Other schools prepare you for life, Post Oak offers you real life now.” That was an Alumni Night comment from a recent college graduate, looking back on her Post Oak education through eighth grade. (Put this year’s Alumni Night on your calendar: January 5 at 6:30 pm.) The comment is interesting because Dr. Montessori herself said that education must be “preparation for life, and not just for the next level of schooling.”

Our graduate, on the other hand, was contrasting her Post Oak education with conventional education. At Post Oak, her experiences were real; they rang true; they affected her life; they responded to her interests even as they were shaping future interests. Her thoughts and feelings were recognized and honored by both faculty and peers. “Post Oak helped me to find my inner voice,” she said. “At my high school it was squashed and I’m just now finding it again.”

Middle School students investigating the relationship between time and height in free-fall situations. The students were inspired to do the work following the trip to the Grand Canyon.
At Post Oak she developed real world people skills by working collaboratively with her classmates. She learned to clarify her thinking and to refine her expression in seminars driven by student questions, where students sat in a circle and spoke directly to one another in a collective search for understanding. This stood in stark contrast to her conventional private high school, where literature discussions were funneled through the classroom teacher, and where questions felt like “veiled examinations.”

Let me offer another example to tease out the distinction between “preparing for life” and “real life now.” Post Oak Middle School students travel to Washington D.C. in both their seventh and eighth grade years. Other middle schools travel to D.C., too, usually as a culminating event in the eighth grade year. Most conventional schools travel to D.C., too, usually as a culminating event in the eighth grade year. Most conventional schools hire travel companies to handle all the logistical details, set the tour agenda, and provide guides to lead the visit.

Post Oak students actually plan the trips and make all the arrangements themselves. The plan is guided by an academic theme. Students choose the sites to visit, and they plan the daily agenda. This can lead to humorous moments: one year we arrived at a museum which was still under construction. The website was open, but the museum was not. But when students are invited to take responsibility for the planning, they not only feel a very different level of engagement, they learn to deal with very real pragmatic issues: If you want to visit both the Washington Monument and the U.S. Capitol during the morning, what do you need to think about? How long do you allow for the visit to the Washington Monument? Do you need tickets? How much do they cost? Who do you contact to arrange a visit to the Capitol? How do you get from the Washington Monument to the Capitol Building? You could walk, but how long will it take? You could take the subway. How long would that take and where are the stations? How much does it cost? So with all that in mind, what does the morning schedule look like? And where can we find lunch nearby for a group of 30 people?

Sections of the above paragraph read like a boring “story problem” from a middle school math book. Make the problem real, and it becomes quite engaging. In fact, after walking all over D.C. as seventh graders, one group decided the following year to go into training for their eighth grade trip: twice a week students and their teachers did long walks through Bellaire as a part of their PF (physical fitness) curriculum. Contrast that to a more conventional student trip where the most engaged students will ask, “Where are we going next?” They don’t know. They didn’t plan it. They feel more like freight, rather than the captain of the ship.

On the surface, it looks like both schools did the same thing: travel to Washington D.C. They may have even visited the same sights (though I’m sure the conventional school with its professional planners did not arrive at a museum one year early), but did they have the same experience? Did they learn the same lessons? I think this is what our graduate was thinking when she contrasted “preparing for life” and “real life now.”

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2012 POST OAK FUND DRIVE

Congratulations to Hifa Sobhani’s and Errol Pinto’s classes for reaching 100% parent participation in The Post Oak Fund! Thank you for your support!

Current overall participation: 96% $9,000 left to reach our goal

THANK YOU

to all parents, grandparents, faculty, trustees, and friends for your generous donations in support of all the work that happens at Post Oak each day! The work to get us to our goal will continue after winter break. We’re confident we’ll reach $250,000 in early 2012. Don’t forget matching gifts!

MATCHING GIFTS

Matching Gifts add up!
Please help us reach our goal by submitting a matching gift form from your workplace. Many companies have a matching program and some even match 2 to 1. We have $9,000 to go, and every penny helps!
Fourth Annual BIM Drive: Overwhelming Success

On Monday, Matt Thompson and I, accompanied by 14 elementary students, delivered over 60 boxes of food, baby items, and toiletries to the Braes Interfaith Ministries (BIM) at Willow Meadows Baptist Church. The students, two from each elementary class, were selected randomly. Each took his/her responsibility very seriously as a representative of The Post Oak School. They worked hard to assemble and load the boxes into the school van and bus. They unloaded the van, filled grocery carts, and then stacked the boxes in the food pantry.

Unfortunately, Mr. Eloy Montes, BIM's executive director, was away during our visit. Instead, the BIM volunteers directed our students and then thanked them profusely both for the gifts of food and also for the spirit of charity that they demonstrated. I want to extend a huge thank you to everyone in The Post Oak School community for your generous support of this year's BIM Food Drive.

-Kathy Long, Lower Elementary Teacher

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 School succeed. 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 residence on January 10. Want to learn more? Want to join? Call or email us!

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

We're looking to borrow an adult-size recurve bow for the opera. It's needed for one scene only and will be returned after the performance. Please contact Elise McClain at 713-682-6333.
Lions, and Tigers, and (Panda) Bears! Oh, My!

That's right, our opera will have two lions dancing and tumbling around, a tiger from the Zodiac family, and a group of panda bears to delight and, oh, so much more! Tickets for the February 3 opera *The Moon Maiden* will go on sale soon after winter break, so check back to *The Weekly Post* for more details.

Each day, students in first through sixth grade are working on sets or vocal rehearsals. As part of their preparatory work for the opera, they are learning about the Chinese culture in various ways. For example, students in crew studied designs for the traditional Chinese lion before creating the two for our show. First graders have music to sing composed using the major pentatonic scale that is found throughout much of Chinese music.

We want to express our sincere appreciation to the elementary students who submitted art for the opera T-shirt. We received some really wonderful designs and have had a difficult time choosing the art for the T-shirt! Be sure to visit the school’s website to order your shirt today!

Whether you have a student in Infant Community, Primary, Elementary, or Middle School, we hope you will make plans to attend the performance of *The Moon Maiden* on February 3 in the very spacious Dunhum Theater on the campus of Houston Baptist University. This beautiful venue has ample seating for relatives and friends to join Post Oak families at the performance.

—Tanya Gee, Opera Co-Chair

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Order your T-shirts online

Order *The 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 is January 6.
The Bearkats basketball season got started last week with the first two games of the year. The team came out very strong with their passing and shooting to take a 63–30 win over St. Stephen’s. The next day the Bearkats again took on the Bulldogs of St. Stephen’s and this game was very different from the beginning. St. Stephen’s could do no wrong and built a sizable lead over our Bearkats. With just over four minutes left in the game they held a 25 to 16 advantage. After a time out by the Bearkats a furious charge ensued, the Bearkats out-scored the Bulldogs 16 to 2 in the closing minutes to come away with a 30–27 win in their second game. A very exciting finish!

The students who participated in these two games were:

- Coach Mark Tucker

Basketball Games

January 17, 31, February 7, 21, 28

All games are in the Post Oak gym starting at 4:15 pm.

More games to be added—check back for new dates.
In 1980, I entered Post Oak Montessori (as it was then called) as a five-year-old Lower Elementary student in Susan Wallen’s class. Back then, the campus was located on Harwin Drive, outside Beltway 8 (which had not yet been constructed). In 1986, the Post Oak community took up residence in its current location on Bissonnet; I can still remember how excited and proud I was to be among the first students to use the beautiful new facility, built especially for us. Although I only spent one year on the new campus, I have vivid memories of my time spent there, happily collaborating with my friends and fellow students under the expert guidance of our teacher, John Bodi.

Recently, the birth of my first child gave me a reason to revisit the campus. As new parents, my husband and I spent countless hours marveling at our infant son’s natural curiosity about the world and eagerness to explore it. It dawned on us that it was our responsibility to protect his innate inquisitiveness and, hopefully, to instill in him a lifelong love of learning. Remembering how, as a young child, my ideas were encouraged and respected by my teachers led me back to Post Oak. I wanted my child to feel as inspired and supported as I did. The moment my husband and I stepped foot inside the door, I was transported back to my childhood, the lessons I learned at Post Oak still fresh in my mind.

I remembered tracing letters, creating stories with alphabet cards, working with the binomial cube, using symbols to learn parts of speech, working with beads to understand the concept behind long division, and conducting science experiments and testing hypotheses. I remember learning about ancient Greek and Roman civilizations – yes, we read books, listened to lectures, and wrote reports, but we also visited museums, created scale models, prepared traditional foods, staged an archeological excavation, and created period costumes to wear to the lower school classrooms so that we could share with younger students what we had learned. At Post Oak, there was always more to learn than what could be found in a textbook.

When I was a kid, my best friend and I were the same age. I can remember being in the third grade reading and coveting her public elementary school textbooks, with their succinct chapters and quaint illustrations. I sometimes wished I didn’t have to explain to everyone how my school was different or what I did all day; but as I look back, even that exercise was character building. It taught me not to be so concerned about what other people thought and to be confident in my own path.

After Post Oak, I went to St. John’s School for both middle school and high school. I then went on to receive my BA in Psychology and Sociology from Southwestern University and my Juris Doctor from The University of Texas. While I am truly grateful for all of my academic experiences, my most treasured skill is one that I can without question attribute to Post Oak – an undying intellectual curiosity about the world and my place in it. From an early age, Post Oak instilled in me a love of learning for the sake of learning. In my experience, many distinguished academic programs too often rely on memorization and linear thinking, which allows students to succeed without requiring them to think independently. At Post Oak, this was not the case. We were asked on a daily basis to develop our own perspectives and points of view.

There were many aspects that Post Oak taught me that have been beneficial to my career as a lawyer. For example, I learned so much about the importance of empathy, communication, and teamwork. I also learned how to be a strong advocate for my clients. I have used those skills throughout my career and continue to do so today. I have always been grateful to Post Oak for the education they provided me.

I am so grateful to be able to share my story with others and to be able to say that I am a Post Oak graduate. I will always be proud to be a part of the Post Oak community and I am excited to see what the future holds for Post Oak and its students.
Proud former Post Oak parent Helene Lubel recently sent us an update about her daughters Alexa and Samantha. From her email:

The benefits of attending Post Oak from second to fifth prepared Alexa for her successful years in middle and high school and now at University of Kansas. She is a freshman in the school of journalism and has a 3.8 grade point average.

Samantha is a senior at Syracuse University. She has made the Dean’s List every semester. Her major is Child and Family Studies with minors in Psychology and Gerontology. Her dean said it is so rare for a student to have a major, two minors, consistently make the Dean’s List, and graduate on schedule. Samantha’s plan is to go to law school and become a state prosecuting attorney against child maltreatment. She is so independent, self directed, and dedicated to community. I constantly credit Montessori and Post Oak School for Samantha’s and Alexa’s successes!

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TEDx Youth

by Amy Pascoe, Post Oak Alumna

TED. Technology Education and Design. All around the world TED talks take place to discuss current events and “ideas worth spreading.” Once a year, on international youth day, TEDx (x= independently organized) hosts events specifically for students to share their thoughts. Last year, Houston’s ISAS schools organized their own TEDx event. Post Oak was one of the schools that participated, and some of the Middle School students talked about the manager program in the Middle School and their roles. As an eighth grader, I was one of the participating students. This year, as a ninth grader at a completely different school, I was able to participate again by acting as Kinkaid’s official TEDx reporter. When I heard earlier this year that my high school would not only be participating again this year, but also hosting, I was excited to get involved again. I think TEDx is a great program for Houston’s middle and high schools to be involved in because it is a real, public event where students who have ideas that they have developed and want to share can do so. Another of Post Oak’s alumni, Luciano “Lou” Posada, who is also currently attending The Kinkaid School, also participated in this year’s TEDx event. Lou and Camiel Duytschaever, both seniors, have been experimenting with biofuel products this year, and they gave a presentation on an easy process that they have been developing and their plan to share it with other schools. They started with the leftover cooking oil from the school cafeteria, which was an easy material to find in abundance, and after some experimentation and help from the chemistry teachers, were able to create a usable fuel for the buses. They plan to share the kit they developed with a few schools, and then ask those schools to share kits with a couple more schools each, and so on. Lou and Camiel want to use these kits to reduce the amount of natural resources we are using and help save the environment. This is a great example of the benefits of the event because simply by talking at the event, Lou and Camiel were able to spread the idea to the others students that were there. They were able to illustrate TED’s own idea: “Ideas worth spreading.”

Records of the events are available on twitter at the hash tag #TEDxYouth.
1. Rolling dough in Infant Community.
2. Making a get-well-card for a class friend.
4. Memorization of multiplication tables.
5. Checking work with the division board.
6. Singing along with Primary Home Environment.
7. Yoga poses in the west Primary pod.
10. "Make lemonade!" sing the students in Maya Pinto’s class’ play.
11. A great save during the volleyball game at the Alumni Sporting Event.
**NOTICE BOARD**

**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)

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**PAPERWORK DROP-OFF AT ARRIVALS**

If you have paperwork to drop off, you can hand it to one of the people assisting with arrivals and they will put it in a basket that gets taken to the front office every morning. No need to park! There are drop-off baskets in both the Primary and Elementary arrivals lines.

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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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