Dear Parents,

The following letter is from school consultant Peter Cobb. He writes about holiday gift giving, education and design. When you think design, don’t think fashion; think instead about the interface between a tool and its user. In his comments about school design, Cobb wants to move education into the 21st Century. Ironically, his description of how to redesign classroom environments and to reshape the learner’s experience, sounds very much like a Montessori classroom. Read on.

Happy Holidays to you and your family,

John Long
Head of School

continued on page 2
**A letter from Consultant Peter Cobb**

*Dear Colleagues:*

Several weeks ago I had the opportunity to visit the Institute of Design at Stanford University (http://dschool.stanford.edu) with a group of colleagues from The Hamlin School in San Francisco.

We were asked to consider our feelings about holiday gift giving—a timely topic. This question preceded our individual efforts to create and design something to give our partner that might help some gift giving challenge he or she faced.

I have on my desk a pipe cleaner Christmas tree that my partner gave me—a reminder to host a decorating party at my home to help my wife who fell and broke her leg before Thanksgiving. That event has now transpired—actually several events that have our home looking festive.

We journeyed to the Institute of Design not to create gifts but rather to learn about the application of design thinking to schooling, a topic in which I have a great interest as an essential component of 21st century learning.

Learn we did! There are several core precepts about design thinking that center the work of the Institute. Design thinking is human centered, it has a bias toward action, it depends on radical collaboration, it emphasizes showing rather than telling, it both requires and enables a culture of prototyping and it is mindful of the process.

Experientially, design thinking is predicated on working in teams and undertaking big projects—although our project was admittedly modest in scope.

All of this is deeply congruent with thinking about curricular and classroom design as we lean into the future.

There was another derivative take away from our time at the Institute. When we got to talking about our feelings about holiday gift giving, without exception we realized that we were more interested in giving “experiences” than we were in giving stuff. More and more I am inclined to see the role of the teacher in 21st century schools as the architect and the choreographer (the designer) of experiences for students, experiences that will enable their creativity, their passion, their skill development, their exploration and their ownership of learning.

In schools, function has followed form for too long—we have limited ourselves by our classroom and schoolhouse architecture. The learning environment, the space, of the Institute of Design is itself instructive. It is fluid, it is open, it is quite literally transparent, it invites movement and discovery. There are no teaching materials that are shut up or away; they are visible and accessible to all. In this sort of place, the instructional model itself has to change. There is an implicit mandate to meander and figure things out for yourself, to construct things for yourself—and to construct things that will be of value to others.

My wish for this holiday season is that we will configure our schools so that they incorporate design thinking at the forefront of our efforts to embrace and adopt 21st century learning. What a gift that would be—one that endures for all seasons for all of our students.

Happy holidays.

Sincerely,

Peter

Peter W. Cobb is president of Cobb & Associates, specializing in consulting with schools on in-depth issues, as well as providing workshops that look at the current cultural and moral landscape of schools and provide specific strategies and tools for attending to the identified needs and aspirations of the school.

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**“Thank you** for the opportunity to hear Ginni Sackett. We appreciate her helpful and practical advice on honoring our children’s process.

We are grateful for The Post Oak School’s efforts towards arranging this parent education event. For us, it demonstrated yet another way the school supports our daughter, while supporting our own process as parents.

We feel very fortunate to be part of the Post Oak community.”

_Bernadette Verzosa & Len Cannon_
Dear teachers, assistants, gala coordinators, and room parents,

Thank you for the extraordinary work you have put into the gala art projects this year. You have beautifully guided the students through this collective process. As each piece is finished, we see the hours of effort materialize into a true work of art. What a magnificent exhibition and live auction it will be at the Gala!

With deep appreciation for all of your work.

The Post Oak Parents Association
Students in all classes are working on their Gala Art Projects.
DANCING across CULTURES

The 2011 Biennial Gala of The Post Oak School | Feb. 4, 2011

Don’t be left out.
Buy your Gala ad now!

Pick up a form at the front desk, online, or contact parent Renée Locklar. All ad artwork is due Jan. 6, 2011.

Examples of Family Ads from Previous Years

The Vine Family is thankful for Maria Montessori’s vision and The Post School’s uncompromising standards toward that vision.

Matthew Sanders Loves The Post Oak School
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 gala!

For adult events, contact: Amy Lee
For family/children’s events, contact: Paula Mey

volunteers in demand

Gala Volunteers are 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

Volunteers needed for day-of setup.

reserve a hotel room

Reserve your room early for $169 at the Houstonian Hotel now. Call 800-231-2759.
Alumni Night 2011

Alumni Night
a parent education event

Join us for the 2011 Post Oak Alumni Night on Thursday, January 6, 2011.

High School students, college students, and young professionals who graduated from The Post Oak School return to reflect on their experiences in Montessori. How did their education at Post Oak help prepare them for their subsequent education and for life? Parents of our current students as well as prospective parents are encouraged to attend this event. Faculty will be in attendance.

Reception from 6:00-6:45 pm for all attendees. Panel discussion and Q&A from 6:45-8:00 pm.

To succeed as leaders

"In our society, in part as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, we place so much emphasis on narrow abilities and knowledge that often students who are the ‘best’ academically have had little incentive to develop the emotional intelligence, practical intelligence, and wisdom-based skills that are needed to lead the institutions of society. Hence one can end up with particular leaders who were educated at elite institutions—who are very smart in an SAT sense—and then sometimes prove unable to connect with the rest of the population and who create financial and ethical messes because their analytical skills were never adequately complemented by the creative, practical, and wisdom-based skills they need truly to succeed as leaders."


(Robert J. Sternberg is provost, senior vice president and professor of psychology at Oklahoma State University. He is a former president of the American Psychological Association and is president of the International Association for Cognitive Education and Psychology. He spent most of his long career as a leading professor of psychology at Yale.)

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.
The Post Oak High School: we want to be engaged

by James Moudry, Middle School & High School Director

“I like coming to school in the morning. My previous school was all about conformity. Here you can be yourself.”

That’s a direct quotation from a Montessori high school student. Last week while John Long and I were visiting two Montessori high schools in California and Colorado, we were struck by the commonalities amongst the students despite the differences in the way the programs looked at first glance.

The student experience of the programs was the dominant feature. In their own words, their experiences are remarkable and they are sensitive to how their school differs from others:

We want to be engaged.

Montessori school challenges us more.

I know everyone in the school, all the students and all the teachers.

We’re like a big family. We hate each other and love each other.

The geeks are the jocks.

No bullies.

Here you can be yourself.

People accept each other and their differences.

There are no cliques; we’re open to each other.

We learn to see things in a different way, from different perspectives.

The teachers know our strengths and shortcomings. Their trust in us is inspiring.

We’re able to find our own talents.

We’re not taught what to think...but are encouraged to think independently.

This is the kind of school where everyone wants to sit in the front of the class.

The Post Oak High School faculty will create an environment to engage the adolescent. The students themselves will bring the preparatory work to life when they walk on campus in August of 2012. Until then, we’re asking current and former Post Oak students as well as Montessori high school students in other schools to tell us how to create a school that they’d like to come to every morning. Have thoughts to share? Send me an email: jamesmoudry@postoakschool.org

The POST OAK HIGH SCHOOL

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).
An outing to the Houston Museum of Natural Science

Post Oak parents Susan Granger-Tyler and Karen Redding took a group of Lower Elementary students to the Houston Museum of Natural Science. Afterward, Susan wrote this report to the classroom teacher, who had stayed on campus at Post Oak with the rest of the class.

by Susan Granger-Tyler

This morning’s outing with the 3rd graders was a special treat into the mind of your 3rd grade Montessori class. They were so attentive, they were so excited! Most importantly, they were so knowledgeable! They looked/sounded like professional scientists/researchers!

Equipped with their clip boards and list of questions, I was not only impressed with what they had listed to ask, but with the many more that weren’t even listed. To me this suggested they actually did a lot of research, had an amazing foundation of their subject matter, and had an earnest curiosity to learn even more.

The Docent was so smitten, she couldn’t tear herself away from them, she couldn’t help but answer each and every question. As they poured on the questions, she sometimes didn’t know the answers, but rather that short-changing the children, she’d go check her facts, and with great care, patience, and with clock ticking away—she made her moment with the children about her and them. She went on and on, answering each question, never seeming rushed...She was eventually interrupted by a colleague who kindly interjected “Karen, I know you are loving what you are doing right now, but you are missing lunch.” She smiled, acknowledged that perhaps the time has flown by, but still didn’t hurry. She looked at me reassuringly and informed me, she had time and was in no hurry. Later she informed me that she was not supposed to do the tour today, but the assigned tour guide didn’t show up to work, so she gladly took the assignment. She also admitted that she did not expect that these kids would be so bright, so prepared, so informed, and would ask so many great questions.

About half way through the tour, the kids then made a presentation of their time line poster. That single act of gratitude made the Docent speechless. She informed the kids that in all her years with the Houston Museum of Natural Science she could not recall such an amazing gesture. She vowed that she would find a special place in her department to post the time line poster so that others could appreciate the great details and intricate work that enlivened the various timeline eras. At several points throughout the tour she referred to the work the kids had presented to her/the museum to verify her own facts. She had quickly come to appreciate that the work the children did actually had great facts, and added real value.

Towards the end of the tour, the kids were over at the time line exhibit board, and one of the girls asked a question about the time line which, as the other kids were jotting down data to complete their research questions. A group of teachers escorting older kids from another school listened attentively. Upon observing/overhearing the girls, one teacher turned to the other teachers and said, listen, they are asking questions about timelines, and they have a list of questions—how clever. Then another teacher turned to me and said “well done, you are an amazing teacher.... We didn’t even think about preparing our kids to ask about time lines and the different eras...that’s so important...you are so amazing, makes us look bad.” I quickly admitted to her that I am not the teacher, but yes, their teacher is amazing. I don’t think they actually felt bad about themselves, but I did get the sense that they would walk away realizing the bar has been raised.

That possibility made me feel good. I felt that if the students of these teachers get to benefit from what their teachers observed during this short exchange, then that’s what life’s moment encounters are about. Your inspiration to your own third graders might possibly have had a positive domino effect on kids you don’t even know.

Finally, just before we left, one of the girls read her report summary to the Docent. As the time for lunch came and ticked away, the Docent stooped in close and listened with such attention as if no one and nothing else mattered.

I wanted to hurry the kids along, but then I realized I should pause. In that moment I realized that this is the kind of attention to details and respect for research most people only experience at the college level. Our kids got this today at the 3rd grade! It was worth missing lunch. How cool!

Thank you for preparing these kids with this much sense of self. Thank you for having such faith, and trusting so much that you didn’t even have to go witness yourself. This was really all about the kids, and Karen Redding and I were only the transportation to the experience.

Thank you for this opportunity.
Bearkats basketball

Dates:

In January:
Tuesday, January 11
Thursday, January 20
Tuesday, January 25

In February:
Tuesday, February 1
Tuesday, February 8
Tuesday, February 15

These games against St. Stephens start at 4:30 in The Post Oak School gym.

The Bearkats basketball team opened up two weeks ago with two wins over St. Stephens. The scores were 31-28 and 36-26 with Thomas Rasor leading the scoring in both games with 20 and 23 points respectively. In the first game Matthew Sanders helped with the scoring by adding 11 points, and in the second game other scorers were Mason Speed with 4, Larson Moye with 4, and 5 points by Matthew Sanders. The basketball team will continue play on January 11. — Coach Mark Tucker

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**Image Description:**
- Various images of basketball players in action during practice, highlighting the intensity and focus of the team. The images show players in different positions, from guards dribbling the ball to forwards in a defensive stance. The gym setting is evident from the wooden floors and backboards, with the Post Oak School logo visible in the background.
Process not product

by Tanya Gee, Parent

Having been educated in “traditional” classrooms where it seems everything is measured and quantified by the outcomes of examinations in one form or another, I was intrigued by the topic offered at the recent Primary parent education event, “Honoring the Process at School and Home.” The speaker, Ginni Sackett, is a well known AMI Montessori trainer, lecturer, consultant and examiner.

We have four sons at Post Oak who are in classes in Upper El and Primary, and having a clear picture of what they really know or don’t yet know about the three basics of reading, writing and arithmetic is difficult at best. Therefore, a seminar about the importance of honoring the process and not product was very attractive.

During her talk, Ms. Sackett, offered answers to many of the questions that parents like myself have about the “outcomes” of their children’s education. To begin she offered a lesson from an old Zen master who teaches his pupil that the more he focuses on only the outcome of his training, the longer it will take to “master” the task(s). Instead the Zen master offers that the student should focus himself on the path (process) of mastering the tasks and not the outcome.

Her first question answered was “Is there evidence of success?”

Yes, there will be evidence that the process has been successful. The most important evidence of this will include: happiness, a sense of well-being, sociability, discipline, confidence, and self-efficacy.

From there she moved on to questions such as, “Why do we look for products?” “What is wrong with products as a measure of success?” Her answers were thought provoking. One question in particular caught my attention, “Is the product proof of our child’s success or our own success as parents?”

The next phase of her seminar focused on recognizing and honoring the process while it is occurring. For example, a two-year-old trying to open a door by himself does not need or want anyone stepping in to open it for him. She suggests that we should be aware that he is trying to gain mastery of the (to him) complicated task of holding the knob, turning the knob in the right direction, the correct number of degrees of rotation and pulling or pushing the door open at just the moment that the knob has rotated the correct distance. Whew, did you ever think about something like opening the door as such a complicated multi-step process?

In the closing moments, Ms. Sackett offered several ways to honor and support the process of learning and becoming an individual. Some of them are to give your child the gift of time, allow natural consequences of their actions and choices, limit or eliminate screen time, avoid over-scheduling, choose environments for your child that honor the process and when you need reassurance of their progress, look for the real evidence such as developmental achievements like walking, reading, and writing.

On her handout, Ms. Sackett offered two books as great reading choices for parents, Nurture Shock by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman and Unconditional Parenting by Alfie Kohn. The Post Oak library will have these books available in January for parents to check out.

At the end of the talk, I was motivated to continue on with our incorporation of Montessori principles in our home and will be working very hard to look for moments where I can honor the process of learning for all four of our sons.
Post Oak Alumni visit for volleyball and catching up!
The most beautiful gift: never-ending love

submitted by Post Oak School Counselor Phylis Tomlinson and
used with permission from The Love and Logic© Institute

Dr. Charles Fay, President of the Love and Logic Institute,
and a school psychologist

Have you noticed how much effort some folks put into finding just the right Christmas gifts for their child? I bet you know someone who doesn’t think twice about spending endless hours—or even days—scouring store shelves for that awesome action figure, digital doodad, or doll their child has been wanting.

Let’s think about it. Is there anything wrong with this? What’s the problem with spending lots of time and energy looking for neat and nifty Christmas gifts for our kids? Nothing. But…

What happens when we exert more energy on finding these gifts than showing our youngsters what a gift they are to us? Ouch! I’ve done this. Yes, I’ve fallen into this trap! I’ve worn-out myself trying to make things perfect that I’ve forgotten the most perfect gift of all: the expression of never-ending, unconditional love.

We’re all wired to need it. All of us yearn for a relationship with someone who will love us forever, regardless of how stinky we behave. Isn’t this the greatest gift we can give our loved ones? Isn’t this what Christmas is really about?

During this Christmas season, my hope is that you’ll...

• show them through your never-ending love what a precious gift they are.

Thanks for reading! Our goal is to help as many families as possible. If this is a benefit, forward it to a friend.

Many children in the USA have too many toys!

So what do we get for them for the holidays?

Children want, children need, their parents time and attention. Recently there have been many 1-minute bedtime story type books on the market; what is that message to families? And toys that are advertised for children to use all by themselves alone in their room, fantasy toys where children can create a perfect world where there are many people who share their daily lives! Or electronic items where they learn to turn to a machine instead of other humans for happiness. Or plastic toys that give the message that children are not worth the real thing or the best quality. Where is this heading?

Each year the Michael Olaf Montessori Company has reduced the number of items they carry for children, focusing on better and better quality items that families can use together, or that teach about the real world of plants, animals and humans, and the beautiful world of the arts.

The above text is adapted from the Michael Olaf publications. Please feel free to share anything on this page with friends, teachers, family, anyone who wants the very best for the next generation. For more information, visit:
www.michaelolaf.net/news演绎2010.html
SCENES from The Post Oak School

1. Labeling the countries of South America.
2. Middle School students created models in response to their reading of Dante's *Inferno*.
3. Recent Post Oak graduates Karis Barker and Paola Gasca stop by for a visit.
4. Holiday gift work.
5. Classification in Lower El: water, land, and air
Division with decimal fractions

A group of Upper Elementary girls recently demonstrated how to divide decimal numbers. They started with relatively simple problems like $6.4 \div 3.2$ (which equals 2).

Then they wrote the following problem for themselves: $9.3 \div 3.3$. The answer is what mathematicians call a repeating decimal.

The girls wrote, "Our problem was an everlasting problem. If we wanted to, we could continue it until we died." (You can see the answer in the photograph, above, right. Pictured right are [L-R])

In the spirit of giving:
Braes Interfaith Ministries food drive

Dear Mrs. Long, Students, Teachers, and Parents,

On behalf of Braes Interfaith Ministries, I would like to thank you for the many toiletries, food, and baby items, that you brought to us this past week. Our mission is to provide much-needed help to our underprivileged neighbors in the Southwest area of Houston, and it is because of caring people such as each of you together with our coalition congregations that we are able to continue our work. It is at this time of the year that we become more aware of our many blessings and reach out to those less fortunate.

Our ongoing services include food, clothing, assistance with employment opportunities, and when available, financial assistance with rent and utilities. We have also completed another very successful school supply program and are in the process of making plans for the coming year.

Again, thank you so very much and may you and your families have a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Eloy E. Montez, LMSW, Executive Director, Braes Interfaith Ministries

Bake Sale benefits Red Cross
Haitian cholera relief effort

Students donate $1,200 raised through their bake sale to the American Red Cross. Funds benefited the cholera relief effort in Haiti.
**CALENDAR**

For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

**WINTER BREAK DEC. 18–JAN. 2**

DECEMBER 19–25

Tue 12/21  
*Winter Solstice*

Sat 12/25  
*Christmas*

**DECEMBER 26–JANUARY 1**

Sun 12/26  
*Kwanzaa begins*

Fri 12/31  
*New Year’s Eve*

**JANUARY 2–JANUARY 8**

Mon 01/03  
*Teacher In-Service Day*  
*School closed*

Wed 01/05  
*Parent/Employee Basketball*  
*8:00 pm*

Thu 01/06  
*Alumni Night*  
*6:00–8:00 pm*

Fri 01/07  
*Upper El Spelling Bee*  
*10:00–11:30 am*

**JANUARY 9–JANUARY 15**

Mon 01/10  
*Spring ASEP begins*

Wed 01/12  
*POP A Coffee/Work Day*  
*8:45 am–1:00 pm*  
*Parent/Employee Basketball*  
*8:00 pm*

Fri 01/14  
*Application Deadline for new students*

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**NOTICE BOARD**

**Post Oak Dad’s Club**

**Saturday Workday**

Sat., Dec. 18 from 8–11:00 *ish*

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

(including upper el & middle school students)

As we help the school with gardening projects

- Meet at Avenue B gate
- RSVP to [ ] (for breakfast count)

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**Lost & Found:**

**cold-weather clothing**

*Is your child missing a jacket? A sweater? Not sure?*

Visit our Lost & Found treasure chest in the front lobby before we donate the contents to charity at the close of school before Winter Break (December 17).

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**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)

4600 Bissonnet, Bellaire, Texas 77401  •  Telephone: 713-661-6688  •  Fax: 713-661-4959  •  www.postoakschool.org

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**Free Water Table for Toddlers**

Available: a Michael Olaf water table for toddlers and Primary children—used, but still very useful! Free to anyone who wants it. Contact Tanya Gee.

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**Save Time & Gas by Carpooling**

Have you thought of carpooling? It saves on gas, lightens the traffic in our driveway, and saves time. Consider calling a Post Oak neighbor to share the driving duty.

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**Barbara Hacker’s green tip**

**Quick!**

Act by December 31 and get a tax credit on:

- insulation
- new windows
- duct sealing

*Source: Green America Nov.–Dec. pg. 13*