“...the Montessori educational approach might be the surest route to joining the creative elite, which are so overrepresented by the schools’ alumni that one might suspect a Montessori Mafia,” wrote Peter Sims in The Wall Street Journal. Post Oak parent and award-winning designer Lana Rigsby was inspired to illuminate that article on the school’s website, integrating stories of prominent entrepreneurs, actors, musicians, thinkers, and writers who attended Montessori schools as children, with alumni of The Post Oak School.

Why does this matter?

How to evaluate the impact of education is a surprisingly elusive question. We want to be able to measure it. Our culture loves measurement. On page one of this morning’s Houston Chronicle, there is a story about “value added”: a measurement that HISD intends to use to evaluate teachers. “As the name suggests, the method is intended to measure the value a teacher adds to students’ learning, based on their standardized test scores.” Teachers hate it.
School board members and the general public suspect that is just teachers’ fear of accountability.

We at Post Oak also question whether test scores are an appropriate measure of education’s most important outcomes, and it is not fear of accountability driving that stance. Certainly our students perform well on standardized tests, which they take yearly beginning in grade three. Compared to national norms, the average Post Oak student scores at the 90th percentile in reading and math. Of course, private school students tend to score higher, on average, than students in public schools. How do Post Oak test scores compare to other private schools? The average scores of Post Oak students equal the private school norms for reading and math. Post Oak students do as well on standardized achievement tests as students in other private schools.

But this is not our aim, we don’t train students to take tests. We certainly pay attention to test results, but see them as a by-product of our work. Dr. Montessori valued academic accomplishment, and she acknowledged that students in her schools must be prepared for professional careers. She also understood that education is more than training, more than acquiring information. It is ultimately the formation of character. She recognized that children educated in her schools displayed certain traits. And so it is fascinating to see this reported in university research and the popular press.

“The Montessori Mafia showed up in an extensive, six-year study about the way creative business executives think. Professors Jeffrey Dyer of Brigham Young University and Hal Gregersen of globe-spanning business school INSEAD surveyed over 3,000 executives and interviewed 500 people who had either started innovative companies or invented new products.”

“A number of the innovative entrepreneurs also went to Montessori schools, where they learned to follow their curiosity,” Mr. Gregersen said. “To paraphrase the famous Apple ad campaign, innovators not only learned early on to think different, they act different (and even talk different).”

Yes, but...

We’re a scientific, data-driven, hard-nosed society. We want proof.

It is all well and fine to tell us about these accomplished former Montessori students, but what about my child’s test scores? Isn’t Value-Added a good measure of learning and therefore of teacher effectiveness? “Dan McCaffrey, a senior statistician at the RAND Corporation, said his research has found that ... the Education Value-Added Assessment System (or EVAAS), performs well compared to others.” But he goes on to say, “That doesn’t mean it’s right. We don’t know whether any of these models are right.”

That ambiguity pointed me back to the question: can we observe the ultimate impact of education as it is unfolding? I remembered a letter I received this spring from Post Oak parent Tanya Bennett. Her husband, David McConkey, and their daughter an Upper Elementary student, flew back from Disney World in time for the Post Oak science fair. The parents recognized how important the science fair was to and gave her that choice. In Tanya’s words, “Here was a child who was more passionate and engaged in her “real life” than about spending time in the Magic Kingdom—a quintessential Montessori “poster child” for whom the love/process of learning was everything. Wasn’t that most consistent with our family values, more important in terms of “life lessons” than family time in an amusement park?"

“David and I continue to be amazed and humbled by who our child is becoming and we know that her school plays a huge part in this. It’s not every child that would make the above choice, but it’s also not just any school that would provide the environment to support and nurture such learning and passion.”

Underlined phrases in this article are links to websites—you can access them in the online edition from our website (link on the left side of the homepage).
From Bellaire to Kandahar—spotlight on Alumnus William Treadway

by Shannon Neufeld, Communications Coordinator

What happens at Post Oak doesn’t stay at Post Oak—William Treadway left Post Oak after grade one when he moved with his family to Sugar Land and attended another Montessori school there. The lessons he learned here have traveled with him all the way to Afghanistan.

Treadway is a United States Army first lieutenant serving in Kandahar Province with the armored cavalry. After attending The Kinkaid School for high school, he graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2009.

Treadway attributes his military success to West Point—and to his Post Oak experience. “I came out of school and they gave me a platoon to run,” he said. “School can only do so much to prepare you for that. I remember being in this [Montessori] environment and if I needed to learn long division, I sought out a teacher and she would produce a training aid. I can do that in my job now—I can seek out someone who knows how to do things and they’ll draw a training aid and teach me how to do it.”

Common themes in the life of a Post Oak student: leadership and service. These both inspired Treadway to serve his country. “There are many different elements to it,” he said. “There’s a service element: as an American citizen, I want to have a stake in where this country’s going. Not that I feel everyone should serve, but I just personally felt that in order to be a part of this country, I wanted to serve the country. I wanted to become an officer because I wanted to lead soldiers—take America’s best into a tough situation and get them out of it... I’ve been well trained by everyone from Miss Hacker all the way through now—it’s all been leading up to it.”

“He says his Montessori years also helped him juggle life at West Point including academics, athletics, and the military aspects of his education. Montessori education taught him how to manage his time, take responsibility for his tasks, and seek help from others when there’s something he doesn’t know.

Treadway still vividly remembers Montessori materials such as the Stamp Game. “Learning addition, subtraction, the box with the colored squares—the colors indicated magnitude—and you could easily get to multiplication and division.” He also remembers his teachers, and says, “teachers in the Post Oak environment actually taught... as opposed to having knowledge dumped at me from a fire hose where effectively someone’s playing a recording... Miss Hacker would sit down and show you how to do something.”

continued on page 5
Familiar faces grace new web pages

Be sure to visit our website to check out the new pages designed by Post Oak parent Lana Rigsby of Rigsby Hull. In the bottom right corner of the homepage you will find the links leading you to Montessori students, parents, and supporters, as well as a recent WSJ article about Montessori education. Our thanks to Lana for her superb work!

Tips from Officer Anthony Hefferin

Every day hundreds of Texans suffer the shock, anger, and frustration that characterize vehicle-related crimes. As you head out this year to the recreation spots in the city and elsewhere, remember that criminals may be in those areas, too. The Bellaire Police Department would like to remind residents of the ways to help prevent car burglaries.

TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR VEHICLE

• **Hide your valuables.** Items in the open make your car a target. Remove your GPS units, cell phones, purses, and radar detectors.

• **Take your keys and never leave a second set in your vehicle.** 20 percent of stolen vehicles had keys inside them, making the theft even easier. Do not leave your vehicle running or unlocked to run into a day care, grocery store, etc.

• **Lock your car.** A large percentage of vehicles stolen or burglarized were left unlocked.

• **Park in well-lit or heavily-trafficked areas.** Thieves do not like witnesses. Find an attended lot or garage if possible. At night, park your vehicles in your garage if at all possible, or driveway, do not park on the street.

• **Give parking attendants the ignition key only.** Keep your trunk and glove box locked at all times. If possible, get separate keys for the ignition and the trunk and glove box.

• **Never leave your car running unattended.** Cars are often stolen or burglarized at convenience stores, gas stations or when an owner leaves the vehicle running to warm it up.

• **Install an anti-theft device.** Many insurance companies may give you a discount for certain anti-theft devices. Check with your agent for details.

The Bellaire Police Department would like to remind residents to call 713-668-0487 to report any suspicious activity.
Congratulations to former Post Oak student Jack Peterman who is graduating from Strake Jesuit this May and will be attending Vanderbilt University.

His mother Angela shared a few words with us about his brother Andrew, also a former Post Oak student and currently a freshman in the engineering department at Southern Methodist University. Recently Andrew told her that one of his professors said: “Andrew, you are going to be a wealthy man the way you research things.” She asked him if he wanted to be wealthy, was this his ambition? He responded that he didn’t need to be wealthy to be happy, he liked to learn things on his own—that’s the way he is. Angela then asked him what made him the person he is, to which he replied: “Montessori school, that’s it. I am who I am because of my experiences in the Montessori school.”

Montessori education is known more for its focus on peace-making rather than as a cradle for soldiers, so Head of School John Long asked Treadway to connect the dots between Post Oak, West Point, and Afghanistan. “Leadership and service,” was his response, emphasizing that Montessori promotes both characteristics. “Leadership and service,” he repeated.

He also acknowledged how influential September 11, 2001 was in his life. He was a ninth grader at the time, in fact, he was riding a bus to Enchanted Rock on a class outing. Like many in his generation, the events of that day inspired him to military service.

Long told Treadway about events here at Post Oak. On September 12, 2001, faculty gathered around the flag pole with Upper Elementary and Middle School students and invited them to respond to the act of destruction with an act of construction: “in a way that speaks to our hearts and that we will remember.” Each student was given a brick on which to paint a message, and three days later returned as a group to build the small monument that stands at the base of the flag pole in front of the school to this day.

Treadway responded, “That’s incredibly powerful—that’s an excellent response. Where we’re going, there will be destruction, but there will also be building up. The more building I do, the less destruction I have to do…. We’ll be looking for the bad guys and at the same time trying to help the good guys,” he said. “The way we’ll win the war in Afghanistan is by winning the people.”

“From Bellaire to Kandahar” by Shannon Neufeld, continued from page 3

Alumni updates

Congratulations to former Post Oak student Jack Peterman who is graduating from Strake Jesuit this May and will be attending Vanderbilt University.

His mother Angela shared a few words with us about his brother Andrew, also a former Post Oak student and currently a freshman in the engineering department at Southern Methodist University. Recently Andrew told her that one of his professors said: “Andrew, you are going to be a wealthy man the way you research things.” She asked him if he wanted to be wealthy, was this his ambition? He responded that he didn’t need to be wealthy to be happy, he liked to learn things on his own—that’s the way he is. Angela then asked him what made him the person he is, to which he replied: “Montessori school, that’s it. I am who I am because of my experiences in the Montessori school.”
SCENES
from
The Post Oak School

1. Cutting carrots to offer to friends.
2. Selecting letters from the moveable alphabet.
4. Easel painting to express creativity.
5. Learning division with racks and tubes in Lower Elementary.
6. Shoe polishing demands deep concentration.
7. A Lower Elementary student puzzles through fraction equivalences.
8. Primary students have the goal in sight.
10. Creating a story with the moveable alphabet.
11. Multiplying by three with the stamp game.
The Great Post Oak Book Exchange

On Wednesday, May 18 the book exchange will take place in the space between the gym kitchen and Coaches Tucker and O’Connell’s office. Students will be allowed to cash in their book bucks for books they would like to have in place of the ones they donated. Any books remaining after the book donors have purchased their selections will be offered to students who did not donate books. Any remaining books at the end will be donated to a needy library.

Student play: ‘Nineteen’

by [Author Name] & [Author Name], Grade 8

The students of Post Oak Middle School will perform a student-produced original production titled Nineteen that documents the events of the 20th century. Come watch 100 years of major historical events in 100 minutes. Watch WWI through the eyes of two brothers; travel through the roaring 20s. Experience the counterculture of 1968, and follow the stars of the 1980s.

Date: Wednesday, May 18, 2011
Time: 6:30 pm
Location: Post Oak School Gym

Who’s got spirit!?!?

The Houston Cheer Competitive All Star Cheer Program (www.houstongymnastics.com) is hosting an All Star Cheerleading Clinic and Tryout.

TRYOUT CLINIC: May 24, 26, 27; 5 pm–7 pm
OPEN TRYOUTS: May 28; 9 am–12 pm
All levels and all ages (18 and under)

Tryout costs
Register on or before May 16
$10 returning HC All-Star Athletes 2010-11, $20 new athletes
Register May 17 through May 28
$20 returning HC All-Star Athletes 2010-11, $30 new athletes

Clinic costs
$50 new athletes, includes clinic and tryouts
You may call to set up tryouts on alternate dates: 713-668-6001

Houston Gymnastics Academy
5804 South Rice Ave., Houston, TX 77081
Come out to support the graduating class of 2011

It’s time to make plans to attend the eighth-grade graduation on May 27 at 6:30 pm. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear the students share in their own words about their time at Post Oak. Parents of younger children have remarked in the past what a powerful experience it was, giving them a “portrait of a graduate.” Come see the power of Post Oak education and celebrate with those students moving onward.

Redirecting Children’s Behavior

_The Gentle Art of Parenting_

Pre-register for this 15-hour course designed to guide parents to use discipline as a process of teaching children self control and responsibility. This class is a positive, powerful, informative, and fun training course that will give you a system to handle every situation in which adults and children interact, from infancy to adolescence.

Visit www.deborah-fry.com for more information.

**Dates:** June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29  
(five Wednesday evenings)

**Time:** 6:15–9:15 pm

**Place:** The Post Oak School

**Cost:** $225 per person, $325 per couple

For registration, call 713-840-8663.

Deborah Fry, Ph.D. is a certified instructor for the International Network for Children and Families. She gives talks and seminars for parents, teachers, and people involved with children and families, as well as teach at Westminster Weekday School.

Baby brother

Introducing Verma, new little brother to Verma in FDIC.  
was born on Monday, May 2, weighing 7 lbs., 2 oz., and measured 21 in. long.  
Parents Aparajitha and Amit expressed thanks for everyone’s good wishes and said mom and baby are doing well. Congratulations!

Gentle reminder…

pledges due

All Gala and Post Oak Fund pledges are due this month. Pledge reminders have been mailed. Please contact Christina Cantu in the development office if you have any questions. Thank you.
Softball Swing!

The crack of the bat was enough to know that the softball hit by Post Oak dad Anthony Policastro was heading way out of the field! Post Oak dads, moms, and kids turned out for the first annual Dads’ Club softball game held at Episcopal High School last week. It was a friendly competition with dads, faculty, and Middle School students getting up to plate. Thanks to Post Oak parents Greg Scheinman and Travis Crabtree for organizing the event. Thanks, too, to the Middle School crew who sold hot dogs, chips, and lemonade to the cheering fans.

Winners of the Homerun Derby: Greg Scheinman and Anthony Policastro
Ice cream sprinkles & rain sprinkles made for a fun afternoon

“Do you like the ice cream?” a parent asked a four-year-old child at this week’s Ice Cream Social. His chocolate filled smile and enthusiastic nod said it all. Over 100 parents, students, faculty, and staff turned out for this sweet celebration of volunteer effort. Post Oak parents give countless hours in support of the school, and a fun social gathering on the school’s back lawn with children, ice cream, and lots of friends catching-up was a perfect way to honor that work. POPA Chairs Erin Stus and Melissa Cordero, who finish their two-year term this month, put together the festive event and handed out small gifts of thanks to all parents. If you were not able to attend, please drop by the development office to pick up one of the Post Oak cubes.
**CALENDAR**

For more, visit [www.postoakschool.org](http://www.postoakschool.org)

**MAY 15–21**

- **Mon** 5/16: Emergency Release Forms due today
- **Tue** 5/17: Buddha Day
- **Wed** 5/18: Middle School theater Book Exchange
  - New Elementary parent gathering
    - Lower El: 6:30–7:15 pm
    - Upper El: 7:15–8:00 pm
- **Thu** 5/19: Parent/employee basketball (this week only)
  - 8:00–10:00 pm
- **Fri** 5/20: Spring ASEP ends

**MAY 22–28**

- **Mon** 5/23: Declaration of the Bab
- **Tue** 5/24: Farewell to Friends
  - 4:00 pm
- MMUN introduction
  - 6:30 pm
- **Wed-Thu** 5/25-26: Middle School visits Retreat at Artesian Lakes
  - Parent/employee basketball
  - 8:00–10:00 pm
- **Fri** 5/27: Last day of school
  - Early dismissal
    - IC: 11:00 am
    - PRI: 11:30 am
    - EL & MS: noon
  - Graduation
    - 6:30 pm

**NOTICE BOARD**

**Becoming a Love & Logic Parent©**

**SUMMER CLASSES 2011**

**Tuesday evening, 6:30–8:00 pm, June 21, 28, July 5, 12, August 2, 9**

- **Cost:** $120/ couple for 6 classes , $60/ person or $20 each session and $10/ workbook small group setting, limited space available.

**CONTINUED CONVERSATIONS—support, reinforce, learn, Q&A**

- **Tuesday, 10:30–11:30 am, June 21, 28, July 5, 12, August 2, 9**
- **Cost:** $15 drop-in or $80/ 6 weeks plus $10 workbook
- For participants in previous classes, and those interested in making skills come naturally.

**Location:** 4010 Bluebonnet #109, Houston, TX 77025

For more information or to register please call:
713-668-6558 or contact phylstomlinson@gmail.com
www.phylstomlinson.com

**Receipts for reimbursement**

**Dear parents,**

If you have receipts for reimbursement (e.g. from the gala), please turn those receipts in by May 20. Check request forms are found online or at the front desk.

*Thank you,*

Christina Cantu
Development Director

**Order Cinco de Mayo performance photos or the DVD online at:**

[www.jhphotographyonline.com/Clients/postoakschool](http://www.jhphotographyonline.com/Clients/postoakschool)

- DVD $30
- Blu-Ray $40

Orders will be shipped on Wednesday, May 18.

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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 Communications Coordinator Elaine Schweizer (elaineschweizer@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 and Elaine Schweizer 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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