A century ago, Dr. Montessori discovered that freedom and excellence are intertwined. Both children and adults today could benefit from applying this insight to our schools and work places.

Our traditional school systems are built like our traditional factories. Even the end-of-period bell mimics the shift-break bell in an industrial facility.

Having once worked in a traditional factory myself, I can attest that the similarity of cultures continues to this day, authoritarian and unstimulating environments where questioning and collaboration are both disdained. In fact, the traditional school system was designed in tandem with the support of early “efficiency experts” with the goal of producing ready workers for industrial expansion.

continued on page 2
It’s curious that today we still find these alienating attitudes in our workplaces and schools. Not just our educators, but our business leaders also should know better. In the 1980s, businesses around the world began to take note of unusually efficient processes at automotive factories in Germany and Japan. These factories produced more cars at lower cost and with fewer errors, yet oddly they upended a great deal of standard practice.

Consultants discovered that these workers collaborated more, especially with management.

However, there was one extremely startling difference at the most successful of these factories. In traditional factories, such as the one I worked at, workers’ responsibilities are quite constrained. For example, my job was to put rubber gaskets on circuit boards. I couldn’t go too fast or too slow lest I risk disrupting the production queue. Because of union rules and shop practice, I was not to inspect the parts for any problems, so I needed to ignore even the most glaring defects which would render the final devices useless. My job, like many others, was essentially to “pull a lever.” It was certainly disappointing, but it also struck me at the time as rather inefficient.

In contrast to the one I worked at, consultants found that at the most effective factories, worker responsibilities were extended beyond the rapid production of the next part to encompass the overall quality of the product. Workers who spotted any defect were allowed to call a halt to production if necessary. These workers weren’t just pulling levers, they knew the purpose of their work and felt ownership and pride over the output of the factory.

One of the most striking findings of these consultants was that the workers in these factories knew the purpose of their work and felt ownership and pride over the output of the factory. However, this was not just our work environment, and it was not just our educators.

Consultants found that at the most effective factories, worker responsibilities were extended beyond the rapid production of the next part to encompass the overall quality of the product. Workers who spotted any defect were allowed to call a halt to production if necessary. These workers weren’t just pulling levers, they knew the purpose of their work and felt ownership and pride over the output of the factory.

Work should be ennobling, but far too frequently it is not. Way back in 1968, a management consultant by the name of Fredrick Herzberg studied workplace efficiency and concluded that the intrinsic motivators of work (the pleasures of the job itself) outweighed the motivation of extrinsic factors such as pay, vacation or even the perks of the work environment.

Obviously people need to be fairly compensated for their work in order to feel motivated, but beyond that point extra dollars did not lead to extra effort. Things that did include providing employees with the freedom to accomplish tasks in the ways best suited them, and extending their responsibilities “vertically” to encompass more of the work process. The more responsibility offered an employee, the greater their own reported sense of satisfaction. This contrasted against the negative effects of “horizontal” job loading an employee, for example by challenging them to tighten twice as many bolts in a day.

In Montessori, too, we talk about intrinsic motivation as superior to extrinsic motivators such as grades or even praise. In fact, Herzberg’s studies of adults show that intrinsic motivators produce superior results, one more way the Montessori method better prepares children for the real world. It is interesting today that despite the fact that we know we both learn and work best when we are interested, schools and workplaces are still constructed around the premise that students and workers are adversaries of teachers and employers respectively. If we treat children and adults as if they can’t be trusted to want to do their work, is it surprising that they don’t act like they want to be at their schools and offices?

Is it surprising that our schools are failing, or that workplace productivity is lagging? These are direct cultural and economic consequences that follow from the way people are treated. If we assume students do not wish to learn, then we get bored students who learn less and even goof off. Assume employees don’t want to work and risk being forgotten like Altavista. This once leading search engine has been rendered obsolete by one where employees are encouraged to spend a day a week on any problem of their choosing. This is Google, a company founded by two former Montessori children.

continued on page 11
This past Wednesday, Upper Elementary and Middle School students learned a little more about The Post Oak High School at an assembly hosted by Head of School John Long and High School Director James Moudry. Parents won't be left out; mark your calendar for Coffee with the High School Director on Wednesday, February 23 at 9:00 am (regular) or Tuesday, March 1 at 7:00 pm (decaf).
Students in all classes are finishing their Gala art projects.
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/childrens events, contact: Paula Mey

special meals

Please let us know if you would like a vegetarian or kosher meal by emailing christinacantu@postoakschool.org

reserve 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.

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.
1. Monkey Launcher! Jump on the end of the board and then catch the monkey!
3. Getting in a little reading before going to the Infant Community playground.
4. Math warm-ups in Middle School.
5. Putting on shoes in Infant Community—physical independence builds self confidence.
6. Ironing napkins deepens concentration.
7. Finding the highest common factor.
8. Stamp game subtraction.
9. Doing the dishes contributes to the life of the community.
10. Preparing to polish—the beginning of sequences.
12. Illustrating a story.
13. Writing words with "ou" in them.
Last week, 12 alumni returned to speak about their experiences since graduating from Post Oak and to reflect on how Montessori education has prepared them for life. In attendance were high school students Tom Harvey (St. John’s), Jeffrey Davis (Episcopal), Nikhil Schneider (Episcopal), Josh Brenner (St. John’s) and Lou Posada (Kinkaid), college students Michael Harvey (U. of Notre Dame), Michael Mitchell (Trinity U.), Annie Daugherty (Texas Christian U.) and Wren Fondren (U. of Texas), and post-collegiate adults Jessica Wagner, Sara (Mitchell) Bushell, and Allison Wong. Afterwards, Post Oak parent Jenny Marshall sent me the following note:

Dear John,

That was our first Alumni Night. We really enjoyed it. Even my Mom came and she sat right next to you! I guess she doesn’t know the “you don’t sit next to the Principal” rule?

I was struck by one key point made by a former student, now mother. She said that going to a mainstream school was like going auto pilot until you went to college. Then at college you got back your freedom and responsibility again. By going Montessori the whole way she said you would avoid that gap. Great point.

I was also delighted that several kids mentioned that they looked for the “harshest” schools to get into. Says a lot about Montessori and creating a love for challenge.

Thank you for putting this together. Everybody seems to walk away enlightened.

Jenny Marshall
Alumni: Post Oak to Pakistan

In June 2010, Post Oak students Aziza and Azam relocated to Karachi, Pakistan with their parents Munira and Zahir. Aziza is now in eighth grade and Azam in sixth grade at the American School of Karachi. Their mother, Munira, recently sent this letter to Head of School John Long.

Dear John,

Happy New Year. Both Aziza and Azam finished the first half of their year at Karachi American School, and as I was reflecting on 2010, I had to write this note to you. A note of thanks to the faculty and staff of the Post of School for preparing Aziza and Azam so well for their future. They have both managed to settle in very well academically and socially, and are quite confident in their new environment. We have always had this great debate on whether Montessori prepares the children well for traditional school environments as they move on from Middle schools. Well, we found out it definitely does. Our children not only moved to a traditional school, but they have moved half way across the world in a brand new cultural environment they have never been exposed to. So, I wanted to share our experience with you.

I still remember the first day of school at Karachi American School. Unfortunately, the orientation had been cancelled the day before because of riots in the city, so we went to the first day of school fully expecting that at the least Aziza and Azam will get a tour of the facility before they are taken to their classrooms. Well, as soon as we arrived at the school, they were taken into their respective classroom. I went home and prayed. I was very nervous for them. They had never seen the school, let alone spoken to the teachers or met other kids. In addition, they were not at a Montessori school any more. When I went to pick them up, they came out beaming. They had a great day. Children can be so resilient. Yes, KAS is an international school, so they do an awesome job of transitioning children. But as I think about it, the three-year cycles in the Montessori environment prepared the children really well. At the end of the three-year cycle, the children are in a very comfortable leadership position and then they start all the way at the bottom of the next three year cycle and learn the ropes in the new environment. Aziza and Azam have been through three of these cycles so they do adapt to changing roles and environments really well. Yes, the three-year cycle process does make them very resilient.

Both Aziza and Azam have done really well academically. Aziza received Student of the Month Award and was placed on the Honor Roll list in the second month of her being here. The principal told her that in the history of the school, no student has received this award as quickly as she has. The award is given for academic achievement, adherence to the three school rules, positive contributing member of the class, a positive representative of Karachi American School and a willingness to help others. Every principle embodied by Montessori is included in this award. Aziza is grateful that Mr. Noah forced them to learn the MI A reporting standards because that is all they use at this school; in addition, Aziza is doing extremely well in Math and Science, thanks to the hard work of Ms. Gray. Aziza is now taking a high school level Spanish course, thanks to all her Spanish teachers. Azam has received the academic achievement award and the super citizen award at the elementary level. Azam’s teacher tells me that when Azam is reading a book in the classroom, the whole classroom can be turned upside down and he would have no clue that’s how engrossed and immersed he is in his reading which reminded me about the article you wrote on “FLOW.” These are all the attributes they have gained from their Montessori education. They have recently introduced differentiated learning at KAS, which in my mind is very similar to the Montessori concept. Due to the differentiated learning model, Azam now attends the grade six math classes because he was so well prepared in the Montessori environment. Azam never misses an opportunity to promote a visit to see Mr. & Mrs. Pinto or maybe even get them to travel to Karachi.

The purpose of my note today is not to brag about my children but to let you know how grateful we are for the Montessori education they have acquired and that this Montessori education has prepared them tremendously well for their transition and growth.

continued on page 11
The Post Oak Upper Elementary Spelling Bee took place Friday, January 7. A grade four student in Laura Roark’s class won the bee by spelling the word “mauve,” and a grade five student from Errol Pinto’s class was the runner up. They will continue on to represent Post Oak in the Houston PBS - KUHT - Channel 8.1 Spelling Bee. They will represent Post Oak if [ ] is unable to participate.

Post Oak Spelling Bee winners

Bearkats basketball

Dates:

In January:
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.

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:

Wed. evenings, 6:30–8 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

Thurs. 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).
Infant and Parent Classes

The Infant and Parent class offered at the Motherhood Center is facilitated by Post Oak Half-Day Infant Community Teacher Sarah Moudry. Learn about:

- Montessori principles
- preparing the home with the child in mind
- how to encourage independence
- language development
- movement
- weaning
- toileting
- active learning & concentration

This is truly an opportunity to offer Montessori from the start.

Register now!

Class A: Birth–Crawling
Mondays & Thursdays for 8 weeks (1:30–3:00 pm)
Jan. 20–Mar. 10, 2011; $420/child or $756/sibling price
Note: $10 non-refundable registration fee added at checkout. To register: www.motherhoodcenter.com/index.php/infant-and-parent-montessori

Class B: Crawling–Walking
Tuesdays for 10 weeks 1:30–3:00 pm
Jan. 4–Mar. 8, 2011; $250/child or $450/sibling price
Note: $10 non-refundable registration fee added at checkout. To register: www.motherhoodcenter.com/index.php/infant-and-parent-montessori

"Where the children work for themselves," by Marc Seldin continued from page 2

The table on page two is from Frederick Herzberg’s original 1968 article in Harvard Business Review. See if you spot any similarities between the principles Herzberg enumerated and those we hold fast to as Montessori educators.

Herzberg’s chart suggests the value of removing controls while increasing personal accountability. This brings to mind the delicate balance of freedom and responsibility that is essential in a Montessori classroom. This balance is often a Montessori teacher’s greatest challenge. Reflecting on how well we achieve this balance with each individual child and our class as a group is an important part of our daily spiritual preparation.

Today the wisdom of Dr. Montessori is reaching an ever greater number of people, and we see more and more public Montessori schools opening around the world. And as we have seen, some of the most successful companies are applying similar principals in there workplaces. Nonetheless, the majority of schools and workplaces have not yet adopted the respectful and humanistic practices that we know lead to better outcomes. Our work continues!

—Reprinted with permission.

"Alumni: Post Oak to Pakistan," continued from page 9

In addition to academics, they also have their passions. Azam is very passionate about American football (that’s what they call it here) and Aziza is quite enthusiastic about her choir singing and Glee. Of course, the football game and Glee is not available on any of the TV channels here, so they use the Internet to keep up. We have tried to support them so that they can still keep up with these interests. Azam even wakes up at 5:00 am or stays up until 1:00 am (on school holidays) to watch the games. He has taught the game to his classmates, and he is also trying to talk to the teachers to see if one of them is willing to sponsor American football as an after-school sport. His confidence, gained from talking to you about Model UN and subsequently the Post Oak School sponsoring the Model UN program, has given him hope to pursue these goals with other adults.

This doesn’t mean that they don’t miss their friends and their comfortable environment from the past. Last week, Azam woke up and told me that he dreamt about MM trip to New York, and when he woke up, he was in tears because he missed his friends. I told Azam that it was very natural for him to feel this way. Both Aziza and Azam have not really reacted or complained about this major change in their lives, so this kind of feeling on his part is expected and normal. He should definitely express his feelings more.

Anyway, Azam and Aziza have never known anything but a Montessori school since they were two years old, so I believe that the system has prepared them extremely well to face the opportunities and challenges that life awaits them. I am thrilled that Post Oak is now creating a high school, because, based on my experience, it will prepare the children extremely well for university.

Many thanks for everything The Post Oak School does in preparing the children for their future.

Kind regards,
Munira, Zahir, Aziza and Azam
CALENDAR
For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

JANUARY 16-22

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
Gala Underwriting Cocktail Reception (off campus)
5:30-7:30 pm

Wed 01/19
Coffee with the Elementary Director
9:00 am
Becoming a Love & Logic Parent®
6:30-8:30 pm
Parent/Employee Basketball
8:00-10:00 pm

Thu 01/20
Becoming a Love & Logic Parent®
9:10-10:30 am

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

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

JANUARY 23-29

Sun 01/23
NAMTA Conference in Houston

Thu 01/27
Primary Parent/Child Night
6:00-7:00 pm

Check out our online calendar—or download a copy of the printed calendar at www.postoakschool.org

NOTICE BOARD

Schedule a Parent/Teacher Conference

Schedule your Parent/Teacher Conference online today. Go to the “For Parents” menu at the top of the page and go down to “Schedule/View a Parent-Teacher Conference.”

Housekeeper available

Our housekeeper of 15 years is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays, morning or afternoon. Housekeeping only.

Call Jenny at [phone number]

Loving Home

Urgently seeking nanny for newborn baby boy

Seeking a full-time nanny for work in the Heights beginning early/mid February.

English required (unfortunately we’re monolingual)! Please email Nancy at [email address]

NANNY WANTED APRIL 2011

Family living in Braeswood Place seeking nanny for newborn infant beginning mid April, 2011. This is a full time position that requires taking care of an infant and related housekeeping and cooking. The applicants must be able to speak English, be able to drive and must be reliable. We prefer applicants with prior experience in taking care of infants in Braeswood Place, West University or Bellaire.

Contact: [phone number]

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 International (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

Barbara Hacker’s green tip

Old phone books make up a large percentage of waste in landfills:

• recycle old ones
• call to stop delivery of new ones and use online directories instead.