There has to be a better understanding of what really motivates people to succeed in their lives and to engage with the world around them. There are simply too many adults who actively dislike what they do and lack any sense of purpose in it.”

That comment comes from Ken Robinson in a *Time* magazine blog. Robinson has prominently challenged conventional thinking about education over the past decade. His TED talk, "Schools Kill Creativity, (2006)" has nearly 20 million views. The
Robinson asks, “Are you in your Element? Do you love your life or the work you do? Sadly many people don’t have any great sense of purpose or fulfillment. They put up with what they do and wait for the weekend.”

I heard Ken Robinson speak four years ago here in Houston at the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) annual refresher course. He believes that our current conventional schools foster conformity, compliance, and standardization—a recipe for killing creativity and engagement.

In contrast, it is our aim at Post Oak to help children turn curiosity into interest and interest into talent. We aim to help them find their inner voice.

Sometimes we get notes of appreciation at the end of the year. This came in from the mother of a high school student new to Post Oak: “Mr. Moudry, I wanted to let you know how EXTREMELY grateful I am to you and everyone responsible for making Post Oak High School happen and continue to happen. Last year, my daughter was bored and stressed from school. Last week she told me how much she will miss school this summer. I told her that we would be sure to give her lots of opportunities to see her Post Oak friends over the summer. She told me that she will miss the entire school experience, not just seeing her friends. You are really making magic happen at Post Oak High School and I am forever grateful.”

I wish each of you an interesting summer.

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Links in this article:
ideas.time.com/2013/05/21/what-graduation-speeches-should-really-say/
www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U
www.youtube.com/watch?v=wX78iKhlnsc
www.goodreads.com/author/show/43940.Ken_Robinson
Announcing 2013–2014 Event Chairs!

Thanks in advance to our new event chairs for next year. It will be a big year as we celebrate Post Oak’s 50th anniversary!

POP A Power!

Post Oak Parent Association chairs are behind-the-scenes superstars: quarterbacking for the parent volunteer team; selecting the leadership for major school events; hosting monthly POPA coffees to help teachers with projects while giving parents a chance to get to know each other; constantly brainstorming ideas to make Post Oak a better place. It’s not always high publicity stuff that shows up in The Weekly Post, but they are always there, ready to help Post Oak.

As this school year ends, I want to express my most sincere thanks to POPA Chairs Laura Citardi and Whitney Walsh who end their two-year term. When they graciously and enthusiastically agreed to take on this role back in 2011, they probably didn’t know what a busy two years it would be. Between opening a high school, having a record-breaking gala, starting a capital campaign, having increased retention of families into the upper levels, it’s safe to say they’ve been busy! They were fortunate to bring Jessica Gregg on board during the second year as a third POPA Chair to help with everything.

It has been such a pleasure working with both of them and seeing their ideas turn into action. Whitney’s boundless creativity and Laura’s keen attention to detail helped them develop and implement the High School Ambassadors’ group. They continued to streamline the communication process with room parents. They jumped to action helping on events that needed support. They have brought humor and warmth to everything they’ve worked on and have been true leaders in our Post Oak community.

Jessica Gregg and Suzan Samuels will now take the lead as POPA Chairs next year. And if you see Whitney or Laura this summer, please take a moment to thank them for their excellent leadership.

Christina Kopanidis-Cantu
Development Director
More Reports on Williamsburg

Williamsburg was extremely fun. It is probably one of the best trips I’ve had at The Post Oak School. My favorite parts of the trip were when we visited the magazine which is where they held the muskets, wall guns, and cannons of all sizes, although most of them were small. But they also had gunpowder and other things soldiers would need when they went out to war.

We also went to see the old jail. The old jail contained four cells and actually the original cells held the crew of the famous pirate known as Blackbeard although he was not there. He had died in a previous fight. That was pretty cool. Also that day we went to the witch trial, which was a play called “Cry Witch.” There was a place where we did something called “in defense of our liberty” which was a little taste of how they worked and we were also taught how to fire a flintlock musket. We also learned how life at camp worked.

When the sixth grade group went to Yorktown one of the most interesting parts, at least for me, was the medical tent. The medical tent was filled with all of the medicines, medical instruments, and most vital tools that were needed to use on soldiers when they got hurt. Most of these tools looked like instruments of torture.

We did many things there at Colonial Williamsburg. The whole place had recreations of the living areas, camps, farms, and all sorts of other places from there. We even saw a witch trial where I got to sit in the jury stand. It was pretty cool but freaky. Another interesting thing that we did was go to this program that was supposed to be like being in the army. The people shouted at us to march, turn, and other stuff. Although this was all fun my favorite part was the play called “The Devil in the Wine Cellar” or “The Walking Statue.” They would say that particular line again if you shouted “encore” so that made it a whole lot funnier.

On the fourth day we went to Yorktown where the battle of independence took place. Then we got to see a recreation of a tobacco farm and the farmer’s household. We also got to see the medical tools they used and how to use them. Later we got to see a movie about a soldier and got to see a cannon being fired. Then we went back to the visitor’s center to eat dinner at Christina Campbell’s which was a restaurant with old fashioned recipes. Afterwards we got to see a play called “The Devil in the Wine Cellar” or “The Walking Statue.” It was a lot of fun because it was an interactive play, so if you were to yell “encore” they would do the particular part of the scene over again. Afterwards we went back to the hotel and went swimming.

On May 6 the sixth graders went to Williamsburg. We did many things there at Colonial Williamsburg. The whole place had recreations of the living areas, camps, farms, and all sorts of other places from there. We even saw a witch trial where I got to sit in the jury stand. It was pretty cool but freaky. Another interesting thing that we did was go to this program that was supposed to be like being in the army. The people shouted at us to march, turn, and other stuff. Although this was all fun my favorite part was the play called “The Devil in the Wine Cellar” or “The Walking Statue.” They would say that particular line again if you shouted “encore” so that made it a whole lot funnier.

Our plane was cancelled so we had to spend another night there. I was on the early flight to Chicago then waited four and a half hours for the other group to arrive before flying back to Houston.

By

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By

CHAPERONE REPORT ON THE 2013 WILLIAMSBURG TRIP

Between May 6-11, I had the opportunity to chaperone the sixth grade trip to Williamsburg. Above and in the May 17th issue of The Post you had a report of the experience from the student’s perspective. Here is mine:

1. The trip: Our visit to Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown presented all participants with the opportunity to learn how America began. From the Native-American life, to the first settlements, to the displeasure within the colonies with the policies of the Crown, the war of Independence, and more. All the experience was interactive, inviting engagement and mixing entertainment with learning. I felt that we were part of the history of our country.

2. The students: The students were interested and active participants in all the activities. They sought answers, made intelligent inquiries, volunteered for events. With minimal corrections, they behaved exemplary, were respectful of the environment, their peers, and themselves.

3. The teachers: Mr. Errol Pinto was our beacon. He moved the group efficiently and assured that we visited as many sites as possible, on time, well fed, and with all the right breaks. Every evening he would debrief the students who had the chance to reflect on their experience for the day. Mrs. Maya Pinto contributed to our enrichment with her kind demeanor and firmer guidance. She kept the group together and added her observations to the activities. Mrs. Debbie Nickerson had on the spot quizzes to assess the number of facts the students were learning. Students took this very seriously. She went beyond the call of duty to assure rain gear protection for all. The teachers were wonderful and made me feel—again—fortunate to have my children learning from them.

4. The chaperones: Besides me, Dr. Thomas Lu participated in the trip. It was good to have him with the group, helping to assure that we arrived safely to our destinations.

By Mario Kapusta
Photos from the End of Year Assembly
May 29, 2013
A Cool Green Summer

by Daniela Weil, Post Oak parent and Green Team member

We have come again to that time of year when we wish to not be in Houston! Perhaps there is no better time than now (actually, when you get your $400+ summer electric bill) to consider futzing around with the thermostats, in order to save some money and energy. You can do this by setting the ideal summer temperature of 78°F (80°F if you're away). Research on Florida homes shows that summer air conditioning costs increases 12% for each degree the thermostat is lowered below 80 degrees.

Or, consider investing in a high tech, programmable thermostat, like the NEST (nest.com). It was invented by the same genius mind that created the original iPod. It’s super cool and easy to use. NEST learns your behavioral patterns and creates a temperature-setting schedule from them. It sends you messages about how long it will take to get to the temperatures you set, and makes suggestions that simulate your temperature tastes but that are more efficient. Also because it is wi-fi enabled, you can even set temperatures remotely via your computer or smartphone.

Whether old-school, or high-tech, make monitoring your home temperature into a challenge; it’s a great way to get the whole family motivated to save money and energy... kids can be involved in seeing the direct relationship between the air conditioning temperatures and energy consumption, and even seeing the numbers on the bills go down. Yes, parents, go ahead and show them your energy bills! Everyone can be involved in the solution!

Well, friends, I’ll be resuming my green column in the fall again. If you like this subject and wish to help Post Oak implement some concepts and projects in the school, joining the Green Team is the way to do it. You can contact Christina Cantu (christinacantu@postoakschool.org) when school resumes, or ask your new room parent to put you on the Green Team volunteer list. I’ll post a shout out to everyone as a reminder as well. Many of the green projects and concepts at Post Oak came directly from the will and voices of the parent volunteers.

Looking forward to reconnecting with you again in the fall.

Have a cool, green summer!

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TUTORING & BABYSITTING BY MEGAN

Megan Routbort, a Post Oak alum and rising junior at St. John’s School, will be offering tutoring and babysitting services during the summer. She can mentor students in the full academic curriculum, including Spanish language, as well as teach preparatory courses for standardized tests including the ISEE and CTP-4. Megan has extensive experience as a babysitter and has worked with children from 3 to 13 as a camp counselor at Main Street Theater. She is CPR and AED certified by the American Heart Association. Her contact information is:

Cell phone: 713-408-9068
Email Address: meganroutbort@gmail.com

Be sure to look for the special summer edition of The Post in mid-July!
Your Dollars at Work

A REPORT ON FINAL NUMBERS FROM THE POST OAK FUND AND THE BIENNIAL GALA
by Christina Kopanidis-Cantu, Development Director

POST OAK FUND
Each fall we ask all parents, employees, and trustees to participate in our annual fundraiser, The Post Oak Fund, which goes toward a variety of school needs. Post Oak Fund Chair Paula Mey and the class captains worked hard this year to spread the word about the importance of the Fund, and her efforts paid off. As we come to the end of the 2012–2013 school year, I am pleased to present the following report on this year’s record-breaking campaign:

- Employee participation: 100%
- Trustee participation: 100%
- Parent participation: 96%
- Overall funds raised: $286,785

BIENNIAL GALA
This was also our year for the Biennial Gala. Chairs Erin Stus and Jian Short along with their large group of parent volunteers presented Friday Night Fever—a night of disco dancing till we dropped! AND another record-breaking fundraiser for the school, grossing over $466,000. We still have a few expenses outstanding before we can report our final net, but the estimate is $367,600.

Classroom Corner, a separate part of the Gala auction where collected donations are equally divided among all classes, brought in over $12,000. Here are a few examples of how teachers used the Classroom Corner funds: Debbie Nickerson added more science to her class by purchasing a scientific torso model; Sarah Moudry brought more music by purchasing an assortment of children’s instruments; Julie Parraguirre added a lovely patio picnic table and umbrella to her garden; Beth Smith bought an iPod Touch and speakers for the class; Kathy Long also focused on science and math with the purchase of a microscope and Geometric Cabinet; Miriam Winton used her funds to purchase gardening items along with a child’s Adirondack bench; and the High School used their funds to purchase tools for the design studio and for gardening.

Annual Fund and Gala: How did the school use those donated dollars? Here are some concrete examples of your fundraising dollars at work:

1. Retrofitted light fixtures in the whole school to accommodate new bulbs—a huge project! Eventually we would not be able to buy bulbs for our older light fixtures.
2. We completed the fourth and final phase of elastomeric coating to prevent future cracks on the exterior of our building.
3. Several classrooms received new flooring.
4. A new van was purchased for the High School.
5. Modified landscaping to create new “buddy parking spots” to help expand parking.
6. Two Primary classroom gardens were upgraded and three more will be done this summer.
7. The sabbatical fund, given yearly on a rotation basis to one Post Oak teacher, was granted to Errol Pinto.
8. Financial aid awards were increased.
9. The endowment received 5% as is the school’s policy on all fundraising.

It is with immense gratitude that I write this report. The Post Oak community is both generous and caring. All of you have contributed in so many ways to the life of this school, and I offer thanks to each of you.

Post Oak Annual Fund pledges due May 31
Please contact Christina Cantu in the Development Office if you have any questions or would like to pay by credit card. Thank you.
F.I.S.H. Meeting Wrap Up

SCREEN TIME
On May 10, Elementary Director Jeff Schneider teamed up with Primary teachers, Emily Hansen and Julie Parraguirre to discuss with parents the effect of screen time on children and provide some good summer time alternatives.

Jeff started the conversation with an alarming statistic: “Texting impairs a teen’s ability to drive more than if they were legally drunk—with a blood alcohol level of .08.” (www.cnbc.com/id/31545004/site/14081545) As parents, we can model safe behaviors now that can save our children’s lives when they become teenagers. Jeff provided the following information:

Negative consequences for children experiencing excessive screen time include:

- Exposure to messages that children need to buy things and have the “right” things to be happy.
- Exposure to news programs that can overwhelm children by communicating negative messages (culture of fear, pessimism, and worry).
- Robs a child of the gift of boredom. Creativity springs from the need to alleviate boredom.
- Screen time is a mentally passive activity. Rather than the child activating her creativity and initiative, her will is submitted to the messages and directives of the program or software on the screen.
- Screen time is a physically passive activity. The human brain develops optimally when children act in a physical way in their environment and the body systems need to move to maintain good health.
- Children who experience excessive screen time get in the habit of expecting to be entertained.

Ways to Reduce Screen Time
- Avoid using screen time as a reward or punishment
- Adults should model good screen time habits (screens should be avoided on the road, at meal times, and at special family times)
- Eliminate background TV.
- Screen-free family meals
- Screen-free bedroom
- Access to the Internet in a public location
- Have a family meeting to agree on the amount of recreational screen-time per week (starting place: a couple of hours for Primary, four hours for Lower Elementary, and six hours a week for Upper Elementary).
- Consecutive days of screen time should be avoided (very important to pre-empt a habit from forming).
- Help children track and manage their choices as independently as possible.

For further reading, please see John’s Long’s article, "The Touch Screen Generation," in the March 28 Weekly Post.

Emily and Julie discussed a good summer time alternative to screen time—road trips! Road trips create valuable family bonding time and can leave children with lasting memories. Instead of using screens in her car, Emily creates small boxes of activities for the children, including music, road games, art supplies, cookie sheets with magnets, and sticker books. Her family makes the most of interesting conversations, plays twenty questions, and reads books together. Julie has taken her sons to the National Parks around the country and taken advantage of the Junior Ranger activities. Julie also added that road trips don’t have to be long. Taking trips to local sights, such as the Beer Can House, the President Heads, or the Art Car House in Houston can be equally rewarding.

Here are a few more ideas for summer that Julie had: home-made or pre-made scavenger hunts (geo-caching www.geocaching.com or letterboxing www.letterboxing.org), making mixed tapes, making photo albums, planning a trip, making a lemonade stand, going on a picnic, taking a canoe ride, or going to a skate park (to name a few). Happy summer!

THE YOUNG CHEF
On April 19, Primary teacher Miriam Winton and Infant Community
teacher Phoebe Yeager gave an excellent presentation to Post Oak parents about cooking with their children.

**Miriam’s Top Ten Reasons to Cook with your Child**

1. Cooking together creates family time and happy memories;
2. Learning to cook helps children learn about nutrition;
3. Cooking can help your child feel capable, thereby boosting his self-esteem;
4. Children are more apt to eat what they make themselves (vegetables!!!);
5. Children will learn an important life skill;
6. Children will help contribute to the family;
7. Children learn teamwork;
8. Cooking teaches planning and making choices (choosing recipes, finding ingredients);
9. Cooking together teaches organization and follow-through;
10. Cooking gives children an opportunity to practice creativity and use their imagination.

Phoebe discussed the how-to’s when cooking with children, including preparing the environment, pre-measuring ingredients (for very young children), appropriate sequencing (butter first, then eggs), and providing age-appropriate tools. See Phoebe’s recipe for cornbread.

**Cornbread**

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1/3 cup flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1 egg
- 3 Tbl. vegetable oil

**Preparation:**
- Grease a 9-inch square baking pan.
- Heat oven to 450 degrees.
- In a large bowl, combine cornmeal, flour, baking powder, and salt.
- Add milk and egg, mix thoroughly.
- Pour in prepared pan.
- Bake 20–25 minutes or until golden brown.

**Little League Wins Big**

Congratulations to Lower Elementary student [redacted] and his West University Little League team, The Storm, on their win in the U9 National Division and earning the title 2013 Minor A Champions.

Mom, Kate Scheinman, writes, “We are proud of his teammates, and the great coaches of The Storm.” Although the team didn’t always win during the season, “they continued to gel as a team and improve as individuals players, it paid off in the play-offs!”

**The Art of Helping**

Last week, Upper Elementary student [redacted] sold digital art work here at school to help those recently affected by the devastating tornado in Moore, Oklahoma. Thanks to everyone at Post Oak who made donations, he was able to present The Red Cross with a check for $330. Thank you!
Next Healthy Habit: Move More

by Aimee Taylor, Healthy Lifestyle Consultant, ACSM Certified Personal Trainer, and Post Oak parent

Wow, another semester of school behind us and you have been doing some amazing work focusing each month on a healthy habit. You focused first on more fruits and veggies, then you tried to incorporate more whole grains into our diet, you added more high quality lean protein (which gave us super strong muscles for this month’s healthy habit), worked on limiting added sugar, and over the past month focused your efforts on more whole and less processed food. Here we are at the beginning of the summer and it is time to focus on the physical activity and keep up the good work on the other five habits. Physical activity is not just important because it helps our bodies burn more calories. The benefits of physical activity are numerous and include heart health, bone health, brain health, digestion health, skin health, and oh yeah every system of your body, just to name a few... When you are physically active your entire body functions better.

Do you remember that feeling you got as a child as you rode your bike down the street or ran as fast as you could—freedom, exhilaration, and FUN! Physical activity is crucial to a healthy lifestyle, yet as adults we have decided that it is about as much fun as going to the dentist. Not something we want to do, but HAVE to do. You’re right, we do have to do it, but there is nothing that says it can’t be fun.

At lunch with a good friend yesterday, she said, “One of the best parts of having kids was getting to act like a kid.” I think we need to focus on acting like kids a lot more. This weekend we had the slip ‘n slide and mini pool set up in the backyard and my inner child could not contain herself. Before I knew it, I was running and flinging my body onto the wet yellow plastic with reckless abandon. It was so much fun that I had to do it a few more times before realizing that I already had bruises on my knees and I was going to be sore the next day. Bruises and soreness aside, man it was so much fun! The kids continued to slip ‘n slide and jump in and out of the pool without noticing that they had been MOVING for hours. That is the key—have so much FUN moving, that you don’t realize that you are actually exercising!

We all ideally need to get MOVING for 30 minutes to an hour most days, but there is nothing that says that you have to run on the boring treadmill or elliptical machine for an hour straight every day. In fact, short bursts of physical activity, such as running relay races, playing chase, or a vigorous game of hide-and-seek have proven to be just as good for you as moderate continuous exercise. With all of the technology available for us today, it is easier and easier for us and our kids to sit in front of the TV, computer, or video game instead of getting out and having some fun and getting physical. This is a chance for you and your kids to have some fun and for you to set an example of what an active life looks and feels like. So, come on let’s get out and PLAY!

SUMMER/SPRING FUN

◆ Slip ‘n Slide
◆ Softball/baseball
◆ Flag football
◆ Relay races
◆ Game of tag or keep-away
◆ Jumping rope
◆ Silly obstacle course races
◆ Bike riding in the neighborhood
◆ Hide-and-seek
◆ Frisbee at the park
◆ Hula Hoop
◆ Dancing to your favorite tunes
◆ Pushing trucks around in the backyard
◆ Being a horse for your kids to ride on (hard on the knees but very fun)
◆ Playing on the jungle gym (monkey bars, climbing wall, see-saw)
◆ Night exploring walk
◆ Gardening
◆ Building sand castles at the beach
◆ Playing in the waves at the beach

FALL/WINTER FUN

◆ Building a snowman
◆ Digging tunnels in the snow
◆ Sledding down hills

continued on page 2
Beyond having some fun with the kids while you get your workout, there are things that you can do every single day to become more active. After all, the key to a physically active life is to SIT LESS!!! Do you get an hour workout on most days but spend most of the rest of your day sitting in meetings, in the car, at your desk, and then in front of the TV at night? Unfortunately, this is worse for your health than if you decided not to workout. We are a society of sitters and we have to find ways to MOVE more.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Instead of emailing a colleague, get up and walk to her office.
- Instead of calling a neighbor, walk to her house.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day so you HAVE to walk to the restroom often. Even better, use a restroom that is up a flight of stairs or down a long hall instead of the one close to you.
- Stand up and walk around your office or house as you talk on the phone instead of sitting (yes, your colleagues may look at you funny at first, but your health is surely worth that.)
- Bring your lunch to work and walk to a park to enjoy it.
- Take the stairs in your parking garage or office building instead of the elevator.
- Park at the back of the parking lot.
- Before you hop in your car, give a second thought to whether you can walk or ride your bike instead—good for your body and the environment.
- Don’t just SIT in front of the television or computer each evening; spend time stretching, jogging in place, lifting some hand weights, doing some yoga poses, etc. Even if you just get moving during the commercials it would be progress.

Moving more does not mean that you have to make a commitment to wake up every morning at 5 a.m. and workout for an hour. What it does mean is that you have to be more thoughtful in your activity and find new more active ways of MOVING through your everyday life. Still need more help in figuring out how to incorporate and maintain physical activity? Contact me today and I will help you get started! ✌️

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**HAVE A FUN & HAPPY SUMMER!**
**CALENDAR**

**FRIDAY**

- Last day of school
- Early dismissal
  - IC: 11 am
  - PRI: 11:30 am
  - EL & MS: noon
- Fri 5/31: HS families Hermann Park picnic at noon
- Eighth Grade Moving Up Ceremony: 6:30 p.m.

**JUNE 2 - 8**

- Mon–Wed 6/3–6/5: Teacher in-service days
- Thu 6/6: Admin Retreat (school closed)
- Fri 6/7: School closed

**JUNE 9 – JUNE 15**

- Mon 6/10: Summer School begins

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**NOTICE BOARD**

Planning has begun for celebrations throughout the 2013–2014 school year, including our Jubilee in the fall.

Interested in volunteering? Contact the Development Office.

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**ERFs & Health Inquiry Forms due Friday, May 31**

2013–2014 Emergency Release Forms (ERFs) and Health Inquiry Forms for each student have been sent out. Please be sure to make any necessary changes and return to the school by **Friday, May 31**.

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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 p.m. 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 p.m. 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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