The aquarium calls out to her. The first thing she does each morning when she enters her classroom, is to sit on the floor and observe the aquarium. She watches the fish and the snails; she watches the grass, the water and sand. She observes like a scientist; she observes like an artist. Each day she enters the classroom, sits down in front of the aquarium and observes. Then she gets up and chooses her next work.

Her next work? So far, all she’s done is walk into her classroom and look at the fish tank. Is that work?

Observation is at the heart of science. Harvard biologist Louis Agassiz’s first assignment for his new graduate students was to observe a dead fish.

continued on page 2
After a single hour one such student declared his job complete. Agassiz sent him back to the fish. He kept the student observing for three days. The fish began to stink. That, too, is an observation. Agassiz knew his students would quit too soon. He knew they did not yet know how to observe. Observation is work. It begins with interest. It requires patience. It requires self-control.

and the other children notice when the aquarium needs cleaning and they tell their teacher. One day they observed a swarm of tiny black fish they’d never seen before. Baby fish.

Then there was the day the snails were hugging. All day long they hugged.

Within days the children observed a clump of tiny beads attached to the aquarium lid. “Snail eggs,” said their teacher. There was a second capsule of eggs, too, and her classmates may or may not become scientists. But they are learning how to observe.

If you look closely at the photo on page one, you can see three large snails: one on the sand at the bottom of the tank; and two near the surface of the water, one crawling on a rock and the other attached to the glass wall. You can also see one of the egg capsules lying on the sand at the very front of the photo.

Looking at I see her calm state of intense concentration. To observe you must slow yourself down. You need to stay centered. You need to focus your attention outward.

Is observation of the fish tank on our curriculum? No, not explicitly, but the conditions are ripe to encourage observation. In preparing the environment, the teacher included an aquarium and placed it at the child’s eye level. She did so because Dr. Montessori observed the young child’s love of animals and recommended including them in the prepared environment.

Furthermore, children are allowed freedom of movement, and choice of activity. Do all of the children start their day observing the fish tank? No, only But many of the others observe the aquarium as they move from one activity to another during the day. Some just slow down to look in passing; others stop for a minute or three; and others, like spend a longer time studying the fish and the snails and the water and plants.

As they do so, their teacher observes them, and listens to their conversations and questions about the fish tank. There are many teachable moments. "What is that clump of tiny beads in the water? It wasn’t there yesterday.”

“Snail eggs. That’s how baby snails are born.” And it’s how scientists and artists are nurtured.

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"Observation," by John Long continued from page 1

The American painter Winslow Homer observed for more than a decade the rising and setting of the sun by the ocean in Prout’s Neck, Maine. He observed the incoming and outgoing tides, the gathering and diminishing storms. His admirers praised him for "painting what he saw." His art was deeply rooted in observation of the natural world. A study of Homer’s life and work is subtitled The Nature of Observation.

Above: Upper Elementary students are pictured in the art studio. They are observing themselves in hand mirrors preparing to paint self-portraits. Art like science begins with seeing and seeing begins with looking— as Yogi Berra famously said "You can observe a lot by watching."

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"...in Infant Community"

I was allowed to fulfill my greatest dream: figuring out how and from where the water in the sinks came. Once I had found that it came from somewhere in the wall, I had to figure out where it was going! That morning I spent about 90% of my time in the bathroom turning the water off and on and listening to it through the pipes. Five percent of my time was spent eating snack because I just had to eat and the other 5% was spent organizing the shoes in the bathroom. The great thing about that day was that my great teachers allowed me to explore and fulfill my curiosity.

Curiosity is a big part of learning. Once you have learned something, the best way to retain that information is to work on your own…

— Karis Barker

Post Oak Eighth Grade Class of 2010 (in her graduation speech)
Gala invitations were mailed—please respond

Tickets are $150 each and can be purchased by returning the reply card in your invitation.

If you did not receive an invitation in the mail, please contact the development office, or pick one up at the front desk.

Questions? Call the Development Office 713-661-6688.

Deadline for underwriting names in the program is January 12, 2011.

Deadline extended
Buy your Gala ad now!

Pick up a form at the front desk, online, or contact parent Renée Locklar. All ad artwork is due January 12, 2011.
Students in all classes are working on their Gala art projects.
special meals
Please let us know if you would like a vegetarian or kosher meal by emailing christinacantu@postoakschool.org

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 events, contact: Paula Mey

reserving a hotel room
Reserve your room early for $169 at the Houstonian Hotel. Call 800-231-2759.

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.
1. Science fair research in Upper El.
2. From Sap to Syrup in Primary.
3. Practical life in Infant Community.
4. Using the moveable alphabet to describe winter break and presents.
5. A quiet corner with the math stamp game.
6. Ohhhh a brush...
7. Multiplication quiz with a friend.
8. Cleaning up after bean pouring practice.
9. Discussing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality test and applying the results towards goal setting in Middle School.
10. Matching animals with corresponding continents.
11. Setting up to work on the pink tower.
12. Towering cylinders.
13. Preparing for a class presentation on the Galapagos Islands.
14. Left: abstract long division; right: learning long division with racks and tubes.
Post Oak’s TEDxYouth

by Mirna Andrade-Salgado, Technology Director

“TED: Ideas worth spreading—riveting talks by remarkable people.” TED talks are just that—riveting talks by remarkable people. TED conferences are a series of talks on a wild variety of topics by extraordinary people. Each talk is shorter than 20 minutes. If you don’t know about TED, check out their library of presentations on the Web at www.ted.com.

School, The Kinkaid School, and Chinquapin School. The event was recorded and streamed live over the Internet. A link to the recorded video will be posted soon on our website.

Post Oak students talked about the Middle School Manager Program. This seemingly simple program encourages leadership and responsibility by taking on jobs that matter in the real life of the middle school. What are some of these jobs?

The hospitality managers greet adult visitors to the Middle School, conduct tours, and explain the Middle School program. They write thank you cards as well.

The travel managers deal with out-of-town trips (such as Washington, D.C.). They book flights and hotel rooms, select local restaurants, and plan the itinerary for museums and local sites.

The media managers maintain the Middle School computers and printers. They are currently shopping for an interactive white board for the middle school. They are also scanning student photos for the graduation slide show.

The community service managers organize Middle School students into groups for their weekly trips to five sites around the city. They maintain contact with the service organizations. They manage student permission slips, emergency medical

TED started out in Silicon Valley and the conferences have spread around the globe. So it was only natural that independent schools would emulate this idea and give students a chance to give their own TED talks. The event was held in conjunction with Universal Children’s Day as well as Independent Schools Association of the Southwest’s (ISAS) Initiating Innovative Ideas project. More than 70 schools worldwide hosted TEDxYouth events on the same day this past November.

Here in Houston, Middle School students from Post Oak joined High School students from St. John’s School, Episcopal High School, The Kinkaid School, and Chinquapin School. The event was recorded and streamed live over the Internet. A link to the recorded video will be posted soon on our website.

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The Houston Express Soccer Club U9 Excelsior boys won the trophy division at the Eclipse Academy Cup last weekend. This team includes from Hifa Sobhani’s Lower Elementary class, from Maya Pinto’s Lower Elementary class, and Post Oak Dad Ken Redding as coach.

Forms and other paper work. They recruit parent drivers.

What is the importance of the manager program? It helps students develop real life skills while affirming their capability. Did you make travel arrangements for yourself and your classmates at the age of 13?

What about the experience of participating in the TED talks? Here’s what Middle School participants had to say:

"The TEDx talk let me share the idea of our manager program, hopefully spreading it and making more schools aware of just how much their students might be missing, and how much more they can benefit."

—

Participating in TED was a great opportunity for me. It gave me a chance to tell the world about our manager positions at The Post Oak School, hoping to inspire someone else at another school with our ideas. In the process of presenting our TED talk I gained some very valuable public speaking skills.

—

Participating in TEDx was a valuable experience for me. I was provided with the opportunity to share something I was passionate about with a global audience. The audience was open to innovative ideas, and that made the sharing all the more valuable. The idea of a manager program and a community-supported agriculture program at Blackwood Land Institute is something that is very near to my heart. I have always styled myself as an environmental activist. I believe that our passage to a better future is through renewal of the environment. If we don’t have a home to live, where will we store everything that is valuable and beneficent about humanity?

—

My participation in the TEDx presentation taught me that public speaking is not one of my favorite things to do. While I do not enjoy public speaking, I learned that it is an important skill to have.

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Participating in TEDx was a great experience because we got to spread our idea of our manager program. Being able to spread the word about this program to people outside of our school community was great because I feel the program has really helped my class become stronger as a whole and the members of it more developed adolescents. The experience also helped me get one step closer to overcoming my fear of public speaking. I think we chose our topic because the event was a great time to connect to lots of people. Even if the exact program is not adopted at other schools, I believe the idea will help inspire the creation of other programs to benefit the adolescents.

—

Post Oak students win in soccer

The Houston Express Soccer Club U9 Excelsior boys won the trophy division at the Eclipse Academy Cup last weekend. This team includes from Hifa Sobhani’s Lower Elementary class, from Maya Pinto’s Lower Elementary class, and Post Oak Dad Ken Redding as coach.

Post Oak students win in soccer
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.

Surface area

by Grade 6

This picture is about surface area. Surface area is a type of math where you measure the surface of an object. For instance, I did a three-dimensional rectangular prism out of blocks and then measured its length and width and how many sides were the same as the one I measured. Then I multiplied them all together. The next step is to measure another side not the same shape as the others and measure it the same way. Now you have two numbers. You add those numbers together and then you have the surface area of that object! We had an assignment to measure the surface of a 3D rectangular prism made from blocks, then split it again and again each time measuring the surface area, until you got to the smallest amount possible.
Post Oak Dad’s Club does some Post Oak gardening

Post Oak dads, under the direction of parent Travis Crabtree and Facilities Manager Matt Thompson, got together for breakfast and some yard work on Saturday, December 18. Their work resulted in replacing the chipped-paint fence by Primary Home Environment with some small boxwoods plants, and they created new garden beds for Laura Roark’s Upper Elementary class. Participants included: Travis Crabtree, Rakesh Agrawal, Walter Cassidy, Arnold Colunga, Ken Redding, Greg Taylor, Jason Walker, Marc Walsh, and Alan Ying.

Travis and Dads:
Let me note my thanks and appreciation for the work that you did here at school last Saturday. Almost every feature at the school has a history behind it: someone whose idea, work or initiative is behind it...largely uncommemorated. Our alums always look for their ceiling tiles in the art studio or the library. The same can be said of parents and faculty who have left their mark in large and small ways. I'll never look at that boxwood hedge, or the Upper Elementary garden without thinking of you.

Thanks,
John Long
CALENDAR

For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

JANUARY 9–15

Mon
01/10
Spring ASEP begins

Wed
01/12
Parent/Employee Basketball
8:00 pm

Thu
01/13
Post Oak Dad’s Club
Poker Night

Fri
01/14
Application Deadline for
new students

JANUARY 16–23

Mon
01/17
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
School Closed

Tue
01/18
Beginning of Redirecting
Children’s Behavior
(reg. req’d, 6-week course)
6:30–9:30 pm

Wed
01/19
Coffee with the
Elementary Director
9:00 am

Thu
01/20
Teacher In-Service day

Fri
01/21
Classes not in session; only
students with expanded-year
contracts attend

Fri-Sun
01/21-23
NAMTA Conference
in Houston

NOTICE BOARD

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, and 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, and February 3, 10, 17, 24.
Cost: $20 per person for the series (includes workbook).

Post Oak Dad’s Club Poker Night

Thursday, January 13

311 Saddlebranch
Doors open 7:30 pm
Game starts at 8:00 pm

RSVP by Monday, January 10

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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