read his explanations to each and every question, I learned a great deal about autism and how a person with autism must think and feel. It is an amazing eye opener to anyone who doesn't understand the condition. You really get an idea of what is going on in the mind of a person with autism.

*One of the questions that Naoki answers in the book is:
"Why do you enjoy going out for walks so much?"*

His answer:

"My guess is that lots of people with autism like walking, and I wonder if you can work out why. "Because walking makes you feel good?" "Because it's great being out in the open air?" Both these replies are true, of course, but for me the number one reason is that us people with autism love the greenness of nature. Now you might be thinking, "Oh, is that all?" However, our fondness for nature is, I think, a little bit different from everyone else's. I'm guessing that what touches you in nature is the beauty of the trees and the flowers and things. But to us people with special needs, nature is as important as our own lives. The reason is that when we look at nature, we receive a sort of permission to be alive in this world, and our entire bodies get recharged. However often we're ignored and pushed away by other people, nature will always give us a good big hug, here inside our hearts.

The greenness of nature is the lives of plants and trees. Green is life. And that's the reason we love to go out for walks."

The most important piece of information I learned from Naoki was that no matter what kind of behavior that autistic children display, they just want you to accept them. They try to behave or react appropriately but their body and mind can't do what they ask it to. They are fully aware of what you want from them, they just can't do it.

I would highly recommend reading this amazing book. It gives insight to a disability by answering many questions people have regarding behaviors and reactions of autistic children. It helps you understand what is going on inside them and why they may behave the way they do. Naoki Higashida does a wonderful job portraying his feelings and thoughts throughout the book.

(Mrs. Fosdick teaches in the 4 Day-Room 1 Class)



Q & A from Family Matters

Dear Family Matters,

I would love to hear from my 4 year what he does at school? Yet, when I ask him he says "nothing". He enjoys school but I am curious what he is doing? How do I elicit more of a response from him?

Response -

Children are often tired, mentally & physically after a busy time at school. It's the last thing they feel like talking about. Most often they are willing to share their thoughts later in the day, dinner table or at bedtime. It may help to ask specific questions..."What was today's story about?", "Did you build in the block room today?", "What was in the water table today?", "What was today's project?", "What was your favorite part of your school day? etc. Good luck!

Dear Family Matters,

How do I get my child to dress appropriately for the winter? It's a battle getting dressed in the morning! All he wants to wear are spring/summer clothes because they are his favorite.

Response -

Any part of getting the family ready for the day and out the door on time can be frustrating, especially getting dressed. Parents want their children dressed appropriately for the season, temperature, etc. Children usually want the power to choose. There's your solution! Offer choices for your child from which YOU approve!

For example: Lay out your child's choice of clothing preferably the night before. Typically, the fewer the choices, the better. The choices you offer should be ones that you approve of regardless which one they choose, however you are respecting their right to decide what they like for that day. Make it easier on yourself by only having in their closet clothes appropriate to the season. Many factors are involved in why children choose the clothes they do - comfort, color, clothing similar to a friend's clothes, control and sense of power, etc. In extreme cases where a t-shirt, for example, might be their absolute favorite, you may consider letting them wear it under more appropriate clothing. Practice encouraging independence while getting dressed. Words such as, "You know just what to do! You must be very proud of yourself!" or "I'll help with your socks, you can do your shoes." It also helps to show confidence that your child can get dressed by saying, "When you're all dressed then you can help me make the pancakes!" This shows your confident expectation that they can and will do it, rather than posing it as a question or a request such as, "If you get dressed all by yourself then maybe I'll make you pancakes..."

And lastly, when it comes to putting on all those snow clothes to brave the cold outdoors...we often say at Berrybrook, "Today, the temperature tells us we need to wear our snowpants (mittens, hat, etc)" Therefore, the reason to do so is on an uncontrollable factor (the temperature) rather than a person who they may feel they need to try to control by refusing to do so. Try it! It usually works! You'll feel proud of yourself by

realizing you are respecting your child as they understand how to use the power that comes along with their naturally developing sense of self.

Dress warm!

Dear Family Matters,

First of all, thank you so much for doing this. What a great resource!

My daughter will be starting kindergarten in the fall. She is already asking me a LOT of questions, and I'm not sure if she is anxious or excited. I'm leaning towards excited, because she rarely gets anxious about anything. But I don't know how to answer her questions because she is our only child. Are there any books that you can recommend that I can read with her? I have looked at sites like Amazon and Barnes and Noble, but it's a little overwhelming because there are just so many.

And speaking of anxiety, I'm full of it...I have no idea what to expect and I don't know if there is anything I need to be doing now to start the registration and screening process. I have checked the town website and tried Google, but I haven't found anything useful. Should I call the Elementary School directly to inquire about these things? Is it too early? Any information you can give me would be great.

Thanks again,

Soon to be kindergarten mom

Response -

Going off to kindergarten is both exciting and anxiety provoking for children and parents. Balancing the here and now with questions about next fall can be overwhelming. Adults don't always have all the answers, and it's ok to let children know that. You can ask your child "What things do you want to know about kindergarten?" Just as when they were very young, give simple straight forward answers. If she asks about the bus, give a simple answer. "The bus driver will stop at the end of our driveway. I'll wave good bye. I will be waiting here for you at the end of the day."

Most schools will provide information about the transition to kindergarten at the time of registration. The district's screening process will be explained to you as well. Depending on the school district, there may be activities over the summer and/or an orientation for the new students. Parents can call their Elementary school or check the local newspaper for the date and times for the registration process.

Your classroom teachers are a great resource. During Spring Conference time, kindergarten transition is an important topic. Berrybrook students will visit Chandler School in Duxbury during the spring. The bus ride is always exciting. Even if your child will not be going to Duxbury Public School, this visit helps children begin to understand what kindergarten is and this is the time when they may have very specific questions.

It is important to help temper her excitement so that she is able to enjoy the rest of her Pre-K year. You can help answer some of her questions about the future while

redirecting her to what is happening now. "Do you think you will be painting at school tomorrow?" Or " I wonder if you will learn a new song at circle?"

One favorite book about Kindergarten is from the Berenstien Bears series of books. This collection offers parents and children positive ways of dealing with a number of childhood struggles such as fear of the dark, a new baby, going to kindergarten, sibling relationships, and many more.

Below is a list of our communities with information about the kindergarten registration process. Most communities have information on their school district websites.

- Marshfield January 29, 9:30-noon at all elementary schools. Half Day Kindergarten, Full Day Kindergarten by lottery.
- Duxbury Half Day Kindergarten, Tuition based Full Day. Registration in March, more information will be available soon, and Berrybrook will forward details to families.
- Kingston Kindergarten Registration is March 15 - 21 Parents come in during school hours to pick up a registration packet.
- Pembroke Half Day Kindergarten and tuition based Full Day Kindergarten - lottery to be held March 17, 2014. Application for full day must be submitted by March 14, 2014.
- Hanover Please call your local school office as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to register your child. Your child must come with you to registration.
Hanover Street Elm. 637-9000 x 125
Clearview Elm. 637-9000 x 100
Washington Elm. 637-9000 x 150
- Plymouth Half Day Kindergarten Registration March 3, 2014 – March 7, 2014 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Registration takes place at the assigned school. Tuition-based full day Kindergarten is based on a lottery.



The Berrybrook Summer Nature Program is offered during June and July, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 – 1:00.

Children must be 4 by September 1st (or Berrybrook Beginners!) to register. We also welcome siblings up to 7 years of age.

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 February 24, 2014.

Berrybrook Board of Directors

Taking some Berrybrook for the Road..

As we near the end of the school year I have realized that I will be leaving Berrybrook as a parent (at least for the next couple years) in just a few months. I have often wished that Berrybrook was K-12 as I think about putting my little one on the bus and off to a much larger school. But since Berrybrook isn't going to be our children's school forever, I think it is up to us to work on creating environments in our new schools that build on the foundation we have provided them here. Education policy is a complicated and confusing arena, but for me it all boils down to a simple basic. A school should be a child-centric place that addresses the needs of the whole child, a place where it is safe to explore, make mistakes and find their own path.

We are seeing much greater success around the world in educational systems than are here in the U.S. One particular system that has caught my attention is Finland. Finland in recent years has ranked on the top of nations around the world in education outcomes in math, science and reading. 40 years ago Finland decided to make drastic changes to the way it educates its children. Today children do not start school until age 7, they rarely take tests and don't do homework until later in their teen years, and they have 75 minutes of recess a day. Dr. Pasi Sahlberg, author of a best-selling book about the Finnish experience called "Finnish Lessons", has said "the first six years of education are not about academic success. We don't measure children at all. It's about being ready to learn and finding your passion."

And they are finding success. They have the highest rate of college attendance in Europe, they have a higher high school graduation rate than the US, and they spend about 30% less per student than we do in the United States. Much of the success is also attributed to the role of teachers in Finland where only the top 10% are admitted to teacher training programs and they are harder to get into than medical or law schools. And as professionals are viewed similarly to doctors and lawyers.

Some naysayers say we can't apply the lessons from a country like Finland which is very different than our country. But interestingly when we look at Norway, which is similar to Finland, but follows a US style of education, it is not finding similar success to Finland but rather ranks near the US in math, reading and science. I am not saying we should be creating an exact replica of the Finnish system. What I am saying is that we need to think about focusing on the child and not on standardized tests and comparing child-to-child as they begin their educational journey. That as parents we need to be more involved in the development of educational policies in our own communities. Together we can work as partners with our schools to make them safe places to grow and explore and help our children become their best selves. I guess in the simplest terms, let's bring some Berrybrook with us as we move on.

Allyson Frazier, Berrybrook Board

Valentine's Day Thoughts

"If you would be loved,
love and be loveable."
- Ben Franklin

"Is it the look in your eyes,
or is it this dancing juice,
Who cares, Baby,
I think I want to marry you."
- Bruno Mars

"If music be the food of love, play on."
- William Shakespeare

"You are the sunshine of my life,
that's why I'll always be around."
- Stevie Wonder

"Don't marry the person you think
you can live with;
marry only the individual
you think you can't live without."
- James Dobson

"All you need is love."
- Lennon-McCartney

"It doesn't matter if the guy is perfect
or the girl is perfect,
as long as they're
perfect for each other."
- Good Will Hunting

"God only knows
what I'd be without you."
- Brian Wilson

"Everybody needs somebody.
I need you, you, you."
- Wilson Pickett

"Love is the condition in which the
happiness of another person
is essential to your own."
- Robert Heinlein

"There's sumptin 'bout your love
that makes me weak
and knocks me off my feet."
- Stevie Wonder

"You make my life so rich,
you know you should
have been some money.
Baby you're so sweet,
you know you should
have been some honey."
- The Temptations

"When you realize you want to spend
the rest of your life with somebody,
you want the rest of your life
to start as soon as possible."
- When Harry Met Sally

"To keep your marriage brimming
with love in the wedding cup,
whenever you're wrong admit it,
whenever you're right, shut up."
- Ogden Nash