One of our third-grade boys finished his spelling assignment, closed his book, and declared himself ready to work on math.

His teacher said, “Open your math notebook. There’s a subtraction problem ready to get you started.”

“I hope it’s nice and long,” he said.

I was sitting there at the lesson table and was curious why he said that.

“Because I want to get really good at subtraction and then I want to get really good at multiplication and division.”

continued on page 2

Two six year olds set up a multiplication problem on the checker board.
Two girls in another Lower Elementary classroom were learning to use the checkerboard, an aid to multiplication. Here’s the problem they wrote for themselves: 377,734 × 72.

They were on the steep part of the learning curve, but they were fearless. In fact, as soon as they finished writing the problem in their math notebooks, one said to the other, “I forget how to do this.”

I was sitting next to them on the floor and could have helped out, but I wanted to see how they handled this situation, so I offered no adult intervention. In fact, their teacher sent me over to observe them because I told her I was looking for students confronting a difficult passage in their work. These girls had already been given a lesson on the checkerboard, but were not yet independent using it.

As she walked by, one of their classmates asked, “Do you need help?” She spent the next 15 minutes re-teaching them how to use the checkerboard. At one point she offered to simplify the problem, shortening the multiplier from two digits (× 72) to one digit (× 2). They declined her offer. “We want to do this problem.”

“Everyone has a role model, someone who pointed the way at a critical moment in their lives. These children were my role models. They obviously knew something I didn’t and I was determined to figure it out—to understand the kind of mindset that could turn a failure into a gift.”

“What did they know? They knew that human qualities, such as intellectual skills, could be cultivated through effort. And that’s what they were doing—getting smarter. Not only weren’t they discouraged by failure, they didn’t even think they were failing. They thought they were learning.”

At the heart of Dweck’s discoveries, after 20 years of work, are two opposing mindsets. Some of us see ourselves (and others) as smart or not smart. And we see smartness as a fixed characteristic, something we ourselves cannot change or influence. In fact, we might even believe that smart people don’t need to work hard to learn something. And that if you do need to work hard, this proves that you’re not smart. As parents, when our child learns something new we say, “You’re so smart.” This helps us pass on to the next generation the fixed-intelligence mindset.

Other people see themselves (and others) as learners. With this mindset, we understand that errors are a natural part of learning. We also see that learning builds intelligence. We expect that we need to work hard to learn new things, and that through our hard work we make ourselves smarter. As parents, when our child learns something new, we say, “You worked really hard at that, didn’t you?” This helps us pass on to the next generation the learner mindset.

MONTESSORI

Dr. Montessori said that we must help children develop “a friendly relationship with error.” This gets communicated in little ways and big ways and over a long period of time, it helps develop a learner’s mindset.

When a child is running indoors, do you say, “Don’t run!” or do you say, “Walk”? Saying “walk” is not only more effective (children often hear only the last thing we say, so a child hearing “don’t run” hears only “run!”), it also entails no correction, no error. Hearing about the error is often the worst part. The control is external. You are being controlled and feel like you are being controlled.

continued on page 11
Talented Youth

By Shekkola Gray, Middle School Director

Post Oak Middle School students [redacted] and [redacted] have qualified for state recognition and for admission to summer studies programs at national universities. How did they qualify for the Duke University Talent Search and Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth programs? They and three of their classmates chose to sit for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the College Board’s official college entrance exam which is given annually to high school juniors and seniors.

The exam consists of three tests: critical reading, math, and writing. Each test has a maximum score of 800 points. In 2011, the mean scores for seniors in Texas who took the SAT were 497 in critical reading, 514 in mathematics, and 489 in writing. You can see below that our seventh graders stacked up very well against high school seniors from across the state of Texas.

Both [redacted] and [redacted] will be studying electrical engineering this summer through the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth program. [redacted] will attend classes at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, and [redacted] will attend classes at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. [redacted] feels that the electrical engineering course will be the most fun of the courses offered. [redacted]’s interest in electrical engineering stems from the fact that his grandfather served as an electrical engineer in the military.

[redacted] will study architecture at Davidson College near Charlotte, North Carolina. Students in the architecture program will explore the history and language of architecture, create individual and team projects, and study the historical significance of various structures. [redacted] chose to study architecture because of her “family ties” to architecture. Her grandfather is a retired architect and her mother was an interior designer. Her contributions to the renovations at her family home have also been inspiring to [redacted].

I also want to commend seventh graders [redacted] and [redacted], as well as former Middle School student [redacted], for their participation. Although they did not qualify for summer studies, they did choose to sit for the exam and in doing so, gained valuable experience. Through their engagement and their willingness to do the work, they demonstrated the truth of the aphorism, “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” Congratulations, all.

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Post Oak (7th grade students)

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Texas (High school seniors)
Smiles and Sprinkles

Cool breezes and cold treats made the Volunteer Appreciation Social a total delight! Parents, students, faculty, and staff gathered together in the nature center to celebrate the volunteer efforts of the Post Oak community including volunteers from our Board of Trustees, POPA events, room parents, chaperones, class captains, and more. POPA chairs Laura Cirardi and Whitney Walsh handed out Post Oak gift totes, while everyone indulged on frozen treats from Marble Slab Creamery.

If you were unable to attend, please drop by Kathryn Murphy’s office to pick up a tote.
Another Phi Beta Kappa

Post Oak alumna Catherine Fondren (eighth grade class of ’05) is a senior at the University of Texas in the Plan II program. It has been a busy semester for her. She was invited to join Phi Beta Kappa. She is currently living and studying in Japan. And during the first part of the semester she did a mentorship in the Cell and Gene Therapy Lab at Texas Children’s Hospital (a lab directed by Post Oak alumni parents Clio Rooney and Malcolm Brenner.) Catherine sent me the report below from the lab earlier this spring.

–John Long, Head of School

Mr. Long,

I’m so sorry this took me so long to type up! I’ve been so busy I didn’t even realize a week had gone by and I still hadn’t gotten back to you. Right now I’m on an extended winter break from UT. I’ll be heading out to Japan on April 1 for a four month semester at J. F. Oberlin University, and I’m dying to get overseas! This has been one of my main goals for my time at UT, so seeing it come to fruition has been really rewarding. I know it’s going to be a great chance to grow and learn.

In the meantime, I’ve been working in Dr. Malcolm Brenner and Dr. Cliona Rooney’s Cell and Gene Therapy Lab at Texas Children’s Hospital (through Dr. Ganesh Palapattu, who put me in touch with their lab in the first place). I’ve been mentoring under a post-doc who’s basically taking me through an immunology course experiment by experiment. I learn about the white blood cells by growing them, and learn about their function by mixing them with different peptides and vectors that represent bacteria and viruses. It’s been very challenging, both because I had very little background knowledge on immunology and because of the nature of the research environment. It’s a trial and error world (error being the key word). I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but I’m definitely a type A person. So for the first two weeks, when I couldn’t for the life of me explain back to Patrick (the post-doc) what an antigen presenting cell was and when every time I moved my hand in the hood he had to pipe up to correct my form or tell me I had contaminated something, it was definitely a test of my confidence. I had to keep breathing and remind myself that they expected me to make mistakes, and that I would learn from them.

Now, three weeks into the experience, I’m using samples of my own blood, separating it out to isolate the white blood cells, and then culturing those cells through a process that imitates the body’s immune response, allowing me to manipulate the type of cells propagated and what those cells fight. And I feel like I could explain all of it too. It makes me miss all of the hands on learning that Post Oak provided. Labs have always been my favorite classes just for that reason, and I can’t think of anything else I’d rather be doing in my break than spending a month and a half in a lab learning as much as I can in that time.

So far it’s been a fantastic experience, and I look forward to the next three weeks of it!

–Catherine Fondren

Catherine in a costume she designed and made for comic-con conventions. Photo submitted by Leland Fondren.
A Big Help!

This week the students in Debbie Nickerson’s and Errol Pinto’s classes worked together to host an art sale and bake sale to raise funds for the Ugandan orphanage Malayaka House. Team leads [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] did an exceptional job of bringing it all together. Thanks to the families who provided the baked goods and the students who provided the artwork. Thanks, too, to the Post Oak community for making it a sell out! The group raised $2,358.02 for their charity. 📈
High School Teaching Team Complete

Jan Ott has joined the Post Oak high school teaching team as our science specialist for this coming fall! Jan comes to Post Oak from Chinquapin Preparatory School in Highlands, Texas, just east of Houston. She has been teaching high school and middle school science and mathematics at Chinquapin for the last two years and before that taught science and integrated studies for over 20 years at The Evergreen State College in Washington.

Jan holds a BS in biology from Sarah Lawrence College and a PhD in Neurophysiology from the University of Southern California with a focus on the neuroplasticity of the brain. Jan brings a zestful energy for applied sciences in all areas and is excited about our Museum District partnerships. Her broad post-secondary teaching experience gives her a strong base for creating and participating in a rigorous, reality-based science curriculum that emanates from the school lab and culminates in applied student interests throughout the Museum District.

With this position filled, our full-time teaching team is complete: James Quillan (humanities), Jan Ott (sciences), and Jeremy Grisbee (mathematics and Spanish). You’ll immediately see that we’ve assembled a true “J-TEAM” (myself included) to create and open our high school. They are individually and collectively ready to engage! I know that everyone is excited to get to know the new staff and students at the high school. Last week, 80% of the new high school families attended the New Family Reception. There, they met Post Oak faculty, trustees, and of course, got a warm welcome from current Post Oak parents!

The high school faculty team will be starting the 2012–13 academic year next month(!) as we get to know each other better and our new high school building. Please be sure to come see the high school for yourself on May 15 from 4:00 to 6:00 pm during our Spring Preview (see invitation on the back page)! All are welcome to drop in. The excitement continues!

by James Moudry, High School Director

Gentle reminder… pledges due

All Post Oak Fund pledges are due by May 31. Please contact Christina Cantu in the development office if you have any questions. Thank you.

Graduation Approaches

It’s time to make plans to attend the eighth-grade graduation on May 25 at 6:30 pm. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear the students share in their own words about their time at Post Oak. Parents of younger children have remarked in the past what a powerful experience it was, giving them a “portrait of a graduate.” Come see the power of Post Oak education and celebrate with those students moving forward.

Off to See the Wizard

Lower Elementary siblings [redacted] (Tinman) and [redacted] (munchkin, Mrs. Gulch, Winkie) will be performing in the HIts Theatre production of The Wizard of Oz this weekend. Their shows are on Saturday, May 5 at 3:00 pm and Sunday, May 6 at 6:00 pm at 311 W. 18th Street. Tickets are $15 for adults and $5 for kids. See www.hitstheatre.org/ for more performance times and information.
Welcome New Families from Infant Community to High School!

Last week Post Oak gave a festive welcome to parents of incoming 2012–13 students. At our New Parent Reception we heard lots of enthusiastic folks share their stories of how they found out about Post Oak and how happy they are to have their children start next year. We were pleased to see so many of our high school parents attend the event! This was a great way to meet and welcome the newest members of our community. As the current school year comes to a close, we look forward to an exciting year ahead, bringing us closer to our 50th anniversary in 2013–14.
The Great Post Oak Book Exchange

by B.R. Simon, Librarian

We’re into the homestretch of the last month of school and you may be planning your summer. We would once again like to suggest SUMMER READING!

This year the Lower and Upper Elementary classes are invited to participate in the seventh annual Great Post Oak Book Exchange. We are asking students to turn in any unwanted, gently used books, between now and May 15. Please, turn in Elementary age appropriate books (books that Elementary students might want in exchange). All books must have their covers and all of their pages. Books will be turned in to specially marked boxes in the library. For every book turned in, the student will receive a Book Buck.

On Thursday, May 17, the Book Exchange will take place in the Library. Students will be allowed to cash in their Book Bucks for books they would like to have in place of the ones they donated. Any books remaining after the book donors have purchased their selections will be offered to students who did not donate books. Any remaining books at the end of The Great Post Oak Book Exchange will be donated to a needy library.

- **What:** The Great Post Oak Book Exchange – Turn in old books for new, gently used ones.
- **When:** Donate gently used books May 1–15 in specially marked boxes in the library.
- **Where:** The Library
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.

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 PhD, CPE
For more information and to register, please call Deborah at 713-840-8663.
This is a reason that many Montessori classroom materials have a built-in control of error: the child can check herself and does not need the teacher to tell her if she is right or wrong. If she is wrong, she simply re-does it. Errors are a normal part of learning.

If a child drops a plate and it breaks, he gets the broom to sweep it up. He does not need to be told, “You broke a plate,” (a comment that is often embellished with some additional insult about the child’s carelessness.) We are aiming to develop a friendly relationship with error. We are aiming to develop the mindset of a learner, someone who understands that errors are a normal part of learning. We are aiming to avoid a fear of mistakes, a fear of failure, which can paralyze a learner. If you are afraid to make mistakes, you’ll be reluctant to try something new and hard.

We aim to develop a curiosity about errors. A child mixing colors wants orange. She combines red and blue and gets purple. “Oh, that’s interesting. You’ve made purple. How did you do that? What colors did you mix?” Compare this to an error-oriented approach: “No, that’s definitely not orange!” An adult taking this approach might then tell the child what to do: “Mix red and yellow to get orange,” or even say, “Let me do that for you.” Either way, the message to the child is this: you’re wrong and you’re incompetent. Reminds me of Thomas Edison’s 10,000 attempts to develop the filament for the incandescent light bulb. Or Spencer Silver’s development of a glue that didn’t work very well (think Post-It Notes). Some people deny their errors. Or cover them up. Or get discouraged. Or throw the whole mess away. Or leave the workbench and go watch TV. Others maintain an air of curiosity.

What’s the difference? Mindset. How do we develop the mindset of a learner? It begins with our attitude toward error, toward effort, and toward intelligence.

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2012–13 Important Calendar Dates

Watch The Weekly Post and our website for more information about next year’s academic calendar.

Here are a few dates we have already determined:

- Aug. 20–24: First week for Elementary, Middle School and High School
- Aug. 27–31: First week for Infant Community and Primary
- Sept. 3: Labor Day (school closed)
- Oct. 8: Columbus Day (school closed)
- Nov. 21–23: Thanksgiving Break (school closed)
- Dec. 24–Jan. 7: Winter Break (school closed)
- Jan. 21: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (school closed)
- Feb. 18: Presidents Day (school closed)
- Mar. 11–15: Spring Break – only students with expanded-year contracts attend
- Mar. 29: Good Friday (school closed)
- May 27: Memorial Day (school closed)
- May 31: Last day of school

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"You’re So Smart"? by John Long, continued from page 2

I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.

—Thomas A. Edison

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First printed November 13, 2009
**CALENDAR**
For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

**MAY 6–12**

- Sixth Graders to Williamsburg
- Middle School to Washington D.C.
- Mon–Fri 5/7–5/11

**Thu 5/10**

- Answering “Where Do I Come From?” Questions
  1:50–2:50 pm
- New Primary Parent Gathering
  7:00 pm

**MAY 13–19**

- Sun 5/13
  Happy Mother’s Day!

- **Tues 5/15**
  High School Spring Preview
  4:00–6:00 pm

- Thu 5/17
  The Great Post Oak Book Exchange (see p. 9)
  New Elementary Parent Gathering
  Lower EL: 6:30–7:15 pm
  Upper EL: 7:15–8:00 pm

**Fri 5/18**

- Spirit Day
- Spring ASEP ends

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**NOTICE BOARD**

**Lost**
Josie Kaplow has lost a bracelet of sentimental value, which may have fallen off at the school. If you do find it or have found it, please bring it to the front desk or contact her at [email] or [email] Thank you very much!

**HIGH SCHOOL**
Spring Preview
1102 Autrey, Houston 77006

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

Answers for when children start to ask
“Where Did I Come From” Questions
Fielding sensitive questions without increasing curiosity

For parents whose children are beginning to ask questions (or not just yet), feel free to join this conversation facilitated by Post Oak Counselor Phylis Tomlinson.

All Post Oak parents are welcome
May 10, 1:50–2:50 pm
in the multipurpose room

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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

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