Time magazine’s cover story says, “It all starts with the teachers,” and wonders, “...why it’s so hard to find good ones.” The story resonates with Post Oak’s plan to open an AMI-accredited Montessori teacher training center in 2013, but first the background.

We have been living an education crisis since my own childhood, when the Soviet Union upstaged the United States and launched Sputnik, the first satellite. That was 1957 and the event ignited a firestorm of criticism directed toward American education and a series of initiatives aimed at reforming our schools. It is no coincidence that in the following year America’s oldest Montessori school was founded in Greenwich, Connecticut.

In short succession Montessori schools were established in nearly every major city in the United States. The Post Oak School opened in 1963 as “The Little School House,” the first Montessori school in Texas.

Fifty years later, our national resolve to reform education is fueled not by “the space race,” but by
economic competitiveness. In searching for answers to our current education woes, *Time* calls teaching “national service,” and wonders how we can recruit and train top-notch teachers. *Time* author John Cloud reports many of the criticisms of traditional university-based teacher education programs. In contrast, he describes attempts to attract new recruits to teaching: Ivy League graduates and career-changers from other professions. Two non-traditional, fast-track routes to teaching are alternative certification programs (ACP) and volunteer organizations like Teach for America (TFA) and the New Teacher Project (TNTP).

These efforts to induct a new cadre of teachers from the ranks of the best and brightest are both admirable and flawed. To call teaching a national service acknowledges the sense of mission felt by many teachers while at the same time revealing the inherent flaw of these well-intentioned induction programs. It suggests a temporary stint of volunteer work in the classroom before beginning a real career in business, medicine or law, and to further the image, the preparation program for these volunteer teachers could be a five-week crash course often compared to boot camp. This qualifies candidates for a first-year trial by fire in the classroom, what *Time* calls, “That First Awful Year.”

Yes, the best teachers enter the profession with a sense of mission. In his book *Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer writes of teaching as a vocation or a calling, and not merely a career. “Vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear.”

That is the starting point for the best of teachers, a sense of mission rooted not in ego but in service—the nation as *Time* suggests, but to this writer it feels deeper, more fundamental: service to the individual child before me, to all humankind, to our future as a culture and as a species.

Thinking in this way, we must take the farmer’s perspective, the long-term view. As Dr. Montessori said, we must look at the child before us and see the man he will become.

As a school, taking the long-term view has other implications as well. One such need is to cultivate the next generation of teachers. This must be more than a five-week course because teaching is both art and science, and teacher preparation must acknowledge its manifold complexity. Dr. Montessori trained teachers so that they would understand her observations of children as well as her educational methodology.

Today, AMI Montessori teacher training courses are an academic year in length or three summers. This is post-graduate work, not the traditional college of education course—and well beyond a five-week crash course. The new Strategic Plan recently adopted by the Board of Trustees calls for the creation of an AMI Teacher Training Center here at Post Oak. This is an important step in cultivating the next generation of teachers—for our children and their children, for Post Oak, for Houston, for Texas, and yes, for America. As selected graduates of this teacher-training center join our faculty, Post Oak will directly benefit; in addition, its ongoing presence as an outreach of the school will further deepen our existing culture of professional growth.

This is an initiative of great worth for Post Oak and the wider community. The school has the professional resources and financial stability to take this on; we have the long-term perspective of how to make the school better and better. That is what makes a school great. 

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Montessori prenatal and parenting classes

Attention parents and expecting parents!

Current and prospective parents: join Post Oak’s Infant Community Teacher Deidre Lodrig for this prenatal parenting series.

Montessori Prenatal 1: Discussion topics include how to support prenatal development of language and movement, attachment and separation at birth, the mother-child relationship, the role of the father, and other psychological aids to your child’s prenatal and postnatal development. Tues. Sep. 14–Nov. 15 (10 wks) 1:30–3:00 pm, $250

Montessori Prenatal 2: Discussion topics include physical aids to your child’s development including clothing, furnishings, and developmental materials. Learn how to prepare the ideal Montessori environment for your child’s prenatal and postnatal development, and custom design and make materials that benefit your child’s development. Thurs. Sep. 16–Dec. 9 (12 wks) 1:00–3:00 pm, $300 +$50 fee

Montessori Parenting Classes—“How to Parent a Toddler”: Participate in discussions of how to best parent a toddler in each and every situation and/or environment. Learn how to integrate education, discipline, and lessons in grace and courtesy with your parenting. Topics include: how to shop together peacefully; sharing and play dates; choosing appropriate toys; and supporting independence with toileting. This class is for adults only. Wed. Sep. 15–Nov. 17 (10 wks) 1:30–3:00 pm, $250

Contact Deidre Lodrig for more information: (713) 661-6688 x140 or deidrelodrig@postoak-school.org.

Classes can be taken in any order. Register online at www.postoak-school.org —> For Parents —> Parent Education.
New full-time substitute teacher

Meara Sullivan joined Post Oak as a Full-Time Substitute Teacher yesterday! Meara has seven years’ experience in education. She holds a B.A. in elementary education and psychology from Guilford College and spent a semester abroad in London for a “Foundation for International Education.” She also is certified in elementary education in the states of North Carolina and Texas. Meara has worked with children with special needs, as an elementary teacher, and as a substitute teacher in a Montessori school.

POSitively POPA

Check the POPA bulletin board in the lobby for upcoming events and to see photos of new students!

Girl Scouts at Post Oak!

by Gerry Waters, Parent

Last Friday marked the inaugural Girl Scouts meeting at Post Oak. Fifteen third grade girls learned the Girl Scout law and promise, sang songs and did crafts, took on new responsibilities, and discussed their goals for the year.

We have three separate troops established for 1st through 3rd grade, and will hold meetings at the school for each troop on one Friday per month. The troops will go on field trips and take on service projects as well as having a lot of fun.

The underlying purpose of Girl Scouts is to help girls become tomorrow’s leaders. The program is designed to engage the girls in discovering self, connecting with others, and taking action to make the world a better place. This emphasis on girl-led programs, with experiential and cooperative learning, is highly consistent with the values of Post Oak. So along with all of the fun, patches, field trips and silly songs, the girls will also be doing some important work that will help build the person they will be in the future.

If you have any ideas for local service projects that the girls could help with, let us know! They are an eager and energetic bunch, excited to take on new challenges.

Troop Leaders:

3rd Grade: Rennae Henry
2nd Grade: Lana Rigsby
1st Grade: Gerry Waters
Embark on a Montessori Journey

Online signup starting Monday, Sept. 20
Limited space available

Montessori Journey dates:

- November 5, 2010 6:00–9:00 pm
- November 6, 2010 8:00 am–2:00 pm

Each year the faculty of Post Oak invite prospective and current parents to participate in Montessori Journey.

During this (adults-only) two-day workshop, you will experience the five different classroom environments from Infant Community through Middle School, first as an observer and then as a participant receiving lessons and working with classroom materials.

This workshop is a hands-on approach to understanding how and what your child is learning. Enrollment is limited to 40 persons and the charge is $30 per person. Please complete the registration online beginning September 20. You will find the link on the left side of our website.

DANCING across CULTURES

February 4, 2011
The Houstonian Hotel

volunteers in demand

Gala Volunteers in high demand! Get involved, get to know the Post Oak community! Sign up to be a Gala Volunteer today by contacting Gala Chair Annette Gregory at ame.gregory@gmail.com.

program advertising

There are many ways to support the Gala effort. If you would like to buy an ad for the gala program, there is a wide range of price options available. Contact parent Renee Locklar, or drop by the development office to pick up an advertising form. Individual family ads are welcome!

underwriting letters

Gala Underwriting letters went out to Post Oak families this week. Please thoughtfully consider your support of the school and participation in this biennial major fundraising event. Call your friends to get a table together! Consider making a night of it by also reserving a room at The Houstonian! Underwriters of $1000+ are invited to a special Cocktail Reception in January.
1. Blowing the shofar for Rosh Hashanah.

2. Sketching a design for Field Day t-shirts.

3. Getting to know North America's countries in Primary.

4. A seventh-grade math student determines an Elementary student’s secret number using the magic of binary numbers.

5. Gridding coffee beans develops dexterity, hand strength—and concentration.

6. Adding beads and converting them into tens is what the “snake game” is all about.

7. Can you find the “er” sound?


On the first of September, we were given an assignment on the Solar System. We were asked to pick a planet in our Solar System and do research. I really wanted to do Pluto because I knew no one else would pick it—also because I didn’t want to leave Pluto out. I wrote my report on Pluto over the weekend. I made a project on the Solar System and I added Pluto. We were told that one way to remember our plants was this sentence: My (Mercury) Very (Venus) Educated (Earth) Mother (Mars) Just (Jupiter) Served (Saturn) Us (Uranus) Nachos (Neptune) Plus one (Pluto). You don’t usually add the “plus one!”
Post Oak Counselor Phylis Tomlinson presents “Becoming a Love and Logic Parent©” curriculum for elementary age and beyond. The class will be given Thursdays from 9:00–10:30 am in the Post Oak multipurpose room (formerly called the reading room) on the following dates:
- Sept. 16, 23, 30, & Oct. 14
- Continuing Oct. 21, 28, Nov. 4 & 11

*Only the October 14 class will meet in the Tile Room—this is a change of date from October 7.

**Topics include:**
- The Two Rules of Love and Logic©
- Delayed or “Anticipatory” Consequences
- Using Empathy and Love and Logic One-Liners to Neutralize Arguing
- How to get more information about Love and Logic

This parenting program is designed to give you practical skills that can be used immediately.

These classes require pre-registration by calling Phylis at 713-661-6688 ext. 176.

Only costs: $10.

Barbara Hacker’s green tip of the week

Not composting yet? Collecting rain water? The city of Houston will sell you the means at half price on Saturday, October 16, at two locations. Get there early and then head over to Field Day at Post Oak at 10:00 am!


Field Day t-shirt deadline extended

The deadline for the Field Day t-shirt order form has been extended to Wednesday, Sept. 22.

You may download a form on the left side of the Post Oak website.

ABOUT THE WEEKLY POST

The Weekly Post appears on most Fridays 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 pm on the Tuesday before publication to Communication Coordinator Shannon Neufeld (shannonneufeld@postoakschool.org). If publication is on a Thursday due to school closure on Friday, then the deadline is 5:00 pm on the preceding Monday.

All photos in The Weekly Post are by Shannon Neufeld unless otherwise noted.

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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