



April, 2011

Friday, April 8	Last day to complete your parent survey!
Thursday, April 14	BPA Meeting 7:00 pm
April 18-22	Spring Vacation
Tuesday, April 26	Parent Discussion Group 7:00 pm
Wednesday, April 27	Berrybrook Board of Directors 7:00 pm
Tuesday, April 26	School Pictures, 3 Day & 4 Day
Thursday, April 28	School Pictures, 2 Day & 5 Day

Notes from the Headmaster

“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.” (Impacting Readiness: Nature And Nurture; Jane M. Healy, ChildCare Exchange, March 2011)

Self Regulation allows children to do the right thing because they want to, not because they have to. At Berrybrook, teachers help children develop self regulation and they do it by allowing them to make their own choices and decisions, and honoring their choices. That does not mean they can “choose” to hurt another child, because teachers certainly enforce safety rules, but we know that children will learn self control, when they have the opportunity to make choices and decisions and the opportunity to experience the consequences of their decisions. At Berrybrook, we see first year children developing self regulation as they separate from parents, enter the classroom with confidence, “choose” to wash their hands without being told to do so by an adult, and make their own choice about a classroom activity. Our second year students exhibit a great degree of self regulation as teachers allow and encourage children to take responsibility for their work, their problem solving and each other. Teachers incorporate skills of self regulation into meaningful learning opportunities that challenge childrens’ curiosity, imagination and creativity. At Berrybrook we know children with good self-regulation are able to control their emotions and behavior, resist impulses, and exert self-control and discipline. Parents and Teachers may be “in charge” of external conditions, but truly, children are in charge of themselves and their own feelings.

Pat Keeley

First Year Program News

Spring is slowly making its way into our classrooms! A traditional early spring activity at Berrybrook is the tapping of a maple tree. All the classes have made their way over to the tree 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. You may have noticed a sweet aroma filling the hallway the past week or two as the sap has been boiling and turning into syrup. As part of the tradition, the children have had a delicious snack of pancakes with syrup. Other subjects that have been part of the three and two day March calendars included Dr. Seuss, dinosaurs, transportation and musical instruments.

As April comes into our classrooms, our activities will include wind-related projects - it's always fun to fly a homemade kite! And we will be painting blown-eggs. Half the fun is getting the eggs prepared; we encourage all families to try to blow at least one egg at home! Teachers will bleach all the eggs and fit them with pipe cleaners (so the children will be able to hang their beautiful painted eggs) and then the eggs will be wrapped carefully and sent home.

After vacation week, first year students will be planting seeds and helping them to grow. We also will be finishing up spring conferences at the beginning of April. It is always nice to sit down with parents and share how much growth each child has accomplished in these past few months!

Thank you for your support,
Mrs. Capasso, Mrs. Delano, Mrs. Dunn
Mrs. La Forest, Mrs. Picot, Mrs. Pisani



Second Year Program News

SPRING

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

After a very snowy winter, spring arrived on March 20th. Somehow spring doesn't seem official until April 1st. Just saying the word "April" conjures up images of sunshine, warmer weather, and of course, rain! However, we all know what April showers bring to us in May.

The children at Berrybrook will be watching for signs of flowers, and SPRING. With warmer weather's return, there will be more outdoor experiences available for them. We will be planting grass and flowers, measuring and observing them as they grow. Children can observe the new growth of forsythia and pussy willows as they drive around their town. Look for projects involving these trees and bushes that your child will be making at school.

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.

We will be identifying robins as well. You will most likely hear your child singing the catchy tune, "The Red, Red Robin", and possibly demonstrating sign language for some of the lyrics.

**When The Red, Red
Robin
Comes Bob, Bob
Bobbin' Along**



When the red, red robin comes
Bob, bob, bobbin' along, along.
There'll be no more sobbin' when
He starts throbbin' his
old, sweet song.
Wake up, wake up, you sleepy head;
Get up, get up, get out of bed.
Cheer up, cheer up - the sun is red.
Live, love, laugh and be happy!

What am I to do
When I'm walkin' through fields of flow'rs.
Rain may glisten, but still I listen
For hours and hours.
I'm just a kid again, doin' what I did again.
Singin' a song.
When the red, red robin
Comes bob, bob, bobbin' along.

One of the cornerstones of the curriculum at Berrybrook is the study of nature. Last fall, children had the opportunity to study the life cycle of pumpkins. Currently they are learning how sap is tapped from the maple tree here at Berrybrook. Teachers know to tap the tree when the days are above freezing, and the nights are below freezing.

The children had all five senses engaged once they viewed the sap flowing! They saw sap flowing, then touched the tree and the free flowing sap, they heard the steady "plop" of the sap in the bucket. What does the sap taste like? There were varying reviews! Finally – the delicious smelling sap as it boils down to syrup.

All of this culminated in a delicious traditional "Sugar on Snow" party which is based on a book, "Sugar On Snow",

written in 1964 by Nancy Dingman Watson. Donuts, pickles, ice cream (snow) with REAL maple syrup from our tree was enjoyed by all!

Please remember to send in clean blown eggs next week. The children will be experiencing another longstanding tradition at Berrybrook – painting eggs.

The full moon – April 18th
Planets also visible this month

The Second Year Teachers,
Miss Bent, Mrs. Caddle, Mrs. Fosdick,
Mrs. LaForest, Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Neal, Mrs. Rosen and Mrs. Swan



Berrybrook
discover | play | learn

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.

Don't forget to check your email for
information and application. We also have
applications available in the office.

Welcome Brooke Fraga!
**Congratulations to Reilly Fraga (in
the 2 Day Class) and her family on
their new addition!**

Board of Directors

Now that the weather is getting slightly warmer, and hopefully the snow is gone, it's time to start thawing out and getting ready for spring. The school year is getting closer to the end, families are starting to plan their summer activities, and spring-time sports are about to start up again for the kids. As a dad, I sometimes think about all of things I try to do with my son, sometimes wearing myself out. Between karate, soccer, t-ball, swimming lessons, and my full-time job, it's amazing how much free time I have when I didn't even know I had it. While I'm not doing all of these things every day, and they do take a lot of time, I wouldn't give them up for anything. My son has fun, and I get the benefit of knowing he's getting my best effort. As each day passes, even though I'm usually tired at the end of it, I know it's worth it, and he appreciates it (at least he will eventually!). He's also doing extremely well in the first-grade, and much of that can be directly attributed to his attending Berrybrook only a few short years ago.

I consider Berrybrook to be a very special place, and am proud to serve on its Board of Directors. Several years ago, when my wife and I were searching for a preschool to send our son to, I remember my wife mentioning Berrybrook, which was one of many potential schools on our list. "What's Berrybrook?" I recall saying, having not heard of it before. Fast-forwarding to today, I can say that Berrybrook is a place that cares deeply about its children, its staff, its history, and strives to provide the absolute best education as possible. Always wanting to provide the best for my kids, I feel the decision to send my son to Berrybrook couldn't have been better. I remember very clearly how my son would come home every day from Berrybrook with a big smile on his face, full of stories of the day's activity, the friends he made, and his wonderful teachers.

A few years have passed since my son completed his time at Berrybrook, and he is excelling at school, sports, and is an all-around good kid. As a parent I couldn't be more proud of him than I am, and the solid foundation built while at Berrybrook has greatly contributed to this. A few years from now I will have the pleasure of my daughter attending Berrybrook, and I'm sure she will come home each day with the same smiles and wonder...

Derek Monroe
Berrybrook Board of Directors

Board of Directors Strategic Planning Update

Greetings, Berrybrook Families!

The Strategic Planning Committee continues to forge ahead with help from the staff and the community. In addition to a review of our work with the Board of Directors, we also offered a community forum this month. Although there was a small number who attended, the forum was helpful in collecting more information from the perspective of Berrybrook families. Thank you so much to those who attended!

The Strategic Planning Committee has been meeting regularly since January, and we are very pleased with the amount of information we have collected. The task of establishing a new strategic plan is large; there are many aspects to cover just in the operation of the School, let alone providing all involved an opportunity to voice opinions and suggestions. With help from the Board of Directors, the staff, and the

community, our work over these first eight weeks has been to create a list of priority items. We have identified two main categories: Programming and Buildings & Grounds. These categories will help us further collect specific data and get us closer to action steps. The Committee has designed an on-line survey for parents and we are hoping that every family will participate. The Committee will analyze the data to best approach the feasibility of using space and resources to offer additional programming options to families. The Committee will also collect and analyze data to best approach the maintenance and use of our buildings and grounds. There have been many ideas proposed in our first two months of work.

Thank you again to all of who have participated in this process. Please know that no decisions have been made up to this date. We remain open to receiving ideas and suggestions; you can always email me (mlongsjo@comcast.net).

We look forward to our next steps. April will bring more progress toward our end goal of a Strategic Plan document that will help guide our School for the next five to ten years.

Sincerely,
Mark Longsjo,
for the Board of Directors

The 9th and last 2010-2011
tuition payment is now due.

2 Day \$ 235.00
3 Day \$ 345.00
4 Day \$ 428.00
5 Day \$ 505.00

Thank you!

Parent Discussion Group News!

"Dads Night Out" Informative....
Up Next, "Moms Night Out"!

Our annual "Dads Night Out" March Parent Discussion Group was a success with Dads who came with concerns on fostering father-daughter relationships, questioning the effectiveness of time-outs, balancing the challenge of getting different age children to bed and following through on parental requests. These Dads left with ideas on practicing validation and respect, fostering self-pride using non-approval statements, organizing family meetings to solve day to day problems and focusing on choice for children and consistency of parental expectations.

Now, it's the Moms turn!

ALL MOMS!

Please join us for our
Moms Night Out

Tuesday, April 26, 2011

Refreshments 7:00 pm Discussion 7:15
pm

We welcome you to come for an opportunity to gather together and discuss future transitions for which your family may be preparing such as summer vacation, a new school year, new baby, new home, etc. Most importantly, always bring to our Parent Discussion Group any questions, concerns or challenges you may have...other parents are probably going through similar experiences.

We can all learn from each other

Looking forward to seeing you there!

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

Berrybrook Parents' Association

Save the date of Tuesday May 10, 2011 4-6:30 pm (rain date May 11) for the First BBQ of the Season at the **Berrybrook Spring Fling!** Bring your picnic blanket and family to share in some fun and an easy BBQ dinner.

We will be planning this event at our next meeting Thursday evening, April 14th. Please plan on attending this meeting and let us know how you might like to volunteer for the Spring Fling. You can also check out the BPA board outside the Multi purpose Room to participate in this wonderful Berrybrook tradition.

The BPA had a wonderful turn out for the first mom's night out and we're encouraged to try to get another one on the calendar before the school year is over. Keep your eyes open for e-mail reminder for a night out!

The children were busy again this past month with many new and traditional visitors. Maureen Haley came with some young Irish Step Dancers, and the Soule Homestead visited with a few animals and gave all children the opportunity to spin their own wool! Dr. Claire, veterinarian and Charlie's mom, came and gave a presentation to classes about animals and what happens to them at their doctor's office! Thank you again to all parents who have donated dues and participated in our other fund raising activities to help support all of the BPA enrichment programs.

I would also like to let all the parents, gardeners and green thumbs know about our new "**Share Your Garden**" event here at Berrybrook. During the week of May 9-13, bring in any extra perennials, bulbs, and plants that you would like to share with another family. The idea is, many gardeners are clearing and dividing plants this time of

year so bring in your extra plants, and take another variety home to your garden!

There will be an area marked off by the inside of the main gate for families to drop off plants and if you could label your flowers as to name, color and needs, that would be helpful for the person who you will be sharing your garden.

Please congratulate Allyson Frazier who has agreed to serve as the 2011-2012 BPA President and Heather Canty who has volunteered to be Vice President. Cheryl Kilduff will be coordinating BPA family events again next year. There are other opportunities to volunteer for the BPA next year. Please get in touch with Mrs. Frazier, Mrs. Canty or Mrs. Keeley if you have any questions about the BPA.

The next BPA meeting is scheduled for April 14 at 7 PM.

Thank you very much-
Mimi Gallagher

School Pictures

Please mark your calendars with the dates for school pictures:

Tuesday, April 26, 3 Day & 4 Day

Thursday, April 28, 2 Day & 5 Day

Sandy Krupa Photography will be taking pictures again this year. More information will be sent home soon!

Spring In New England

Cynthia C. Dunn

“It’s gooey! It’s slippery! It’s gloppy!” What can it be? A parent might say, “It’s messy. You’ll get all dirty. You’ll track it all over the car. Get out of it”. Have you guessed yet? It’s mud! And it is all of these things and many more.

To a preschooler, mud is very, very interesting. Playing in the mud is different from playing in sand, either wet or dry, or playing on the grass, or on the playground wood chips. Making mud is a scientific experiment. Many aspects of learning are taking place while playing in the mud. Children first and foremost enjoy a new sensory experience. Mud feels different from clay and play doh, it feels different from sand. You can change its consistency - add more dirt or sand, and the mud gets thicker. By adding twigs or pebbles, mud becomes coarser. Mixing in more water makes the mud juicier.

Language skills are emerging as children are playing in the mud. When observing children engaged in a muddy setting, listen to their vocalizations as they search for familiar and new words to describe the delicious way the mud feels. These statements lead to discussions among the young scientists to help them make sense of their experiments. Observational skills are at the forefront of scientific endeavors. Mud play involves sight sound, touch, and smell. Occasionally, taste is involved, but most children don’t really enjoy the taste. Some mud makes a heavy plopping sound; other mud makes a light plipping sound. Mud can feel smooth, or grainy or slippery. Some mud feels cold, some mud is very warm.

Children use math skills in the mud puddle. How much more mud will fit into the bucket before it over flows? How can I make the mud stop oozing off the shovel? Mud play is also a good way to explore cause and effect. What happens when I drop a rock into the mud? Is it different from when I drop a rock into water? If I jump in the mud puddle, where does the mud go? If mud is left out in the sun, what will happen?

Imaginary play also emerges while playing in the mud. It can be used for cooking on a campfire, or made into mud pies to bake in a kitchen. It can be a dinosaur bog, or a frog home, or a construction site, or anything the imagination can conjure up. I remember watching my own children using mud and acorns out in the yard to make a stew. This stew became the focus of many weeks’ worth of outdoor play. They couldn’t wait to get home from school to return to their outdoor world and the stew. When we moved to a new state, it was very important that the stew pot get packed carefully. I explained that they could invent a new stew mixture at our new home. And they sure did!

Giving children the time and freedom to get messy allows them time to really explore. The joy on their faces and gleeful tones in their voices tells it all. When we provide opportunities for our children to use all of their senses while engaged in play, we are helping them to become active, engaged learners. Play clothes are a must. Soap and water are great tools for cleanup time. Happy Mud Trails!

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