If you want people to perform better, you reward them, right?”

That’s Dan Pink speaking. Challenging this thinking, he says, “There’s a gross mismatch between what science knows and what business does.”

What?

In answer to his rhetorical question Pink reveals that rewards actually dull thinking and block creativity. “Rewards don’t work and often do harm,” he says.

“This is NOT philosophy. This is NOT a feeling. This is a FACT—or as we say in Washington DC, a true fact.”

continued on page 2
Drive, by John Long, continued from page 1

Dan Pink's new book, *Drive*, is about the science of motivation. In order to write it he reviewed research into motivation conducted over the last 40 years. For example, he refers to a recent survey of 51 studies conducted by economists at the London School of Economics (LSE). The studies examined pay for performance plans in business and industry, the kinds of plans that many of our civic leaders are prescribing to improve public school education, tying teacher salary increases or bonuses to student test results. LSE concluded, "We find that financial incentives can result in a negative impact on overall performance." Pink calls this finding "un-American." He also says it is one of the most robust findings in experimental economics and psychology—and also one of the most widely ignored.

*Drive* considers motivation in the world of work. In Tuesday's faculty meeting we looked at motivation in school. "Traditional schools are steeped in incentives to get children to learn and to behave well," says University of Virginia Professor of Psychology Angeline Lillard. "In Montessori schools there are no grades, gold stars, demerits, honor rolls, pizza for reading programs, and so on."

This month, faculty read the fifth chapter of Lillard's book *Montessori: The Science behind the Genius*, “Extrinsic Rewards and Motivation.”

Lillard surveyed educational research; Pink surveyed similar studies of motivation in economics and psychology. Both found overwhelming and consistent evidence showing that external rewards impact performance, thinking, and creativity in negative ways.

So why do we do it? Why do we tie pay to performance in business? Why do conventional schools reward students for academic accomplishment and good behavior (grades, class ranking, gold stars, blue ribbons)? Because they work *sometimes*, in some circumstances. When the task is simple, well-defined, even mechanical, rewards improve performance. When the task is complex, ambiguous, and more like real-life, rewards depress performance. This has been demonstrated experimentally over and over and over.

So what does motivate people? Intrinsic motivation; Pink calls it “drive:…the desire to do something because we like it, because it is interesting, because it's part of something important.”

I asked Upper Elementary students about the work they were doing at the moment. Here are two of the conversations:

"I'm trying to read 20 bluebonnet books this year."

*Why do you want to read 20?* "Because this is my last year to do Bluebonnet books and I've never done that many before."

"See my butterfly? I worked on it for three hours."

*Why did you spend so much time on it?* "Because this is my last year to do Bluebonnet books and I've never done that many before."

I asked teachers the same question, “Why are you doing this work?” Their answers were not focused on what was in front of them at the moment, but rather more in the vein of life mission:

"I remember my childhood, and I think I have something to offer."

"It grows my soul. I feel rewarded (gratified, privileged, honored) by being able to help out, to do my part in making a difference in lives (or moments) of a child or adult's life."

"To be of service to humanity and help facilitate peace in the world. To be in touch with my higher spiritual purpose."

"I do this work because it fulfills me. I experience joy, despair, hope, frustration—the whole gamut of emotions. I feel capable, my work is worthwhile and I am motivated to try again every day."

"It is my calling."

Those comments from Post Oak teachers reminded me of Malcolm Gladwell's observation in his book *Outliers*:

"It is not how much money we make that ultimately makes us happy between nine-to-five. It's whether our work fulfills us. If I..."
Happy Campers

It was a perfect day. Hifa Sobhani’s students and their families set out for Brazos Bend State Park for the annual class camping trip. The weather was a nice blend of sun and shade with a cool breeze. Families arrived, set up their tents, and spent a relaxing day enjoying the campsite. Ms. Sobhani scheduled a special hands-on demonstration at the George Observatory. The children enjoyed riding their bicycles, playing games, climbing trees, and spending quality time with their classmates and their siblings. Hifa’s class presented “My Town, My World,” a musical about caring and community. The children and parents participated in a group dinner and rounded out the evening with a campfire: songs (courtesy of the Post Oak Girl Scouts) and s’mores for everyone.

“My favorite part of the trip was roasting marshmallows because someone gave me all of their burnt ones! I also liked going to the space exhibit at the observatory and landing on the moon. I cannot wait to do it again,” noted second grader. [REDACTED] added, “My favorite parts of the camping trip were going to the observatory and being a navigator with [REDACTED] eating watermelon for a snack, and making yummy s’mores for dessert.”

It was clear that it was entirely possible to enjoy the natural surroundings of the campsite without the distractions of electronic games, iPods, and iPads. The children bonded with their classmates and enjoyed the freedom of running, biking, and playing in a safe and beautiful environment. Even our four-legged friends, (family pets Strider Gregg and Maggie Locklar) enjoyed the day. Thank you to all the families who participated this year. Get ready to do it again next April! Aside from the strong night winds and a few tent mishaps, I think it is safe to say that we were all happy campers that day.

–Amy Kirchner, Post Oak parent
Last week the Bearkats team members, the cheer squad, their families, as well as faculty and staff came together to celebrate the outstanding efforts of our Post Oak athletes. The gym was decked with the team’s colors of green and white, the brightest decoration being the new scoreboard donated by the Dads’ Club.

After a rousing cheer from the squad, Coach Tucker took to the stage to say a few words about the athletics program this year and thank parent Alan Ying who was there representing the Post Oak Dads’ Club. The students in the cheer squad gave another enthusiastic performance before Coach Tucker brought them on stage to honor their first year of bringing more spirit to the games. Next, the Bearkats one-by-one were given a medal for their participation in this year’s sports, including soccer, cross country, basketball, and volleyball.

The final award of the evening, the annual Bearkat Heart award, was presented to **[Redacted]** This is the first year this accolade has been given. Coach Tucker said, “This award stands for dedication – being at all the practices and games; persistence – to keep working hard at improving yourself; attitude – being a leader through actions and staying positive; willingness – to challenge yourself; to stretch your limits. This year’s award winner has done all these things and more.”

Congratulations to all the team members for a spectacular year!
“Dirt! is good for you!”

The annual Spring Environmental Event was a hit last Thursday, as Post Oak families and friends from throughout Houston gathered in the gym to watch Dirt! The Movie and listen to guest panelists share their knowledge and expertise in the areas of farmers’ markets and co-ops, gardening, raw foods, cooking, permaculture, and composting. We are very grateful to panelists Monica Pope, Bob Randall, Joe Blanton, and Kristina Carrillo-Bucaram (all pictured below) who gave thoughtful answers to the audience’s questions and shared their passion and interest. Thanks to the Post Oak Green Team for their efforts and to everyone who came and made this such a great event!

Thursday also marked Post Oak’s first Carbon Neutral Day. Students and faculty shared these ways that they reduced their carbon footprints:

- I rode my bicycle to school!
- Air-dried my hair!
- I recycled!
- I used reusable lunch containers!
- I watched Dirt!
- I drank tap water instead of bottled!
- I recycled a paper bag!
- I used reusable bags and carpooled today.
Your Post Oak Fund Dollars at Work

Ever wonder where those annual fund dollars donated by our generous Post Oak community go? We knew you might be interested, so here is a small recap of the campaign along with a list of this year’s Post Oak Fund-paid-for projects.

Post Oak Fund Chairs, Kim and Michael Callahan did a terrific job last fall of working with Class Captains to reach out to fellow parents and ask for support of this annual campaign. Thanks to everyone who worked on and participated in this year’s campaign!

FINAL NUMBERS:
Overall parent participation: 98% (we’ve been over 97% for six years straight!)

Our financial goal was $250,000 and we will end the campaign having raised $264,498. We have a very generous and giving community at Post Oak!

To date we have received cash of $229,068 and have $35,430 in outstanding pledges due by May 31. (Please pay your pledge!)

WHERE DID YOUR ANNUAL FUND DONATIONS GO?
- In May, the Board of Trustees will direct a percentage of annual fund dollars toward our endowment and to replenish cash reserves.
- With several teachers and staff in training this year (Anita Taj, Jamie Ward, Mirani Smith, Erin Smith, Vivian Blum, Kelly McNamara and Ryan Tucker), we increased the Professional Development allocation.
- Our Financial Aid amount was also increased to accommodate need in our community.
- Discretionary capital spending such as the four-year project to renew the elastomeric coating on the building’s exterior will be completed this summer when the outer walls of the gym are treated.
- A plethora of unbudgeted and unexpected facilities work was covered with Post Oak Fund dollars:
  - Several A/C units broke down and needed to be repaired, along with heeding the recommendation of our serviceman to clean all of the coils in our air handlers.
  - The A/C unit in our server room died and needed to be completely replaced.
  - Unexpected increases in our utilities this year were absorbed by annual fund dollars.
- If you ever exit Post Oak onto the Episcopal driveway, you might have noticed an officer stationed by Bissonnet Street. We coordinated with Episcopal High School this year to share the cost of that officer after we learned that their traffic patterns had changed and started causing a back-up with both schools exiting at the same time.
- During some of the storms this year, a large amount of mulch flowed off of our playground and needed to be replaced.

Your annual fund gift benefits the school in so many different ways. Ultimately, you are helping the school maintain its level of excellence in programming, faculty development, facilities maintenance, and planning for the future. Thank you!

by Christina Kopanidis-Cantu, Development Director
Art Sale and Bake Sale

to support Malayaka House

Together, students in Mrs. Nickerson’s class will present a Bake Sale and students in Mr. Pinto’s class will present an Art Sale to raise funds for the Ugandan orphanage, Malayaka House.

Tuesday, May 1
9 am to 2:30 pm
in the Common Room

Bake Sale goods range from 50¢ to $2
Artwork ranges from $1 to $30

Parents are welcome! Donations are welcome!

Help us support this organization of big people helping little people.

Summer Class for
Redirecting Children’s Behavior
The Gentle Art of Parenting

Wednesday evenings, June 6, 13, 20, 27, 6:15–9:15 pm

This four week, twelve hour course teaches parents how to help children grow in a way that enhances self-esteem, teaches responsibility, and promotes cooperation and self mastery. Upon completion, you will be able to:

- Discipline without yelling
- Reduce sibling rivalry
- Redirect mistaken goals
- Interact to build self-esteem
- Develop a sense of responsibility
- Create an encouraging family

Course fee: $235 for one; $335 per couple
Fee includes 25 minute one-on-one phone coaching
One-on-one parent coaching: $110/hr
Sleep coaching: $135/hr

Taught by Deborah Fry Ph.D., C.P.E.
For more information and to register, please call Deborah at 713-840-8663.
Becoming a Love & Logic Parent©

Tuesdays, 6–8 pm
May 29, June 5, 12, 19, 26 (5 weeks)

Discount will be given to Post Oak parents!

Cost: $90 per person + $10 workbook
Drop-in fee: $25 per night
(free for prior completion of entire series)

For more information call Post Oak Counselor Phylis Tomlinson at 713-668-6558
or email her at phylistomlinson@gmail.com

We have fun and learn a lot of very effective, tried and true techniques for changing children’s behavior. These classes offer practical and simple techniques for interacting with children, reinforcing concepts learned in Redirecting Children’s Behavior and other parenting programs. The classes are a great way for parents new to Post Oak to really get to know other parents on a very personal level. We do keep confidences, of course!

Not registered? Come anyway, we can always make room for one more.

Do I have to be a Post Oak parent? No, we open our hearts and arms to all who want to learn effective parenting strategies which prepare our children for living in the real world.

What if I can’t attend every class? Come to any of the classes, each week new techniques are presented and learning one or all, will bring more pleasure to your time with your child(ren).

Can I take the classes more than one time? Yes, many people find having a “refresher” helps them feel more confident.
1. Building fine motor skills while creating a beautiful environment by filling flower vases.
2. Peeling and slicing an egg for snack.
3. Watering plants in the library.
4. Matching geometric cards in order to build spatial reasoning skills.
5. Can you find the eraser? Developing the sense of touch.
6. Identifying geographical features on a map of the United States.
7. Look at the size of the addition problem this 9-year-old boy is writing for himself.
8. An 11-year-old derives square root with the peg board.
9. Making dolls for a Spanish Fair project.
10. Performing in music class.
CALAENAR
For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

APRIL 29 – MAY 5

May Day
Art Sale & Bake Sale
9:00 am – 2:30 pm

POP Volunteer Appreciation Ice Cream Social
3:30 – 4:30 pm

Annual Fund Leadership Circle Cocktail Reception (off campus)
5:30 – 7:30 pm

New MS Parent Gathering
7:00 pm

Third graders to Camp Allen

PHE sing-along
4:30 – 6:00 pm

MAY 6 – 12

Sixth Graders to Williamsburg
Middle School to Washington D.C.

New Primary Parent Gathering
7:00 pm

Front Desk Lanyards Missing

Did you perchance wear one of our stylish Parent or Visitor lanyards home? The front desk has run fresh out after this last round of conferences. Please help us save some trees by returning the reusable badges to the front desk.
Thank you!

NOTICE BOARD

YOU ARE INVITED!
Tuesday, May 15 from 4 – 6 pm

HIGH SCHOOL Spring Preview
1102 AUTREY, HOUSTON 77006

ABBOUT 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

Shop and Share

Don’t forget! to link your Randall’s Remarkable card and Target Visa Credit Card or Target Credit Card to The Post Oak School.

For more information, visit our website

For Parents > Giving & Getting Involved > Store Rebate Programs.

Check out our online calendar—or download a copy of the printed calendar at www.postoakschool.org