A crowd of 200 watched the documentary film Race to Nowhere in the Post Oak gym last Friday. In the film’s view, students, parents, and teachers are caught up in a high-pressure system driven by grading, testing, and college admissions, and characterized by hours of nightly homework and extracurricular activities chosen to build resumes. Ironically, the education at the core of this “race” is “an inch deep and a mile wide.” Students study for their tests and promptly forget the information. In fact, they are only interested in the material if they know it is going to be on the test. This is throwaway learning rather than deep understanding.
Students are just “doing school.” Learning for its own sake is not important; grades are.

In the same week, USA Today published “Outdated teaching is failing our children.” This opinion piece, written by Ruth Bettelheim, a psychotherapist and educational consultant, proposes that schools work against the way kids learn. “Contemporary neuroscience has confirmed that children’s learning is largely dependent on inherent interest, emotional engagement, social interaction, physical activity, and the pleasure of mastery.”

“These findings are ignored in traditional classroom approaches.”

Why on earth would we design an educational system that ignores current research findings from cognitive science and behavior science about the way children learn? Because innovation is hard—we are battling the inertia of tradition and the tyranny of common sense.

Don’t you agree that grades motivate students in the same way that rewards motivate adults? This is a fundamental truth of our society. Everyone knows that. Right?

Dan Pink’s book Drive examines the most current research on human motivation and calls all of the above assumptions into question. No, actually, he doesn’t call them into question, he demolishes them. Pink is not looking at education, but rather, the adult world of work. Pink says that monetary rewards improve performance only for simple, repetitive tasks, and that when tasks are complex or require creative problem solving, rewards actually hurt performance.

Returning to Bettelheim’s critique of education, “Freedom to make mistakes and benefit from them is the basis of intellectual growth. If researchers or entrepreneurs were forbidden to make errors, innovation would cease. But when teachers are required to prioritize standardized test preparation, children are necessarily taught that being wrong is unacceptable.”

In other words, focusing on performance, focusing on errors, focusing on test scores, actually diminishes performance and depresses creativity.

What’s the answer? Montessori education. Bettelheim says that Montessori education may not be the only answer, but Montessori education does incorporate the scientific evidence of how children learn, and it does have proven results.

Rather than hijacking children’s motivation and redirecting it toward the race to nowhere, Montessori education relies on children’s inherent desire to learn. Rather than punishing children for making errors—giving them lower scores on their papers, projects and tests—Montessori education treats error as a normal part of learning. Montessori children become creative problem solvers because they are willing to try interesting solutions that might be wrong.

Who ever thought that you could just allow the general public to write and edit an encyclopedia? What a crazy idea. It would be a hodgepodge of unschooled ignorance and opinion. Montessori kid Jimmy Wales thought otherwise, and Wikipedia came into being.

Who ever thought you could make a profit selling books on the internet? Montessori kid Jeff Bezos did—and he became Time magazine’s person of the year for 1999. Have you ever used Amazon.com?

Post Oak Middle School student addressed the audience after seeing the movie last Friday. compared her own experience to the students in the film who felt the stress and drudgery of hours of nightly homework. She said, “As a Montessori student all my life, I have a different view. We have homework in the Middle School. And there have been times when I’ve stayed up until midnight to get it done. But I’m interested in the projects that I’m working on, so I look for ways to go deeper into the topics, and I feel a sense of accomplishment when I finish them.”

Race to nowhere? Not a race. Not to nowhere. is someone who’s going somewhere. ☃️

Copyright John Long and The Post Oak School
Thank you to all who have shown their generous support of Post Oak by contributing to this year’s Post Oak Fund. As we announced at the beginning of the campaign, this is the last week we will publish the participation graph, and I am delighted to see that it has reached 96% parent participation! Your annual fund contributions help to keep The Post Oak School at its best, and we will continue to work behind the scenes to get us to our financial goal of $250,000.

If you have already contributed and know that your company has a matching gift plan, please consider submitting your gift for a match. Most companies will match 1:1, and some even match 2:1.

Let me offer personal thanks to this year’s campaign chairs, Amy and Lloyd Kirchner. Thank for your unbeatable optimism, for working hard to keep everyone on track, and for making those calls to meet our early participation deadline of November 15. Thank you for all you have done to make this year’s campaign a success!

Again, on behalf of everyone at The Post Oak School, thank you to all contributors!

Christina Kopanidis-Cantu
Development Director

On November 20, 2010 — Universal Children’s Day—TEDx organizers across the globe will host events for (and by) young people that can be seen via live streaming webcasts from 8:30 am until noon. Post Oak students will participate in this inaugural event for Houston, taking place at St. John’s School, 2401 Claremont Lane, 77019. Students are invited to attend. Other schools participating are St. John’s School, Chinquapin School, Episcopal High School, and The Kinkaid School. Visit www.postoakschool.org tomorrow at 8:30 am and click on the TedxYouth link in red on the left side. These events share a common vision: inspiring curiosity, igniting new ideas, and empowering young leaders.
Thanks to all who attended the International Wine & Cheese Pairing that took place Nov. 10 at the Tasting Room in Uptown Park. Ticket sales will be used to purchase several wine packages which will be available at the gala silent auction. Thanks to Annette Gregory, Gala Chair, Paula Mey, Silent Auction Co-Chair, and Courtney Bucy, Wine Auction Chair. Thanks also to the Tasting Room for donating this fun event.
Students in all classes are working on their Gala Art Projects. These works of art will be offered at the live auction at the Gala.

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**Dancing across Cultures**  
The 2011 Biennial Gala of The Post Oak School | Feb. 4, 2011

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**Restaurant Auction**

**Items Needed**

Know a chef? • Have a favorite restaurant at which you eat regularly?

The auction committee is looking for restaurant gift certificates to help round out many silent auction packages. Download a donor form online and pass it along to your favorite restaurant manager/owner. Contact Paula Mey or Suzan Samuels.

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**Calling All Hosts**

Are you creative? Do you like to entertain?

This year’s Gala needs you! We need hosts, cooks, wine connoisseurs, or entertainers. Be creative and organize your own theme and event. Your donation will need to include the location (typically your home), food and/or beverage. Entertainment optional. Events can be for adults, children, or family, and will be sold on a per-person basis with all proceeds going toward the gala fundraising total. You set the number of attendees.

Home parties have been very successful in the past. Partner with another family, a Post Oak staff member, or a friend. Make your planning as fun as the event and raise big money for The Post Oak School at the 2011 Gala!

For adult events, contact:  
Amy Lee

For family/childrens events, contact:  
Paula Mey

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**Invitation Printing and Advertising Deadline**

If you plan on underwriting for the Gala, please send in your form before Nov. 23 to get your name listed in the invitation. Payment is not due until the Gala on Feb. 4, 2011. If you would like to purchase an ad for the program, the deadline for artwork is Dec. 15. For more information on the 2011 Post Oak Gala, visit www.postoakschool.org and click on the gala link on the left side of the page.
1. Butterfly in flight—can you find it? Mirani Smith releases a recently emerged Fritillary butterfly with Infant Community children.

2. Fun time listening to music.

3. Peeling a cucumber.

4. Fall fun! Toasting pumpkin seeds.

5. Practicing subtraction in Lower El.

6. Researching the parts of a tree.
Braes Interfaith Ministries food drive at Post Oak

As the holidays approach, our thoughts turn to those who are in need of help. We have initiated a community service project in which the children and families in Upper and Lower Elementary can participate. Braes Interfaith Ministries is a group of several churches and denominations in the South Braeswood and West Belfort area of southwest Houston. They serve the most urgent needs of a wide cross section of people in our community. To the right are some of the items they are in particular need of at this time:

Post Oak will be filling class boxes during the week of November 29–December 3, and will deliver the donations on December 6. Please help us make this a meaningful experience for the children of Post Oak and a welcomed gift for the families in our community who need our support.

Toiletries: (indv. pkgd.)
- bars of soap
- shampoo
- toothpaste
- toothbrushes
- hand lotion
- deodorant
- talcum powder

For Infants:
- diapers (sizes 4 & 5)
- Enfamil with Iron powder baby formula
- baby food (esp. fruit and vegetables)

Non-perishable canned & pkgd foods including:
- boxes of cereal
- pkgd pasta & sauce
- canned veg meats etc.
- rice lentils beans
- evaporated or condensed milk
- tea coffee sugar
- cookies/crackers
- pkgd soups/broth
- dried fruit and nuts

Becoming a Love and Logic Parent©

This parenting course series is designed to give you practical skills that can be used immediately. The course series is featured in the spring semester on these dates:

**Wednesday evenings** 6:30–8:00 pm,
January 12, 19, 26, February 2, 9, 16, 23.
Cost: $150 per person for the series, plus $20 workbook. ($100 per person if you previously attended all fall 2010 classes). Drop-ins welcome, $30 per class

**Thursday mornings** 9:10–10:30 am
January 13, 20, 27, February 3, 10, 17, 24.
Cost: $20 per person for the series (includes workbook).

Primary Parent Ed

**save the date**

Tuesday, December 7
7:00 pm

“Honoring the Process with your child at School and Home”

Ginni Sackett, AMI Montessori trainer, lecturer, consultant and examiner will speak.

Primary teachers will be in attendance.
“One of my favorite things in Middle School was the weekly Monday volunteering,” said Brittany Beavers, reflecting on her twelve years as a Post Oak student. She later attended St. John’s High School and is now a sophomore at Stanford University majoring in human biology. Her goal, she says, is to help people, and to become a psychiatrist.

“I remember having to wake up earlier than usual to arrive at school for the carpool to Palmer Memorial Church to serve homeless people breakfast, but the early rise was always so worth it.” Thinking about other sites where she performed community service as a Middle School student, Brittany said, “Small Steps was a site that I loved to work at with the children with limitless energy.” Also on her list of places she liked to work is Gordon Elementary—the HISD school across Bissonnet from Post Oak. “It was so tiring and by the time lunch rolled around I was ready to get back to Post Oak for a breather, but I really enjoyed my time spent there,” she said. Brittany also volunteered at the Houston Humane Society in grade six. Volunteering, “instilled a sense that service work is important to incorporate into life,” she said.

Brittany spoke about the importance of the trips she took with her Elementary and Middle School classes at Post Oak. “I felt like such an extensive traveler by traveling to Blackwood farm; all across Texas; Williamsburg, Virginia; Washington, D.C.; and Crow Canyon, Colorado... Riding the subway in Washington, D.C., was always a thrill, and I felt like an adult buying my own subway ticket and learning how to read the subway maps.” She said that anticipation on the trip to our nation’s capital peaked on “fancy night” when students would dress up, eat at a nice restaurant, and attend a theater performance.

“Our days were always jam-packed, full of fascinating museums, beautiful sights, or fun events...and through these trips, I felt a stronger connection to my classmates—they always provided great bonding experiences.”

Even now, Brittany sees the impact of her Post Oak education in the way she investigates things that interest her. She knew that she had more time than students in other schools to explore her interests and she loved to talk about the things she did at school during the day. “I always felt excited about learning new things and going to school,” she said.

“The biggest strength that I received from my Montessori education is a sense of independence and confidence in myself to achieve my goals.”

In both high school and college, Brittany says she has found Post Oak helping her to learn. “Post Oak cultivated a love of learning and for me to want to seek out knowledge. This has really helped me to find success in college because I find myself genuinely interested in the classes I take, thus helping me to enjoy the work that I do.”

“The freedom we had to choose what we wanted to learn and how we spent our time also helped contribute to my habits in college. I am able to identify how to effectively spend my time,” she said.

“The Montessori setting allowed me to pursue specific interests that I had in various subjects, allowing me to progress faster in areas where I excelled, while also emphasizing the remaining subjects,” she said. “The lessons put on by the teachers are extremely important for learning and emphasizing a variety of subjects. I think that a child might only focus on a certain subject, except that the teachers do a great job of monitoring the student’s work during the day.”

We asked Brittany what she thought of Post Oak’s plans to open a high school in 2012. “This sounds like a really cool idea! I’d love to come visit and see how the school operates once it’s open,” she said.
NAIS Viral Video Contest: How Great Is your School?

How great is your school? The world is ready to find out. National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) is hosting a Viral Video Competition to showcase their school community’s best original videos. Open to students, faculty and parents, we invite you to create an original video, one to four minutes in length, and submit it by December 31, 2010.

Under the theme, “My school is awesome because…” the contest seeks to discover what is unique about your school. A panel of experts will choose one winner and two runners-up. The winner will receive a pocket video camera. First runner up: $200 in camera accessories. Second runner up: $100 in camera accessories. Videos should be posted on the school’s web site, and/or YouTube, Vimeo, etc., with a link submitted to NAIS through the online submission form at www.nais.org/go/viralvideo. Winning entries may be featured on the NAIS iTunesU site, and will be promoted by NAIS on its Facebook page and elsewhere as part of its advocacy initiative for independent education. Details and complete rules are available at www.nais.org/go/viralvideo. For questions, contact Paul Miller, miller@nais.org, or (202) 973-9753.

Grandparents’ and Friends’ Days next week!

Dear Post Oak parents,

If you have relatives or friends attending next week’s event on either Monday or Tuesday, here are a few of things to note:

1. We are limited with space and ask that parents not attend. We promise to take good care of your guests!
2. The event starts at 9:00 am and concludes around 11:00 am. Breakfast will be provided.
3. There will be parking on campus. All employees will be parking off campus, so it might look like there is no parking because of all the cars on the street. Drive in and see if there is any room in our parking lot before parking on the street. Parking is available: 1) on campus, 2) on Avenue B, and 3) across Bissonnet on Merrie Lane (the street behind Compass Bank)—an officer will be at the intersection to help you cross.

4. For guests coming to see Infant and Primary students, they will view the students from the observation window. We do this to give grandparents and friends a true example of a Montessori classroom in action. Guests of older students are invited into the classroom to work with those students.
5. If grandparents or friends plan on taking the student home, we must have permission from the parent, as is the normal policy.
6. Even if an RSVP has not been sent in, we welcome all visitors on both days.

Thank you,
Christina Kopanidis-Cantu
Development Director
Student conduct policy update

In order to tie together the Post Oak Parent Handbook and the school’s Responsible Use Policy (RUP)—which applies to computer usage by students, faculty, and staff of the school—we have incorporated the following changes.

The Post Oak Parent Handbook has a section on “Student Conduct.”

The School’s “Responsible Use Policy (RUP)” includes a section on cyberbullying, a topic which has been prominent in the national news this year.

Changes are in bold letters.

Change to the “RUP”:

Cyberbullying (electronically transmitted threats and insults intended to embarrass, harass, or intimidate), and the electronic transmission of inappropriate content by a member of the Post Oak community will result in disciplinary action.

Changes to the Parent Handbook:

The school considers the following to be major misbehavior:

Interference with the rights of others, including physical abuse (such as hitting, punching, kicking, or biting), verbal abuse (such as teasing, taunts, threats, or intimidation), and bullying (whether by physical aggression, social alienation, or verbal aggression and intimidation).

Online communications with members of the Post Oak community will be treated as if they were delivered face to face;

If you have any questions, please contact Head of School John Long.

Post Oak students in children’s musical

Come see a great family-friendly musical production of “A Year with Frog and Toad” based on the award-winning books by Arnold Lobel. The show is being produced by Houston’s newest children’s theater company, Wildfish Theater, and Post Oak students are performing in several of the productions. [Name redacted] will be seen as Mouse, Mole, Squirrel and Young Frog. [Name redacted] will be playing the role of Toad. Tickets are by donation at the door. Seating is limited. Shows last 45 - 60 minutes.

Wildfish Theater—1703 E. Post Oak Blvd. (SE corner of Post Oak & San Felipe next to Wolf Camera)

Showtimes:

Wed., November 17, 6:00 pm
Fri., November 19, 7:30 pm
Sat., November 20, 1:00 pm, 6:00 pm, 8:00 pm
Sun., November 21, 5:00 pm, 7:00 pm

For more information, contact Jennifer Touchet at

POPA Coffee & Work Day

Wednesday, December 1
8:45–1:00 pm

These volunteer gatherings are held each month in the Common Room after drop-off at 8:45 am. They enable parents to socialize while helping prepare classroom materials and do other work in support of the teachers. Come by whenever you can. Coffee and good company provided.
Middle School Texas Odyssey

Marine Military Academy

by [Name] Grade 8

One of the places we visited during the Texas Odyssey was the Marine Military Academy. The Marine Military Academy is a military school for students ranging from eighth grade to twelfth grade. They showed us the original statue of a famous picture of troops raising a flag in the battle of Iwo Jima. Then we got a bus tour around the campus. The academy focuses on teaching the students discipline, academics, and how effective teamwork is.

On the tour, they showed us the obstacle courses and told us about all of their after school activities. Every student is required to go to one after school activity. They encourage the students to stay fit. They feed students up to 5000 calories a day and have multiple gyms around the campus.

They told us about their summer camp and all of the activities they do. The main ones are paintball, football, basketball, tennis, soccer, and swimming. It was enjoyable and interesting to learn about the academy and its history.
CALANDER

For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

NOVEMBER 21–27

Mon-Tue
11/22-23
Grandparents’ and Friends’ Days
9:00–11:00 am
No ASEP classes

Tue
11/23
Print deadline for Gala underwriting

Wed-Fri
11/24-26
Thanksgiving Break:
no school

NOVEMBER 28–DECEMBER 4

Tue
11/30
Middle School Moving-Up Night
7:00 pm

PICTURE RETAKES

Wed
12/01
Hanukkah begins
at sundown
Parent/Employee Basketball
8:00 pm

Fri
12/03
Bake Sale for Haitian cholera relief effort

DECEMBER 5–11

Tue
12/07
Primary Parent Ed
7:00 pm

Coffee with the Elementary
Director: Intro. to Physical
Science in Lower El
7:00 pm

Wed
12/08
Parent/Employee Basketball
8:00 pm

Thu
12/09
Infant Community Transition
to Primary meeting
9:00–10:30 am

NOTICE BOARD

Happy Thanksgiving!

· school closed ·

Nov. 24–26

Bake Sale
Friday, December 3

Students from Errol Pinto’s class will host a bake sale in support of the Haitian cholera relief effort. Funds will be donated to The American Red Cross. Please send $3-5 dollars with your child to participate in this student-driven effort. Additional donations are welcome.

Barbara Hacker’s green tip

Instead of sending old rugs to the landfill, check with local animal shelters to see if they can use them. Old towels, blankets, and sheets are also appreciated.

Source:
the “Go Green” app for iPhone.

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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