Did Maria Montessori Wear Khaki?

by John Long, Head of School

According to Brin, the Montessori approach instilled in them self-direction and self-motivation, an inclination to challenge the status quo and to do things differently. We at Post Oak recognize these characteristics as common to Montessori children (and adults).

Montessori fosters creativity, self-confidence, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

So it was no surprise to learn that Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, also attended Montessori school. A recent issue of *Business Week* said this about him: “As a preschooler, Jeffrey P. Bezos displayed an unmatched single-mindedness. By his mother’s account, the young Bezos got so engrossed in the details of activities at his Montessori school that teachers had to pick him up in his chair to move him to new tasks. It’s a trait that goes a long way toward explaining why the company he founded, Amazon.com Inc. (AMZN), has survived to become the most dominant retailer on the Internet.... Says Paul Saffo, research director at the think tank The Institute for the Future, ‘Jeff Bezos was the first one to figure out what the power of the Internet was for selling.’”

Actually, we at Post Oak would have allowed young Jeffrey to continue with his work rather than moving him to new tasks. It’s a trait that goes a long way toward explaining why the company he founded, Amazon.com Inc. (AMZN), has survived to become the most dominant retailer on the Internet.... Says Paul Saffo, research director at the think tank The Institute for the Future, ‘Jeff Bezos was the first one to figure out what the power of the Internet was for selling.’”

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About The Post Oak News

- The Post Oak News is published weekly while school is in session.
- It is distributed each Friday to the oldest child in your family.
- It is also available at the school's web site: www.postoakschool.org
- The deadline for material to be considered for inclusion each week is 5 pm on the Tuesday preceding the publication day.
- Please send text or images in electronic form (email or disk) to Post Oak Director of External Affairs Joseph Lockett: josephlockett@postoakschool.org
- You may also call Joseph if you have any questions: 713-661-6688 ×149.

Now, even laborers need education. They must understand the complex problems of our times, otherwise they are just a pair of hands... [with] no head.

Meanwhile, the intellectuals of today are all cripples as long as their hands remain useless....

Men with hands and no head, and men with head and no hands, are equally out of place in the modern community.

— Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence
The 2008 Post Oak Fund: Outlining Excellence

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<th>Class</th>
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<td>Hacker</td>
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Total parent participation as of Jan. 10: **97%**

Only 7 families to get to 100% participation!

Congratulations to:

Class Captain Laura Baird &
Elementary Teacher Maya Pinto,
whose class has reached 100% parent participation!

Infant Community Transition to Primary: Parent Meeting

On Thursday, January 17, from 9:00–10:30 am, Lower School Director Kathy Long will present to parents of Infant Community children the transition process for children moving into Primary.

If your child is currently enrolled in Infant Community, then this class is for you. Here is an opportunity to prepare yourself for the changes that come with this move. The class will include a brief tour of the Primary pods so we can compare the similarities and differences between the two levels.

Kathy has offered this class for the past five years, and parents have found it to be helpful, informative and reassuring. RSVP to Kathy Long.

Registering Siblings for 2008–2009

We are still accepting applications for siblings of current students. The deadline is January 18 and, although a tour is not necessary when submitting an application for a sibling, I would like the opportunity to meet you if we haven’t done so already.

Don’t forget to sign up for our ongoing parenting classes: a good way to meet prospective parents, and an even better way to share your own (or your child’s) “Montessori Moments.”

I look forward to those applications!

Vivian Blum
Director of Admission

The Post Oak School’s application deadline is Friday, January 18.
A Letter to Primary Parents

Dear Primary Parents:

When you first applied for admission to Post Oak for your children to enter Infant Community or Primary, most of you spent much time and effort investigating your choices. Many of you attended the prospective parent classes taught by Kathy Long; some of you participated in the infant-parent classes led by Susan Tracy; others attended Montessori Journey, Alumni Night, Redirecting Children’s Behavior, or some of the other events open to parents and prospective parents.

In moving from Primary to Lower Elementary, your children will also move from the Lower School to the Upper School at Post Oak. Even more significantly, they move from the first stage of development (0–6 years of age) to the second stage of development (6–12 years of age). Your children will change. They will look different; they will act different; and they will think differently.

Some parents say that Post Oak is the best preschool in Houston, but when their children get to first grade it is time for “real school.” Real school? What they mean is school like we attended when we were children, traditional school. Other parents echo the alumni couple I met in the grocery store over the weekend. They said, “Many parents believe that the Infant Community and Primary are the gem of Post Oak. They’re wrong. The Lower School is fabulous, but the Elementary and Middle School are the gem of Post Oak. When we compare what kids are doing at Post Oak with what kids in traditional schools are doing, there’s no comparison. And it is the Middle School where all of that comes together for the kids.”

As you approach the transition from Lower School to Upper School, we encourage you to be as thorough in your approach as you were when you first applied for admission. To aid you in that process, here are a few upcoming events:

**Parent to Parent**
**Tue, January 15, 7 pm**

Laurie and Leland Fondren, alumni parents (not the couple in the example above), will discuss their perspective on the Post Oak experience. The Fondrens’ three daughters completed eighth grade at Post Oak. Currently Lauren is a junior at Middlebury College, Brittany is a freshman at Southwestern University, and Catherine is a junior at St. John’s School.

This meeting will be held off campus, at the home of Farrell & Stuart Saunders:

**Achievement Testing**
**Tue, January 22, 7 pm**

Dr. Sid Barish from the Educational Records Bureau (ERB), will discuss the Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP-4), the new achievement test that Post Oak is adopting this year.

**Bluebonnet Book Night**
**Thu, January 24, 7 pm**

You might be interested to see and hear from Elementary students directly in this celebration of reading.

**Upper School Coffee**
**Wed, February 6, 9 am**

Upper School Director Jeff Schneider will show how math is taught in the Montessori Elementary classroom.

**Classroom observation**
**Almost any day!**

We encourage you to observe Elementary and Middle School classes. Contact Upper School Director Jeff Schneider to make arrangements.

Please RSVP at the front desk for these parent education events. Childcare can also be arranged at that time.

Sincerely,

John Long
Head of School

POPA Coffee Work Day
next Tuesday, January 15

Come to the Aftercare Room after drop-off to meet other parents and work on projects to benefit classroom teachers and the school.

Green Team

The next Green Team meeting will be Tuesday, January 15, at 12:30 pm. All are welcome; we will review the survey of cleaning products used around the school.
Bluebonnet Evening Event

Voting and Awards / Dessert Potluck

Thursday, January 24th, 7:00 – 8:30

All are invited. Come enjoy an evening to celebrate the success of our students participating in the Bluebonnet reading program.

Students will display and read their book summaries, vote on their favorite Bluebonnet book, and receive awards for outstanding achievements.

Childcare will be provided for current Post Oak students in Primary and Upper School.

Dear Mom & Dad,

You are invited to come see our Primary classroom on Thursday, January 31, at 6:00 pm for Primary Parent–Child Night.

We can’t wait to show you our work at school.

There will be childcare for my siblings. Just call the front office.

With love,

Your Primary child

Did You Get Your Flyer With This Newsletter?

The Dad’s Club will hold their first meeting on January 22. See the flyer that came home with this issue of The Post Oak News for details.

For more information, contact Jeff Sills.

Coming Changes in Standardized Testing

Dr. Sid Barish, vice president of Educational Records Bureau, will be on campus on Tuesday, January 22, for an evening presentation and discussion on the Comprehensive Testing Program, fourth edition (CTP 4), the new standardized test we will use this spring.

This is a special opportunity for all Post Oak parents (testing occurs in grades 2–8) to ask questions and learn about how the CTP 4 will benefit our students.

Please mark your calendars: Tuesday, January 22, 7–8 pm.

Childcare will be provided for current Post Oak students in Primary and Upper School.
Infant–Parent Classes

at the Motherhood Center

Session II classes begin on Monday, January 14. The “A” class, for infants who are 2 months to crawling, will be held on Thursday afternoons. The “B” class, for infants who are crawling to walking, will be held on Monday and Tuesday afternoons.

Spaces are available in all classes. Registration information is on the school website under “School Community.”

All classes are taught by Post Oak Infant Community Teacher Susan Tracy at the Motherhood Center, located at the corner of Timmons and West Alabama. Please contact Kathy Long if you have any questions about registration.

High-School Interns
Watch and Learn

Sarah Gordon and Ashley Wolf are seniors at The Emery/Weiner School, but for this week of their school’s “Winterim Term,” they are Montessori classroom assistants, Sarah in Jessica Wagner’s Infant Community and Ashley in Errol Pinto’s Upper Elementary.

Sarah Gordon notes, “I had no idea what the Montessori program was going to be like. They’re absorbing everything; it’s really amazing how caring and nurturing they are at this young age. It’s actually kind of mind-boggling how mature they are. I don’t think I was that mature at that age.”

Ashley Wolf plans on studying education next year at the University of Arizona: “If I could do elementary school again, I would definitely go to a Montessori school, because I think it’s a really cool way to learn and be independent.”

Redirecting Children’s Behavior
The Gentle Art of Parenting

Are you tired of yelling at your children?
Have you said “NO!” more than three times today?
Do you ever feel like you’re losing the battles?
Then this is the class for you!

This six week, fifteen-hour course guides parents to use discipline as a process of teaching children self-control and responsibility. Redirecting Children’s Behavior is not “tips for moms and dads” or a “parent support group”—it is a positive, powerful, informative, and fun training course which gives a complete system for handling every situation in which adults interact with children from infancy to adolescence. You will see it bringing positive changes to your parenting and your family from the first class onward. Read more on the web, at www.incaf.com.

**Dates:** Jan. 22 – Feb. 26 (six Tuesday evenings)

**Time:** 6:30 to 9:00 pm

**Place:** Post Oak’s Atrium

**Cost:** $225 per person, $325 per couple

Includes book and workbook

The course instructor is Deborah Fry, Ph.D, a certified instructor for the International Network for Children and Families (INCAF). Deborah gives talks and seminars for parents, teachers, and people involved with children and families, and teaches three-year-olds at Westminster Weekday School. With her enthusiastic speaking style and sense of humor, she helps make the art of parenting and working with children enjoyable. For class registration call Deborah at 713-840-8663.
Did Maria Montessori Wear Khaki?
by John Long, Head of School
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During the holiday break I got out *The Post Oak School Cookbook* to look for a recipe. (For those of you who have never seen one, current Post Oak parent Jenny Murphy led a committee several years ago to produce an amazing cookbook of, by, and for the school.) Its introduction quotes Julia Child, the author and cook often credited with ending the primacy of the meat-and-potatoes cuisine in America. In it she says, “Influenced, perhaps, by my early experience at a Montessori school… I am all for encouraging children to work with their hands.”

“Influenced by my early experience at a Montessori school.” Is that the chorus of the creative, culture-changing entrepreneur? I wonder if they wore khaki, too?

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A Crabby Day in Aftercare

Maya Pinto enthralled the students in Aftercare with the Japanese folk tale of the Heike crab: the “samurai crabs” that seem to bear human faces on their carapaces. Such interludes are common in the Aftercare environment, in between crafts, cooking, and opportunities to work silently on homework.

Exploration of world cultures is an important part of the Upper School curriculum. Students in Aftercare are riveted by Maya Pinto’s telling of the Heike legend, “The Samurai Crab.” (Photo by Asenet Garcia: Heike crab added afterward!)

Nanny Needed

Looking for a housekeeper/nanny to do housecleaning, ironing, laundry, etc., and some cooking. She has to love kids and be a happy, active woman. – Liliana Walji.

Housekeeper Available

Our housecleaner of 12 years has days available. She is reliable and owns her own transportation. We recommend her. If interested, please email me (Phyllis Epps) at

Post Oak Green Tip

The Houston Arboretum & Nature Center will host their 2008 Arbor Day Celebration on Saturday, January 19, from 10 am to 4 pm. For more information, call 713-681-8433 or visit www.houstonarboretum.org.

Important Dates for 2008–2009

Watch *Post Oak News* and our website for more about next year’s academic calendar. Here are a few dates we have already determined:

6/9–8/1 Summer School
Aug. 17–22 First week for Elementary and Middle School
Aug. 25–29 First week for Infant Community and Primary
Nov. 26–28 Thanksgiving Break
12/22–1/5 Winter Break
Jan. 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday
Feb. 13 Teacher in-service day
Feb. 16 Presidents Day holiday
Mar. 16–20 Spring Break
May 25 Memorial Day holiday
May 29 Last day of school
Skater Cites Post Oak’s Influence

by Leslie Contreras


Like all ice skaters, Becky Bereswill falls on the hard ice with every new jump she tries in practice. But as a competitive ice skater, the 17-year-old Episcopal High School junior also is preparing to compete against major names in the field and has to train her body to increase speed and jumps at daily practice—in addition to keeping grades up in honors classes.

She cites a day-by-day philosophy of focusing on specific goals to get her through the stress—and the major challenge of skating competition.

“For me, I think it’s been having certain goals that you want to achieve and you work for every day,” she said. Focusing on specific goals is what, she said, “helps you get through.”

It’s a simple approach to a major goal. The teenager will compete against former Olympic ice skaters at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in St. Paul, Minn. the week of Jan. 20. She placed second in the 2008 Midwestern Sectional Championships in Rochester Hills, Mich. in November, and first place in the 2008 Southwestern Regional Championships in Dallas. She will compete against 21 top skaters in the senior women’s section and could potentially be scouted for the Olympic team.

As immense as this competition seems, Becky is solidly grounded, and shares the limelight with her twin sister, Allison, another accomplished skater. Professional skating is not a dream she’s had since she was little but something she said “slowly” grew from her training as a ballerina. And she doesn’t really consider becoming a career ice skater, adding: “I haven’t really thought about it that much. It’s something we really love doing.”

Her focus and ability to concentrate on what’s important is something her mother, Kim Bereswill, attributes to a Montessori education at The Post Oak School in Bellaire, where both daughters attended from ages 2 to 15.

“Montessori was the turning point in their being able to skate,” she said. The Montessori method taught her daughters the ability to “focus for long periods of time,” said the twins’ mother, who is a gymnastics instructor for the city of West University Place. With Montessori-learned skills, she added, “something catches your eye, (and) you’re able to go the distance.”

She recalled how, even as toddlers, her daughters learned to balance bean bags on their hands and head, and participated in exercises that required long periods of concentration and the ability to apply corrections—skills that are easily transferred to ice skating. “When she gets into that zone, she focuses,” she said.

The ability to focus is only part of her training. Skating is an intense cardio workout, with its bursts of energy required for jumps and sudden spins, and both girls participate in track and field to gain strength and muscle, in addition to practicing two to four hours a week at a skating rink in Sharpstown.

Her daughters both stand out for their ability as performers, gained from their dance training, Kim Bereswill said. For her long program, Becky will be skating to the “Cinderella Ballet” by Sergei Prokofiev, inspired by her performance as an angel with the Houston Ballet.

Allison, who competed and qualified for the Junior Level Final Rounds at the 2008 Southwestern Championships in Dallas, said that she loves fast music and the feeling of flying when she jumps. “I love skating every day,” she said. “I love coming into practice and setting a new goal.”

She puts some of that focus to work in student government, spending time as one of two prefects in her class and working on council and community projects.

Becky is focusing mainly on her upcoming competition, which is her first national skating event. But ask her if she’s nervous, and you’ll get the same level-headed attitude. Before going on the ice, she said “I always get really nervous and I take my place.”

“The moment my music starts, I get relaxed. If you think about all your jumps, it won’t work.” So Becky plans to listen to the music like a ballerina, focus and skate.