I stopped outside the door to his classroom to watch the children work. It’s one of the perks of my job. He came over and said hello. Shook my hand, too. He’s one of the oldest in his class and much more mature than he was a year ago.

“What are you working on today?” I asked.

“A story,” he said.

“Would you like to show me?”

He led me to his table where more than fifty individual letter cards were set out in patterns: “tyrannosaurus rex. were one of the bigist dinosaurs in the world”—in his hand he held a card with a dot on it. “Do I need a period after ‘world?” he asked me.

“Well,” I said, “it depends on what you’re going to say next.”

“...when dinosaurs were alive,” he added.
‘That’s where you put the period;’ I said, ‘not after ‘world.’”

His spelling needs attention: two errors in eleven words might cause apoplexy in a perfectionistic editor; and I suspect that he got help from the book that lay open on his table, when it came to spelling ‘tyrannosaurus’ and ‘dinosaur.’ And he clearly is still trying to figure out the use of periods. He had already used one where it wasn’t needed, and if I hadn’t helped, he would have placed another unnecessary period four words before the end of his sentence. On the other hand, he won’t be six years old until November and is already developing a number of personal characteristics that will serve him well for a lifetime.

I observed self-direction, initiative and concentration. His teacher did not assign this work, and she was not standing over him to ensure he was busy; he had chosen to write this story himself, and was working to please himself. He had not chosen something easy to do. He was out on the edge of his understanding when it came to spelling and punctuation, and he was asking about it, trying to figure it out. He was clearly comfortable on the steep part of the learning curve, and not afraid of errors. Many reference ‘life-long learning,’ but what do you need to sustain that? Curiosity. Initiative. And a willingness to endure the discomfort that always comes when scrambling up the steeper slopes of the learning curve. Here was a five-year-old demonstrating all of those characteristics.

Variations on this scene happen every day at Post Oak. And have been happening here for fifty years now; ever since. The Little School House opened its doors on Briar Ridge Drive as a one-room school house for ‘pre-schoolers,’ the first Montessori school in the Southwest United States. Over the next five decades the school grew, adding elementary classes and infant and middle school, and finally last year, a high school. During that span, the school changed name and location more than once, finally moving to this campus on Bissonnet as The Post Oak School in 1985.

History and heritage strengthen The Post Oak School. We have learned so much over the past fifty years. Of course, no one person’s career has spanned that entire period, but our collective experience is passed on through each successive generation of educators who have served the children of this diverse community of families. We do have teachers who have worked at Post Oak for twenty-five years, and others who are new this year. The collective wisdom embodied in our school and in the wider Montessori community inspires and guides them all. In fact this past summer, we initiated a teacher-training course at Post Oak under the auspices of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), with an eye toward the future as we prepare the next generation of teachers.

Our youngest children couldn’t care less about a fifty-year history; the older ones may be curious. And they seem happy enough to wear our striking commemorative t-shirts. But in reality they respond to our focus on the present moment. As we connect with each child, we help them connect to their learning. In that process, there is only this moment; there is only this child who stands before me.

Simultaneously, our teachers also have in mind the child of the future, the child who will emerge: the man he will grow into, the woman she will grow into. And this, this spirit, this vision, inspires our work, gives it a sense of mission and a sense of direction. So it is with The Post Oak School. We celebrate our history and our heritage, and the work of those teachers upon whose shoulders we stand, at the same time, we celebrate this very present moment; and in this jubilee year, we also celebrate our future work with these very same children whom we imagine passing through each successive grade of development on their way to creative adult lives; we celebrate the work of our successors, who will extend our work with new children, new families, and make real contributions across the decades to come, contributions to the culture and vitality of Houston and the world.

“Do I put a period after ‘world?’” he asked me.

“Well, it depends on what you’re going to say next.”
In last week’s Post, we learned that Post Oak School was opened by Carol Ferguson in 1963 on Briar Ridge Drive. It all began with one primary classroom and a vision, but with determination and energy, the community continued to flourish. Post Oak’s First Infant Community was established in 1965, followed by the opening of a Lower Elementary classroom a few years later. Although our roots started out small, they continued to grow strong. As we are reminded every day by our Post Oak students, mighty oaks from small acorns grow.

What is a Bearkat?

Ask several people what a “bearkat” is, and you will likely get several answers—and a few puzzled expressions. Some people think of “bearkat” and “bearcat” as interchangeable terms, in which case the name refers to a species known as a binturong. Binturongs are fairly rare arboreal mammals related to civets. Described as having a cat-like face and a bear-like body, they are classified in the order carnivora, and will eat fruit, carrion, small invertebrates, birds, eggs, leaves. Aiding communication, binturongs make a chucking noise when they are happy; perhaps we have a new post oak battle cry! Bearkats are also noted for their intelligence and curious disposition, a perfect description of our own Bearkats here at Post Oak. Continue to show us your Bearkat pride throughout this anniversary year!

The 50th Jubilee:

Oct 5th

We’re quickly counting down the weeks to what will undoubtedly be a memorable and festive anniversary event. We are excited and honored to announce that the Executive Director of AMI, along with the involvement of global influence, makes her an extraordinary leader and role model amongst educators. This is an incredible privilege for The Post Oak community as we celebrate 50 years of success and achievement. If you haven’t purchased tickets for this exclusive event, please visit our website.

Post Oak Visits City Council

In honor of our 50 year legacy, the City of Bellaire and the City of Houston will be presenting The Post Oak School with proclamations deeming November 2nd as The Post Oak School Day. Bellaire Mayor, Dr. Phil Naeve, will be presenting us with the proclamation at the Bellaire City Council Meeting on October 7th at 7 p.m.

We invite the entire Post Oak community to attend and be a part of what will be a prestigious moment in our proud history.

Last year I decided it was time for change in my life. I’ve spent the greater part of my life focusing on service learning, and before having children, and I worked year round volunteering. However, as a family we spent too little time working in our community, getting to know those in need, and making a difference.

At first I found it challenging to find volunteer opportunities for young children; however, I eventually found an organization in Austin called Little Helping Hands (www.littlehelpinghands.org), which helps match families to weekly projects. The types of activities, like stacking the shelves at a food pantry, preparing food at a shelter, and working outdoors to clean trails were perfect for our daughters, now eight, and six.

50th Anniversary Spotlight

In honor of our 50 year legacy, the City of Bellaire and the City of Houston will be presenting The Post Oak School with proclamations deeming November 2nd as The Post Oak School Day. Bellaire Mayor, Dr. Phil Naeve, will be presenting us with the proclamation at the Bellaire City Council Meeting on October 7th at 7 p.m.

We invite the entire Post Oak community to attend and be a part of what will be a prestigious moment in our proud history.
Coffee with the Elementary Director and Specialists

September 25, 9–10 a.m.

Join Elementary Director Jeff Schneider and – back by popular demand – Meet the Post Oak Specialists. Mark Tucker (PF), Patricia Onofre (Spanish), James Winslow (Music), Saida Fagala (Art), and Jami Sweeney (Library), will be on hand to share a bit about their work and answer questions. All parents welcome regardless of the age of your child(ren).

Spotlight on Alumni

As we reflect over our 50 year history, we are reminded that it is not one person or even one group of people who define our school, we are ALL Post Oak. Each student who has ever walked our halls has added to the culture, heritage, and reputation of our school, which makes talking to Post Oak alumni all the more interesting. Each of their stories not only provides us with an insight into where they are now, but also provides a deeper look into where they came from: the Post Oak School.

This year we will recognize the Post Oak 50 for 50 Community Service Activities that individuals and families are participating in. Many Post Oak families, like ours, are already embarking on a journey to incorporate service into their lives. This year, in particular, Post Oak would like to hear about what you are doing! Please log your service activities on the Post Oak website by clicking the 50 for 50 link on the left-hand navigation of the homepage.

Yoga for Post Oak Kids and Parents

This year at 22, has obtained a degree in California. is a creative thinker who is passionate about fostering social change. She is actively pursuing her interest in utilizing entrepreneurship and design to identify innovative ways to better serve and support people. She is currently building research to launch a new outreach program at a pediatric clinic that emphasizes wellness and higher education amongst low-income families in Houston. Her broader goal is to provide patients with brighter futures from health to education to lifetime achievement.

Arguments her ability to recognize her life passions, reflect on how to attain them, and then put her plan into action to the Montessori education she received at Post Oak. She recalls her elementary years and how she was encouraged to discover new solutions to problems, appreciate learning, and to embrace failure as a necessary step in achieving success. believes that it’s this kind of mindset that makes her a stronger student, a more confident individual, and even more appealing to employers, who says aren’t always aware of the kinds of challenges they’ll be facing and thus actively seek outside of the box thinkers. When reflecting over the benefit of yoga for kids (and parents!):

* teaches discipline and responsibility
* increases self esteem/provides a tool for stress management
* cultivates a peaceful, relaxed state of mind and body
* increases self esteem/provides a tool for stress management
* encourages kind peer and social interaction
* teaches discipline and responsibility

Just a few of the benefits of yoga for kids (and parents!):

- increased strength and flexibility/enhanced concentration
- cultivates a peaceful, relaxed state of mind and body
- increases self esteem/provides a tool for stress management
- encourages kind peer and social interaction
- teaches discipline and responsibility
BIG BIRTHDAY BASH GEAR

Get into the Post Oak 50th Anniversary spirit wearing the official Big Birthday Bash (Field Day) cap and hoodie! Order your swag early to get one of these high-quality embroidered items. The hoodies are super soft and light for the Houston fall/winter season, and the caps have a nice “weathered” look to them. Caps are $15 and hoodies are $40 each.

ORDER ON OUR WEBSITE BY OCTOBER 7th

Redirecting Children’s Behavior

Tuesday evenings,
Sept. 24, October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29,
from 6:30–9 p.m.

This six week, 15-hour course is designed to guide parents to use discipline as a process of teaching children self-control and responsibility. Redirecting Children’s Behavior is a positive, powerful, informative, and fun training course which will give you a complete system for handling every situation in which adults interact with children, from infancy to adolescence. You will see it working and bringing positive changes to your parenting and your family from the first class onward.

The course will be taught by Deborah Fry, Ph.D. She is a certified instructor for the International Network for Children and Families.

Deborah gives talks and seminars for parents, teachers and people involved with children and families, as well as teaches three-year-olds at Westminster Weekday School. With her enthusiastic speaking style and her sense of humor, Deborah helps make the art of parenting and working with children enjoyable. To register, call Deborah at 713-840-8663 or visit www.deborah-fry.com.

Course fee: $235 for one; $335 per couple includes book, workbook, and 15 hours of class time.

The POST OAK HIGH SCHOOL
in the Museum District

CLASS PROFILES

OPEN HOUSE

Tuesday, October 8th – 7 p.m.
Tuesday, November 19th – 7 p.m.
Thursday, December 12th – 7 p.m.
Thursday, January 16th – 7 p.m.
Wednesday, February 12th – 7 p.m.
Tuesday, April 8th – 7 p.m.

Kids Care Club

Post Oak School’s Kids Care Club (POS KCC) is a service organization open to the entire Post Oak School community. Our goal is to find ways we can contribute to the world around us while spending time and learning valuable life lessons with our families. We try to find projects that all ages and abilities can participate in. For locations and more details, please join our Facebook group http://www.facebook.com/groups/278032742310211/ or

This past Sunday, September 15, the POS KCC prepared lunches for preschoolers in need with Food For Life, which were distributed by Kids Meals Houston. The event was a great success! A large number of Post Oak families came out to lend a helping hand. The adults and older children made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, packaged them, and put them in sacks which were decorated by the younger children in attendance.

Bring your friends and family along to our upcoming project in partnership with Urban Harvest:

OCTOBER 5, 9:00 A.M.

The POS KCC will be working in an Urban Harvest community garden. Our job at this event will most likely be making a “lasagna garden” made of layers of newspaper and compost. Neighborhood gardens provide an opportunity for neighbors to grow nutritious food as a community, and create an urban oasis for the neighborhood. We look forward to seeing you!
Garbage Smoothies

by Post Oak Parent

In the spring, I wrote a few columns on what to do with food scraps, and the benefits to you and to the environment of not using the sink disposal and trying a composting pile in your backyard. I hope that this subject resonated with you, and I’ve received great feedback on the whole composting thing! But I’m not done yet...

There are several different ways to compost. Today I’m going to explore one, which for some of you might blow your mind! It’s called, the Vitamix Composting. I’ll just call it, VitaComposting. Yes, you heard it, the Vitamix, my favorite kitchen appliance of all time, which makes the best green smoothies, ice creams, and soups, and grinds anything you throw in there to a pulp? Yes, my beloved friend the Vitamix is now also my eco-friendly compost maker ally!!! Who knew?! The benefits of composting with the VM, are: It is a cold composting technique, which means that the soil will retain the beneficial microorganisms and nutrients, that are killed in some hot composting techniques. Because you “pure” the food, you automatically avoid putting any weed seeds into the compost. And because the compost is immediately applied after it’s made, it’s a fast and easy composting method.

The instructions are simple. All you need to make free, super nutrient-dense compost is a spare wet blade container (never use your normal food container for composting or making fertilizers and natural pesticides.) Loosely fill the VM container to the 6-cup mark with leftovers that you would normally run through a garbage disposal. The amazing Vitamix motor will even chop up such leftovers as banana peels, celery stalks, cantaloupe and watermelon rinds, etc. It is a good idea to include eggshells in the mix, and you can use coffee grounds (a couple of tablespoons) and coffee filters as well. Add enough water to cover the produce scraps. Blend for 1-2 minutes, by dialing 1/10, then “HIGH”. Immediately after making the puree, pour it on the soil around your plants. Scrape a top layer of soil or mulch away making a long shallow trench alongside your plants. Cover the furrow back up and ...voila! You’ve just made your garden a delicious and nutritious garbage smoothie!

For those of you that have a Vitamix, (high five) and here’s to trying out this idea! If you don’t have one, I will certainly not insist on you getting one as those things are super expensive (about $400-$500), and I totally get that it’s not on everyone’s budget and priority list. Either way, this is a good alternative to composting in your backyard, and some “pureed” food for thought!

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Ambassadors’ Team Meeting

“Quarterbacking from the Couch”

Thursday, October 10, 7–9 pm
7 pm huddle and hors d’oeuvres
7:30 pm kick off conversation

This event, held at the home of a Post Oak family, is an opportunity to enjoy a social evening with Post Oak parents as you learn more about the High School. Help us spread the word about what an amazing asset we have to offer in the Museum District!

Want to join in? Contact: christinacantu@postoakschool.org

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My BackPack

Through My BackPack, parents can access and change account information, view the school directory, and make online payments among many other things. Just go to https://postoakschool.seniorlink.com/ and enter your unique username and password. If you have any questions or have forgotten your user ID, please contact the Technology Office at 281-822-4063 or technology@postoakschool.org. Please note that the site will be down for maintenance on Sunday, September 22 from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Donations for 2013–14 can be made online at any time.

The Annual Fund campaign runs from Oct. 15 to Nov. 15.

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Be among the first to make your contribution and show your support for Post Oak!

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Two Very Sweet Gerbils Need Post Oak Homes!

Post Oak student is giving away two gerbils. If you are interested, please contact her mom at .

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The POST OAK HIGH SCHOOL

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The POST OAK FUND

TOGETHER WE CAN!

Post Oak’s environment, professional development, facilities, technology enhancements—all are supported by your gift to the Annual Fund. It takes everyone working together to maintain the level of excellence you expect from Post Oak.

Be among the first to make your contribution and show your support for Post Oak!
“The Best PF Ever”

by Mark Tucker, Physical Fitness Specialist and Bearkats Coach

"This is the best PF ever," we heard recently from middle school students. That comment is high praise from adolescents, and reflects some of the changes we’ve made to the structure and content of PF classes that result in more activity for the entirety of the class. We’ve also added music, in the same way that aerobics and spinning classes use music. Upper elementary students have said that they love listening to music while we work out and learn new skills.

We began to change last year when our PF department was visited by consultant, Dr. Susan Wagner, from Texas A&M. Dr. Wagner made a number of recommendations which we began to implement in the spring. The next step came over the summer, when I attended a workshop by one of the best PE educators in the country, Dr. Robert Pangrazi. Based on what I learned there, we have made additional changes to PF that will benefit the students throughout the year.

What’s different, in addition to music? We’ve purchased new equipment for floor hockey and badminton, as well as batting tees, and enough soccer balls, footballs and basketballs to have maximum student involvement. We want to teach skills and teamwork; then end the session with games of floor hockey.

Our hope is that all students will enjoy and learn during PF classes throughout the year. So far, that seems to be the case! We’ve added other equipment as well. “The Patch” is a series of planks and adjustable stanchions that allow us to construct a portable fitness course involving balance and strength building while having fun at the same time. Coach Dolger and I are receiving ongoing training so that we can do more and more with “The Patch.” We’re also using a set of large foam blocks that all ages can work with in PF class: building creative structures while using it for exercise activity.

We’ve also adopted Dr. Pangrazi’s model for class organization. When students come in, we go directly to a five minute warm up, followed by ten minutes of fitness work, and then into our lesson for the day. Every three to four weeks we shift activity. We’ve begun this year with fitness testing which will help us get a fitness baseline for each student. Once we’ve completed those assessments, we’ll be introducing floor hockey. First we’ll teach skills and teamwork, then end the session with games of floor hockey.

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![Middle School students enjoying their introduction to floor hockey.](image)

Infant-Parent Classes: Explore Alongside Your Child

**INFANT & PARENT MONTESSORI: CLASS A**

For infants 8 weeks to crawling
Instructor: Sarah Moudry
Location: The Motherhood Center

In this fun and eye opening class parents are introduced to the Montessori Philosophy. Parents explore topics such as preparing their home for their baby’s optimized development, supporting their child’s natural development of independence, language, movement, sensorial, socialization and much more. Through hands-on experience in a carefully prepared environment, parents learn how to maximize their child’s developmental energies, engagement with the environment, concentration. This is truly an opportunity to offer Montessori from the start.

**INFANT & PARENT MONTESSORI: CLASS B**

For infants between crawling and walking
Instructor: Sarah Moudry
Location: The Motherhood Center

In this class, parents continue to explore the Montessori Philosophy and how it can be implemented at home and in everyday life. Topics include: choosing toys, supporting language and movement development, independence and socialization. Through hands-on experience in a carefully prepared environment, parents learn how to maximize their child’s developmental energies, engagement with the environment, and concentration.

**INFANT & PARENT MONTESSORI: CLASS C**

For children at least 12 months and walking well (able to carry an object with two hands) to 24 months
Instructor: Sarah Moudry
Location: The Post Oak School - HDIca

Building on the foundation of experiences from the previous Infant-Parent classes, weekly parents explore a Montessori classroom with their child. In this new setting parents learn setting limits and expectations, the art of observation, and how to support the whole development of their child. Children experience materials and toys that are unique to the Montessori classroom, an environment that is built specifically to support their developmental needs, and opportunities to interact with other children their age. This is a fun and active class that offers new experiences each week.

**A TODDLERS KITCHEN: CLASS D**

For children 16 months to 24 months
Instructor: Sarah Moudry
Location: The Post Oak School - HDIca

Building on the foundation of experiences from the previous Infant-Parent classes, weekly parents explore a Montessori classroom with their child. In this new setting parents learn setting limits and expectations, the art of observation, and how to support the whole development of their child. Children experience materials and toys that are unique to the Montessori classroom, an environment that is built specifically to support their developmental needs, and opportunities to interact with other children their age. This is a fun and active class that offers new experiences each week.

**INFANT & PARENT MONTESSORI: CLASS D**

For children 16 months to 24 months
Instructor: Sarah Moudry
Location: The Motherhood Center

In this class, parents continue to explore the Montessori Philosophy and how it can be implemented at home and in everyday life. Topics include: choosing toys, supporting language and movement development, independence and socialization. Through hands-on experience in a carefully prepared environment, parents learn how to maximize their child’s developmental energies, engagement with the environment, and concentration.

**INFANT & PARENT MONTESSORI: CLASS E**

For children at least 12 months and walking well (able to carry an object with two hands) to 24 months
Instructor: Sarah Moudry
Location: The Post Oak School - HDIca

Building on the foundation of experiences from the previous Infant-Parent classes, weekly parents explore a Montessori classroom with their child. In this new setting parents learn setting limits and expectations, the art of observation, and how to support the whole development of their child. Children experience materials and toys that are unique to the Montessori classroom, an environment that is built specifically to support their developmental needs, and opportunities to interact with other children their age. This is a fun and active class that offers new experiences each week.
SCENES from The Post Oak School

1. An upper elementary student studies the history of languages.
2. Creating land forms in Lower Elementary.
3. Middle School students brave the science laboratory.
4. Learning boundaries while bathing the class pet hedgehog.
5. Students come together to form the number five for a Jubilee Centrepiece.
6. A conversational Spanish lesson in Upper Elementary.
7. A Lower Elementary student explores sound with the tone bars.
8. Viewing onion and cheek cells in Middle School.
10. Replacing the decanomial material after a lesson presented to younger primary students.
11. High School students pal around with “Buck-ee” on their Odyssey trip.
CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 22-28

Fall Equinox
My Backpack Maintenance
(site will be down)
9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Sun
9/22

SPRiT DAy!
Coffee with the Elementary
Director and Specialists
9:00–10:00 a.m.
Bearkats Soccer Game
at St. Catherine’s
4:30 p.m.

Wed
9/25

TEACHER IN-SERVICE
Classes not in session; only
students with expanded
contracts attend

Fri
9/27

SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 5

Redirecting Children’s
Behavior (1 of 6)
6:30–9:00 p.m.

Tue
10/1

POPA Coffee/Work Day
8:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Wed
10/2

50th Anniversary Jubilee
at the Houston Museum of
Natural Science
begins at 6:00 p.m.

Sat
10/5

Check out our calendar
online or download a copy
at www.postoakschool.org

NOTICE BOARD

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO EAT AT THE JUBILEE?
Please let us know your entrée choice, if you haven’t already. You and your
guests may choose between:
• Roasted quail
• Beef tenderloin
• Gluten-free
• Vegetarian
• Kosher
Please email jessicajackson@postoakschool.org with your selections by Sept. 23.

Conference Registration
The online parent/teacher conference scheduling is now open. Conference
days are October 11, 18, and 25 (Infant Community is in session on the 25th). To sign up for a conference
go to www.postoakschool.org. For Parents • Schedule/View a Parent-Teacher Conference and have your login information ready. If you are
having problems, please contact technology director Mirna Andrade-Salgado, at technology@postoakschool.org or 281-822-8063.

POPA Coffee/Work Day
Wednesday, Oct. 2
8:45 a.m.–noon

ABOUT THE POST
The Post appears every other Friday 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 Elisa Schmidt (elisaschmidt@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.

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