Every year we collect the first grading period results for our graduates. As a member school of ISAS (the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest), we are required to do so. Of course, following up on our graduates is the kind of joyful burden that any parent would understand. How are our kids doing? Last year’s grads went off to seven different high schools: Kinkaid, Episcopal, St. John’s, St. Agnes, Carnegie Vanguard, HSPVA, and Xavier. We have reports from 13 of 15 graduates and their composite grade point average is 89.67 on a 100-point scale. This is one measure of their preparation for high school work.

For a number of our students we also received copies of the comments made by teachers on the report cards. These comments give a more nuanced “portrait of a graduate”. Here is a selection of those comments:
"She is focused, determined, disciplined..." 
by John Long, continued from page 1

- “He poses thoughtful questions that enrich our conversations about literature.” (English I)
- “He always provides thoughtful, insightful contributions to class discussions.” (World History I)
- “He is an active learner in the classroom, often asking very insightful questions or adding interesting comments to our class discussions.” (Biology I Honors)
- “She is leading her section of English because she possesses abundant gifts in the language arts, and because she works hard to ensure her understanding.” (English I)
- “She asks thoughtful questions, participates in class discussion... often explains concepts to her peers and has insightful solutions to difficult problems. She enjoys challenges and appears to have fun in class.” (Geometry Honors)
- “She has the highest level of fluency in all three classes.” (Spanish II Honors)
- “She continues to bring her high energy, great attitude, and admirable efficiency to class each day.” (Photography I)
- “She is vigilant about her work load, seeking to know assignments in advance so that she can continue to manage her time well... Her enthusiastic attitude, her willingness to take risks—for example, reading periodically from her writer’s notebook—and her attentive note-taking are all excellent examples of her high-quality academic skills.” (English I)
- “She has done a truly fabulous job this year in geometry. It is wonderful to work with someone who is so cheerful, has such a great attitude and work ethic, and who handles her success so well.” (Geometry)
- “She is a great Honors biology student. She participates well in class discussions, asking insightful questions and frequently answering questions that I pose to the class.” (Biology I Honors)
- “E—, have you heard that you and Mary Poppins have much in common? You are both ‘practically perfect in every way.’... you have exceeded expectations in every way.” (Spanish II)
- “She is a smart, thoughtful, and serious student. I admire her maturity as a student, especially for her grade level.” (English I)
- “She has done a truly fabulous job this year in Geometry.” (Geometry)
- “She possesses that winning combination of natural talent and industry... all while being very engaged, she presents a quiet and serene attitude that I find becoming and praiseworthy.” (French I)
- “She participates fully... I have been impressed with her work ethic and willingness to take the necessary musical risks needed in order to become a more independent singer.” (Choir)
- “One of my most enthusiastic students.” (English I)
- “Her responsiveness to feedback has most impressed me. As a result, her writing has improved rapidly, and she is already writing some excellent historical essays.” (World History I)
- “She is a take-charge biology student... She does not hesitate to ask questions for clarification or contribute interesting comments.” (Biology I Honors)
- “Her work and effort have been exemplary since day one.” (Geometry)
- “She participates well during class discussions and has a positive attitude towards learning science.” (Biology I Honors)
- “She is respectful and responsible and turns in excellent work.” (Computer Applications)
- “She is a gorgeous dancer, a pleasure to teach, and an example to all... She is focused, determined, self-motivated, disciplined, consistent, kind and respectful.” (Dance I/II)

In conclusion, here’s a list of descriptors culled from the teacher comments:

continued on page 9
A Gift to the Post Oak Fund? Yes!

As we have said before there are really two goals for our Annual Fund: 1) 100% participation and 2) a meaningful gift from each family to help our Annual Fund reach its financial goal. The financial goal this year is $250,000. What is a meaningful gift? It’s different for each family, but the meaningful part will largely be driven by the perspective you place on it. Did you think about the impact Post Oak has on your child? A meaningful gift is a gift that says you believe in the work that happens at Post Oak each day.

Post Oak does not use Annual Fund gifts to balance the school’s budget. However, Annual Fund gifts are used in a wide variety of ways that contribute to the unique environment and excellent experience your child has on a daily basis. This year’s Annual Fund is in its fourth week and through gifts from Trustees, employees, and corporations, we have reached $150,000. We have $100,000 to go to reach our goal. A meaningful gift from your family will help us get there. And, don’t forget to check with your company for a matching gift. Double your gift instantly – it will make you feel good, your company feel good … well, yes, we’ll feel good, too.

Your child spends many hours of the day learning, creating, absorbing, choosing, playing, socializing, laughing, and, growing at Post Oak. Help Post Oak continue to BE Post Oak. Your annual fund gift impacts the life of the school. And that ...impacts the life of your child.

Huge thanks to everyone who has already given their meaningful gift or pledge.

Christina Kopanidis-Cantu, Development Director
I would say my life has changed a lot in the last year. But the story really starts further back than that. When I left The Post Oak School in 2001, I followed in my sister’s (Caroline Sharp) footsteps. My parents never restricted my high school decision, but I never questioned where I would go. Some would say it was the easy decision, the decision that avoided making a decision. So I went to Bellaire High School and worked very hard, made my family proud, and graduated in the top 10% of my class. The academic preparation I received from The Post Oak School made it possible for me to excel in my AP classes. I was happy, I felt like I had succeeded at high school. From there I was automatically admitted to any public Texas university and applied to the University of Texas and Texas A&M University. I really enjoyed the “green” spacey campus of A&M and voila ... decision made! As to my course of study, I was good at science and I loved doing math, so engineering seemed to be the obvious fit. I worked hard for another four years, graduating cum laude as a mechanical engineer. Throughout school (both high school and college) I did what a good student is supposed to do: study hard, participate in extracurricular activities, do volunteer work, get summer jobs, etc. I “fit the mold” well, and I succeeded. I got my first choice job right out of college and started working for Frito-Lay in Dallas in August 2009 (after enjoying a summer in Europe!) as a Frito-Lay Research & Development Packaging Engineer. Sounded like a cool title to me. Again, I felt successful. My family was proud of me, and I felt happy. It took me a while to realize that all of this hard work and decision-avoiding had gotten me somewhere in my life that “should” be perfect – but slowly I realized I wasn’t happy.

Early in 2011 I left my job with Frito-Lay and moved to Fergus Falls, a small town in Minnesota. Now, that was a decision! It wasn’t expected, it wasn’t calculated, and it wasn’t “normal” by any sense of the word. But it has made me very happy. After growing up in one of the largest cities in the country, I found happiness in a tiny farming town as a project manager at a window manufacturing company. It was a shock for me when I realized that all my “success” wasn’t exactly what I wanted after all. I believe that at 24, the ability to make such a decision and leave my comfort zone was made possible by my early Montessori education.

The Post Oak School prepares students in a way traditional schools simply do not have the capacity to do. Post Oak allows students to stretch the limits of traditional education and shape their own minds. I was allowed to excel in math at an early age and no teacher considered telling me “no” when I wanted to learn something new. I learned how to understand basic concepts and principles in a tangible form. These education methods simplified math and writing in my mind and not only helped me learn them then, but are helping me pass that knowledge on now. I have the privilege of working with several elementary age children and I find that bringing back the Montessori methods helps me explain things in a way they understand. I have a better spatial reasoning and sense of “the whole” than many of my peers had throughout high school and college. I know now that Montessori education has helped me excel at managing my time, managing complex projects with many tasks, and work in teams of peers with a variety of skill sets.

I am very thankful for the education and independence that Post Oak provided for me. I am confident that I will benefit from that education for the rest of my life.
Welcome to New Employees
Additions & Transitions (part two)

Beth Smith joined Post Oak as an assistant/intern with Kathy Long in Lower Elementary. She completed her AMI Elementary training at the Washington Montessori Institute in Maryland and taught for one year in a Montessori Lower Elementary class outside of Atlanta. Before beginning her career as a Montessori educator, Beth was a psychiatric social worker and taught for two years in the French public school system. Beth has a B.A. in sociology/social work from Clemson University and an M.Ed from Loyola University in Maryland.

Simran Sood joined Post Oak as an assistant/intern with Orly Kluk in Lower Elementary. She completed her AMI Elementary training at the Washington Montessori Institute in Maryland. Simran spent 15 years in the corporate world before choosing to follow her calling into Montessori education as a vocation. Simran has B.A. and M.A. degrees in English from the University of Delhi, and is completing her requirements towards earning an M.Ed. from Loyola University in Maryland.

Jamie Ward took on a new role at Post Oak this fall as an assistant/intern with Maya Pinto in Lower Elementary. She has completed her first of three summers of the AMI Elementary training at the Hershey Montessori Training Institute. Prior to beginning her Montessori training, Jamie worked at Post Oak assisting in the Infant Community, substituting at every level, and assisting in Lower Elementary. She holds a B.A. in Dance Education from Hope College in Michigan.

by Jeff Schneider, Upper School Director

Alum Update from Christian Gray

Christian writes: So far being at a new school is really fun and exciting. I love ninth grade so far, but I miss Post Oak, PF, and having my mom as my math teacher.

High school is challenging, but I love new challenges. I love all of my classes, especially my four music classes. All my teachers have a great sense of humor, so school is never boring. At The High School for the Performing and the Visual Arts, our schedule is always changing. There is always something fun and entertaining and unplanned that takes place.

Even though we have a lot of fun, students at HSPVA are expected to try hard and to always do their best. That’s not a problem for me because Post Oak has taught me how to put forth my best effort with anything I do.

Sing It!

Congratulations to Upper Elementary student on his acceptance to the Houston Boychoir Chamber Choir for the 2011–12 season. Choristers are expected to develop and exhibit important character traits such as discipline, confidence, responsibility, leadership, and a loving understanding of art. Way to go.
**Día de los Muertos**

**Day of the Dead**

by Patricia Onofre, Spanish Specialist

*Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) is an important festivity in most Latin American countries. Rather than being a sad occasion, El Día de los Muertos is a happy one because it celebrates life and pays respect to our ancestors and loved ones.

For the festivity, *ofrendas* (prepared tables) are placed in public places (community offerings), homes, and cemeteries. The *ofrendas* are decorated with marigolds and other flowers, sugar skulls, food, folk art, candles, copal, and items that were special to our loved one.

The celebration is particularly delightful for children because of the strong sense of love and family appreciation which is expressed through arts and crafts, toys, and treats. Therefore, we invite all students to bring a photo, memento, story, or even a favorite food of their loved ones to participate in Post Oak’s 16th annual Día de Los Muertos presentations which will be held on October 31 and November 1, 2011.
When gusts blow and bluster, young readers scared by thunder, lightning, and howling wind often dive right under the covers. Enter the Storm Wrangler! He shows them that their beloved blankets and toys are just the tools they need to feel secure until the sun shines again. Energetic rhymes convey the derring-do of the Storm Wrangler and the power of building storms, while nuanced illustrations showcase the endlessly fascinating skies. A glossary of weather terms explains exactly what’s happening when lightning bolts zap and crackle. Delivering the promise of the calm that comes after every storm, the Storm Wrangler is sure to find little heads peeking out from under the covers to hear about his adventures again and again.

Coert Voorhees was born and raised in New Mexico, and now he lives with his family in Houston. He holds an MFA in Fiction from the University of Houston, and he is the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship in the translation of Chilean theatre as well as fellowships from Houston Arts Alliance and Rice University, where he served as Visiting Writer in Residence. Coert is the author of the novels *The Brothers Torres* (2009 ALA Top Ten best Books for Young Adults) and the forthcoming *Lucky Fools* (Summer 2012). *Storm Wrangler* was inspired by his son’s fearful reaction to Hurricane Ike’s 2009 assault on Houston. —from amazon.com

Don’t miss Coert reading *Storm Wrangler* at 4:30 at the Book Fair!
SCENES from The Post Oak School

1. Discussing countries and their location.
2. Team work: carrying a moveable alphabet box together.
3. Painting with primary colors in Primary.
4. Diwali presentation in Lower Elementary.
5. A group lesson in Texas History.
Dear Elementary and Middle School Parents,

Standardized testing will begin on Monday, November 7, and will proceed through Friday, November 18.

Once a year, for the past 23 years, Post Oak has administered a standardized test to Upper School students. This year we will continue to administer the Comprehensive Testing Program fourth edition (CTP 4) to all students from third grade through eighth grade. Make-up testing will be conducted the week of November 28–30 for students with excused absences during testing week.

At The Post Oak School, our belief in an emphasis on learning outcomes and development of the whole child, rather than “teaching the test”, is consistent with our mission as a Montessori school. This is not an attempt to avoid accountability. Instead, it goes to the heart of the purpose of education. Montessori teachers would universally agree with Linda McNeil of Rice University who said, “Measurable outcomes may be the least significant results of learning (Education Week, 9/26/01).” The Montessori curriculum is rich and varied, and it provides children with a tremendous opportunity to develop analytical thinking skills, life skills, and emotional intelligence; none of which are measured by a paper and pencil achievement test.

So why do we test at all? Given the manifold uses of standardized tests in our culture, students need experience taking them. Since Montessori schools eschew grading and testing typical of traditional schools, standardized tests can reassure parents that their children are learning what students in traditional schools are expected to learn. Test results can also provide teachers additional information that can be used to guide instruction.

What can you do to support your child and your child’s teacher during this week? You can ease anxiety, if it exists, by emphasizing the faith that you may have in your child’s abilities and talents. Please leave test preparation to the teachers. Overemphasis on high test scores often creates anxiety which can diminish the effectiveness of the experience. Encourage an early bedtime routine and healthy eating habits. Send your child to school with a healthy lunch, a snack, and a book to read silently between testing sessions. Please arrive on time, as testing will begin shortly after arrival each morning.

Thank you for your support!

Upper School Director, Jeff Schneider on behalf of the Upper School faculty

Thorough
Enthusiastic
Positive energy
Work ethic
Intelligence
Eagerness
Enthusiasm
Focus
Responsive to my feedback
Cheerful
Great attitude
Focused
Very motivated
Active contributor
Friendly
Cheerful
Cooperative attitude
Very conscientious
Thoughtful

“She is focused, determined, disciplined...”
by John Long, continued from page 2

Thanks to all who came with questions this week! Mark your calendars for the next High School Huddle
Tuesday, November 29
Bearkats Corner: a Successful Run

The Bearkats cross country season came to a close last Thursday with the running of the annual Dolphin Dash at TC Jester Park. The course was set up for 1.5-mile and 2-mile runs for the sixth through eighth graders. I am very proud of all of our runners as they put in early hours of practice and competed well at all the races this fall. The team was made up of sixth graders and seventh graders who ran this year were . We look forward to next fall’s cross country season. Go Bearkats!

—Mark Tucker, Bearkats Coach

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

Basketball
Nov. 7  Practice begins this week

Bellaire Recycles Fest
Sat., Nov. 5, 9 am—1 pm
7008 S. Rice Blvd. at Jessamine (near City Hall)
www.ci.bellaire.tx.us

Free and secure electronics recycling by CompuCycle & paper shredding by Shred Pro.

Donate old eyewear to The Bellaire Lions Club.

Faith Lutheran Church will be collecting coats, jackets, blankets, and sleeping bags for the homeless.

AARP Arts and Crafts Show. Visit the Civic Center.

Also visit the Fall Book Sale hosted by Friends of the Bellaire Library. Stop by, pick up a book and reuse! 9 am—5 pm

PLAY: Lots of kid-friendly activities (can smashing, face painting, inflatable bouncy house and more!)

LEARN: Tips to dispose of unwanted items not taken in the curbside program and how to reduce yard waste. Visit booths and displays of green vendors and organizations from Bellaire/Houston.

SEE: Nissan Leaf and eVgo’s electric car charging station will be on display.

EAT: Food truck selling delicious cupcakes by What’s Up Cupcake.
New Faces in Elementary & Middle School

Welcome to students new to Elementary and Middle School this year!
**NOTICE BOARD**

**Grandparents’ Days invitations**

Invitations are being mailed this week! 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 go to [www.postoakschool.org](http://www.postoakschool.org) and submit mailing information. (Grandparents select the most convenient day to attend.) Please include anyone you think would like to observe and/or interact with your children in their Montessori environment. After Nov. 4, invitations will only be emailed as long as we are given the email address. If you would like additional invitations, please pick them up from the front office.

**Vision & Hearing Screening**

**Thurs. Nov. 3 & Fri., Nov. 4**

All children in the required ages/grades will receive vision, hearing, acanthosis nigricans (AN) and/or spinal screening.

Required ages (as of Sept. 1, 2011) for vision and hearing screening: all first-time entrants ages four and older, all four, five, six, eight, 10, and 12 year olds.

Required grades for acanthosis nigricans screening: all children in 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th grades.

Required grades for spinal screening: all children in 6th and 9th grades.

Girls are requested to wear undergarments.

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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) 4600 Bissonnet, Bellaire, Texas 77401 • Telephone: 713-661-6688 • Fax: 713-661-4959 • [www.postoakschool.org](http://www.postoakschool.org)