“Do you store ketchup in the refrigerator or in the cupboard?” I have to admit I’d never considered that question. I’m an unquestioning Ketchup-in-the-refrigerator guy. I grew up in a ketchup-in-the-refrigerator family, I married a wonderful ketchup-in-the-refrigerator woman and we raised our kids, well you know how.

Who’s asking such a question? Scott Page, Professor of Complex Systems, Political Science, and Economics at the University of Michigan.
Dr. Page was not playing Trivial Pursuit with the board chairs and headmasters of ISAS member schools. He was speaking to us at a conference in the Galleria this week. “Leveraging Diversity” was the title of his talk and it turns out that the answer to the ketchup question has a cultural dimension most of us were blind to. African Americans and Australians are among the groups more likely to store ketchup in the cupboard.

So what?

Was this just another diversity workshop encouraging me to be tolerant and inclusive of Australians and African Americans? No, Dr. Page looks at diversity through a very different lens. Emphasizing the creative energy that emerges from groups of diverse thinkers, he sees differentiation and diversity contributing directly to creative problem-solving and economic vitality. That got my attention.

In a review of Page’s book, The Difference, Claudia Dreifus wrote, “Rather than ponder moral questions like, ‘Why can’t we all get along?’ Dr. Page asks practical ones like, ‘How can we all be more productive together?’ The answer, he suggests, is in messy, creative organizations and environments with individuals from vastly different backgrounds and life experiences.”

So what’s this got to do with school? What kind of school environment will best promote creative problem solving? What kind of school environment will best prepare students for adult life? What kind of schools will make the largest contribution to creative enterprise, entrepreneurial activity and economic growth? Schools with the greatest diversity of thinking.

I look at Post Oak’s hall of flags, celebrating the 55 countries of birth of Post Oak students or their parents. It is emblematic of the school’s ethnic, religious, cultural, racial and national diversity. But they all attend Montessori school; don’t they all think like Montessori kids?

To be a Montessori kid is to be a divergent thinker. Last spring the Wall Street Journal asked, “Is there something about the Montessori approach that nurtures creativity and inventiveness that we can all learn from?” At the same time, renowned creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson declared "School kills creativity."

Montessori teachers encourage and celebrate diversity of thought. Montessori students don’t spend time trying to figure out the answer hidden inside the teacher’s brain. They are encouraged to think for themselves; to find their own solutions to problems; and ultimately, to identify their own interests. Montessori kids don’t all think alike; they each have their own ideas. They are independent thinkers. And to amplify this diversity of thought, Post Oak kids come from a host of different backgrounds.

A couple of years ago a family left Post Oak for another school. At the time they commented to me, “Post Oak is just too diverse.” It was not hard for them to find a school that is more homogenous, where the cultural background of students and their families is more singular. That can feel very comfortable. How can we understand this perspective?

As a part of his research, Dr. Page assigned contrasting work groups to deal with difficult problems. He did this a number of times with different problems and different groups of people, and the experiment was always a variation of this: one group had highly qualified people with similar backgrounds, and the other group had people of different backgrounds. The other group had people of different backgrounds in terms of technical training and education as well as culture, ethnicity and intelligence. Though the first group was comprised of a team of experts, the more diverse groups consistently produced measurably better results, measurably better solutions to difficult problems.

However, when they were surveyed about their experience working together, the more homogenous groups were happier
coming to finding more and better solutions to difficult problems, they were less generative and less creative.

In his book Who’s Your City, Richard Florida discussed diversity in terms of a “wide variety of talents and specialties.” He went on to say, “The city...is a complex, self-organizing ecology whose form cannot be predetermined or controlled from outside. Its diversity is the true source of innovation and economic growth.” This certainly echoes Scott Page. And it describes in macrocosm the Montessori classrooms we have created at Post Oak.

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**Coffee with the Elementary Director**

November 20, 9:00 a.m.

Join Elementary Director Jeff Schneider for a discussion all about the transition from Primary to Lower Elementary. All parents welcome regardless of the age of your child(ren).

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**Grandparents’ & Friends’ “Day-of Tips”**

Monday, November 25 & Tuesday, November 26, 9–11 a.m.

- **Complimentary valet parking provided at Bissonnet campus**

Dear Post Oak parents,

If you have relatives or friends attending the coming event on either Monday or Tuesday, here are a few of things to note:

- We are limited with space and ask that parents not attend. We promise to take good care of your guests!
- The event starts at 9:00 a.m. and concludes around 11:00 a.m. Breakfast will be provided.
- There will be parking on the Bissonnet campus. All employees will be parking elsewhere, so it might look like there is no parking because of cars on the street. Use the complimentary valet parking in the Peace Circle.
- For guests coming to see Infant and Primary students, they will view the students from the observation window.

We do this to give grandparents and friends a true example of a Montessori classroom in action. Guests of older students are invited into the classroom to work with those students.

- If grandparents or friends plan on taking the student home, we must have written permission from the parent, as is the normal policy.
- Even if an RSVP has not been sent in, we welcome all visitors on both days.

Thank you,

Christina Kopanidis-Cantu
Development Director
The Arizona Human Origins Trip was fascinating and educational at the same time. We went to many places and had many great experiences. The whole trip held many bonding moments and intriguing educational experiences. On this trip we learned about the daily lives of the Sinagua people. When we visited Montezuma’s castle we saw a very descriptive model and experienced activities which helped us understand their daily lives. We learned how and why building a shelter in a cliff would help the Sinagua survive. We also went to Elden Pueblo, where some of the Sinagua resided. At Elden Pueblo we got to see the remains of their pueblo. The pueblo consisted of one large room, with many dividers to make it livable and more comfortable for more people. The rooms were all very small, and every room housed a whole family. At Elden Pueblo we also excavated pottery sherds. The excavation of these sherds was very important as the sherds represented many of the objects the Sinagua made and used in their daily lives.

The views we saw on this trip were all magnificent. We were all adamant about going to the Grand Canyon, so we buckled up and travelled 4 hours to the West Rim of the Grand Canyon. It was
all worth it once we got there. The view was just spectacular and we could not have asked for anything better. We all viewed the Colorado River winding through the Grand Canyon and the view, again, was just amazing. On every drive, we saw many beautiful views. Reaching the top of structures at the end of each hike was a great experience; we enjoyed looking down on the land. Looking through the telescope at the Lowell Observatory we saw a star cluster 50 million light years away. The trees, the flowers, the stars, and everything made the experience amazing and unforgettable.

We felt like we were discovering history because we got to excavate pottery sherds at Elden Pueblo. We would dig up what potentially could have been houses of the Sinagua. This experience was very compelling because we got to help in the discovery of something. In Red Rock Country we learned about the pictographs of the people that lived there many years ago. We got to map the locations of pictographs that we had found. Feeling that we were all assisting in discovering parts of history was fun and intriguing.

All in all, this trip was educational, enlightening, and enjoyable. The trip went by very fast and we saw many things in such little time. We truly recommend the trip to all future Middle School students and know they will enjoy it. We will all remember this expedition and its moments for the rest of our lives.
THANKS TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY!

Thank you, thank you, thank you! Employees, parents, trustees and class captains. Today marks the last day of our parent campaign for the Post Oak Fund. Employees and trustees reached 100% participation in early September and we hope to reach above 90% for the parents by the time we tally up all the donations that arrived this past week. As the chair persons of this year’s Post Oak Fund we can’t thank you enough for going the extra mile to help support our many improvements to the school. No matter how you look at it, this year’s donation means so much more knowing each and everyone of us is also being asked to contribute to the capital campaign. It’s both impressive and humbling. We knew we would be lucky to meet our goal but as you can see, we’re well on our way to exceed it. Way to go!

Each year we ask our class captain volunteers to do a little more. This year was no different. In addition to the emails, they made individual phone calls to ensure you had the information you needed to make an educated donation. It takes a special person to take the time and call on people they may or in many cases may not know personally. We can’t thank our team enough for balancing the weekly campaign tasks with their day to day jobs. You’re the best!

CLASS CAPTAINS
BASHAM ............
DALSEY ............
HANSEN ............
KLUK ............
LODRIG ............
LONG ............
MIDDLE SCHOOL
MOUDRY ............
NICKERSON ............ and
PARRAGUIRRE ....
E. PINTO ............
M. PINTO ............
SMITH ............
SOOD ............
TOWNSEND ............
WINTON ............
YEAGER ............
9TH GRADE ............
10TH GRADE ............
BOARD ............ John Long
FACULTY/STAFF . . . James Winslow

Thanks so much for all your giving.

Paula and Mark Mey
2014 Post Oak Fund Chairs

$244,000
TOTAL FUNDS AS OF NOV. 8

2014 FUNDS AND PARTICIPATION TO DATE

PARENTS
63%
EMPLOYEES
100%
TRUSTEES
100%
BIG BIRTHDAY BASH!

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 2
10:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

FIELD DAY FUN!

MORE PHOTOS ONLINE IN THE PARENT COMMUNITY...

Special thanks to our chairs and...
In 1980, the Little Schoolhouse was outgrowing its campus and also its name. With a growing student body, the school expanded to a beautiful new building on Harwin Drive and renamed itself Post Oak Montessori in 1981. As you might have expected, the Harwin campus was lovely -- a central atrium created a warm, sunny atmosphere, and each classroom had its own little patio that led to a shared playground (there were see-saws and a merry-go-round -- we lived dangerously!). The new auditorium was home to holiday celebrations, school plays, and guest musicians, as well as folk dance classes (clogging, anyone?). Post Oak achieved many milestones in the 1980s: the school’s first-ever 8th grade class graduated, favorite traditions such as archeological class trips to Crow Canyon began, and in 1984 the After School Enrichment Program (ASEP) was started. Also back then, the school had a NIDO (derived from the Italian word for “nest”), which provided care for infants as young as 3 months old as well as well offered an “Assistants to Infancy” course. The unique program was one the first of its kind in the country and even caught the attention of a local news reporter for the Houston Chronicle in 1984.
Second Generation Carrying on Ground-Breaking Montessori Work

Reprinted from the Houston Chronicle
Tuesday, August 7, 1984
written by Kay Moore

The woman visiting the Houston classroom bears an uncanny resemblance to the serious-faced woman whose photo hangs in the classrooms of Montessori schools everywhere.

But Ada Montessori says that she looks nothing like her famous mother-in-law, late educator Maria Montessori.

"Except maybe," she says with a touch of humor, "for the gray hair."

A touch of humor seems to surround most of Ada Montessori’s memories of Maria Montessori even though the educator had a reputation of being intense, absorbed in her work, and "not the easiest person to live with."

"She could get very enthusiastic about something she read," recalls Montessori here recently. "She would call to us and say, 'Here it says...'. and then read it to us. We would ask, 'Well, who wrote it?' She would look and find, actually, she had written it herself."

Dutch-born Ada Montessori is the widow of the late Dr. Mario Montessori, the Italian educator’s only child. She traveled to Houston from her home in The Netherlands to give examinations for Post Oak Montessori System, which recently graduated its first class of “Assistants to Infancy.”

She and her late husband were also here in 1980 as Post Oak opened its new facility on Harwin Drive. Mario Montessori, who started in his mother’s work at age 15, died last year at age 85, and his widow took up the gauntlet to continue promoting the unique educational system.

Montessori says family members felt no pressure to join Maria Montessori’s cause, although it was impossible to be around the woman without getting caught up in the work, recalls Montessori.

“She could inspire people,” she says. “She was very forceful when she spoke. You were ready to do anything for the child, just like people who are ready to do anything for their country, even go to war for it.

“She was never tired. She could go to three movies in one afternoon. She couldn’t stand it if you were tired.”

The story of how Maria Montessori, daughter of one of Rome’s oldest families, stumbled onto the Montessori method is by now legend. The first woman to graduate from medical school in Italy, Montessori was called on to set up a day-care center in 1907 in Rome for children of poor families. Although she knew little about education, she devised a philosophy of teaching that allows children to learn at their own pace and to follow their innate curiosity in learning.

For example, children learn the alphabet by touching a sandpaper cutout of the letters and learn mathematical concepts, through hands-on materials like a strand of beads.

Yet, despite her extraordinariness and brilliance, Montessori was a very human person, says her daughter-in-law.

"People are sometimes horrified when I say that she loved wine, she loved the cinema and even smoked a cigarette," she says, laughing.

Ada Montessori, 70, met the Montessori family after she had completed her own Montessori training in 1935 in Holland.

"I had always shown an interest in children, and my teacher asked me, 'Why don’t you go into Montessori?’ I said, ‘Montessori? What’s that?’"

She soon got the answer to her question in a big way. A few years later, she was training under the famed Maria Montessori herself in London and met Mario, who always assisted his mother in her courses. They fell in love and planned to marry.

Then, while Maria Montessori and her son were in India for six months, World War II broke out and the duo had to remain away for six years. During that time Ada and her Dutch family took in the four Montessori

continued on page 10
schoolchildren because they could not return to their homeland.

Finally, the couple married in 1947. Ada Montessori herself never gave birth to any children but reared the Montessori children. Two of the four are active with the Montessori movement today.

Montessori says her own experience in teaching the Montessori method is brief and came in the late 1930s in Holland.

“I taught there under her eye... ahhhh!” she says, rolling her eyes remembering Dr. Montessori’s exactness. Later, she became active in the Association Montessori International, which has branches all over the globe, and later was co-director with her husband.

Before Maria Montessori died in 1952, her work was becoming accepted in the United States, with competing movements even developing based on her teaching. She even visited the United States and was received in the White House. Montessori schools were starting to open throughout the country. They died out here after Montessori’s death and only began resurfacing in the United States in the early 1960s.

Despite this fame, Montessori never seemed impressed with her own growing importance or exactly how avant-garde she was for her day. (Besides breaking the gender barrier at medical school, Montessori was also a single mother in rearing Mario, a product of a disappointed relationship from her youth.)

“She was very pleased if someone showed interest, particularly if it were someone of a certain importance or academic people. But she was very humble. Her guiding idea was to advance the cause of children,” says her daughter-in-law.

Myths about the Montessori method still exist everywhere, even in Europe, where the system is more ingrained in culture, she says.

Oddly, critics have called Montessori too rigid and too unstructured. It gets the rigid label because children follow a carefully planned progression through extensive materials. It gets the unstructured label because children do not progress in “lock-step” fashion as they often do in a regular classroom, doing a variety of activities and talking more than in a regular situation.

“It’s a controlled environment, but it’s not structured,” says Carol Ferguson, director of the Post Oak Montessori System. “The lock-step” method is structured according to the needs of the adult, or to the teacher’s convenience, and not to the child’s.”

Some people feel that the Montessori child will have trouble adjusting to a regular classroom environment, especially in the upper grades (Only a handful of Montessori schools in the United States continue into the junior high years and even fewer into high school, meaning that Montessori students eventually filter into regular classrooms.)

But Ferguson says, “We see them adjusting beautifully because they’ve had the possibility for a long number of years to help structure their own environment. They make contracts with their teachers (where children outline for their teachers what work they will complete in a week’s time). We see this difference in children who come into our middle school from the outside. During their free period, the children who have been in Montessori for continued on page 11
years sit and do their homework, while the others will sit and talk. The Montessori children will structure that time because they don’t want to do that homework when they go home. Perhaps one of the main strengths of the Montessori child is the ability to respond appropriately.”

Montessori says she is often queried about “how Montessori children turn out” as adults. She says she and her husband never compiled statistics on what professions the graduates enter.

Dr. Silvana Montenaro, an Italian psychotherapist who is also here for the “Assistants to Infancy” course at Post Oak, says one of the overriding traits of the Montessori grownup is a “commitment of the social life.”

In Italy, she says, the young Montessori adults she knows are “all in political movements and have a commitment to society, regardless of what field they enter.”

These youngsters are also more peaceful as adults, believes Montenaro, who directs the Assistant to Infancy program in Rome. She attributes this, in part, to the Montessori tenet of letting children work out their own problems.

“They have the kind of wisdom to try to solve things. They don’t have that kind of aggressiveness that comes from being compressed from the beginning. They try to listen to others. If you receive a ‘no,’ you’re told why.”

Ada Montessori says she finds that Montessori children are “far more consequent.”

“If we say ‘no,’ it is ‘no,’ and probably more ‘no’ than ‘no’ is in other places,” adds Ferguson.

Montessori says she believes her mother-in-law would be pleased with how widely accepted Montessori education is today. Even though it has not permeated public education full-scale today, public educators are recognizing more of its strengths. Here, two of the Houston Independent School District magnet schools have a Montessori component.

Ferguson says the “Assistants to Infancy” course is the first of its kind in the country and requires two summers of training to complete. She says students came here from as far away as Norway and England to take the course.

It prepares adults to deal with children under the age of 3. Graduates get additional understanding of the newborn and can use their new skills in day-care centers, hospital nurseries, pediatricians’ offices and anywhere a greater knowledge of the child’s personality and development is needed.

“I envision that some of these graduates will form a group that a family can call on to take their case just like a physician would,” says Ferguson. “They would follow the family through the birth process. In a week’s time, a child changes from one kind of human being to another and needs a different approach. Young families today just don’t have the resources that they did when we were more rural.”

This fall, Post Oak Montessori will vacate the new building that Mario Montessori saw dedicated in 1980 and move into new quarters at 600 Ave. B in Bellaire, just off Loop 610. The school will lease space at the former site of HISD’s Gordon Elementary, which closed due to low enrollment.

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Using Less Paper

by Post Oak Parent

I can tell you, flat out, that the amount of paper I take to the recycling center far outweighs any of the other trash that comes out of this house. Sometimes carrying those paper bins to the car is back-breaking work. How did all of that paper get in my house?!

Here are the facts: Do you know that YOU (yes you, the reader!), alone, will produce about 750 pounds of paper trash every year?! Our demand for paper leads to about 4 BILLION trees being cut each year, and all of those trees, via the paper products they become, end up being about 40% of all of the trash produced in this country!

Shall we do something about this? Here are some ways we can reduce waste paper at home:

NAPKINS:
Let’s start with a baby step, and commit to using cloth napkins at home for a month. The average family of 4 uses paper napkins for breakfast and dinner (56 per week). We could save about 3,000 napkins a year! We can do like the French and reuse cloth napkins several times before laundry... it’s ok!

PAPER TOWELS:
Try replacing paper towels with a basket of handy rags that can be used for spills and routine cleaning. You may even find that they actually work BETTER than paper towels!

PAPER PLATES:
Paper plates taken to recycling often contain bits of leftover food, and if so, must be removed from the batch, as leftover food and grease will jam the sorting machines. Soiled paper goods are NOT recyclable. What if we give that nice dinnerware (yes, remember those wedding gifts we rarely use? :) a chance to shine, and then just run the dishwasher (with earth-friendly detergent, of course!). It’s not as much work as it seems! Another good suggestion is to keep a set of BPA-free plastic dishes on-hand for backyard affairs where breakage may be a concern.

JUNK MAIL AND CATALOGS:
Stop them from entering your home! For catalogs, call the customer service line and ask to be removed, or use online services, such as catalogchoice.org and 41pounds.org, for catalogs AND junk mail.

PRINTER PAPER:
If you can, set your printer to print double sided, or save your printed papers and then reusing their second side. If you need a clean proper one-sided print, you can always load in a blank page by hand.

For the rest of the papers that sneak into your home, recycle recycle recycle! This should be a good beginning!

Join the Green Team! Watch the Post Highlights for the next meeting time or email Post Oak Parent at
Montessori Journey

January 24, 6–9 p.m.

January 25, 8 a.m.–2 p.m.

Registration for the Montessori Journey is now available on our website. This two-day (adults only) workshop is a powerful, hands-on approach to understanding how and what your child is learning. We invite and encourage current Post Oak parents to attend, whether for the first time or for those desiring a chance to take the journey again. Space is limited, so sign up early to reserve a spot.

Cost: $30 per person.

What parents have said:

What was your most memorable experience of the day?

“The realization that learning can be fun and stepping out of your comfort zone can be so rewarding.”

What value do you feel you have derived from this experience?

“A greater understanding of the environment and method behind Montessori and what my child’s day is like.”

Bearkats Basketball

2013-2014 Schedule

DECEMBER
3 vs. Memorial Lutheran 4:30
4 vs. St. Stephen’s 4:30
6-7 Tournament @ Memorial Lutheran
9 @ St. Francis 5:00
10 @ Beren Academy 5:00
11 vs. St. Stephen’s 4:30

JANUARY
14 vs. Beren Academy 5:00
15 vs. St. Stephen’s 4:30
16 @ Memorial Lutheran 4:30
22 vs. St. Francis 5:00
27 @ Emory Weiner 4:30
28 vs. St. Stephen’s

FEBRUARY
5 vs. St. Stephen’s
11 @ Woods 4:00
12 vs. St. Stephen’s
1. Preparing snack in Primary is an important exercise in practical life skills.

2. Middle School hosts a pizza party for a visit with the high school students.


4. Setting the table for snack in the Infant Community is another way for the children to exercise care for their environment.

5. An older student offers his knowledge in a lesson with a younger student in Primary.

6. High school students relaxing before the all-school photo.

7. Head of School John Long accepts a proclamation from Bellaire Mayor Phil Nauert, declaring November 2nd Post Oak Day.

8. Working on embroidery in Primary helps develop fine motor skills.

9. Lower Elementary students practice mathematics with the checkerboard.

10. A Primary student paints a map of the world.

11. Lower Elementary students work side-by-side, sharing the biology nomenclature material.
CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 17-23

Mon–Fri
11/18-22
Standardized testing (CTP-4)
for 3rd graders and Upper EL

Mon–Fri
11/18-22
Middle School to Blackwood

Tue
11/19
High School Admission
Open House
7:00 p.m.

Wed
11/20
Coffee with the
Elementary Director
9:00 a.m.

NOVEMBER 24-30

Mon–Tue
11/25–26
Grandparents’ & Friends’
Days at Post Oak
9–11 a.m.

No ASEP classes

Wed–Fri
11/27-29
Thanksgiving break
(school closed)

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

NOTICE BOARD

Parenting the Love and Logic Way® Holiday Short Course

presented by

Phylis R. Tomlinson, LPC, LMFT, ATR-BC
Post Oak Counselor & Independent Facilitator of Parenting the Love and Logic Way® curriculum

A parenting program designed by Love and Logic®. This series of courses offers solutions for families of children from early childhood to beyond adolescence. Previous participants are encouraged to return to share experiences and reinforce skills. All classes are open to the public. Childcare will not be provided.

SHORT COURSE AT THE POST OAK SCHOOL

Thurs., December 5 & 12, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
$20 for both classes - $10 workbook optional

SHORT COURSE AT ST. MARK’S CHURCH

Wed., December 4 & 11, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
$35 each or $70 for both classes - $10 workbook optional
Bring a brown bag lunch!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Phylis Tomlinson, Counselor
phylistomlinson@gmail.com
713-668-6558

Class size limited to 30 people for classes at Post Oak.
Call or email in advance to reserve a spot!

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

Happy Thanksgiving
School closed
November 27–29