It was a perfect day for a drive along Virginia's coastline. Upper 60s, cool breeze, not a cloud in the sky—a real "Chamber of Commerce" day. The windows were down in our seven-passenger van and the wind blew our hair aimlessly, bringing with it the sweet smell of Virginia willows, red blackberry lilies, and globe thistles that painted our view. The banter and laughter of five sixth-grade boys in the backseat my only reminder of why we were here.

It was day four of the sixth graders' trip to Colonial Williamsburg. I was a chaperone.

The stated purpose of this field trip was to educate our children about the lives of America’s early settlers, the hardships they endured, the decisions they made, and the impact of those decisions on our current lives. Little did I know just how relevant and timely this education would prove to be.

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As we drove along the winding coastal highway, one of the boys asked me a simple question: “If you had to pick one member of a platoon, who do you think would be the best one?” In his opinion, the best member would have to be the commander, as he must possess not only certain leadership qualities, but also must have a working knowledge of all skills required of his troops. Thus, if push came to shove, the leader of the platoon was clearly the best. The four other boys disagreed, claiming the best member would have to be the most skilled sharpshooter, sniper, or gunner. They argued that the mission would be lost if not for the sharpshooter’s ability to hit his mark.

Rather than immediately joining the debate and offering my opinion, I invited the boys to present their case. Each boy presented very compelling reasons for his beliefs. All were well reasoned and articulated. More importantly, however, each boy sat quietly as the speaker made his presentation without interruption. The debate went on for 20 minutes. When the time was right, I offered a few observations.

To begin, I reminded the boys that every team has a leader. Football teams have a coach. Basketball, baseball, soccer, and hockey teams do as well. Our country has a president, and other countries have an elected official, governing body, religious leader, or patriarch. In short, every ‘team’ has a leader. The coach may not be the best-suited to throw a touchdown pass or kick a field goal, but without a leader, the team’s members might not possess the skills necessary to make strategic decisions on how best to accomplish their mission. A leader is important in every group. But without skilled players, the team’s mission could not be carried out or achieved. In short, every person, regardless of his/her title, position, or rank, has an important role in the success of a mission. And without each participant, the mission would fail.

This resonated with several of the boys. They quickly processed this ‘new’ information and reasserted their arguments, drawing on the sports analogy. The debate continued for another 15 minutes. In the end, no unanimous decision could be reached. When I sensed that the boys were looking to me to validate their respective positions (and, by doing so, declare a victor), I told them that each of their beliefs were valid. There was no right or wrong answer. That everyone had a right to choose his ‘best’ team member. I reminded them how important it is to give everyone a platform and opportunity to share his opinion with his peers in a respectful manner. This right is often referred to as a ‘God-given’ right, but in truth, it is a fairly new concept and is what sets America apart from other countries around the world: the freedom to assemble and present one’s view, regardless of its popularity. Regrettably, our children often see politicians, pundits, and news programs where respect for another person’s beliefs is ridiculed or vilified. As a parent, I do not believe it is my role to choose a winner for my children, but rather to teach them tolerance and to respect the beliefs of others.

Later, I reminded the boys about their debate in the van and asked them why it worked and what they learned. Without exception, they responded that they appreciated the others’ respect in permitting them to share their views and present their opinion without fear or risk of ridicule. Sound familiar?

As many of you know, during the time of America’s birth, it was considered an act of treason for the colonists to challenge the authority of the British Empire, to oppose the rules and laws required of them, or to speak out on perceived injustices. The colonists were subjected to imprisonment, public ridicule, and at times death if they voiced a belief that was incongruent with the King’s rule of law. Our freedom today is a direct result of the courage and bravery of those early colonists, who literally risked their lives, and the lives of their families, by challenging the status quo. It is this undeniable truth, which the boys experienced first hand that day, driving along the coast in Virginia.

What impressed me the most about this simple debate was the boys’ ability to respect each other’s opinions and to give everyone the time to express his thoughts, much like our forefathers did in Williamsburg more than 200 years ago when they struggled with the decision of whether to declare their independence from Great Britain. Independence, just like the boys’ choice of who was the ‘best’ platoon member, was not always a popular belief. Many of the Colonists rebuked their own, wishing to keep things the way they were instead of venturing into the unknown of self-rule and independence.

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Our nation is young, but its history is rich and its government is perhaps the most powerful in the world. Washington D.C., the nation's capital, includes all of our most important political authorities and buildings. D.C. is also home to the Smithsonian, a museum complex which includes nineteen museums, nine research facilities, a zoo, and is the largest collection of museums in the world. Indeed, there is no better place to learn of the U.S. than Washington D.C.

Each year the students of Post Oak travel to this wondrous city to explore the cultural treasures of this nation that are like no others. From walking by "The Fountain of Neptune" outside the elaborately designed Library of Congress, to viewing the enlightening tour of the White House, the whole journey was a lot of fun, and even better, gave us an excellent view of our nation. The trip's theme alternates each year between "War and Peace" and, this year's theme, "Law and Government."

In this year's trip we saw the workings of our political system through such buildings as Congress and the White House, while on the "War and Peace" themed trip we might spend more time in various museums. The trip was well planned and turned out enjoyable, but there were also some exciting unexpected events such as Wednesday at noon and a similar event in the afternoon.

Later that day, we went to the Newseum, which is a popular museum that contains wacky and wild exhibits dedicated to the pursuit of good news. As we tried to purchase tickets at the group entrance, we were barred by several Secret Service men with enormous guns. Why? Because President Obama was scheduled to visit the Newseum at two o'clock that day!

We explored the museum for two hours. We saw eight pieces of the Berlin Wall, a guard tower that watched over East Germany, an antenna from the 9/11 wreckage, decades of Pulitzer prize winning photographs, the Unabomber cabin, and dilapidated signs from Hurricane Katrina. Around 12:30, stomachs were grumbling and most of the class was ready to eat. But some people, especially Ms. Gray, made it clear that they were not going to budge until we saw President Obama. We positioned ourselves outside of the Newseum, and we began to wait.

We woke up at the crack of dawn to visit the White House on Wednesday morning. After being jostled through multiple security lines, we ventured into the depths of the president's home. Most of us were excited for what would be our first glimpse of the glamorous existence of the commander-in-chief. We gazed at the green room, the red room, and the blue room. After we saw the state reception room, we were hustled out of the building. Slightly disappointed, we returned to the hotel.

We observed cars pouring in, police clearing traffic, and we searched for snipers in the nearby buildings. Fifteen
Stories from the sixth grade trip

DAY ONE
On Monday we went on two airplane rides. We used Continental Airlines for both plane rides. One was two and a half hours long and the other was one hour long. When we got there, there were four cars waiting for us. Then we went on the road. Half way there we stopped at Five Guys. There I got a hot dog. After that we hit the road again. When we got to the hotel we unpacked our bags. We had an hour extra to settle into the hotel. When the hour was up we went to a Japanese steak and seafood restaurant called Kyoto. They made our food right in front of us. It was similar to a place called Tokyohana. After Kyoto’s we went to a ghost tour. There we listened to three ghost stories. The ghost tour was over at 9:30. That was the first day of the Williamsburg trip.

DAY TWO
On a bright and sunny Tuesday, May 10, 2011, we visited Jamestown and visited the Powhatan village and got to see where they lived. We also saw a man make a bunch of tools out of stones like greenstone, obsidian and chert. Tools included axes, knives, and other things. We also got to see how the Powhatan Indians make kayaks and how they fished. Then we saw James Fort, the first settlement. After they arrived on ships in 1607 they used their supplies to build James Fort named after King James I of England. We got to see a musket being fired. We got to try on armor. We saw the guard’s building and we got to see the barracks which is where the soldiers and guards stayed and the cook’s house where their food was cooked.

The weather was great. I learned a lot about the first settlers from England and their way of life and how the Powhatan Indians lived before the English arrived.

DAY TWO (CONTINUED)
On a beautiful and pleasant Tuesday, May 10, 2011 we drove from Williamsburg to Jamestown. Jamestown is where the first colonists lived. We saw where the Powhatan Indians lived, Jamestown fort, the port and the museum.

We went to the port where the three ships that the colonists sailed over on were moored. They weren’t the originals but they were made to look like them. The three ships were called the Susan Constant, The Discovery, and the Godspeed. The Susan Constant was the largest of the three. We went aboard and saw the hull, the captain’s quarters, the main deck, below deck, the beds where...
the sailors and passengers slept and much more. The ships were amazing; I don’t think I’ll ever see anything like that again.

After visiting the ships we went to the museum which had artifacts, models, replicas, and texts.

Williamsburg was a life-changing experience that I will never forget.

DAY THREE
The sixth grade field trip to Williamsburg was a lot of fun. We learned a lot about American history. I am going to focus on Wednesday. In the morning we went to a movie called Portrait of a Patriot. The movie is about a man named John Fry. John Fry had been invited to live in Williamsburg to join the House of Burgesses. The narrating voice was the actor of John Fry telling his wife Elizabeth of everything that was occurring through his letters to her. He wrote of his opinions and his big decision he had to make. The House of Burgesses had been dismissed and many decided to continue the meetings without the British’s approval. John Fry was reluctant at first but he decided to go for liberty instead of following the British as subjects.

Wednesday evening we went to a play called Cry Witch. Cry Witch was about a witch trial: a woman named Grace Sherwood was being accused of witchcraft. The accuser had all the evidence and even had three witnesses. Grace Sherwood denied the accusations and she was taken away as the audience voted her guilty.

DAY FOUR
On Thursday, May 12, 2011 we drove to Yorktown which is about 13 miles from Williamsburg. There we visited a museum, saw a movie, and then walked outside to learn about the use of different cannons and how they work. We also learned about doctors and their operations, and then we tried on clothes from the 18th century, and visited the gift shop. We then drove to Merchant Square in Williamsburg where we had lunch, and then we walked to The College of William and Mary. Next we went to a mental hospital museum. Then we went to dinner at Christiana Campbell’s. Lastly we went to a play called Polly Honeycombe, a 19th century romantic comedy, which was hilarious. It was an exhausting but fabulous day to be

The lessons from Williamsburg are many. On the surface, we read and listened to the experiences and teachings of our forefathers. More deeply, however, this experience demonstrated the importance of tolerance and respect of others to our children. These are the lessons that will last a lifetime for our children. And these are lessons that will continue to make this country so special.
2010/2011 Standardized Test Results

by John Long, Head of School

Each year Post Oak School students in grades three through eight take a series of standardized tests called the Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP 4). These are the standardized tests most commonly used by Houston private schools. The results for grades four through eight in math and reading are shown in the graph provided (grade three test results are reported differently).

A COUPLE OF NOTES
For each subtest there are three bars shown: the Post Oak norm, the independent school norm (outside of Texas, “independent school” means private schools only), and the national norm (which includes both private schools and public schools). Scores on this graph are “scale scores” between 0 – 400. These are the most useful scores for comparing test results from year to year (rather than percentiles, stanines, or grade equivalents). The scores on the reading test from year to year show movement upward and it is legitimate to compare them. The same for the math scores. But you cannot compare the reading scores to the math scores. They are not comparable.

You’ll note that the Post Oak norms and the independent school norms are consistently higher than the national norms by a significant step. You’ll also note that Post Oak norms track closely with the independent school norms. This means that Post Oak students as a group perform as well as, or better than students from private schools across the country.

You are invited to

A Farewell to Friends

Tuesday, May 24
4:00–5:00 pm
The Post Oak School nature center by the playground

Drop by to give your well wishes to Luiza Grandchamp, Shannon Neufeld, Joshua Noah, and Francesca Shoemaker!

Children are welcome to attend with parents.
1. Table washing to develop concentration.

2. Focussed on sewing a button in order to complete a bracelet.

3. Taking pleasure in working the zipper frame.

4. Early experience with the Pythagorean theorem by squaring with the decanomial square.

5. Measuring with the balance scale.

6. Adding with the large bead frame.
Singing through the centuries

Lower Elementary students put on quite a show last week—several in fact! Here’s a small sampling of photos from Dig It! performed by Kathy Long’s class, spring tea in Orly Kluk’s class, and Mother’s Day tea in Maya Pinto’s class.
Graduation
May 27 at 6:30 pm in the gym

Speeches are being written and processions rehearsed. Mark your calendar for next week’s eighth-grade graduation ceremony for the class of 2011.

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 appreciated attending the event in the past, providing them with a “portrait of a graduate.” Come see the power of Post Oak education and celebrate with those students moving onward.

Of course, children are welcome!
Why kids and families should visit the museum

Sunday, May 22, 3:30–4:45 pm
Brown Auditorium,
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Are you a Museum Super Parent? Join a panel of museum educators for an open discussion about the benefits of museums for children and families. This discussion will include the results of a nationwide survey of parents who visit museums with their children, with findings that many of these visitors fit into categories like Ultra-Curious Mom, Ultra-Fun Mom, and more. This engaging conversation will help you assess your own museum habits and determine how you can make the most of museums for your family.

The panel includes staff from the Houston Zoo, Health Museum, Children’s Museum of Houston, and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Program includes door prizes, information on museums, and refreshments.

This program is free for all adults and children. While adults enjoy the discussion, children are invited to participate in a Creation Station art-making activity led by an MFAH teaching artist. Available until 5 pm, the activity is located in the Farish Classroom, MFAH.

This program is offered as a public session in conjunction with the American Association of Museums, 2011 annual meeting. For more information about the conference, visit www.aam-us.org.
Gentle reminder... 

pledges due

All Gala and Post Oak Fund pledges are due by May 31. Pledge reminders have been mailed. Please contact Christina Cantu in the development office if you have any questions. Thank you.

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.

D.C. ADVENTURES

*continued from page 3*

...minutes before 2:00, the police grew more aggressive, moving people around, and calling in motorcycles. We knew that the president was on his way. We pulled out our cameras, and began to videotape. Rows of motorcycles began to arrive, then scores of police cars, followed by large SUVs. Cameras began snapping the best photographs. Then we saw a limo with little American flags flying. We peered into the windows and began cheering. Cries of “I saw his profile,” “He waved at me!” “I got a picture!” filled the air. We had finally seen President Obama.

Ravenous, we left to eat lunch at Potbelly sandwiches. We devoured huge meals. As we left the shop, we heard the familiar sirens of the motorcade. Could it be? Could we really see the President twice in one day? The procession began once again; those who had not been fortunate to glance him the first time were overjoyed when they saw him.

With all of our pleasurable experiences on the trip, it was certainly a successful one. The aforementioned experience was only one of many and the outing was one the whole class will remember.

Montessori Model

United Nations 2012

Announcing an evening to introduce the next ASEP Montessori Model United Nations Program in Post Oak School!

Parents and students of Elementary and Middle School (current third through seventh grades) are welcome to attend. Come and hear about some of the experiences the students and parents had in April 2011. We will announce program details, and the approximate timeline involved for this unique adventure.

We will gather in the Middle School on Tuesday, May 24, between 6:00 and 8:00 pm.

*RSVP to errolpinto@postoakschool.org by Monday, May 23, 2011.*
CALENDAR
For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

MAY 22–28

Mon 5/23
Declaration of the Bab

Tue 5/24
Farewell to Friends
4:00–5:00 pm
MMUN introduction
6:00 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—join in!
6:30 pm

NOTICE BOARD

May 22–28

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 phylistomlinson@gmail.com
www.phylistomlinson.com

WANTED

for Primary Home Environment classroom:
gently used children’s cultural attire

One of the children’s favorite activities in the PHE classroom is dressing up in costumes from around the world. Several pieces of clothing in our current collection have become tattered and torn after years of much loved use. If you have any gently used items that your children have outgrown or are no longer using, especially traditional garb from faraway places (kimonos, African prints, serapes, etc), we would love to have them for our costume corner. Please contact Dinah Chetrit (dinahchetrit@postoakschool.org) to arrange for pick-up of these costumes.

Thank you so much for your contributions!

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 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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