

# BERRYBROOK NEWS

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*December, 2007*

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**Friday, December 14**

**Last day of school before holiday break**

**Wednesday, January 2**

**School resumes/Enrollment begins**

## *Notes From the Headmaster*

I am happy to report that at Berrybrook, the giving of gifts is not limited to the month of December. Berrybrook teachers make special gifts to children throughout the year. One gift that is very important, but sometimes overlooked, is the gift of time. Teachers give children enough time to finish work, time to make a choice, time to respond. Teachers patiently listen to children for as long as it takes for children to say what's on their mind. If you visit a Berrybrook classroom you will notice that children are very busy, but they are not rushed. The gift of time is especially important this time of year when things get so hectic. Another gift that Berrybrook teachers give children is their respect. They respect each child as an individual and encourage respectful interactions in the classroom. Teachers help children understand that the more they respect others, the more rewards they will receive from socializing and making friends. These gifts are only two of the many gifts delivered daily at Berrybrook. Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Delano, Mrs. La Forest, Mrs. Swan, Mrs. Piccuito, Mrs. Neal, Mrs. Fosdick and Miss Bent give generously and thrive on the gifts they receive in return. The children give us the joy and magic of the holidays the whole year through. All of the wonderful things available at Berrybrook have been made possible by a gift from Berrybrook's founder, Katharine Mann. Our beautiful natural setting, our philosophy and our supportive community were all part of Mrs. Mann's vision when she started the school in 1954. When we think about giving during the holiday season, it is important to remember that the most precious gifts do not come in a box, they come from love, compassion and understanding. We have an abundance of those gifts and at Berrybrook, they happen 365 days a year.

*Best wishes for a restful holiday season,  
Pat Keeley*

## *Classroom Activities*

As the days grow shorter and colder, the fields and woods around Berrybrook are changing and many of our classroom activities and discussions focus on the new season. What happens to our plants and trees? How do animals and people prepare for the change of seasons?

This month, classrooms will be choosing a holiday tree from the Berrybrook woods. In years past, classes would cut down a small tree and bring it inside for the season. Recently, Berrybrook teachers have modified that Berrybrook tradition by digging up a small tree with its roots so that it may be re-planted. Other activities coming up this month will include sharing the traditions, customs and holidays important to Berrybrook families and other families around the world. Stories, music, games, food, decorations and festivities will embellish the holiday season. For example, during our observance of Hannukah, children discuss the Menorah and its significance, and make Potato Latkes for snack. The Latkes are delicious and our recipe is simple. Try them at home!

### Hannukah Latkes

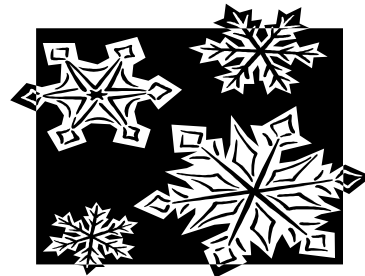
“Take a potato – pat, pat, pat  
Grate it and make it flat, flat, flat  
Fry it in a pan with fat, fat, fat  
Hannukah Latkes clap, clap, clap!”

## Potato Latkes

6 Potatoes  
4 Tablespoons flour  
1 Teaspoon Salt  
1 Egg

Peel and shred potatoes into a bowl. This can be done with a cheese grater or food processor. Add flour, salt, and egg and mix together. Form mixture into table-spoon sized patties. Cook in hot oil until golden.

There are many sparkling activities planned for this month, including a holiday celebration for each class. They will take place on the last day before our holiday break. Watch for your invitation!



## *Snow Cancellation*

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

In rare situations, there may be times when we must cancel classes during the day to ensure the safety of our children, families and staff. In those cases, the teachers will phone families in their class.

## *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.

### *Berrybrook School Playdough Recipe*

4 cups flour  
2 cups salt  
4 cups water  
4 tbsp oil  
4 tbsp cream of tartar

Mix all in a large pot. Cook on  
medium heat until dough forms.  
Cool, knead, and store in  
an air-tight container.

Home-made playdough makes a  
nice gift.

Enjoy!

## *Toys of Value*

Making decisions about what toys to purchase during the holidays gets more difficult each year. Children and Parents are inundated with television ads from thousands of toy makers trying to convince them that their toy is best. Parents are under tremendous pressure to buy the "hot" item that may be sold through films, TV ads and even fast food restaurants. Play is essential for children and toys are the tools of play. Healthy toys promote imaginative, creative, interesting, and long lasting play. A group called TRUCE (Teachers for Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment) has some hints for choosing healthy toys. They recommend the following:

- Choose toys that can be used in many ways
- Choose toys that allow the children to determine the play
- Choose toys that appeal to children at more than one age
- Choose toys that are not linked to video games, TV or movies
- Choose toys that can be used with other toys for new and more complex play
- Choose toys that promote respectful, non-stereotyped, non-violent interactions

## *Thank you*

Thank you to all of the parents who volunteered in and out of the classrooms over the last few months. Many parents volunteered to chaperone the 4 & 5 Day Plimoth Plantation field trip in November, and there have been many helpers in the 2 & 3 day classes. So many parents came into school to help with cooking or art projects, or helped by cooking items at home. Berrybrook would not be the special place it is without the support of all of our families. Berrybrook Teachers are so appreciative of all of the thoughtful, generous words and deeds we receive so often from parents. Your support and understanding and goodwill create a wonderful environment where teachers and children are able to do their best work.

## *Enrollment 2008-2009*

During the holiday break, all current and alumni Berrybrook parents will receive enrollment information for 2008-2009.

Our goal is to meet the needs of all of our current families and every effort will be made to accommodate parent preference. Please remember that the Berrybrook Board of Directors sets aside funds in the school's operating budget for financial assistance. The cost of tuition should not keep a child from attending Berrybrook. If you are interested in receiving information about financial assistance please contact Mrs. Keeley.

## *Berrybrook Parent's Association*

Happy holidays to everyone! Thank you to all parents who have already brought in donations for the Pilgrims Hope Shelter. Although this is a busy time, please remember that there is still time to donate to the shelter. We will be collecting items right up until December 14<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to Stephanie Handfield for coordinating this BPA community service project. Your donations capture the true spirit of the Holidays.

Many thanks to the Garrett families and Volta Oil for sponsoring the Berrybrook tree for the Festival of Trees to support Cranberry Hospice. The tree looked wonderful thanks to the children, teachers, and Lori Mullin and Christopher and Molly DeOrsay.

The BPA will soon be planning the children's enrichment programs for 2008. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please feel free to contact me or Tricia Stravin who has generously volunteered to coordinate the programs.

I also have an "enrichment" idea for parents. In the January, we will be placing a box in the entry way for a BPA book swap. If you have read a great book, pass it on! Hope you enjoy.

Happy Holidays,  
Nancy Cooney,  
BPA president

## *Berrybrook Board of Directors*

I'll never forget my first trip to Berrybrook seven years ago. As Mrs. Keeley gave me a tour of the farmhouse, she emphasized that "simple pleasures" are what Berrybrook is all about. It was appealing. Later that evening, as I read about Berrybrook's child-centered values in the handbook, I almost wept with joy. I didn't think I would find anywhere that reflected the philosophy I had learned and espoused when I was in graduate school for education. The belief that children learn through play; through learning to respect and care for one another; and through having each child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs understood and attended to is what growing into healthy children is all about. It can be tough to remember how necessary this is in today's test-driven/results dominated educational society. Allowing children to learn through exploration helps develop creative, independent, life-long learners.

It's one thing to profess a philosophy, but a very different thing to live it. Berrybrook's incredible faculty does just that. They practice what they preach. They kneel down to be at the children's eye level to converse with them. They explain things so things can be understood. They find a way to keep things in the affirmative, "The plane flying through the air must stay in your hand until it lands." They respond to questions with "What do **you** think?" rather than answering the question with "Because....." They are wonderful models of what we ideally would always be with our children. I believe that Katharine Mann would be ecstatic knowing that fifty-three years since its inception, Berrybrook children can still definitely feel free to safely "explore their environment and express themselves through play, thus fostering individuality, creativity, and independence." (Berrybrook's Educational Policy)

Berrybrook is going through a big growth spurt, and not without its share of growing pains. My heart went out to Mrs. Keeley, the faculty and the Board of Directors last year as they were forced to make painful decisions in the best interest of the children. I found it amazing and admirable that through all of the turmoil, Berrybrook children **and parents** were always treated with respect. Now we see a beautiful, thoughtfully designed new schoolhouse being built. It is exciting to imagine the possibilities that the new facility will bring. However, what has remained consistent and true through all of this is the constancy of a positive, calm, nurturing environment. Whether Berrybrook's philosophy be carried out in the beloved farmhouse, the Maple Room and Cedar Room, or a brand new building, what has been made clear is that what makes Berrybrook unique and special, what makes it hold a very dear place in all of our hearts, is Mrs. Mann's vision and philosophy that is lived out everyday by incredible teachers, Mrs. Watts and our fearless and tireless leader, Mrs. Keeley.

It's a gift for all seasons.

*Angélique Kanía,  
Berrybrook Board of Directors*

## *The Wonderful Holiday Season*

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year”! At least that’s what the song says.  
A few suggestions on how to make the Holidays wonderful for you and your family.....

**Prioritize** - Take time now and ask family members what they like best/least about the holiday season. Don’t forget yourself. Try to plan your valuable time, efforts and money around these comments.

**Traditions** – Families often enjoy, look forward to and remember holiday traditions. What type of activities does your family enjoy? (Baking, singing, decorating, charitable giving, attending local events.)

**Daily routine** – Try to keep daily routines, meals, playtime, bedtime, etc. Most children, and adults, thrive best on knowing what to expect.

**Expectations** – Do yourself and your family a favor be realistic. Too much shopping, eating, entertaining can push anyone to exhaustion and uncooperative behavior. Know when enough is enough.

**Gift Giving** - make a “wish list” instead of a “gift list”. Gifts are wonderful but as adults we know celebrating and connecting with family and friends is priceless.

**Stress** - Let go of the “everything must be perfect” idea, instead get caught up in the reason for the season.

**Choices** - with children’s, family &/or spouses input decide what really is important, valuable and meaningful. What can wait till another time, maybe next year? Needs and wants are often two different things.

**January** - Yes, it will come. Let’s hope we can look back, relax and be proud of choices we’ve made, time and money spent and memories created.

Wishing you all a safe and enjoyable Holiday Season and a Happy New Year!

Sincerely, Mrs. Delano  
2 & 3 Day Teacher

PS. Included with this newsletter is a brochure from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, “Tools for Learning”. It provides helpful information on appropriate toys and activities for children.

The following lovely words were spoken by Rabbi Silverman at Plimoth Plantation as part of the blessing before dinner at Berrybrook's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Rabbi Silverman's words are especially meaningful as we count our blessings during the holiday season.

### **Blessing for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Berrybrook School**

Drink deeply friends of life's sweet pleasures.  
Enjoy them all in fullest measures.  
And let us learn from experience wise,  
How best to strengthen our family ties.

Through kindness, love and thoughtfulness,  
To nature's wonders attentiveness,  
We best can capture happiness.

And so we offer grateful praise  
That we would start so many days  
at Berrybrook  
Which sets us and our children upon our ways.

Meadow and brook,  
Maple trees, goats and geese  
Teachers and friends,  
Our wonderful family on Winter Street.

We give thanks to the source of life  
Who has kept us in life and sustained us  
And enabled us to reach this joyous day of celebration.



*Miss Bent, Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Delano, Mrs. Fosdick, Mrs. Keeley, Mrs. La Forest, Mrs. Neal, Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Piccuito, Mrs. Swan, and Mrs. Watts want to wish all Berrybrook Families a happy and healthy holiday season.*