I have strong opinions. I always speak up in literature seminar. I don’t let my voice go unheard.” One of our current eighth grade students made that clear and powerful statement to me. I interview each eighth grade student in order to write a letter of recommendation. We hope that each of these talented young people enrolls in the Post Oak High School. We know that they are applying to other schools as well. They will have several choices when it comes to high school enrollment.

“I don’t let my voice go unheard.” What does that statement reveal about this student and her class? She has the courage to speak out; to risk expressing her opinion. What’s the risk in that? Think back to your own middle school environment: the social climate of the classroom and among your peers. Was it a climate that encouraged authenticity from every individual? Or which suppressed it? Was it an environment that promoted diversity of thought? Or conformity? Was it an environment that

continued on page 2
supported creative risk-taking, the possibility of being wrong, the awkwardness of not knowing quite how to express an idea coalescing around an experience? Or did “friends”—or teachers—wait to pounce on your every mistake, hesitation, faux pas, or perceived foolishness? And with friends like that, who needs enemies?

Every classroom community at Post Oak, culminating in the middle school, actively works to create a social environment that is safe and encouraging; one that supports creative risk taking, personal growth, and authenticity. Students encourage excellence in each other and their academic accomplishments are impressive. Even more notable is the character development revealed by their comments. I’ve put together a composite of the first couple of interviews from this fall. Here are quotations from those conversations and a few comments of my own:

• “I take everything on as a challenge. I like to challenge myself.” In most schools, teachers worry and wonder about how to motivate students—especially in middle schools. As a Post Oak eighth grader said several years ago, “We motivate each other to be self-motivated.”

• “I’m noticing this year that I have a strong sense of leadership. And I’m very competitive.” As an eighth grader did you recognize leadership in yourself?

• “I’m very self-confident with everyone I meet. I’m talkative and outgoing.” This same student was describing how she handled meeting a new group of peers and adults as she joined a singing group this year. She introduced herself; put herself in the mix. “I didn’t want to be just standing in the corner.” What are the social skills needed to succeed in the adult world?

• “I’m very daring. I’ll take on more work than others. And I always try something new whether it is new food or a new kind of math problem.” Daring. Willing to work hard. Willing to try something new. What are the personal characteristics of an entrepreneur?

• “Algebra is harder for me— I ask for more work so that I can understand it better.” We all encounter subjects or situations that are harder for us. Do we avoid it? Simply say, “I’m not good at math?” Or are we comfortable on the steep part of the learning curve and recognize that hard work leads to success?

• “I like challenges. That’s part of the reason I like math so much. It’s complicated.” We talk about students taking responsibility for their own learning. That sounds so serious. Can you hear the sheer joy in this student’s voice when he says, “I like challenges!”?

• “You really understand something when you can teach it.” This week a Post Oak parent sent me a YouTube speech by a high school valedictorian who said that schools do not promote learning; they promote test taking skills and focus on grades. For many schools that must be true. (http://www.zerohedge.com/news/student-loans-hit-all-time-record-one-high-school-valedictorian-gets-it)

• “I’m very curious. I ask so many questions all the time.” International creativity guru Sir Ken Robinson documents the precipitous decline in the number of questions children ask every day. For the average five-year-old it is hundreds. For the average fourteen-year-old it approaches zero. How does Ken Robinson explain that? Years of schooling. Really?

• “I love the Universe: space and the planets. It really blows my mind.” For many middle school and high school students, this is their first question: “Is this going to be on the test?”

• “I’m studying French on Saturdays. I want to be fluent in Spanish, French, Mandarin and Arabic.” As Robert Louis Stephenson wrote, “The world is so full of a number of things, we should all be as happy as kings.”

• “I’ve read every book in my house three or four times…. I’m currently reading A Class Apart about Stuyvesant High School in NYC.” I know that’s not on the Middle School curriculum, but then, Post Oak students are expansive in their interests. In fact, I’m reading the same book right now. ©

© John Long and The Post Oak School
The Bearkats soccer team moves to a record of 3–1 with a win against Memorial Lutheran on Tuesday of this week. This comes after a win against longtime foe St. Stephen’s last week. The Bearkats were down a few players in the game against Memorial Lutheran, but pulled together and played very well in a 3 to 1 game. Our next game will be next week on October 26 against St. Stephen’s at Feld Park; start time will be 4:15 pm. Come out and support your team!

—Mark Tucker, Bearkats Coach

**Soccer games**
Oct. 26  St. Stephen’s at Feld Park at 4:15
Nov. 2  St. Stephen’s at Feld Park at 4:15

**Cross country**
Oct. 20  Dolphin Dash at 4:30

**Basketball**
Nov. 7  Practice begins this week
The Post Oak Book Fair
Thursday, November 3
9:00 am–9:00 pm
Barnes & Noble
3003 W. Holcombe Blvd.

Gather your gift lists and join us for this fun Post Oak community event in support of our school library. Peruse B&N’s large collection of books and toys for holiday gift shopping, birthdays, and your home libraries. Help supplement your children’s classrooms and the library as well as pick up great books recommended by our school directors.

Volunteers still needed! Please contact Elise McClain at elise@ecamtx.com.

Don’t miss these events

12:00 pm until close
Budding Artist Corner, Community Crafts, and Puppet Making

3:30 pm
American Robotics
Visualize, build & watch your ideal robot move

4:30–5:30 pm
Post Oak parent and author Coert Voorhees reading his new book “Storm Wrangler”

5:00–8:00 pm
Spirit Night
10% of all inside sales go towards the school (Holcombe & Buffalo Speedway)

5:15–6:15 pm
Musical performance by our very own Middle School students

6:30–7:30 pm
Puppet Pizazz Show
Be delighted & amazed by the incredible puppets and performance
Parents, Create Your Story at Book Fair!

Your kids are doing it at the Book Fair, and now it’s your turn to create your own story! Sarah Gish of Gish Creative (www.gishcreative.com) will get parents excited about uncovering their own personal story during her hands-on presentation about finding your personal mission (warning – art will be created!)

Gish Creative is a personal, family, and business enrichment company whose goal is igniting people’s lives through connections—especially connections among families and individuals to their personal mission. Owner Sarah Gish is the publisher of Gish Picks: A Guide to Cultural Activities for Families and The Summer Book: A guide to Houston Day Camps and Classes for Kids and Teens. She regularly presents workshops and talks in the Houston area, many of which include art as a component. Her clients have included AmeriCorps, M.D. Anderson, Chevron, BP, Baker Botts, and the Greater Houston YMCA.

Come for coffee* and listen to Sarah Gish’s presentation on Thursday, Nov. 3, 2011 at 9:15 am. See you there!

*Grab your cup at the cafe in B&N and Post Oak gets a percentage there, too!

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Introducing the first high school faculty member

We are pleased to announce that we have hired the first of the high school’s four founding faculty. Post Oak parent Jamie Lee is currently in her third year teaching high school geography at the Kinkaid School, where she is also faculty advisor for their Habitat for Humanity project. As an undergrad, she was “student of the year” at Bucknell University; she subsequently earned an MA and PhD in sociology from the University of Texas at Austin. Beyond her academic preparation, Jamie has leadership experience in both business and social action. For five years she was president of a successful software company, and as a graduate student, founded a non-profit organization to help Central American women by providing technological training. As an undergrad, she demonstrated the kind of initiative we expect to see in Post Oak High School students, founding the Bucknell Brigade, an organization that continues to operate today, and which calls upon students in engineering, pre-med and Spanish to work in Nicaragua with coffee cooperatives and a clinic that students designed and built themselves.

A former fencer and equestrian, Jamie is now a runner, a cyclist, and a student of yoga. Her travel experience includes 17 countries on four continents beginning when she was 15 on an AFS study abroad exchange program. She is fluent in Spanish.

She brings expertise to the table in a variety of areas that will be put directly to work in the high school. Jamie Lee exemplifies the kind of faculty we are looking to hire: bright, energetic, a high degree of academic expertise, experience teaching adolescents, well-developed talents in co-curricular areas, and an openness to a new, creative enterprise.

Jamie has begun working half days since this past Monday. She will work on curriculum development, meet with our partner organizations in the museum district, work on student recruitment at potential feeder schools, and begin to collaborate on the multitude of tasks large and small that will lead to the opening of the high school in August.

—John Long

3rd Annual Bellaire Recycles Fest

Saturday, November 5, 9 am–1 pm
700 S. Rice Blvd. (near City Hall)

• Children’s Art & Photo Contest (ages 5-18)
  Details at www.ci.bellaire.tx.us
• Electronics recycling and paper shredding
• Donate your old eyewear and clothing
• AARP Arts and Crafts Show
• Activities, tips, displays, and food!
Questions?

Bring your friends, bring your neighbors. Get your questions answered at the next High School Huddle

October 25 at 7 pm

The POST OAK HIGH SCHOOL
in the Museum District
Field Day 2011 Was a Blast!  (Wrap up on page 10)
Field Day Wrap Up

Thanks go to our fantastic Field Day chairs Jamie Lee and Vivian Lee, the POPA chairs Whitney Walsh and Laura Citardi, and the many volunteers who made this a fantastic event. And a big thank you to everyone who purchased Mystery Box tickets to help pay for this community event and to Mary Væza-Lopez for organizing the Mystery Boxes.

Bake Sale

Did you hear about the bake sale last Friday? From Lower Elementary to Middle School, classes came and bought our sweets. We managed to raise $802.09. The cause is to raise money to donate to replant the forests of Bastrop, Texas after being completely burned from the wild fires. We want to thank Mrs. Roark’s class for bringing sweets from brownies and cookies to sushi rice crispy treats and cream cupcakes and the leaders of the bake sale, worked hard from day one. The committee of the bake sale – – all helped to make it possible. Plus special thanks to Mrs. Cantu and Miss Magill.
New Faces in Primary

Welcome to students new to Primary this year. Check back for more new faces in the coming weeks.

Photos by Erin Stus and Elaine Schweizer
NOTICE BOARD

Grandparents’ Days invitations

Grandparents’ Days will soon be here! If you would like your child’s grandparents or other relatives/friends to be invited to this year’s Grandparents’ Days (November 21 & 22), please give your form to the front office or go to www.postoakschool.org and submit mailing information. Please include anyone you think would like to observe and/or interact with your children in their Montessori environment. Invitations will be mailed directly to those individuals the week of Oct. 24.

OCTOBER 30–NOVEMBER 5

Tue
11/1
All Saints Day

Wed
11/2
Dia de los Muertos
POPAs Coffee/Work Day
8:45 am–1:00 pm

Thu-Fri
11/3-4
Vision and hearing screening

Post Oak Book Fair at
Barnes & Noble
3003 W. Holcombe Blvd
9 am–9 pm

Fri
11/4
Montessori Journey
6–9 pm (registration req’d)

Sat
11/5
Montessori Journey
8 am–2 pm (registration req’d)

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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