Once again Post Oak students have performed very well on standardized achievement tests when compared to other private schools across the country or public schools, too. The attached chart shows median scores on mathematics (M) and reading comprehension (RC) for grades 4 – 8. The Post Oak median is compared to public schools and other private schools (“independent schools”—in most of the country this term indicates private schools, not public schools). On eight of ten measures the average Post Oak student outperformed the average student from other private schools.

We’re actually ambivalent about that. Of course we’re pleased that our students do well on these
conventional measures of achievement. This is especially notable given that our classroom practice and the kind of work that students do is not congruent with the testing format. We certainly don’t – and won’t – "teach the test".

I’m pleased to announce that Post Oak is helping to organize a group of thirty Montessori schools across the country to participate in an ongoing effort to do just that – to measure and benchmark performance on 'soft skills' personal characteristics and executive functioning skills that lead to life success.

I said earlier that the world of conventional education is waking up to the importance of these non-academic skills and this project is a great example of that. Post Oak and other Montessori schools will be joining a project now in its fifth year, a collaboration between INDEX schools, an association of more than 100 conventional private schools from across the country, and the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the folks who bring us the SAT exam. The battery of measures they have developed is called the Mission Skills Assessment (MSA) and we will begin to administer these measures next year.

We believe that these scores are actually a better measure of lifetime success than standard achievement testing and we are pleased that we will have this data to assess how we are doing in developing 'soft skills'. No, we don’t expect MSA to replace achievement testing, but having this data as another school performance indicator will at least make us feel less ambivalent about achievement test results because now that will simply be part of a bigger picture rather than the only data we have to report.

Stay tuned. ✨
April 29, 2014

Dear Parents in Anita and Kathy’s class,

I want to give you an update on Kathy’s status and to do so, include a letter Kathy just sent to faculty:

Dear Friends,

I am missing being at Post Oak with you every day. I miss you, my students, my co-workers and everyone in our school community.

As many of you know, I will be having surgery on Thursday, May 8th to relieve the pressure on the nerves in the back of my head. This will be out-patient surgery and my recuperation is 4-6 weeks. This procedure has a high success rate for relieving or reducing headaches due to nerve pressure.

Please keep me and John in your thoughts and prayers as we go through this surgery and recuperation period. Your support, encouragement, optimism and kindnesses have carried us through this long waiting period. We are in the home stretch!

Thank you so much.

Yours very truly,

Kathy Long

The year has been a journey. There are many fine doctors in Houston and we have met quite a few of them. Through process of elimination we believe that we have come to a correct diagnosis and plan of treatment for the constant and chronic head pain Kathy has been enduring for more than 18 months. I am constantly inspired by her optimism and positive energy in the face of it. We had hoped all along that Kathy would be able to return to the classroom sometime this year. Clearly we have passed that point, as the upcoming surgery and the recovery period will extend into the summer.

We had no idea last October when Kathy went on leave how long this road would be. We truly do appreciate the good will and concern that each of you has extended to Kathy.

Sincerely,

John Long
Head of School

News from the Long/Taj Classroom

April 29, 2014

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A Post Oak Student’s Cultural Performance

By Deepa Poduval, Post Oak Parent

performed as part of her dance school at the Houston International Festival downtown on Sunday, April 27th. She performed a classical Indian dance form, Bharatnatyam, involving intricate foot work and hand movements. After months of dedicated focus and hard work perfecting each movement, it was remarkable to see the confidence and joy with which she fearlessly embraced the stage in front of a large audience of strangers. It was a very proud moment for us and another wonderful demonstration of the love for challenges and new experiences that Montessori nurtures!

An Update from Middle School in Washington D.C.

by Jane Sweeney, Interim Middle School Director
May 5, 2014

Everyone arrived promptly at the airport on Monday morning, which was a great facilitator in getting the trip started off right! The check-in process and time in the airport was filled with Post Oak students traveling to DC and Williamsburg. It was good to see all of our people getting on the same plane.

We landed and took the shuttle to the hotel and stowed our bags while rooms were cleaned and prepared. The pizza at Paradiso was a welcome bit of nourishment after the long flight. Following lunch we headed to Peace Corps Headquarters to hear information and presentations relating to the humanities work on Peace and War. Students heard informative presentations, did small group activities, and presented to the whole group about the information they learned.

After a brief rest at the hotel we headed to Das for Ethiopian food and a recap of the day and orientation of the group to our work for tomorrow and the rest of the week. Tomorrow brings the Smithsonian Museum of Science in the morning and the Holocaust Museum in the afternoon. In the evening we will be relaxing at a Nationals game.

Stay tuned to our Facebook page and Twitter @POMSTrips for more updates and photos from the D.C. trip!
by Tom Harvey, Class of '08

It's good to be back. It's hard for me to believe that six years ago I was standing up here giving my eighth grade graduation speech and wondering what life at one of these word-for-word Montessori schools would be like. Hopefully the fact that it's been six years since anyone has asked me to make a speech doesn't say anything about the quality of the last six. My parents never would tell me what they really thought.

It really is an honor to be back, especially to this Bearkats banquet. I loved all of my time here at Post Oak, but I always particularly enjoyed my time on the Bearkats. I even still have my old Bearkats shirt, and since I haven't grown since 8th grade it still fits me pretty well—I must admit though, I was pretty surprised to get an invitation from Coach T to come speak to y'all tonight. I definitely was not the star athlete on any team, don't think I scored a single goal in soccer, and I'm pretty sure any videos of me playing volleyball would be pretty effective blackmail. But while I may not have ever been Post Oak's star athlete, I can say that my time on the Bearkats did have an outsized impact on me beyond my years at Post Oak.

When I think back to my time on the Bearkats, several things stand out. The first is the supportive environment that allowed me to take chances and step outside of my very narrow comfort zone. The second is the importance of the team and one's teammates that comes from playing with all of your best friends and under a coach who made sure everyone played and felt included. Finally, when I look back to my years as a Bearkat, I remember a lot of the things that I did and enjoyed having fun. No other team or group that I have been a part of was as committed to the idea that we were all there to have fun. While these may not seem like life-changing influences, they have had a surprising impact on my life since graduating from Post Oak.

looking the Bearkats might not seem like much of a leap out of anyone's comfort zone, but I was quite a risk-averse person. Left to my own devices, I was unlikely to do much of anything I didn't want to do, which might explain why I almost never did my vocab and spelling homework for Mr. Pinto's Upper EI class. Hoping that doesn't show up in this speech—Sports were one of the many things outside of my comfort zone. My older brother was a better athlete than I was, and in the many little league sports my parents signed me up for, I was not particularly gifted and often felt I wasn't much of a help to my team. My fear of failure and of disappointing my coaches, teammates, or parents prevented me from even truly engaging myself on those teams. I couldn't simply let loose and enjoy myself. Being on the Bearkats was different. Like everything at Post Oak, the team was all about building up its members, teaching them how to do and enjoy new things. It was in many ways a microcosm of Post Oak's Montessori mission—the fact that I never felt the same nerves on the Bearkats that I felt on every past team I think demonstrates this difference. But more than simply being an exception to my past experiences, the successful and rewarding experience demonstrated that risks aren't so bad. They can bring rewards, sometimes great ones, and it demonstrated that failure in a supportive community is not something to be afraid of. In my time as a Bearkat, we were all more likely to laugh with each other than get angry when someone (often me) missed a basket or a goal. One supportive experience like this can change the way you view stepping outside of your comfort zone.

This lesson was essential for me and my development. It can be really easy to go through life, especially given the independence of high school and college life, without ever challenging yourself to try something new. But then you miss out on a ton of what the world has to offer. Would I have felt comfortable playing volleyball, basketball, and soccer with next to zero experience at any other school or on any other team? Would other coaches have let me play?—Probably not, and that would have been my own loss because there were experiences I enjoyed. So when I left Post

I remember my rewarding experiences on the Bearkats and I took risks again. I decided to play football when I went to St. John's, despite knowing no one on the team and even less about how to actually play. I gained some of my best high school friends on that team and played all four years, despite only expecting to play once. I was never the best player on the team or close to it, but I enjoyed all the time I spent with my friends. When football was done, I joined the swim team, which had none of my friends from football and gained a whole new group of friends. By senior year I'd even managed to become a captain. Outside the world of sports, I took risks in other ways, I joined student government, my sophomore year in which I never received. During my senior year I joined the school musical, Chicago, cause what was the worst they could do to me? Make me sing and dance in front of hundreds of people? Yeah they did that, which was pretty rough, but the greatest rewards are found in the places you might never have thought to look.

Just this past semester I studied in Washington, D.C. through a Notre Dame semester program. I was able to intern in a congressman's office while taking classes at night. It was a great experience that led me to an even better opportunity this summer with the House Foreign Affairs Committee, but it all came about because of that last minute opening, two weeks before the end of the Fall semester and in the middle of my studying for final exams. The easier and less risky option would probably have been to stay on campus at Notre Dame with my friends but I decided to go for it and haven't regretted it since.

The second Bearkats theme I mentioned was the importance of the team and one's teammates. As y'all know, the Bearkats are a little different from most sports teams. It's small and its co-ed. I remember how happy we were when we could fit ten out of the eleven soccer positions. It's pretty hard, after all, when that's about the size of your whole middle school. But it all seemed normal to me, and in hard sight I think it was the best team dynamics I've ever had. Everyone is needed so everyone plays, and therefore everyone is in equal part of the team. Furthermore, when practically the entire grade has to play to field a team, it means a lot of your best friends are on the field or court with you all the time. Other schools don't get to say as much.

Oak's star athlete, I can say that my time on the Bearkats was different. Like doing my vocab and spelling homework for Mr. Pinto's Upper EI class—hoping that doesn't show up in this speech.—Sports were one of the many things outside of my comfort zone. My older brother was a better athlete than I was, and in the many little league sports my parents signed me up for, I was not particularly gifted and often felt I wasn't much of a help to my team. My fear of failure and of disappointing my coaches, teammates, or parents prevented me from even truly engaging myself on those teams. I couldn't simply let loose and enjoy myself. Being on the Bearkats was different. Like everything at Post Oak, the team was all about building up its members, teaching them how to do and enjoy new things. It was in many ways a microcosm of Post Oak's Montessori mission—the fact that I never felt the same nerves on the Bearkats that I felt on every past team I think demonstrates this difference. But more than simply being an exception to my past experiences, the successful and rewarding experience demonstrated that risks aren't so bad. They can bring rewards, sometimes great ones, and it demonstrated that failure in a supportive community is not something to be afraid of. In my time as a Bearkat, we were all more likely to laugh with each other than get angry when someone (often me) missed a basket or a goal. One supportive experience like this can change the way you view stepping outside of your comfort zone.

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I found that the inclusiveness and friendship that made the Bearkats so much fun should be a part of every team. I find that not everyone expects the same, some do want to be friends with everyone but others are more focused on their own personal goals, and some are just happy with the friends they have already. But if you work to be a unifier, find what you have in common with the people that you never expected. I found that the Bearkats were a way to do that, and I'm a big supporter of the Bearkats because I believe this program will have similar benefits for others. I am happy to see that the program is growing through this banquet and other events that call attention to it. Additionally, I think sports and other competitions are a great way to boost school spirit and pride, and as a proud Post Oak alumnus I am happy to see such.

Once again, thank you for inviting me here to speak tonight, it means a lot for me to be back here and to see current students enjoying everything that I used to enjoy. I have many great memories of this place, and its great to come back and share them. As some of you will soon find out, it's a lot easier to graduate than to actually have Post Oak behind you. Go Bearkats! Thank you.
MMUN 2014

"I cannot believe I have to veto our resolution tomorrow!" declared [redacted] at the conclusion of the second day of committee deliberations. Representing the Russian Federation, he had just spent the afternoon debating an ad hoc topic on the situation in Ukraine. Strongly in favor of social justice, he was conscious that he was an ambassador from a country with a different view. The next morning he was to accompany his peers into the interim General Assembly Hall at the United Nations Building. He was to witness the Draft Resolution, so carefully worded, to be voted in strong support of social justice, so striving to help solve the world’s problems with dignity, friendship and the fervor only opportunities like this can create.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank our Head of School, Mr. Long/our Business Office, Ms. Lunsford and Ms. Petersen/our parents and chaperones who were invaluable in their support, enthusiasm and faith. We are looking forward to another grand experience next year.

—Errol and Maya Pinto

MY MMUN EXPERIENCE

This year was my first time going to the Middle School MMUN Conference. I have been doing MMUN since fourth grade and each year it gets more enriching. One of my favorite aspects of the conference is the people that I meet from other countries. This year there were students from even more countries than last year. I made good friends from China, Italy, and Mexico as well as from all over the United States.

My country was Israel and I had a very challenging experience. My committee had to debate a third topic last minute and the topic was the Israeli-Palestine conflict. In the particular grouping of countries in my committee, we (Israel) had no allies so we were in a very difficult position to keep our country’s point of view. This was unlike any experience I have had at MMUN so far and I have learned how difficult it can be when you have few allies and nobody understands your position. A parent came to tell me how beautiful it was to see so many Montessori children, deep in conversation with each other, in the same environment, sans prejudice, presumptions or political strain, all striving to help solve the world’s problems with dignity, friendship and the fervor only opportunities like this can create.

Being able to learn that lesson the way I did at the conference is a once in a lifetime opportunity that I would not have gotten if I had not continued to participate in MMUN. All of the partners that I have had have been amazing but this year my partner, and I truly had to have each other’s backs in committee because we had so few allies.

This summer I am proud to be taking part in the leadership program to become a member of the dais next year and I hope to have some Post Oak students in my committee. I am so grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Pinto for bringing MMUN to this school.

Additionally, I am so appreciative of how hard Mr. and Mrs. Pinto worked on making sure we were prepared to go to the MMUN conference. Doing all of the hard academic preparation was challenging and sometimes stressful but in the end it was definitely worth it.

—Errol and Maya Pinto

We would like to go to New York to be International Ambassadors of Peace again in March, 2015!

Parents and students of Upper Elementary and Middle School, (next year’s 4th through 8th Grade), are welcome to attend. Come and hear about some of the experiences the students and parents have had in April 2014.

We will announce program details, and the approximate timeline involved for this unique adventure.

Please let us know if you will need child care for younger siblings during the meeting.

RSVP to errolpinto@postoakschool.org by Monday, May 12.
The POST OAK HIGH SCHOOL

WHAT’S HAPPENING NOW!

HOUSTON INDIE BOOK FEST 2014
Post Oak High School students participated in the 5th Annual Menil Community Arts & Houston Indie Book Festival on May 3. It was an ideal opportunity for them to promote their latest issue of the POHS Literary Chapbook, Mentre Leggeva, while getting to know people in the local writing community.

TIME CAPSULE
Our freshman and sophomore students have filled a time capsule that will be buried on the high school grounds. Students are now working on a design for a stepping stone inlay to mark the area.

HIGH SCHOOL BEARKATS FIRST SOCCER SEASON A SUCCESS!
Our POHS Bearkats overcame the challenges of an inaugural soccer season presented to them, and came out on top! On May 6, the team played a tough game to place second in the State Championship game. They were honored with medals alongside their peers at the Bearkat Banquet.

High School Bearkats take home the 2nd place trophy!

Bearkats Backyard BBQ Celebration

Fun was had by all at the 3rd Annual Bearkats Banquet this year. Celebrating the year in athletics for the Bearkats was the theme and a great celebration it was. Also joining the festivities were the first ever athletic team from our high school. This team competed in soccer this semester and we were happy they could join us for the fun. Hamburgers and hotdogs along with chips and salsa provided by Beck’s Prime was enjoyed by everyone.

The Bearkats all received medals for their hard work in soccer, basketball and volleyball during the year. The event was capped off by receiving the 3rd annual Bearkat Heart Award given to the athlete who has shown exemplary work throughout the entire year.

High School Bearkats receive their medals at the Bearkat BBQ Celebration

Students discuss the beliefs of the Populist party in Government

High School Bearkats Backyard BBQ Celebration
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 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. Jun. 28
- Thu, Jul. 17, 8pm
- Wed, Jul. 30, 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.

News from Post Oak’s Green Team

SPRING ENVIRONMENTAL LECTURE RECAP

Did you know that over nine million acres of prairie once existed as a grassland paradise for Native Americans and early settlers of the Gulf Coast region? Today less than 1% remains of this “critically imperiled” ecosystem as a refuge for rare and endangered birds, mammals, reptiles, insects and plants.

On April 24 we had the pleasure of hosting a lecture from the Katy Prairie Conservancy’s Jaime González, through which we learned about the wonders of prairie biodiversity and what is being done to “re-wild” Houston’s urban areas. We will be sharing this information with the Post Oak community through articles in The Post, postings on the Green Team site, our Facebook page, and at volunteer events at local farmer’s markets.
1. Lower Elementary students discuss their artwork with Ms. Fraga.
2. A Primary student explores numbers with the thousand chain.
3. A Lower Elementary student receives reading comprehension help from a friend.
4. Upper Elementary students excitedly discuss their studies in Biology.
5. Older Primary students work with the ten thousand chain together.
6. An Infants Community student concentrates on her work with clay.
7. Middle School students perform a dissection of a sheep’s eye in pairs.
8. A Primary student crafts her own story using the alphabet cards.
9. Students discuss their creative writing samples in Upper Elementary.
10. Middle School students moving up to the High School have a shadow day.
11. Collaboration is often the key to completing assignments in Upper Elementary.
## CALENDAR

### MAY 11 - 17

**Tue**
- 5/13 Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN) Introductory Event 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

**Wed**
- 5/14 Volunteer Appreciation Event 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

**Fri**
- 5/16 CALENDAR CHANGE: F.I.S.H. Meeting Cancelled

### MAY 18 - 24

**Tue**
- 5/20 New Infant Community Parent Gathering 7:00 p.m.

**Wed**
- 5/21 New Elementary Parent Gathering Lower EL 6:30 - 7:15 p.m. Upper EL 7:15 - 8:00 p.m.

**Thu**
- 5/22 New Middle School Parent Gathering 7:00 p.m.

**Fri**
- 5/23 Spring ASEP Ends

**Sat**
- 5/24 Buddha Day

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## NOTICE BOARD

### FOUND!

LUNCH BOXES, JACKETS, SWEATERS, AND MORE…

Missing something?
Have a look online:
www.postoakschool.org/postoak/Photos_Lost_and_Found_Gallery.asp

If you recognize an item you can come reclaim it from the treasure chest in the front lobby at your convenience.

**Please retrieve all items by Friday, May 20. Everything left over will be donated to charity.**

*If an item of clothing or lunch box has a name written on it, the item is placed in your child’s cubicle/locker. It’s a good idea to mark special items so they always find their way home!*

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## Dads’ Basketball

Every Wednesday Night in the Gym from 8 – 10 p.m.

All Post Oak Dads are invited to attend!

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## 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)

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