Two twelve year old girls gave me my first lesson in Jedi mind control. By concentrating on a ball in a clear plastic tube, I was able to make it levitate; not as well as either girl, but then, it was only my first lesson. “Concentrate,” said the recorded voice of Yoda. “Concentrate,” said the girls.

It was fun. They had a great time showing me this training device (I don’t know whether to call it a tool or a toy), and I was fascinated to see them.
demonstrate its use and to give it a try myself.

It seemed right that these Montessori students would be fascinated by concentration. Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos was a Montessori student. A *Business Week* feature story said, "As a preschooler, Jeffrey P. Bezos displayed an unmatched single-mindedness. By his mother's account, the young Bezos got so engrossed in the details of activities at his Montessori school that teachers had to pick him up in his chair to move him to new tasks."

In *Montessori: the Science Behind the Genius*, Dr. Angeline Lillard identifies three factors in a Montessori classroom environment that facilitate concentration: engaging materials, a three-hour work cycle, and minimizing of forces that might interrupt concentration.

Late this afternoon I went looking for students deep in concentration. The day was winding down. Even I was getting a bit squirrely. My eye landed on two six-year-old boys in a Lower Elementary class. They were working together on a map of Africa, placing little flags to name the countries and capitals. Sitting on the floor near the center of the classroom, there were five other students clustered within six feet of them, working on other projects. The boys were going back and forth from an atlas to the collection of unplaced labels, and then to the map. As they stretched and reached from one resource to another, they could have been practicing yoga or playing a game of Twister. Yet despite the physical dance that was a part of the process, they were locked-in on the work of locating and identifying the countries and capitals of Africa. I stood there watching for fifteen full minutes. They were fully engaged in this work even before I stepped up to the window, and they were still at it when I left.

Is this a form of Jedi mind training? Well, yes, and no. The work certainly drew them into deep concentration. The geography materials are engaging, and the class structure and the schedule of the day enable the children to work without interruption. No bells send them off to another activity after 45 minutes.

I cannot state strongly enough the importance of this. In his book, *Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi ("Just call me Mike") describes the state of deep concentration experienced by artists and scientists at work, a description that matches Dr. Montessori’s depiction of children in her classrooms. As parents and educators, we have a sense that concentration is valuable as a useful state and contributes to learning. You may be surprised to learn, however, that the first chapter of *Flow* is entitled "Happiness Revisited." In it Mike asks, "When are we happiest?"

His research identifies flow—the state of deep concentration—as the doorway to happiness.

That brings us back to the Jedi mind control game. Yes, it encourages the player to quiet the mind, to focus and to concentrate—but to concentrate on what? With the Jedi game, concentration is the end result. With flow theory as in the Montessori classroom, concentration is the by-product of meaningful work.

The key is to find work that you engage in willingly, joyfully—and not with a sense of drudgery or dutiful obligation. On the later occasion, you watch the clock until the end of the day ticks around. You experience boredom. On the former occasion, you lose all sense of time passing, and look up from your work to exclaim, "I can't believe it's one o'clock already!"

I conclude by returning to the children in the Montessori classroom, for whom concentration is an unexpected side effect of meaningful work.
2016 POST OAK FUND DRIVE

Making a Difference TOGETHER

Several Classes Are Very Close to 100%!

The development office will continue calling the remaining families asking for support. Please show your support of The Post Oak School by making your Annual Fund contribution today online, via pledge, securities, or check.

THANK YOU!

POST OAK FUND CHAIRS
LUCINDA & JAVIER LOYA
INVITE YOU TO THE
Leadership Circle Party

Contributors to the Post Oak Annual Fund at the Leadership Circle level ($3,000) are invited to join Lucinda and Javier Loya at their home for the annual, fabulous Leadership Circle Party in April.

Don’t miss it!

ANNUAL REPORT COMING SOON
Look for the 2014–2015 Annual Report arriving soon! It includes the last school year’s donors, financials, activities, and more.

We need to reach our financial goal and 100% parent participation.

Congratulations to the classes reaching 100% parent participation:

Maya Pinto
Emily Hansen
Simran Sood

Several classes are very close to reaching 100%. Please send in your contribution today to support the school and get your class to 100% participation.

Our sincere thanks to the 81% of Post Oak families who have contributed $280,000 toward our $300,000 goal.

2015–2016 PARTICIPATION TO DATE

TRUSTEES 100%
EMPLOYEES 100%
PARENTS 81%

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Three Cheers for Bearkats Basketball

by Mark Tucker, Athletics Director

HIGH SCHOOL
The Post Oak High School team got off to a great start by defeating Esprit 68–29 in their first league game in November. In our second game, the Bearkats stepped out of the league to play Northside and were defeated. Last Tuesday against Fifth Ward, the Bearkats prevailed 53–42 in an exciting game from start to finish. This leaves the High School Bearkats with a record of 2–1 going into the break.

6-7-8th GRADE GIRLS
Our girls’ 6-7-8th grade team jumped out to a great start to their season by beating Emery/Weiner by the score of 34–32 in an exciting overtime contest. The girls also won their next game against Harmony Endeavor, 19–10. The next three contests were against Yellowstone Academy, a very good team. The girls lost all three games to them by scores of 37–13, 28–14 and 31–19. This led the girls into the Fallbrook Holiday Classic. Here the girls went 2–1 against a public middle school and playing very good basketball. The girls go into the break with a record of 4–4.

6-7-8th GRADE BOYS
Our 6-7-8th grade boys’ team started the season against a big Yes Prep White Oak team and lost by the score of 48–34. Up next was St. Stephens and the boys won 54–20. This brought the boys to a contest against the always good team from Yellowstone Academy. Last year the boys lost to Yellowstone by the score of 70–21. This year’s Bearkats went into the game looking at it as a challenge and took them head on. The boys played extremely well together and were victorious by the close score of 38–36. It was a great game! They followed that win with another victory over Western Academy (36–29). This took the boys to the Fallbrook Holiday Classic where they won their division going 2–0 which put them against the second place finisher in the public school division. The boys beat a large team from Plummer Middle School from Spring ISD by the score of 29–21, which then put them in the final game against Bay City Middle School. Bay City took the win by the score of 37–30. The boys end the first semester with a record of 6–2.

January will be full of games for all three of our basketball teams, and we hope you come out and cheer on your Bearkats! •

Way to go, Bearkats!
UPCOMING BASKETBALL GAMES

6-7-8 GIRLS
1/13 vs Briarmeadow, 5:00 p.m.
1/14 at Yellowstone, 5:30 p.m.
1/19 vs Briarmeadow, 5:00 p.m.

6-7-8 BOYS
1/8 vs Woods, 5:00 p.m.
1/11 vs YTE, 6:30 p.m.
1/12 vs St. Stephens, 4:30 p.m.

HIGH SCHOOL
1/5 vs YP Northside, 6:30 p.m.
1/8 vs Woods, 6:00 p.m.
1/8 vs St. Stephens, 7:00 p.m.

Stay tuned for even more in January!
Spring ASEP Registration Is Open

Registration for spring ASEP classes is now available through MyBackPack. Sign up early to reserve your child’s place. Registration will end on Monday, January 4.

Parenting the Love & Logic Way®

presented by Post Oak Counselor Phylis R. Tomlinson, LPC, LMFT, ATR-BC

This series of courses offers solutions for families with children from early childhood to beyond adolescence. Previous participants are encouraged to return to share experiences and reinforce skills. Caregivers are also welcome.

Thursdays, Jan. 28, Feb. 4, 11, 18, Mar. 3, 10
9–10:30 a.m. at Post Oak
$20 per person for series, $15 for workbook
To register, send payment & email address to:
Phylis R. Tomlinson
4010 Blue Bonnet #109, Houston, TX  77025
Questions? Contact Phylis at phylistomlinson@gmail.com or 713.668.6558

Redirecting Children’s Behavior

with Deborah Fry, Ph.D., C.P.E.

This six week, fifteen-hour course teaches parents how to help children grow in a way that enhances self-esteem, teaches responsibility and promotes cooperation and self mastery.

Tuesdays, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, 9, 16, 23, & Mar. 1
6:30 to 9 p.m. at The Post Oak School
$245 for one; $345 per couple
Register online at www.deborah-fry.com

Spring Conference Registration in January

Spring Parent-Teacher Conference registration will be available on Monday, January 4.
Eight Ways to Unplug Your Holidays

The trick is to downsize—not demolish—your family’s reliance on technology over the holidays.

What’s topping your kids’ holiday wish lists this year? Chances are it has a screen, Internet access, and games. With a little planning—and kids’ assistance—you can balance your family’s tech activities with much-needed face time. Here’s how:

**Be jolly—but firm.** Let your kids know that you’ll be enforcing stricter time limits to create more quality family time. And tell them that the rules will apply to the grown-ups as well!

**Make a list (and check it with your kids).** Schedule some daily tech time for yourself and your kids. Get their input on which devices they absolutely can’t live without, and allow some limited use.

**Have a download derby.** Browse the app store together. Look for games and activities that the whole family can enjoy, such as the ones on our best app lists.

**Make setup fun, not frustrating.** No matter how easy to use companies make new devices, there’s always some (often frustrating) setup time. Truth be told, kids often figure out thorny tech glitches faster than parents, so involve your kids in the process. Use that time to discuss responsible use of the new device.

**Try some tech togetherness.** Unplugging for its own sake isn’t the point. Family time is. Plan a night of video games, movies, or maybe preselected YouTube videos that you can all enjoy together.

**Combine on- and offline activities.** Document your family memories and consider compiling them into journals, cards, and scrapbooks. This is a perfect time to share your own holiday memories with your kids.

**If no creatures are stirring ... don’t check your email.** Remember, your kids learn their media habits partly from you. Use quiet time to reflect on ways you can maximize the benefits of technology without letting it take over your family’s life.

**Have an old-fashioned holiday.** Challenge your family to choose low- or no-tech versions of favorite activities. Generate fun on your own steam—no WiFi, data, or plugs.

by Caroline Knorr Parenting Editor, Mom of one 12/2/2014

Reprinted with permission from Common Sense Media: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/8-ways-to-unplug-your-holidays
What's Happening Now at The Post Oak High School in the Museum District

Alumni Voices
A Parent Education Event Open to All

Thursday, January 7, 2016
at 6:30–8:30 p.m.

Bright Minds & Bright Futures:
How Post Oak prepared these alumni for success

Join us as we welcome back former students as they reflect on their experiences at The Post Oak School and thereafter. Parents of current students, as well as prospective parents, are invited and encouraged to attend.

RSVP to Christina Kopanidis-Cantu, Development Director, at 713-661-6688 or christinacantu@postoakschool.org

College Acceptances

New
Barnard College of Columbia University,
Indiana University at Bloomington,
Oklahoma State University,
Southern Methodist University, Trinity University

Austin College
Colorado State University
The Evergreen State College
Hanover College
Louisiana State University
Southwestern University
St. Edward’s University
The University of Alabama
University of Hawaii at Manoa
University of Mississippi
The University of Tennessee

We’ll keep you updated throughout the year as they come in.

Scholarships
Currently the 14 seniors at the High School have received scholarship offers totalling $580,000.
Congratulations!
Happy Winter Break
School resumes Tuesday, January 5, 2016.

Watch & Share
“There’s a sense of curiosity that Post Oak gives you...” So starts the school’s newest video. Have you seen it? Watch and share on Facebook: Main page (www.facebook.com/thepostoakschool/videos) and High School (www.facebook.com/postoakhighschool/videos). #postoakproud

WHO’S GOT SPIRIT?
Fridays are spirit days at Post Oak. Show your school pride with spirit wear from Lands’ End. For details, visit www.postoakschool.org/postoak/SpiritSale.asp and click on the Lands’ End logo.
Upper Elementary

Spelling Bee

Friday, January 8
from 10 to 11:30 a.m.
in the gym

Grandparents welcome!

POPA Coffee/Work Day

Wed., Jan. 6, 8:45 a.m.–noon
Bissonnet campus

Our teachers are experts in their fields.
Come find out how.

OPEN HOUSES
Tuesday, January 12, 2016, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, February 10, 2016, 7 p.m.
Tuesday, April 5, 2016, 7 p.m.

The POST OAK HIGH SCHOOL
in the Museum District
1. Parent volunteers work with Primary students on a wreath-making project.

2. The annual Primary Home Environment Sing-Along made for lots of smiles and fun.

3 & 4. This week included several plays performed by Elementary students for their parents and friends.

5. Students loaded the school van with donations for Braes Interfaith Ministries Food Drive last week. Thank you for the many gifts for those in need!
CALENDAR

DECEMBER 20–JANUARY 2

Mon
12/21–Fri 1/1
Winter break: school closed

Fri
12/25
Christmas

Fri
1/1
New Year’s Day

JANUARY 3–9

Teacher In-Service
School closed

Mon
1/4
Spring ASEP registration

closes

Spring parent-teacher

congress registration opens

Tue
1/5
High School J-Term begins

Wed
1/6
POPA Coffee/Work Day

8:45 a.m.–noon (Bissonnet)

Thu
1/7
Alumni Voices Night

6:30–8:30 p.m. (Bissonnet)

Fri
1/8
Upper EL Spelling Bee

10–11:30 a.m.

NOTICE BOARD

Shopping for the Holidays?

There’s an easy way to help raise money for our school—when you go shopping! Whether buying groceries at Randalls or holiday gifts and school supplies at Target, your purchases can benefit Post Oak! Grandparents, alumni, and friends are all welcome to participate in the programs. We truly appreciate all your support! Happy shopping! 🎄

Shopping Rebate form:
www.postoakschool.org/postoak/DownloadForms.asp

It’s a Girl!

Lauren Bergeron, one of our Full-
Day Young Children’s Community
assistants, delivered her baby on
Saturday, December 12. Daughter
weighs six pounds, 14 ounces. Both are doing well. Congratulations to the family! 🎉

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 Elaine Schweizer (elaineschweizer@postoakschool.org). If publication is on a Thursday due to school closure on Friday, then the deadline is 5:00 p.m. on the preceding Monday.

The Post Oak School was founded in 1963 and accredited by both the International Baccalaureate® Programme (IBO) 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