This week’s letter comes from a high school senior in Germantown, Maryland who is applying to college this fall. Those applications require her to write an essay and she chose to contrast her experiences in Montessori school and conventional school. No, Miss Hutchinson is not a Post Oak alumna, but her perspective is one I’ve heard in many versions over the years from former Montessori students at many schools. (Used by permission of Michelle Hutchinson.)

On my first day of seventh grade, I was bewildered by the idea of sitting at a desk. Every classroom was filled with desks, carefully placed in straight, orderly rows. How strange middle school seemed, after spending ten years in a close-knit Montessori environment. The idea of a desk was fascinating and yet, disturbing – I

continued on page 2
now had my own, assigned space, but how was I expected to work with my classmates if we were separated? The desks seemed like they would hinder learning, rather than facilitate it. A strong contrast from Montessori school, this concept of desks triggered my concern with conventional education.

At three years old, wearing an over-sized apron, I had used a yellow basin of water to determine which objects would sink or float. By seven, on my stomach with feet in the air, I had exhausted encyclopedias and organized note-cards for a research paper. I had wondered, discovered, and achieved in every physical position all over my classroom. Never had I been asked to listen to a lecture for forty-five minutes, or memorize dates, grammar rules, or names of countries for a test. Instead, I had learned the countries, capitals, and flags of the world before age eight by labeling maps with my friends.

I have always been eager to explore and understand as much as possible about the world. I wanted to know everything, and that was that. Thoroughly researching and analyzing has always been my passion, never a chore. It was a shock to witness classmates in middle and high school complaining about homework. Advocates for the Montessori curriculum understand that it is natural for a child to enjoy learning. However, I soon realized that in conventional schools, teachers believe students need incentives to learn, like gold stars or good grades. My unconventional experience convinced me that traditional schools emphasize convergent thinking, leaving little room for creativity, exploration, and discovery.

Throughout my college search, I have sought a school that will encourage me to ask questions about so-called norms. Why do most schools suppose that children learn best when sitting at a desk? Can learning and freedom of movement not go hand in hand? While I have adapted well to conventional education and deeply respect my teachers, I often recall my Montessori education with longing. We learned by asking questions. We absorbed information by examining and analyzing. We understood that experience is not acquired behind a desk.

I believe that everyone possesses the ability and motivation to reach an answer. I owe my inextinguishable curiosity and views about education to my Montessori experience.

I have no doubt that the boy who fell asleep during physics class, and the girl who copied a few answers on the history homework were once excited by the prospect of learning. Montessori theory demonstrates that it is possible to learn effectively and still maintain an interest in the world. Though I have often heard my classmates insist that they will never understand this or that concept, I believe that everyone possesses the ability and motivation to reach an answer. I owe my inextinguishable curiosity and views about education to my Montessori experience.
Let’s reach our goal by Winter Break

We have $30,000 to go!
If you haven’t yet contributed, here are 10 reasons to do so...

1. Post Oak Fund gifts support faculty professional development and Montessori training.
2. Our endowment is supported by this annual campaign.
3. Broken or worn out Montessori materials are replaced by annual fund dollars.
4. Unexpected expenses, such as the repair of a roof leak or other non-budgeted repairs, are paid for by the annual fund.
5. Financial aid is supplemented by The Post Oak Fund.
6. These funds are used to make large purchases such as our two activity buses.
7. Several renovation projects (the common room and library) were paid for by annual giving.
8. You’ll avoid a lot of extra phone calls and emails these last three weeks before winter break.
9. Your participation shows support for your class and for the school.
10. Because reaching this financial goal is important for every person who cares about The Post Oak School.

How do I contribute? You choose...
- Online: go to the left menu on our homepage.
- Email: send your name and pledge amount to christinacantu@postoakschool.org. Pledges are due May 2012.
- Front office: drop off a check or fill out the credit card section on a response sheet.
Lessons, presentations, singing, dancing, hugs, and smiles—Grandparents’ & Friends’ Days had it all. Students had the opportunity to share their life here at Post Oak with family and friends, gathered together before the Thanksgiving holiday.

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers! Your friendly faces and hospitality made the event warm and welcoming to all!

Laura Citardi & Whitney Walsh, POPA Co-Chairs
Join the High School Ambassador Council

We are assembling a group of energetic parents to be High School Ambassadors and help this new division of Post Oak become a success. If you would like to lend your positive energy and creative ideas and be a part of this group, please let us know! Our first gathering “Quarterbacking from the Couch” will be at a private home on January 10. Want to learn more? Want to join? Call or email us!

—Laura Citardi and Whitney Walsh, 2011–2013 POPA Chairs

Becoming a Love & Logic® Parent

Welcome parents, grandparents, and childcare personnel!

This parenting course series is designed to give you practical skills that can be used immediately. The course series is featured in the spring semester on these dates:

**Wednesday evenings 6:30–8:00 pm**
January 18, 25, February 8, 15, 22, 29, March 7
Cost: $235 per couple for 7 classes, includes workbook
(Free to those having a Certificate of Completion from Phylis’ prior classes)
Drop-in fees can be arranged

**Thursday mornings 9:10–10:30 am**
January 19, 26, February 9, 16, 23, March 8, 22
Cost: $20 per person for the series (includes workbook)

Post Oak students hit the stage

Lower Elementary students will be performing in HITS Theatre’s production of *Annie*. will be playing the part of Daddy Warbucks and will be the “woman in the window” and an orphan in the chorus. Performances are December 10 at 11 am and December 11 at 4 pm. HITS is a performing arts education organization for young people in the Houston metropolitan area, located at 311 W. 18th Street in the Heights. (http://www.hitstheatre.org/)

Calling all volunteers

Join one of the opera subcommittees to help create this biennial production.

COSTUMES
Michelle Munn

CREW
Erin Stus

HOSPITALITY
Paula Mey

MARKETING
Amy Kirchner

SET & PROP
Elise McClain

DONE IN A DAY
Suzan Samuels

HALL MANAGEMENT
Sonia Einstein
Post Oak Opera 2012

The Moon Maiden rehearsals underway

The Opera buzz can still be heard around the school. Vocal rehearsals have begun and the crew is busy working on the lions for the Lion Dance and will also assist in developing our marketing materials. Opera subcommittees are busy preparing their teams for all the details necessary for this performance. If you are interested in helping, please review the list of committees and get involved. This is sure to be a wonderful production!

Elementary students are also working on T-shirt designs. Design forms are due back to the school by December 5. Shirts can be ordered through January 6. DVD order information will be available in a later edition of The Weekly Post.

To our new families, the biennial Opera has been part of The Post Oak School for many years and we are excited that the 2012 production of The Moon Maiden will be added to the list of wonderful performances lead by our talented elementary students, Music Specialist, and parent volunteers. All students 1st thru 6th grade have the option of participating in either the cast or crew. There will also be cultural classroom components of this opera incorporated in the individual classrooms, music, and art.

You may be curious about the story of The Moon Maiden. In ancient China, a story came into being to explain the figure of the maiden in the moon. Every fall, the villagers gather to celebrate the season's harvest and to recount the legend of the Moon Maiden. As our opera begins, the vendors and entertainers are assembling for the Mid-Autumn Festival, a time of thanksgiving and storytelling. The story contains elements of the earthly world, the heavenly world, and a story of love, bravery, and immortality. Along the way, you will meet a monster, a hero, a heroine, a king, a queen, their sons, some fairies, a few pandas, a mooncake seller, a poet, farmers, umbrella vendors, and other lively characters. In the end, you will understand how on the evenings with a full moon you are able to see the maiden in the moon.

–Amy Kirchner, Marketing

Order your T-shirts online

Order Moon Maiden T-shirts via the link on the left of our homepage, or pick up a form from the front office. T-shirts are $15 each and the deadline for orders is January 6.
High School Building Plans

Tuesday, November 29, Post Oak hosted a high school open house at the Glassell Studio School. The event introduced the high school to prospective students and their families while at the same time updating current families on the development of the new division. We’re pleased that the Glassell School, as one of our Museum District partners, hosted the event. This demonstrates the multi-dimensional nature of these partnerships, and communicates a clear message about the high school program.

Those who attended know that it was a standing-room-only event with people filling the aisles and looking on from the balcony. Nearly 100 people attended, with over half from outside the Post Oak community. It was a fantastic event continuing the excitement and interest in the expansion of The Post Oak School. During the course of the evening, participants heard about the purchase of two more properties at the intersection of Autrey Street and Montrose Boulevard.

Below is a site plan showing how we will be developing that block in the next six months. In addition to the soon-to-be renovated building at 1102 Autrey Street, we have purchased the property next door at 1108 Autrey Street. This lot will be cleared, landscaped, and kept as green space. This month, we are also finalizing our purchase of the corner lot at 4614 Montrose Boulevard. The vacant building will be razed and the lot will be prepared for more green space and for parking. Financing for the purchase of these properties is being initially handled through long term loans that will be offset by fundraising through our upcoming capital campaign.

We’re happy to have been so successful to find and acquire property that is located in the Museum District and which will meet the needs of the high school as it grows. This continues to be an exciting time at Post Oak. Stay tuned for more updates in the coming weeks!

—James Moudry, 
High School Director

F.I.S.H. Meeting:  
Your Child & Healthy Food Choices

Please join us on the evening of

Tuesday, Dec. 6 from 7:00–8:00 pm

to meet Aimee Taylor as she presents some of her tips and tricks for helping us help our children make healthy food choices. Childcare will be provided – please call the front office.
Alumni Night 2012

Best Night of the Year!

Join us for the 2012 Post Oak Alumni Night on Thursday, January 5, 2012 from 6:30–8:30 pm.

We are excited to welcome back the high school students, college students, and young professionals who graduated from The Post Oak School as they reflect on their experiences in Montessori. How did their education at Post Oak help prepare them for their subsequent education and for life? Parents of our current students as well as prospective parents are encouraged to attend this event.

Post Oak alum and USC film school graduate Sam Geer will introduce the evening.

Braes Interfaith Ministries Food Drive

Class boxes will be filled Dec. 5 through Dec. 9, and we will deliver the donations on Dec. 12. Thank you for helping us make this a meaningful experience for the children of Post Oak and a welcome gift for the families in need.

Toiletries: (indv. pkgd.)
• bars of soap
• shampoo
• toothpaste
• toothbrushes
• hand lotion
• deodorant
• talcum powder

For Infants:
• diapers (sizes 4 & 5)
• Enfamil with Iron; powder baby formula
• baby food (esp. fruit and vegetables)

Non-perishable canned & pkgd foods including:
• boxes of cereal
• pkgd pasta & sauce
• canned veg/meats etc.
• rice, lentils, beans
• evaporated or condensed milk
• tea, coffee, sugar
• cookies/crackers
• pkgd soups/broth
• dried fruit and nuts
**CALENDAR**
For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

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<td>F.I.S.H.: Healthy Eating</td>
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<td>POPA Coffee/Work Day</td>
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<td>Infant Community transition to PRI meeting</td>
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**NOTICE BOARD**

**Go Bearkats!**

Basketball
Dec. 6 & 7
in the gym at 4:15

**Spirit Day**
Dec. 14

**Lost & Found**
Is your child missing a jacket?
A sweater?
Not sure?

Visit our Lost & Found treasure chest in the front lobby before we donate the contents to charity at the close of school before Winter Break (December 16).

**POP A Coffee/Work Day**
Dec. 7, 2011
8:45 am–1 pm

**Alums invited!**
The annual Alumni Sporting Event is coming up and we want you to join the fun! Stop by the gym on Wednesday, December 14 at 5:00 pm for food, music, and a friendly game of volleyball with the faculty. See you there!

**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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