The POST

VOLUME XX, NUMBER 21
A biweekly publication of
The Post Oak School

SUMMER AT POST OAK

JULY 20, 2015
Available online at
www.postoakschool.org
FOURTH OF JULY PARADE

Post Oak faculty, students, and parents celebrate Independence Day with a parade and festivities including popsicles and watermelon!

ALUMNI UPDATES

STEPHANIE STYLES, 2006

Striking newsboys in 1899 New York are the focal point of “Newsies,” but every musical needs a leading lady. That’s where Stephanie Styles comes in. In the national tour of the recent Broadway hit, Styles plays Katherine, the plucky cub reporter who champions the newsies and, as it happens, winds up in love with strike leader Jack Kelly, played by Dan DeLuca.

Born and raised in Houston, Styles graduated from Episcopal High School. She won the coveted Tommy Tune Award for best actress her senior year. She grew up performing at Main Street Theater, Masquerade Theatre, Generations and in Theater Under the Stars shows, as well as in the Houston Grand Opera/ New York City Opera production “The Little Prince.” She studied musical theater at the University of Michigan and graduated in 2014. It was between finals and her last day of classes that Styles auditioned and won her current role in “Newsies,” which launched its tour in October.

Read more online about this talented Post Oak Alum who graduated eighth grade here in 2006:

MIAMUNN, 2014

I am currently a rising sophomore at The Kinkaid School. My freshman year was such a great experience! I was involved in cheerleading, dance, and, most of all, theatre. I portrayed the role of Maggie in the high school musical, A Chorus Line, and it was so much fun. We were nominated for 12 Tommy Tune Awards: awards that are given to different high school musical theatre programs throughout Houston. We ended up winning 4 of the awards, including best musical! It was such a great experience.

I also just participated in my first musical in NYC! It was awesome. It was an off Broadway production called Perspectives. It was amazing performing on a New York stage, something I had always dreamed of. We even got a recognition on broadway.com, where they review all of the amazing Broadway shows! I hope to be back in New York soon.

I have been traveling a lot lately. I was most recently in NYC, and now I am spending a month in the Cayman Islands, something my family and I do every year. My next trip is Scotland, where I will be going to perform a show with a group of kids from school.

Do you have an Alumni update to share with The Post? We want to hear from you!

Please contact Vivian Blum, Admissions Director vivianblum@postoakschool.org

#postoakproud
Faculty Updates for 2015–2016

Middle School

Zach Belis will be joining the middle school team as a science teacher, relieving middle school director Jami Sweeney of that responsibility and allowing him to keep his focus on the big picture needs of the middle school and to provide more direct support for other middle school faculty. Zach has a BS in environmental studies from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. He was a middle school teacher with AmeriCorps and in addition, has experience working with students in an urban farming program. He is also interested in robotics.

Rachel Chetrit has been named a full-fledged, full-time middle school humanities teacher after serving as a long-term substitute in that role last year. Ms. Chetrit is a graduate of Vassar College, where she majored in history and political science. Growing up in France, she experienced the International Baccalaureate curriculum as a middle school and high school student, a background that is valuable as we prepare middle school students for the high school’s IB program.

Young Children’s Community (YCC)

After five years at Post Oak, YCC teacher Sarah Moudry is stepping away from day-to-day work in the classroom in order to focus on parent education. We are pleased that Sarah will continue to offer infant parent classes here at Post Oak. Jiny Gonzalez will take over duties as lead teacher in the half-day YCC. Jiny comes to Post Oak from Community Montessori School in Georgetown, Texas. She is AMI-trained at both YCC and primary levels and has seventeen years of classroom experience working with children from birth-6 years of age in Puerto Rico, Austin and Georgetown.

Full day YCC teacher Phoebe Yeager has relocated to Austin with her husband. We are grateful to Phoebe for the work she did during her five years at Post Oak. Primary teacher Emily Hansen will step into Phoebe’s position in August. Emily is completing her YCC training at the Montessori Institute (TMI) in Denver this summer and so, after nine years with her primary class (seven as the lead teacher), she will begin working with younger children, a goal that she set for herself several years ago as part of her Professional Growth Plan (PGP). Emily’s practical experience in primary will certainly enrich her work with the younger children as she moves to YCC.

Elementary

There is a change at Beth (Smith) Olitizky’s lower elementary classroom. Assistant/interim Jami Thompson has taken on a position as lead teacher at the Lumien (Montessori) School in East Dallas. Jami first came to Post Oak in 2007, and during the interim completed AMI elementary teacher training and an M.Ed. at the University of Hartford. We wish her great success as she moves north, taking the next step in her career and assuming new responsibilities as a lead teacher. Keri Rebuffini will return to Post Oak to work as Beth’s assistant/interim. Keri has eleven years’ experience working with primary and elementary students, and was an upper elementary lead teacher at Post Oak for two years before relocating to Italy. Now after seven years, we welcome her back to Houston with her husband, Mauro, and their two children, Emma and Lila.

For the past two years, Amanda Tee has been Simran Sood’s classroom assistant and during that time, she has developed a deep appreciation for Montessori education. Amanda is leaving Post Oak to pursue teacher training at the Houston Montessori Center (HMC) after which she plans to become a lead teacher in her own classroom. We will miss her. Devin Guiberson will be joining Simran Sood as her assistant. Devin has a BA in psychology from St. Edward’s University in Austin and an MS in Child Life and Family Centered Care — and is herself a Montessori child. She attended School of the Woods and St. Stephen’s Montessori School. In fact, she used to play basketball against the Bearkats when she was a middle school student at St. Stephen’s.

Orly Klok will move from the lower elementary classroom she pioneered seven years ago and return to the primary classroom where she served as a classroom assistant for her first five years at Post Oak. Orly will succeed Emily Hansen. Twelve years ago Orly said her goal was to take the AMI primary training here in Houston — as soon as we started a training center. And it was she who registered as the Houston Montessori Institute’s first student nine years later. This move is the realization of a long-term goal. We are grateful to Orly for pioneering a new lower elementary class when the need was there, while keeping alive her dream of returning to primary when the opportunity arose. Lindsay Mistretta, who has worked as Orly’s assistant these last three years, will become the lead teacher in that class. Lindsay came to us from Austin, where she was the lead teacher in a lower elementary classroom after completing her training at the Milwaukee Montessori Institute. She has brought enthusiasm and positive energy to her work over the past three years, and has built great rapport with the children as her role has steadily grown under Orly’s guidance. Suzette Vettrini will assist Lindsay. Suzette spent fifteen years studying (BA in political science and an MA in marketing) and working in Italy before returning to Houston. For the past year, Suzette has been a substitute teacher at Post Oak. We’re pleased that she’s stepping into a full-time position with us.

Amani Muhawesh, assistant for elementary afterschool, is moving to a primary environment, has informed me that she will be with us through the end of the summer, but will not be returning in the fall. We are grateful for her kind and cheerful presence, and wish her well in the future. We have begun recruitment efforts to identify her successor.

High School

Shoulong Zhou has taken a full-time position in Phoenix, Arizona and is leaving Houston and Post Oak after three years. Sean initiated the high school Mandarin program, and wrote the IB curriculum for us. We wish him well and are actively looking for his successor.

Administrative Staff

Rachel Dupuis has joined us as our communications coordinator, filling a position that Elaine Schweizer has been helping out with on a part-time basis this spring. We’re grateful for Elaine’s talented work and grateful that Rachel has joined us on a full-time basis.

One final personnel note: I informed Jessica Jackson that her position as development coordinator has been eliminated. Over the past two years, Ms. Jackson has taken the lead with many of our school events, as well as with alumni outreach — efforts that will need to be reassigned or scaled back.

Summer Training Update

Houston Montessori Institute (HMI) celebrated the graduation of its first class on June 26th. There were fifteen graduates including Post Oak faculty Elizabeth (Matthews) Dickson, Rebecca Duran, Lilia Garza, Orly Klok, and Monica Moreno, former middle school teacher Sanila Madiman, former associate director Maurien Caron Zanerippe and Post Oak parent Zara Dossani. It should also be noted that the external examiners from AMI, Joel Bettman and Coral Ruiz, gave the trainees and their trainers, Larry Quade and Mirani Smith, high marks for their performance. In fact, the oral exams are as much an assessment of the trainers as of their students. This Monday, without missing a beat, the second course kicked off with a class of twenty-two trainees including Post Oak assistant Katherine Guasti-Nava.

Other faculty are involved in professional training outside Houston. Upper elementary assistant Sandra DeLeon is completing her elementary training in Minneapolis. Emily Hansen is completing her YCC training in Denver. Middle school faculty Rachel Chetrit, Monica Lundeen and Jami Sweeney, and high school teacher Andrea Novik, went to Chihuahua, Mexico to participate in the month-long AMI NAMTA orientation to adolescent studies. Upper elementary assistant Irma Alarcon is also in Mexico this summer to continue her AMI primary training. We wish them all safe travel and engaging study.

John Long, Head of School
WHAT’S HAPPENING in SUMMER SCHOOL

SPASH DAYS & SPANISH IMMERSION
Houston’s long, hot, humid days of summer are definitely upon us now. To stay cool, active and connected to friends, many children are here at Post Oak for our summer program. The full day YCC is running smoothly, serving a group of our youngest students. Bubbles and water play make Friday’s splash days a huge hit with the toddlers. Two primary classes, one in English and one in Spanish are full to capacity with lots of learning underway and new friendships being established. The primary children always look forward to cooling off in the sprinklers on the playground every Friday and enjoying watermelon and popsicles with their friends.

BRAVE NEW WORLD OF ELEMENTARY
Our Transition to Elementary class is abuzz with the excitement of newness and change for our incoming first graders. Their enthusiasm for work is truly amazing!

KITCHEN CHEMISTRY
And this summer, we are especially pleased to be able to offer a summer program at the elementary level once again. Our elementary students have participated in a wide range of new activities thus far. During the first week of summer camp in June, elementary students created several unique art pieces using a variety of mixed media under the guidance of Saida Fagal, our art specialist; practiced Spanish lessons using puppets they created under the direction of Ninfa Bridges, our Spanish specialist; and experimented using simple household materials in Debbie Nickerson’s Kitchen Chemistry class to create polymers, make plastic from milk and vinegar, and explore with acids and bases.

For the second week of summer camp, Mrs. Nickerson led a Squishy Circuits class where students had the opportunity to mix common kitchen ingredients to make insulative and conductive dough for their electronic circuit experiments. They built circuits to power multi-colored LED lights, a motor, a buzzer and a fan.

CAMP INVENTION
Post Oak hosted Camp Invention for the very first time during the third week of the summer. Mrs. Olitzki and Ms. Mistretta led the camp which gave students the opportunity to explore connections between science, technology, engineering and innovation. Students took apart a wide variety of small electronics and reconnected them to batteries to make them work again; built go-carts from simple materials and tested them on an obstacle course; designed simple rockets and explored ways to make them go higher and further; and participated in many other fun filled activities that emphasized creative and innovative thinking, problem solving and teamwork. Camp Invention was very well liked by all who participated in it and we look forward to hosting it again next summer.

ENGINEERING FOR KIDS
Elementary students were busy in the gym kitchen during the first weeks of July as Lindsay Mistretta and Anita Tai Mahmood both shared their culinary talents with them. Mrs. Nickerson led the elementary students through a study of the history and the main types of bridges, arch, beam and suspension. Teams of students constructed truss and suspension bridges of their own. For the next three weeks, Engineering for Kids is here at Post Oak. This week students are studying The Engineering of Power and Energy where they will work together to harness energy from some not-so-obvious energy sources. Upcoming topics are Robotics Mission to Mars and Forensic Engineers. Summer school continues until July 31.

by: Miriam Winton, Summer School Director
Eighth Grade Moving Up
Post Oak students celebrate the end of the year and transitioning to a new level.
2015–2016 Important Dates

Aug 17–21 First week for Elementary, Middle School, & High School
Aug 24–28 First week for Young Children’s Community & Primary
Sep 7 Labor Day school closed
Oct. 12 Columbus Day school closed
Nov. 25–27 Thanksgiving Break school closed
Dec. 21–Jan. 4 Winter Break school closed
Jan 18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day school closed
Feb 15 President’s Day school closed
Mar 14–18 Spring Break (only students with expanded year contracts attend)
March 25 Good Friday school closed
May 26 High School Commencement (2016 graduating class)
May 27 Last day of school (to be confirmed)

Post Oak’s Houston Montessori Institute (HMI) announces an AMI Assistants Course beginning September 9 at the Post Oak Bissonnnet Campus.

This seven week AMI Assistants Course is ideal for parents, administrators, nannies, assistants at any level interested in learning about Montessori principles.

Covers a wide range of Montessori principles including:

- The planes of Development
- The Young Child’s mind from 0–6 years
- The importance of order
- Development of Movement
- Independence
- Prepared Environment
- Freedom and Discipline
- Social Development
- Observation
- Music and Art
- Maintenance of the environment (indoors and outdoors)

**DATES:**

**Seven Wednesdays:**
6:30–8:30 p.m. (Sept 9, 16, 23, October 7, 14, 28, Nov 4)

**Seven Saturdays:**
9 – 5:00 p.m. (Sept 12, 19, 26, Oct 3, 10, Nov 7, 14)

**FEE:** $750

To register or for more information, contact Early Childhood Director, Mirani Smith
713-660-6688
miranismith@postoakschool.org

AMI
Association Montessori Internationale, Amsterdam

AME WITH THE POST OAK SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The Dads Club is part of the Post Oak Parents Association. This group meets for community building and social events. In the past there have been activities such as community service projects, group gatherings at sporting events, Wednesday night basketball support of school wide events, and lots of poker. Many thanks to Post Oak parent, Michael Foertsch, who has organized activities for the past two years.

This coming year we have a trio of parents who will take the lead on organizing Dads Club events. Please welcome to this leadership role: Rick Evans, Blair Garrou, and Aaron Thomas.

Additional, smaller Dads Club events will pop up throughout the year. If you have an event idea or would just like to get involved, contact Rick Blair or Aaron (contact info in My Backpack).

#PostOakDadsRule!

We are looking forward to an exciting year for Post Oak dads, moms, AND students!

Christina Kopanidis-Cantu
Development Director
christina.cantu@postoakschool.org

POST OAK DADS UNITE!

The guys met this summer with POPA Chair Stacey Martin and Alison Wong to plan the main Dads Club events which are also listed on the school calendar coming out later this month.

- Tuesday, September 1 – Kick Off Social Event
Location and time to be announced
- Saturday, November 7 – Dads Club Weekday, dads with children
- Thursday, February 4 – Poker Night
on the backfield sponsored by the Dads Club (a fun event for the whole family)

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**CALENDAR**

**JULY 26–AUGUST 1**

**Fri** 7/31  
Summer school ends

**AUGUST 9–AUGUST 15**

**Mon–Fri** 8/10–8/14  
Teachers & Assistants return

**AUGUST 16–AUGUST 22**

**Mon–Fri** 8/17–8/21  
Check Orientation Schedule for level start dates

**TUE** 8/18  
HS Back to School Luncheon

**Wed** 8/20  
HS Parent Orientation 7–8 p.m.

**Fri** 8/21  
Primary/YCC classroom walk-through

**AUGUST 23–AUGUST 29**

**Mon** 8/24–8/28  
HS Odyssey Trip

**Tue** 8/25  
Middle School Parent Orientation 7–8 p.m.

**Wed** 8/26  
Elementary Parent Orientation 7–8 p.m.

**Thurs** 8/27  
Bearkats Sign-Up Day

**Fri** 8/28  
New Parent Welcome Coffee 8:45–10 a.m.

**Room Parent Meeting** 10:00 –11 a.m.

**NOTICE BOARD**

**BIG WORK SPECIAL EVENT**

Join us for the official  
*Groundbreaking Ceremony* for construction on the new high school building.  
**TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2015 AT 2PM • 1010 AUTREY**

**GALA AUCTION EXPIRATION DATES!**

If you won an auction item at the Gala, make sure to check the expiration date. Most Gala Auction items allow you one year to use a certificate or service, but some have a 6 month deadline. For questions, please email christinacantu@postoakschool.org.

**TYPE LIKE A PRO**

Typing Pal Online offers a personalized approach to learning keyboard skills. We encourage all Post Oak parents, students and faculty to make use of our resources. Contact tech@postoakschool.org for login info and visit the website at: http://school.typingpal.com?TYPSPAOAK

**SHOW YOUR BEARKAT SPIRIT FOR THE 2015–2016 SCHOOL YEAR!**

The Post Oak School’s logos are available at Lands’ End for embroidery or printing on your Lands’ End purchases. If you would like to show your Post Oak spirit by wearing clothing with either the school logo or the Bearkats team logo, contact Lands’ End School Division directly at 1-800-469-2222 or online at landsend.com.

Post Oak’s school number is: 900115890

The logo numbers are:

- Post Oak logo # 0843027K
- High School logo # 1112656K
- Bearkats logo # 0729937K

**ABOUT THE POST**

The Post appears every other Friday of the regular school year.

You can receive a printed copy from your oldest child, or a PDF version online.

Submit letters, articles, or photos in electronic form by 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before publication to Communications Coordinator Rachel Dupuis (racheldupuis@postoakschool.org). If publication is on a Thursday due to school closure on Friday, then the deadline is 5:00 p.m. on the preceding Monday.

THE POST OAK SCHOOL was founded in 1963 and accredited by both the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)  
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