

December 2017

Wednesday, December 13	3 Day Classes Holiday Sing-Along
Thursday, December 14	4 Day Classes Holiday Sing-Along
Friday, December 15	Beginners, 2 Day, and 5 Day Classes Holiday Sing-Along
December 18 - January 1 December 26 - 29	Holiday Break 2018-2019 Enrollment Packets mailed
January 2	2018- 2019 Enrollment begins

Notes from the Head of School

“It takes a village” is something I say to families at least once a week. It rings true for many families who attend Berrybrook and mine is no different. It’s no secret that if I didn’t have a large village for my family - especially my mom - my children wouldn’t be able to complete half the “extra-curriculars” or heck, even the real “curricular” that they are able to experience. She picks all of my children from school every day, and oftentimes is running here and there for something else - whether it is golf/soccer/dance, or keeping my children for dinner and tubs because I have an evening meeting at least once a week and my husband is commuting from Boston. The sheer math alone requires help - with three children and two parents - when each of the children have an activity at the same time it requires assistance somewhere. Even though I joke and tell my mom she has weekends off, in reality when we are going in three different directions I tell her to take a peek at the schedule and she gets first dibs on which child she’d like to bring to what activity.

I know my family is not unique. When I started at Berrybrook many years ago of the 88 children who attended, I was only aware of two families who had dual-working parents. This meant that the majority of the drop-offs and pickups were by the mom or dad. Now, drop-offs and pickups in the Berrybrook halls tell a different story.....grandparents, carpools, and other caregivers show that the picture of Berrybrook has, and continues to, change. A few years ago I did an informal survey and found that almost 60% of the families listed both mom and dad working outside of the home. With Berrybrook being a



half-day program, for parents who both work or have other commitments it goes without saying that the schedule can prove difficult for some families. In comes the village.

I know a group of 4 Day families who all have their youngest child attending their last year at Berrybrook. Although change is a great thing (as I have written about in the past), it is also emotional and I have already warned these families that I will probably be a sobbing mess on Ice Cream Day. I have had the pleasure of knowing these younger siblings from utero and seeing them at arrival and dismissal when dropping off their older siblings; soon I will witness them go off to their next chapter. One of the best things is also seeing these families help each other out. These current Berrybrook students are all the youngest of 3 or 4 siblings, and their older siblings are busy with sports and other activities. These five families have banded together and help supplement the Berrybrook day; they each take a day and have the children at their house for lunch and then all head off to Berrybrook for class at 1PM. They are lucky that most of the older siblings also match up in age and activity, so they also have a similar plan for older ones. If that's not an amazing example of the ultimate village, I don't know what is. But that's Berrybrook, and I would expect no less.

Wishing you a healthy and happy holiday season!

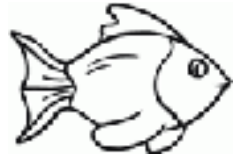
~ *Mrs. Watts*



Congratulations to the Johnson family!
Tillman (4 Day room 2) now has a
baby brother.
Welcome
Merrick Ryder



Beginners Notes



What Gift Can You Give Your Child?

Gifts that come from a store, perhaps wrapped in fancy paper with a great big bow can't begin to compare to the gifts you give your child that come straight from the heart. Even though at this age your child may not be able to express it, they would be grateful for the following gifts because they are so natural to their age and development.

1. The gift of a walk together ~

A walk outside, whether along your own road, through the woods or along the beach no matter what the season, can become the most amazing journey! Not only will you enjoy nature and fresh air but your child will grow in all of their gross motor abilities – walking, running, balancing and climbing. Perhaps a collection of nature items may result in the end or an idea for the next outdoor adventure! It's all about the journey, not the destination!

2. The gift of honoring their feelings ~

Let your child know it is ok to feel whatever they are feeling. This is a very valuable gift. Children in the Beginners Class are learning how to feel their feelings first, then identify them. It takes practice to learn what each emotion feels like and only through experiencing each one can children learn about all of them. Words from caregivers such as “You were really mad when your block building fell down!” or “You were so happy when your sister shared her toy with you!” allow children to see they are safe to feel each feeling.

3. The gift of open-ended creativity ~

Have available different materials for your child that are the foundation for them to create. Blocks, small cars, crayons and blank paper, paints and brushes, small animal and people figures all provide the opportunity for open-ended play. Refrain from stating, “Let's make a _____.” Rather, allow them to lead the play. A quiet atmosphere while they build and create can be wonderful and if conversation does begin try saying “Tell me about your building” or “I noticed you used a lot of blue here in your drawing.” This invites children to share their work with you in a meaningful way, while taking ownership of their creativity.

4. The gift of questions ~

Questions asked in a respectful way about your child's play will, as mentioned, strengthen their confidence, self-esteem and creativity. Even more important, questions **from** your child that lead to learning more rather than accumulating answers is probably one of the most amazing gifts you can give your child. When your child asks you “Why?” you can ask “Why do *you* think?”...and **that** is the gift of questions. It's a gift

because it causes your child to think on their own, believe in their ideas and have a desire to learn more.

So the next time after an overnight rain your child says, “How did everything get all wet?” ask them, “Hmmm. I’m not sure. How do you think everything got all wet?” It could lead to connecting ideas, a new idea, a new direction in learning, a new story, a science experiment, a desire to want to learn more....a journey to discovery!

5. The gift of a story ~

In our Beginners class we keep a collection of all the books we have read at Story Time so far this school year in addition to those books in our Book Area. The children revisit these stories often. When they do, they are not only experiencing the joy of the book once more but through this repetition they gain practice in emerging reading skills. They practice skills such as sequencing, print awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills and letter knowledge. Reading to your child – and rereading their favorites (and letting them “read” to you by retelling the story) is a gift that will truly last a lifetime.

All of the above gifts you can give your child by using your most valuable resource - TIME.

We enjoy the time we have with your children on Thursday and Friday mornings! Please join us on **Friday December 15th** for a very special morning! **Families arrive at 9 am** to enjoy time all together in our classroom, followed by the sharing of songs and music. Cookies made by the children will be enjoyed by all in celebration of the holiday season. Siblings and extended family are also invited and welcome!

~ *Mrs. LaForest*

Mrs. LaForest teaches in the Beginners, 3 Day room 3, and 4 Day room 2



Kingston Animal Shelter Donations

December continues with the annual Berrybrook Community Service Project started by Mrs. O’Neil many years ago. Families may bring in donations of supplies needed to benefit the Kingston animal shelter. To receive these donations, boxes were decorated by the children with cut-out pictures of dogs, cats, and other animals glued onto a colorful background. These boxes have been placed in the lobby along with “Pennies For The Pound Jars”. There will be class discussions about “What is an animal shelter?”, “Adoption of pets”, and “Being respectful of all living things.” It is important for all children to develop empathy and practice kindness. Taking care of pets and other animals is a meaningful way for children to develop these traits.

First Year Notes



Several weeks ago, the first year classes began talking about feelings. We began by making faces such as happy, sad, mad, etc. Along with this, we learned a song about feelings. The song asks the children to make faces to describe certain feelings, and then reassures them that feelings can change and that it's okay to feel happy, sad, or mad. Next, we began looking at each other's faces. The circle teacher might make a face and ask the children to guess how she is feeling. Then she would ask "what makes you think I'm happy?" In this way, we are encouraging observation, critical thinking, language skills, and the development of empathy.

Recently I met with parents for conferences and many asked me about their child's social and emotional development. As I told them, it is the cornerstone of their child's overall development. Teachers are planting seeds which we hope will grow within your child. Our discussions about feelings don't end at circle time. Teachers model kind, respectful, and empathetic behavior for the children. We read stories that acknowledge and validate feelings. Throughout our day we continue to refer to feelings, asking questions such as "how did that make you feel?", "I wonder how he/she felt when that happened?", and "what do you think the child in the picture is thinking?". These open-ended questions challenge children to think more deeply about a situation. Each time a teacher has an interaction like this with a child they are expanding the child's thought process and building empathy.

Our focus on social and emotional growth continues, as we have been talking about families during the month of November and will continue to do so. As we begin the holiday season we will expand our family discussion to include family traditions. We will also discuss some Berrybrook traditions. Children will be working on surprises for their families, as well as preparing for a very informal and light-hearted sing-a-long with families on the last day of school before our holiday break.

Social and emotional growth is an on-going process for all of us. At Berrybrook we see each interaction as an opportunity for growth. As a teacher, some of my most meaningful moments have been spent kneeling on the floor, asking two children those thought provoking, empathy encouraging questions, and seeing that light bulb turn on!

Wishing you all a joyous and peaceful holiday season and happy, healthy new year!

~ *Mrs. Capasso*

Mrs. Capasso teaches in the 3 Day room 1 and the 2 Day classes.

Second Year Notes



Watercolor Candles

At Berrybrook, tis the season for holiday songs, potato latkes, cookies, extra glitter, and holiday projects. A holiday project that is near and dear to Berrybrook is the watercolor candle. Beginner, First Year, and Second Year students all put their own spin on these special candles and hang them on our Berrybrook tree.

Candles are symbolic in many of the holidays that are celebrated this time of year, such as Chanukah, Christmas and Kwanzaa. Berrybrook likes to honor the fact that children are all unique, and holidays are unique to their people and culture. The children get to see the tree decorated with all the candles, and often comment on how the candles are similar, or different, from the one that they painted.

Each holiday has a special way to present a candle. The centerpiece of the Chanukah celebration is the menorah, which holds nine candles. Eight of the candles symbolize the number of days the Temple lantern blazed, the ninth candle is used to light the others. Placing a burning candle in one's window during Christmas time symbolized the warmth of home and family. Families that celebrate Kwanzaa have a kinara that holds seven candles to represent the seven principles of Kwanzaa. During the week of Kwanzaa, a new candle is lit each day.

While children are busy decorating their candles, we love to hear the conversations of their holiday memories, celebrations and traditions. As you enter Berrybrook over the next couple of weeks, take some time to admire their hard work and the ever growing tree of candles.

Happy Holidays!

~ *Mrs. Savoy*

Mrs. Savoy teaches in the 4 Day room 2 class

The Berrybrook Staff would like to thank the Parents Association for arranging snacks for our monthly after-school meetings. Each month we have a 2 hour meeting to discuss curriculum and other matters. These meetings are scheduled from 4:15-6:15 and we appreciate having a snack to fortify us. We are thankful for all of the support and encouragement we receive from parents. It is very thoughtful of parents to take time from their busy schedules to prepare refreshments for us.

Thank You Very Much!!

Parents Association Notes

We hope all of you and your families had a happy Thanksgiving! The holiday season is a very busy time of year for everyone and that includes our Berrybrook students and families. There are lots of fun activities and traditions planned at Berrybrook this month for everyone to look forward to.

Thank you to all the families who participated in the Youth Villages Holiday Heroes gift giving program. We were able to fulfill 50 children's wishes this holiday season. We are grateful for your support of this program as we know this is time of the year when many people are asking for "extra" support. We thank you for choosing this as a priority during the holiday season.

Our next Family Fun Friday event will take place at Mix-It-Up Kitchen in Duxbury. There are a limited amount of spots for both sessions so be sure to register through their website if you are interested.

Additionally, we are organizing a Parent's Night Out event for Berrybrook families. December 6th from 7-9 PM, enjoy some wine while making (and eating!) some tasty appetizers. Please register through Mix-It-Up Kitchen if you are interested in this event.

BPA DUES! Thank you to everyone who has already paid their BPA dues. If you have yet to do so, it's not too late! We ask for a \$30 contribution per family, which goes directly toward student enrichment in and out of the classroom. Forms are available at the BPA table. A big thank you to our Berrybrook families for your continued support and participation!

Thank you and Happy Holidays,

Diana Stewart and Jenna O'Donnell Co-Presidents berrybrookparentsassociation@gmail.com

From The Board of Directors

Reflections

Well... this is it. The Gallagher family's tenure at Berrybrook is coming to an end. All four of our children have attended Berrybrook. After 9 continuous years....our last jar of jelly has come home, we just had our very last Berrybrook birthday, our last diorama of Plimoth Plantation has come home, we had our last field trip to Plimoth Plantation and our last Thanksgiving Feast. Pretty soon it will be our last Holiday Sing Along. It will be our last month of intensive glitter (I'll let you know a little secret... the children use a lot of glitter during December- it is very festive)! In the spring we will take home our last blown eggs and then it will be time for our very last Berrybrook Ice Cream Day.

When deciding on which preschool to send our oldest child to... it is safe to say that I took the decision incredibly seriously. Mrs. Watts will attest to the fact that I came to visit at least twice and it was probably more like three times. Looking back I could not tell you what was going through my head or what, per say, I was worried about; but suffice it to say I took the decision very seriously. At the same time that we were touring other preschools, a very good friend (I'm going to let her remain anonymous) was over for dinner. She had already sent her son to Berrybrook and her daughter who was the same age as our oldest son was already enrolled. My husband enjoys playing the role of the devil's advocate and tries to find out why people think the way they do. He was asking her opinion of the school and what her experience had been like and why an experience at Berrybrook would be so different to any other preschool. At one point, our friend said, "I believe very strongly that what preschool a child goes to determines what kind of adult they will become and perhaps what college they might go to". My husband almost spit his drink out. He looked at her and said, "You can't possibly believe that". Our friend looked at both of us and replied.. "I 100% do believe that". So, knowing me I probably called to schedule one of my many tours the very next day and clearly the rest is history.

I have no idea if there is any actual truth in our friend's statement. That seems like it would be an enormous research project. However, after 9 years I do have some of my own observations/experiences to share. Remember how I said I was a crazy person choosing a preschool for the first time? When I realized at the very beginning of our first school year that the teachers only gave one starting push on the swings and then let them do it themselves, I was instantly terrified that I had made a huge mistake. What kind of teacher doesn't push a three year old on a swing? Then... about 2 weeks later my little guy was pumping that swing all by himself. The same thing happened with putting his coat on, mittens, etc... The teachers taught the children how to do it themselves. Within a very short period of time my son was putting his coat on all by himself. Even at three years old, the teachers were teaching the children about becoming more independent people. (Which was incredibly convenient seeing that his sister had just turned two years old and I was expecting our third child imminently!) At this point- I was settling in... and feeling like things were going to be okay.

What I didn't realize at that moment was how much Berrybrook School was going to impact our family's life. So many of the friends that my children began parallel play side by side with during their first years have evolved and continued to be their closest friends. Almost all of my friends that I have met at Berrybrook are now my dearest friends. Whenever we were at the Berrybrook playground I was always amazed how

the kids were so good about sharing. They learn very early from the teachers that taking turns and considering each others feelings is very important. There have been many times that I have wished the rest of the world could be as simple, peaceful and respectful as the Berrybrook playground.

Our third child has life threatening allergies to milk, all dairy products and peanuts. His first three years of life were so stressful I was wondering if I would ever feel comfortable not having him in my sight. Then came his turn to go to Berrybrook. The teachers and administration went above and beyond what we could have hoped for to keep him safe. They called me if they had any questions or even if they had a slight doubt about a food. Once he was cleared by the allergist to start having milk baked in things, understandably he was positively terrified to try anything. Every single day his teachers put the snack out on the kitchen counter for him to look at it and see. Him and I would stop and talk about it and I would go over the ingredients and tell him I was positive it was safe for him to eat. It took awhile, but after a few months he was trying things that my entire family was standing on their heads to convince him to eat. Not every school, teacher or other organization would have taken the time, patience and consideration to help him through that scary time.

When my children went to birthday parties at My Gym in Kingston, Ms. Jodi often said to me - I can always tell if the group of kids are from Berrybrook. I instantly asked why and she responded... "Majority of the time the children calmly take turns, the general mood of the party is less intense, the kids all sit and wait for the birthday child to take the first turn on swings or other equipment, and when it is time to have the birthday treat... children from Berrybrook do not begin eating their cake/cupcake etc.. until the birthday child has taken his or her first bite. I won't lie - it would have never occurred to me that that would be a good thing for my kids to learn! Each and every teacher we have had at Berrybrook (I think we had them all..) has had a significant impact on our children's lives. To this day, whenever my older children come to pick Colin up, at least one if not many of the teachers stop, remember them by name and talk to them. They ask how they are doing and often share a memory they have of them being at the school or in their classroom.

Just the other night my kids were hanging out and my oldest child said to my youngest, "Colin, you are so lucky you still get to go to Berrybrook, it is so fun there." Colin then responded.."It's not all fun, Finn, we have to work really hard... we have to go to circle, play in the water table, listen to stories AND play on the playground." Colin's response made the kids laugh and the conversation then transitioned into what each child's favorite Berrybrook memory was... Finn said that he thought his favorite memory was going to Plimoth Plantation and making the model of it. Maeve said that her favorite part was when we made play-doh and then she got to play with it with her friends. Keegan told us that he loved all of the music activities; especially the drumming! Colin had a pretty long list...

Suffice it to say he loves everything he does in his class and he's very excited about the Menorah he made today with the helper candle (he wasn't all that clear with the details on that one). My husband commented that his favorite thing has always been asking the kids every day about what was in the water table. I'm not sure I have a favorite.. but attending the Holiday Sing - Along and then eating the cookies that the children make themselves...always make me feel happy and grateful that we are all able to be part of something so simple, sweet, and yet so meaningful.

So... like I said in the beginning... this is it for us. You can come hunt me down in nine years to ask me if my children attending Berrybrook impacted where they will be going to college, etc. If our children are kind, considerate, empathetic people - that is all we really hope for and I do believe strongly that Berrybrook has had a huge impact in setting that foundation for each of them. I hope that your experience at Berrybrook will be as nice as ours. I think the time and energy that I put into deciding on the right preschool has now come full circle into me trying to figure out what we will do and what our life will be like when we aren't walking through that wooden gate every day.

If you see me at Ice Cream Day... you might want to hand me a tissue.

Best Regards and Warmest Wishes for a Very Happy Holiday,

Karen Gallagher
Berrybrook Board of Directors



Colder weather is on its way...

Berrybrook will cancel school if **Duxbury Public Schools** are closed due to weather emergencies. 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. As the weather changes, be sure to dress children appropriately for outdoor play, including the Nook. Now is a good time to locate all hats, mittens, gloves, and warm jackets that will be necessary as we head into December. Once the snow flies, children should bring snow pants and snow boots. Children are welcome to keep slippers, sneakers, or crocs at school to make sure they are comfortable in the classroom. **Please remember to label all clothing.**



Holiday Sing-Along Schedule



*All classes will be celebrating on their last day
before vacation.*

Please plan on joining us for the festivities.

Beginners: Families are invited to join us at 9:00

2 Day: Families are invited to join us at 9:00

3 Day Rooms 1 and 3: Families are invited to join us at 9:00

4 Day Room 1: Families are invited to join us at 1:00

4 Day Room 2: Families are invited to join us at 2:30

5 Day: Families are invited to join us at 10:30

*Each class will finish their sing-along
with a special treat,
which will conclude the day.*

