Do you like pasta? Georgia asked me.

"Yes" I answered as she brought to her mouth a single curly cue pasta lightly covered in red sauce. She lifted the spoon with great control. Her table mate alternately used spoon and fingers. But that’s dinner with two year olds. We were sitting on chairs perfectly proportioned to their size. It was a miracle of engineering that one supported my weight. It was a perfect dining table for them; my feet fit under the table but my knees neared my chin.

Georgia picked up a glass and drank her apple juice. She wiped her mouth with a napkin. She picked up her plate and carried it to the dish drainer by the sink. She pushed her chair up to the table.
A perfect child? “I have a bad cold,” she said. Her runny nose helped me to interpret her words. “Would you like help blowing your nose?” She received help graciously.

She’s sooo cute. Aren’t the tiny little chairs and the tiny little table cute? Wasn’t it precious the way she lifted each curly cue pasta on a little tiny spoon?

To answer, put yourself in Georgia’s position. Are you cute? Are your table and chairs cute? And isn’t it precious the way you eat pasta? Or would you find this patronizing?

Georgia is engaged in noble work. She is developing the practical life skills of using a spoon and drinking from a glass. These are commonplace skills, but ones that confer full membership in the family. She is developing the social skills to sit at table with others, to eat and converse. She is developing a sense of physical order—placing the dirty dish where it belongs, pushing in her chair—that leads to the development of an orderly mind. She is developing a sense of her own capability, of her own capacity to learn and to take her place in the family. She is learning to accept help when it is needed, and to offer it when she can.

How does this happen? The environment was specially prepared for her, and she has been shown how to do these things. So she learns. And that learning is treated with a sense of reverence, a sense of high seriousness. We did smile and enjoy ourselves but at the same time there is a profound respect for the child which undergirds such encounters.

And the child perceives this along with her own growing capability. Dignity results.

Seeing her as oh-so-cute would undermine this. It would say, “We don’t really expect you to be able to do these things and it’s just so amazing that you are able to!”

Hailing her as precious, and declaring each newly learned skill as a Kodak moment creates in the child both a need to please others and a need to be the center of attention. When we match her enthusiasm, but don’t exceed it we honor and protect her intrinsic motivation. We avoid overwhelming and transforming it into extrinsic motivation. A child doesn’t need a cheer leader to develop high self-esteem; she needs to develop capability in a climate of respect and love.

Is she cute? She is beautiful. Is she cute? She is capable. Is she cute? She is dignified. Is she cute? She is our future.

Originally published in Post Oak’s Newsletter on February 5, 1996
Promised Update to Post Oak Parents

Dear Post Oak School families,

I am writing, as I promised, to thank all of you who participated in our information and discussion meetings last week to talk about the important decision that the Board of Trustees had to make over the weekend about the construction schedule here on the Bissonnet campus, and to share the Board’s decision. We are very pleased that 165 families attended the meetings, either in person of via teleconference, and we benefited greatly from the thoughtful questions that you asked and the comments and observations that you offered during those sessions.

SUMMARY OF THE DECISION

The Board indeed met on Sunday afternoon, and decided after a lengthy discussion that we would pause our project while we investigate the ideal way to use our Bissonnet and Autrey Street properties. As a result of this decision, the Building Committee will work between now and September to revise our facilities plan, and to maximize the use of the funds entrusted to the school. Ultimately, we hope this will give us a more cost-effective solution that will better meet the long-term needs of our students and families.

As a refresher on events leading up to this decision, below is a short summary:

BACKGROUND

Over the past eight years, The Post Oak School has experienced 40 percent growth in elementary and middle school enrollment. This growth—due almost entirely to increased retention of students between the preschool level and the elementary grades—has engendered new expectations and created several challenges. These challenges have revolved around four important elements of the Post Oak Montessori experience:

• The need for additional space in middle school to accommodate the increased retention.
• Pursuing the ISAS recommendation and our community’s strong desire to have dedicated and appropriate space for our music and performance program.
• Quality teachers are the heartbeat of our school, and we have come to recognize that we should create our own institute (an initiative that has been extremely successful in other parts of the country) to train Montessori teachers in order to ensure instructional excellence and continuity that is so central to the Post Oak experience.
• Several years ago Post Oak Parenting Classes were moved off campus due to space constraints. These classes are the first introduction to Post Oak for many of our families and it’s time to bring them back home.

During the same period of time, responding to a strong appeal from parents of Upper Elementary and Middle School students, the Board of Trustees developed a plan to establish the Post Oak High School. Modeled after the best Montessori high school in the United States, the high school is the first of its kind in Texas.

FACILITIES SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS PROGRAMMATIC NEEDS

To address the space challenges on Bissonnet and provide for the additional demands associated with the launch of a high school, Post Oak School’s leadership undertook a comprehensive facilities needs assessment in 2011. As a result of the study, Post Oak developed detailed plans to renovate its building on Bissonnet to accommodate the growth in our student body from infants through middle school, to remedy several facilities challenges, launch the Post Oak High School in 2012, and purchase and renovate a building on Autrey Street to house the new high school. These plans called for all capital improvements to be completed by the start of the 2015-16 school year.

A $6 million capital campaign entitled Big Work was launched two years ago to provide funding for these bold initiatives, with $2 million dedicated to the high school launch and the remaining $4 million to capital improvements. Nearly $5 million has already been committed by generous Post Oak families and several philanthropic foundations.

UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY

Over the past few weeks, a late-breaking opportunity emerged when the much-desired building next door to the high school on Autrey Street was purchased by a very generous friend of the school, who offered to hold the property until we were in a position to purchase it. This development led the Board of Trustees to regroup quickly to see if the capital improvement plan for the Bissonnet and Autrey campuses should be revised. The Board asked itself: can we deploy our funds more resourcefully in light of the additional space on Autrey Street that is now available to us?

BOARD DECISION AND NEXT STEPS

On April 13 the Board of Trustees voted to temporarily pause the process that is underway to start construction on June 2. The purpose of this hiatus was to give the Board’s Building Committee the opportunity to quickly assess the situation and identify options with rough costs attached, and to gather input from the Post Oak community. We invited all of you to join the information sessions that had already been scheduled to share the impact of the summer construction project—and, as I said earlier in this email, we were delighted that so many of you were able to join us. Please know that your input was weighed heavily in our discussion when the Board met on Sunday afternoon.

Because the surprise acquisition of a second property on Autrey Street was such a game-changer and opened up many possibilities that had not existed until a few weeks ago, on Sunday the Board concluded that it was in our best interest to take the next four months to review our facilities needs with fresh eyes and consider all of the options available to us in developing our long-term facilities plan.

Our Building Committee will be working with our architects and general contractor over the summer to develop the new plans and cost information so that these can be shared with our community in the fall. As our plans formalize, we will resume the active phase of our Big Work capital campaign to fund this project for the future of Post Oak.

Many thanks for your interest, comments, and support. We needed all of these last week while we considered the best path forward. Now that we are on a slightly different path, we will move ahead quickly.

Sincerely,
John Long
Head of School
Malayaka Orphanage Needs Your “Applause”

50 FOR 50 COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

by Yael Kluk, Post Oak parent

For my family this adventure called Malayaka House started when Robert Fleming visited Post Oak School about two years ago. Robert was invited by parents to speak to students about his founding of Malayaka House, an orphanage in Entebbe, Uganda.

A year passed and Robert came back, this time hosted by a Post Oak family doing a mitzvah (good deed) project. The impact of hearing the stories of some of the kids, talking to them through Skype and meeting other Post Oak families who were also engaged, completely inspired our family and turned our path towards Uganda.

About a month ago I came back from Uganda and Malayaka House; I experienced firsthand the power of empathy, resilience and love. I witnessed Robert and his team devote everything they’ve got to transform the lives of the ones that are most vulnerable in a country devastated by war and poverty. And contrary to what I was expecting, I did not come back feeling pity and sadness, I came back energized, motivated and with a profound admiration for the will of a group of very unique human beings wanting to contribute. The kids of Malayaka house had to endure what no child in the world should ever endure, but they are now more than safe, they are loved.

Families in our school community have been helping, each of us in our own way. Now we are joining forces and looking for ways to help together. Post Oak families are currently involved in fundraising, coffee selling (Bobo’s coffee proceeds go towards Malayaka house) and other activities. In my case, I joined the board, I help them with their strategic planning, I am teaching Namatov (the oldest girl) business skills to run the orphanage, among other things. Our son will do his own mitzvah project around helping Malayaka House.

All of this brings me to this call for action; we need you to applaud us. We are competing for a $500,000 grant to empower and protect women in impoverished areas of the world. Our project is called VOICE – and international media project which would create an audience for women that need to be heard; starting with the women that live inside Malayaka House. In order to continue we need to go viral with votes. Help us by going to this link before April 30th: http://www.openideo.com/challenge/womens-safety/ideas/voice-an-international-media-project-for-women

National Lemonade Day: Calling All Families!

On May 4th, Lemonade Day, Post Oak parent Michelle Luo is organizing a stand for all Post Oak families to join if interested! The stand will be set up in front of Whole Foods Market on Kirby. The event is from 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. If you are interested in taking a two-hour shift, please send Michelle an email at shawbefun@gmail.com. There are a total of two shifts available, and it will be tons of fun! Post Oak students have participated in the past and thus we continue the tradition this year.

Lemonade Day is a free, fun, experiential learning program that teaches youth how to start, own and operate their own business – a lemonade stand. The foremost objective of Lemonade Day is to empower youth to take ownership of their lives and become productive members of society – the business leaders, social advocates, volunteers, and forward thinking citizens of tomorrow.

Each child learns real-life business skills such as creating budgets, setting profit-making goals, serving customers, repaying investors, and giving back to the community. Along the way, they acquire skills in goal-setting, problem solving, and gain self-esteem critical for future success.

Let us say thank you for all the volunteer efforts big and small that happened throughout this year. Post Oak parents, grandparents, and friends are the best volunteers around!
Announcing Our 2014–15 Post Oak Parent Association (POPA) Chairs and Event Chairs!

**POPA Chairs** - (L) Suzan Samuels (fall 2013 to spring 2015) (R) Paula Mey (fall 2014 to spring 2016)

**POPA Dinner Chairs**
(L) Alison Wong, (R) Jennifer Chavis

**Field Day Chairs**
(L) Valerie Sonino, (R) Stacey Martin

by Christina Kopanidis-Cantu, Development Director

Helping with events, selecting event leadership, attending meetings, brainstorming on new ideas for our community... a POPA chair’s work is never finished. Having successfully filled this role for her two-year term, Jessica Gregg steps down at the end of May. Jessica has done an excellent job bringing in fresh ideas, clear and focused thinking, and a desire to get more people involved as Post Oak volunteers. It has been truly terrific working with her this year. Filling her fabulous shoes and continuing work with POPA co-chair Suzan Samuels is Post Oak parent Paula Mey. Many of you may know Paula for her work as Post Oak Annual Fund chair for the past two years. Now she and Suzan will steer the Parent Association during this exciting time in Post Oak’s history. Please join me in offering thanks to both Jessica and Paula for their willingness to take on these leadership roles in our community.

**Book Fair Chairs**
(L) Zeenath Selvakumar, (R) Huma Manal

Post Oak High School Students in the Arts

by John Mellinger

Wire Sculpture by John Mellinger

Wire Sculpture by Emily Randall

Wire Sculptures by POHS Students

The three-day festival supports a wide range of art venues and was hosted at St. John’s. Our art students created two life-size transparent human forms during Fall and Spring, which were presented at the festival.

PMHS Students with Juror Dillion Conner at the ISAS Arts Festival on April 3rd. The three-day festival supports a wide range of art venues and was hosted at St. John’s. Our art students created two life-size transparent human forms during Fall and Spring, which were presented at the festival.

What’s Happening Now!

Galveston Bay Volunteer Work

New students this year at Post Oak High School participated in a volunteer project for the Galveston Bay Foundation. Their task was to grow smooth cord grass throughout the school year, and then on April 15th, they planted the grass near SeaBrook in an effort to help keep the bayou from flooding.

Photography Club

POHS students

and

represented POHS at the ISAS Arts Festival on April 3rd. The three-day festival supports a wide range of art venues and was hosted at St. John’s. Our art students created two life-size transparent human forms during Fall and Spring, which were presented at the festival.

Last Soccer Game of the Season!

Our inaugural POHS soccer team will play its final games on Fri. 4/25 at 6:30 p.m., and on Sat. 4/26 at 3:00 p.m. at Bear Creek Park. We hope to see you there! Our players will also be recognized at next week’s Bearkat Banquet, Wed. 4/30 at 6:00 p.m. on the Bissonnet Campus.

Post Oak High School Students in the Arts

POHS Students with Juror Dillion Conner at the ISAS Arts Festival

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Everyone is invited to join Bearkats and Intramural players, along with their families, faculty, and staff, at our annual backyard barbecue catered by Beck's Prime. There will also be a program celebrating the hard work of our Post Oak athletes.

Join the fun in the Post Oak gym! Wednesday April 30, 6 to 8 p.m.

RSVP with number attending by Friday, April 25. Call 713-661-6688 or email frontoffice@postoakschool.org.

Free DASH Women’s Soccer Tickets

Post Oak Parents Tina Petersen and John Duboise are offering THREE free Dash tickets for the following games:

- Wed. May 14, 7pm • Wed. Jun. 11, 8pm • Sat. Jun. 28, 8pm • Sat. Jul. 5, 8pm • Fri. Jul. 11, 8pm • Thu. Jul. 17, 8pm • Wed. Jul. 30, 8pm

Please email johndubo@gmail.com to pick up these tickets.

Post Oak parents Christina and Isaac Tapia are offering TWO free Dash tickets for the following games:

- Fri. May 23rd, 7pm • Wed. Jun. 11, 8pm • Sat. Jul. 5, 8pm

These tickets are available for pick up in the Development Office.

50 for 50 – Let’s Keep Going!

We began the school year with a community wide goal of completing 50 community service projects in celebration of Post Oak’s 50th birthday. We’ve surpassed 50, but we want to keep going! Community service is embedded in the culture of Post Oak and having reached number 59 before the end of the year is a testament of our shared spirit in helping others. We want to continue to see the community service organizations important to you. Log your acts of service here.

50th anniversary spotlight

The early 2000s at Post Oak were all about new undertakings: entering a new decade, opening new classes, starting new construction, building a new playground, and beginning new projects.

In 2004, Post Oak began offering Prospective Parent Classes to the community. These classes were designed to introduce Montessori principles and how they are applied at home and at school. The primary result was that parents were making a more informed decision when they enrolled a child at Post Oak. A secondary result was that more families chose to enroll for the long term. The difference was particularly noticeable at the transition between primary and elementary. More children were staying for the elementary years.

By 2008, Post Oak opened its fourth Lower Elementary class and two years later opened its third Upper Elementary class (in 2010)—all because more children were staying through the years.

However, new classes weren’t the only additions to Post Oak in the past decade. In 2005, our school’s playground was renovated and rebuilt. Working with landscape artists and playground planners, the school completely redesigned its outdoor environment.

All new play structures were installed, new gardens were added, and an outdoor nature learning center was created.

The following year, in 2006, The Post Oak School received accreditation by the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS). This achievement was a culmination of many years’ work. The documentation of adherence to ISAS standards took two years to complete, the self-study a full year, followed by a twelve-person accreditation team’s site visit lasting three-and-a-half days. Our ISAS accreditation pairs well with our AMI heritage. Post Oak is a world-renowned Montessori school that now contributes to the collective voice of other respected independent schools.

Another important development was the opening of the Houston Montessori Institute. This story began in 2008, when primary teacher Mirani Smith entered the AMI Training of Trainers program. This eventually led to the establishment of a course to train Montessori primary teachers at Post Oak. The center opened its doors in 2013 and its first class will graduate in the summer of 2015. HMI will provide AMI training for more teachers in Houston and also provide long-term faculty development for Post Oak.

Primary work at Post Oak, January 2000

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Too Much Mint in Your Garden?

You’ll want to use this hardy, fragrant herb every day in this elegant tea recipe from famed Parisian restaurant Le 404:

**AUTHENTIC MOROCCAN MINT TEA RECIPE**

Ingredients: 1 teaspoon Gunpowder green tea, 1 large handful of Fresh Mint, Sugar of your choice (cubes, turbinado, honey, etc.)

Put green tea leaves in tea pot.

Add 1-inch of boiling water.

Add sugar (about 6 teaspoons or to taste).

Add mint.

Add 2 cups of boiling water.

Stir and leave for a few minutes.

Serve.

Get the answers to these questions and more at Coffee with the High School Director in the Multipurpose Room on the Bissonnet Campus.

**Coffee with the High School Director**

Tuesday, April 29
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Get the answers to these questions and more at Coffee with the High School Director in the Multipurpose Room on the Bissonnet campus.

written by Post Oak parent
Nikole Thomas

“Those days, if a child isn’t reading by age four, we go into mourning,” said Karol Musher, a certified speech and language pathologist from Texas Children’s hospital during our April F.I.S.H.* meeting. Karol was speaking to parents about how best to support children’s speech, learning and language development. “Parents are the primary educators of their children,” Karol reminded parents. “This can be daunting since children don’t come with ‘How-To’ manuals. However, parents are increasingly relying upon tutors, after-school enrichment, camps and ‘get ahead’ studies rather than building a nurturing home environment. Some parents are so concerned about building their children’s preschool resumes, said Karol, that they short-change the first-hand teaching opportunities that naturally occur at home with a nurturing caregiver. In reference to the early readers, Karol noted that studies have shown that children who were reading at the age of four are indistinguishable academically from those who don’t learn until they are seven by the time both reach upper school. Creating time pressures and unrealistic expectations can actually hinder a child’s learning while unnecessarily tutoring children can send a life-long message that the child is sub-standard.”

Karol did note that not there are times when a child does need tutoring or remediation therapy. However, these apply only to children diagnosed with a learning disability or a behavioral disorder. Some red flags to look for:
- inability to follow directions most of the time,
- underestimates speech at age 2 (for parents) and age 3 (for strangers)
- violent stuttering,
- impaired interaction skills
- obsessive behaviors.

Karol’s parting message to parents: “Worry less and have more fun with your children!”

Karol Musher is a speech language pathologist and is recognized for her work in speech and language disorders. Originally from Laredo, Musher attended Northwestern University where she earned bachelors and masters degrees in speech pathology. She currently works at the Speech Language and Learning Clinic at Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston where she provides evaluation, consultation and management for infants, children, adolescents and young adults struggling with communication and learning.

*F.I.S.H. (Families Integrating School and Home) is a school-sponsored parent group focused on helping families create their own Montessori environment at home with the guidance of experts and ideas generated by parents. We meet monthly for a discussion guided by a teacher or expert. It is an opportunity for parents to come together, share ideas and receive feedback. All parents and caregivers are welcome. Please join us!
1. Practicing a song for performance in Upper Elementary.
2. Primary children develop concentration and sequencing through sink scrubbing.
3. A member of our Infant Community practices the delicate work of threading a needle.
4. Lower Elementary students smile contentedly after completing their work with volume cubes.
5. High School students help each other during open work time.
6. Primary students at three different age levels work together to wash dishes in the classroom.
7. Middle School students create Empty Bowls to be donated to the Houston Food Bank.
8. Ironing an apron is big work in a Primary classroom.
10. Lower Elementary students excitedly begin their multiplication work together.
11. A Primary student squeezes orange juice to share with his fellow classmates.
CALENDAR

APRIL 27 - MAY 3

Tue 4/29
Coffee w/ the High School Director
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
New Parent Reception
5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Wed 4/30
Bearkats Celebration Banquet
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Thu 5/1
New Middle School Parent Gathering
7:00 - 8:00 p.m.
May Day

Thu - Fri 5/1 - 5/2
Third grade trip to Camp Allen

MAY 4 - 10

Mon - Fri 5/5 - 5/9
Middle School trip to Washington, D.C.
Sixth grade trip to Williamsburg, VA

Thu 5/8
New High School Parent Gathering
7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

NOTICE BOARD

Our 2014 Bearkats are BACK!
PLAYING THEIR FINAL 2014 VOLLEYBALL GAME
April 29 • 4:15
ALL GAMES ARE AGAINST ST. STEPHEN’S AND WILL BE PLAYED HERE AT THE POST OAK SCHOOL.

Dads’ Basketball
Every Wednesday Night in the Gym from 8 – 10 p.m.
All Post Oak Dads are invited to attend!

LANDS’ END SCHOOL

Show your school pride with spirit wear from Lands’ End.

ABOUT THE POST

The Post is distributed via email every other Friday of the regular school year.
You can receive a printed copy from your oldest child, or view the 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).