Even before Day One, Post Oak students hit the ground running. During the week of August 8, Middle-Schoolers met with their teachers and parents in individual conferences to set personal goals for the upcoming school year. (When you were 13, did you ever sit down with three teachers and your parents—and it was your job to lead the conference?) On the first full-day of classes, Middle School departed for Artesian Lakes, a three-day outing to work together with classmates, teachers, and challenge-course guides. They engaged in team-building, creative problem solving, individual challenges on the high ropes course, seminar discussions about *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, cooking together, and swimming. Once back in Houston, they launched their academic classes. They also made initial visits to the five community service sites where Middle School students serve on Monday mornings throughout the year. Why do we do all these activities in
addition to a challenging academic program? Because adolescents need to do work that builds self-awareness, self-confidence, social skills and trust. They need to trust themselves, their classmates and their teachers in order to build a community that promotes intellectual honesty, and provides the mutual support and encouragement necessary to risk failure in problem solving and academic stretching.

Meanwhile new six year olds were welcomed to the Lower Elementary and the eight year olds tried on the role of “oldest child” for the first time since their final year in Primary. When the class was invited to write and illustrate a story about their summer, some wrote for 30 minutes and some wrote for 90 minutes. At day’s end, several children read their stories and showed their pictures to the group, who applauded each person’s work. For a six year old with the courage to stand up before her new class, there was applause when she finished reading page one. But there was more. Her classmates were genuinely amazed as she read pages two, three and four. Truly a big work for a first grade student.

Parents often want to know about curriculum: the complete course of study. Post Oak’s curriculum is expansive and visionary. Elementary mathematics, for example, is much more than learning the facts and algorithms of arithmetic, though we do that as well. We meet the intellectual need of Elementary students to understand the “big picture”, so mathematics begins with the historical story of numbers and includes the history of mathematics and mathematicians all along the way. Students learn ancient number systems and non-decimal number bases. They learn arithmetic and geometry, and in the Upper Elementary, begin to learn algebraic representation. They learn weights and measures using a pan balance, a measuring cup, a graduated cylinder, a meter stick, a tape measure, and a measuring wheel. Mathematics is more than “numbers you squeeze from your head to your hand to your pencil to your paper till you get the answer.”

Mathematics at Post Oak is concrete, visual and real, and that results in students who can think mathematically, who are comfortable with numbers, and who “know their stuff.”

Dr. Montessori understood the importance of academic learning and she developed ways to make learning more engaging for every student. But she also understood that the cognitive domain is only part of human intelligence. Long before the terms “emotional intelligence” and “social intelligence” were coined, Dr. Montessori understood their importance to success in life. Work in those domains is also part of our daily curriculum. Look and you can see it. Notice the Upper Elementary students walking the new Primary children to their classrooms in the morning. Learning to give and to receive help. Learning to trust. Learning to calm an anxious child. Learning that they have the skills to make a contribution to society.

Welcome back.
The Artesian Lakes Trip: August 2011

by Middle School students

It was another successful start of the year in Artesian Lakes for Middle School. Pizza was consumed, poles were climbed, and there was a general feeling of merriment in the hot, humid air. As per tradition, there was much swimming and frolicking about in the water; this was partly due to the fact that it was 104 degrees in the sun, and partly because everyone wanted to try out their “slingshot” on the famous Artesian Lakes slide.

Moving on to the main attraction of Artesian Lake: the ropes course. The ropes course is a team-building and self-challenging experience which binds the Middle School students and faculty together through shared terror. We are just kidding about the terror part. Only a few of us were terrified and refused to jump off of the pole. Really. But back on topic, one part of the ropes course is devoted to team-building and trust-producing challenges, such as swinging across a “bottomless gorge” aka the forest floor, six inches below, while being crammed on a miniscule plateau. The catch was that we could not sacrifice fellow “explorers” to gain more room while retrieving the rope hanging in the center of the six-foot gap. And who could forget the journey across the river of acid? Our “floating rocks” kept getting eaten by those pesky “alligators” while our blindfolded comrades stumbled around getting their sunglasses stolen and thrown to the alligators.

The high ropes, the second part of the ropes course, was focused on self-motivation and overcoming one’s fears. The first part of the challenge was a thirty-foot tightrope, twenty-five feet above the ground. There were two versions: one with hanging ropes to grab, and one with a wire that ran the length of the tightrope. The second part was everybody’s favorite: the pamper pole. The pamper pole was a thirty-foot telephone pole with staples on the sides to act as hand/foot holds. If you made it to the top, you attempted to stand on an eight-inch diameter circle. If you succeeded in that, you would be expected to leap from the pole and grab a six-inch ring suspended four feet away from the pole. (In case you were wondering, we were in safety harnesses the entire time). If you managed to grab the ring you were lowered, triumphant, to the ground. If you failed to grab the ring you would be fed to the alligators. Just kidding. Only one of us was fed to the alligators. If you succeeded in grabbing the ring you got to keep it; if you failed to grab the ring, it was lowered down with you and you got to keep it anyway.

One long standing tradition of Artesian Lakes was broken, however. The tradition in question was that of buying and swiftly consuming Oreos and other questionably healthy snacks in our cabins. Instead we were fed carrots. Some of the cabins purchased Zebra Cakes and other assorted goodies, such as popsicles. But most of us were still fed carrots. They were good carrots, though! This year the Middle School class of 2011–2012 was a trailblazer, eating out instead of cooking its own food. We found that eating out reduced our footprint by conserving paper plates and other disposable cooking/serving ware.

In short, it was another successful and enjoyable trip to Artesian Lakes. ☺
Primary/Infant Walk Through
Nurturing Confidence and Joy in Learning

by Deidre Lodrig, Half-Day Infant Community Teacher and Infant/Parent Educator

"In carrying out the bidding of the will, a person's body may at times have to perform acts of enormous complexity." Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*

The first time that I met Guy, he was 9-months-old. He arrived with his caregiver and his mother, who had stepped away from work for an hour or so each week to join Guy in the Infant-Parent class for children who are between the developmental stages of crawling and walking.

When Guy first joined our class, I observed him to be what I like to call a tummy-timer, a child who is comfortable spending lots of time in the prone position, and at a certain stage of development which precedes crawling.

At our first class, I observed him sitting on a large gym mat, putting in his tummy-time, cooing and babbling to his nanny and mother. Hearing the other tiny voices in the room, and seeing them on the mat nearby, Guy would occasionally pause to observe other little tummy timers. At his second or third class, he had turned 10 months and his listening circle appeared to have broadened. Mom and nanny were near, however, now other tummy timers were engaged with Guy in verbal exchanges ranging from coos to wails which, at their peak moments, sounded a lot like yells.

About three-fourths of the way through the 10 week session, Guy had begun to spend time away from the tummy time group. Guy was standing, and bouncing while standing. He would pull his little, yet solid, body up on to the kiosk, and with his mom's help in placement of his hands on the bar, he would find his balance.

Guy would stand and bounce repeatedly, simultaneously babbling what sounded like most of the short vowel sounds. His exercises of standing and bouncing seemed to last an average of seven minutes. We all knew when Guy had enough because, after several minutes his happy babbling might begin to sound like a terse wail, his arms and legs still in position but his eyes roaming and honing in on the nearest adult until he could finally lock in on mom's eyes. Immediately picking up on the cues, mom would extend her arms to Guy and help him sit down on his bottom.

In the next to last class, Guy practiced walking up two small steps leading up to a low wooden bridge while holding a rail. For nearly 28 minutes of class time, Guy stood atop the bridge, bouncing and taking tiny steps forward, while holding the rail. This adventure climaxed with Guy teetering at the opposite end of the bridge, facing the two downward steps. This time it was my turn to step in, as the nanny appeared nearly ready to scoop Guy up into her safe arms and call it a day.

Determined to model the Montessori mantra, 'follow the child,' I stood firm in the hope that today's journey for Guy might end in the optimal way, which was with him ready to ask for help. There I stood at the bottom of the steps, arms stretched outward: 'Come on, Guy,' I said.

It felt as though time were standing still for these brief moments where I, along with other adults present, was about to witness a child face fear and uncertainty, challenge himself physically and mentally, and hopefully in the end, experience self-reliance and self-confidence that lay a foundation helpful in navigating life's future journeys.

Carefully and cautiously, Guy looked down toward the step and then upward at me. After a second or two, he moved one foot forward, his tiny hands firmly gripping the downward rail. My hands were very near his own, ready to catch him if he stumbled and/or to reposition his hands if they slipped or their grip loosened.

continued on page 7
Coffee with the Elementary Director

September 7, 2011
9:00–10:00 am
Multipurpose room

Topic: an open discussion about the Elementary conference report

Throughout each semester, and in advance of the fall and spring conferences, teachers put their time, energy, and knowledge of your child into a written document we call the conference report. We want to know how well this report is meeting your need for information about your child’s progress. You are invited to come let us know what’s working, and how we can improve. I look forward to hearing your thoughts. If you are not able to attend, I invite you to share your ideas via email: jeffschneider@postoakschool.org

League Schedules

The following is a list of some league sports around our area. Registration info is for fall 2011.

**Houston Express Soccer Club**
www.houstonx.org
A full service club serving recreational players ages 4–12 through its West University Recreation program and competitive players ages 7–18 through its Houston Express program. Fall registration for the recreational program is currently closed. Express registration is open. Registration for spring season opens in November.

**Southwest Football League**
www.sfltxfootball.org
Registration for fall football and cheer currently open for grades 1 through 8.

**West U Little League**
www.westull.org
Last day to register for Fall Ball is September 5. WULL offers baseball from Tadpole division (5-year-olds) through Senior division (15- and 16-year-olds). Residency restrictions may apply.

**Bellaire Little League**
www.bellairell.org
Last day to register for Fall Ball is August 31 for ages 5–16. Residency restrictions may apply.

**West U Softball Association**
www.wusa.org
Registration for fall ball through September 2. WUSA supports and promotes girls’ softball. WUSA offers recreational teams for girls ages 5–15 and competitive tournament teams for girls ages 7–16.

On a sad note

Donna Scott informed the school this week that due to unexpected changes in her graduate course schedule, she will no longer be able to serve as the Post Oak music teacher. A search has begun for a new music teacher who has the qualifications we are looking for, and is able to teach the classes in our current schedule as well as ASEP choir.

In the short term, Donna will continue to cover all of her afternoon classes until a new teacher can be hired. Elementary Director Jeff Schneider will be available to cover the one time slot that Donna cannot cover.

We have already begun to interview candidates, and will announce Donna’s successor as soon as the new teacher has been brought aboard. We will miss Donna’s energy and talent, and wish her well.
Then... he did it. Guy took one foot and gradually placed it onto the first step. He nearly stumbled, but I was able to keep him steady as he took three more steps and safely reached the bottom. The adults were excitedly supportive and some exclaimed: "Wow, Guy!" "Good job!" and "You did it!"

From newborn bundling to cribs to infant carriers, it is from the beginning of life that children face obstacles to movement. However, movement is what allows children to follow their own will, attempt to meet their own needs, and develop self-confidence through self-reliance.

Maria Montessori wrote, "Since it is through the movement that the will realizes itself, we should assist a child in his attempts to put his will into act. A child has a natural desire to master the voluntary use of his organs of movement. If he fails to do so, he cannot externalize the fruit of his intelligence. The will is thus not only an instrument of execution but also of psychic development." (The Secret of Childhood, pp. 98–99)

What is special about the infant/parent environment is that it is designed to allow the infant child, a natural explorer who is typically restricted to small spaces which limit his or her ability to move, to explore this inherent need and to follow his or her will, as Maria Montessori describes. In the prepared environment, an experience such as the one with Guy becomes one we can anticipate and one of many examples of Montessori pedagogue – movement as an aid to intelligence – coming to life!

When we as adults create an environment which is physically safe and developmentally appropriate, we then get to witness the physical miracles as they unfold and also know that amazing developments are happening psychologically, such as children experiencing the freedom to fully engage themselves, follow their own will, and become confident and joyful learners!

The Post Oak Parents Association invites you to attend the annual WELCOME DINNER

Tuesday, September 13, 2011
6:30 pm to 9:30 pm
Pre-reception at 6:00 pm for new parents, faculty, board, & room parents

The Junior League of Houston
1811 Briar Oak Lane, Houston, Texas 77027

POPA Dinner Chairs
Shonali Agrawal & Stacey Martin

POPA Chairs
Laura Citardi & Whitney Walsh

Business attire
Parking available in the garage

RSVP with reply card or online at www.postoakschool.org
This is an adults-only event.
1. Removing pegs from the peg board.
2. Arriving for school.
3. Tracing sand paper letters.
4. Counting along with the seven chain.
5. Tending to the garden.
6. Matching up animal stories.
7. Giving the garden much-needed water.
8. Working with geometric solids.
9. Building the decanomial square.
10. A group lesson in Upper Elementary.
11. Math with the long bead frame.
Make lunch waste free!

Kids Konserve Back-to-School Lunch-Packing Deals
Up to 40% off – sale ends August 31.
Pack waste-free lunches in style and save!

http://store.kidskonserve.com/ —from The Green Team

Wanted: Future Cub Scouts!

Boys in grades 1 through 5 can join Cub Scouts.
Pack 34 is holding its first meeting and hot dog dinner of the year:

Thursday, September 8 at 6:00–8:00 pm
at St. Mark’s Episcopal School
(3816 Bellaire Blvd)

Join now to participate
in our first all family camping trip September 24th.

Contact Sean O’Connor
Pack 34 Cubmaster
713-202-1810
oconnorhook@earthlink.net

New members are welcome.

www.pack34houston.org

Cub Scouting:
Fun with a Purpose
for Boys in 1st – 5th Grades

Bellaire’s Pack 130 Registration & Orientation Session

Monday, August 29, 2011, 7:00 pm
Bellaire United Methodist Church (Family Life Center)
SE Corner of Bellaire & Newcastle

For more information, visit our website:
www.pack130.squarespace.com

You can also contact D’Andra Shu, Pack 130 Committee Chair
dandrashu@gmail.com 713.667.5237
Classes at the Motherhood Center

Pre-Natal Series

Birth Choices
Class day/time: TBD, Winter 2012
Cost: $100
Instructor: Deidre Lodrig

The Natural Nursery
Thursdays, Jan. 5–26, 2012; 2–3 pm
Cost: $100
Instructor: Sarah Moudry

Creating Natural Toys & Clothing
Mondays, Jan. 23–Feb. 27, 2012 (6 weeks); 1:30–3 pm
Cost: $150 (plus materials fee of $30)
Instructor: Deidre Lodrig

Post-Natal Series

Infant/Parent Class A
(8 weeks to Crawling)
Tuesday and Thursday; 1:30–3 pm
Fall: September 13–November 3
Winter: January 31–March 8
Spring: March 20–May 24
Cost: $400 per 8 week session
Instructor: Sarah Moudry

Infant/Parent Class B
(Crawling to Walking)
Wednesdays; 1:30–3 pm
Fall: September 14–November 2
Winter: January 4–February 22
Spring: April 4–May 23
Cost: $200 per 8 week session
Instructor: Deidre Lodrig

How to Parent a Toddler
Monday afternoons; 2–3 pm
Fall: Sept. 12–Nov. 7 (8 weeks)
Location: The Post Oak School
Spring: April 2–May 21 (8 weeks)
Location: The Post Oak School
Cost: $200 per 8 week session
Instructor: Deidre Lodrig

Look for detailed descriptions of these classes online at www.postoakschool.org/postoak/Infant-Parent_Classes.asp

Parent Handbooks are available for pick up from the front desk or at parent orientations. (one per family)
**NOTICE BOARD**

**Becoming a Love & Logic Parent©**

Post Oak Counselor Phylis Tomlinson presents this curriculum for parents with children Elementary age and beyond. This program is designed to give you practical skills that can be used immediately.

**FALL CLASSES 2011**

**EVENING**

Wednesdays, 6:30–8:00 pm, 7 classes

September 21, 28, October 5, 12, 19, 26, and November 2

Cost: $200 per couple, 7 classes, $125 per person plus $10 per workbook

Discount for prior completion of entire series

**DAY**

Thursdays, 9:10–10:30 am, 7 classes

September 22, 29, October 6, 13, 20, 27, and November 10

Fee: $20 per person, includes workbook

(classes are underwritten by The Post Oak School)

For more information or to register please call Phylis at 713-661-6688 ext 176

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**New Addition**

little sister, was born June 17, 2011 at 9:54 pm, weighing 7 lbs, 5 oz, and measuring 19¼-inches long. Congratulations to parents Lori Ann and Michael!

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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 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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