I love it when the strands of life weave together into a string of coherent thought. Or are we humans just wired to find connection and meaning among seemingly random events?

Today is Wednesday, the fourth and final day of the visit to Post Oak by the Montessori Peer Review Council (MPRC) team, a group of 10 heads of school, division directors, and master teachers from across the country. Their visit is a key element in the Montessori school-improvement process that began with self-assessment by each individual Post Oak teacher. That led to analysis by each academic department as a team, and resulted in a written self-study documenting our preparation for the MPRC visit.
Given our heightened awareness of the work involved in school improvement, it did not seem like a random coincidence when several Post Oak parents sent me two features from the media about school reform and better parenting.


Yes, parents encouraged their children to pursue excellence and success—but they also encouraged them to find “joy in work.” Their children had freedom to sort out their own values and discover their own interests. And that set them up to flourish as creative adults.

When the psychologist Benjamin Bloom led a study of the early roots of world-class musicians, artists, athletes and scientists, he learned that their parents didn’t dream of raising superstar kids. They weren’t drill sergeants or slave drivers. They responded to the intrinsic motivation of their children. When their children showed interest and enthusiasm in a skill, the parents supported them.

“Five Things To Know About Deeper Learning,” aired on KUHF. Here’s an excerpt from the interview with author and consultant Monica Martinez:

Students are active in learning: “Some people might even think some of these schools look like organized chaos. You know, one of my first visits to one school, I was like, ‘What is going on at this school?’ Because I saw students in the hallways and it looked like they were playing putt-putt. And then I walked into a classroom and I couldn’t figure out where the teacher was. And in reality, the students were out in the hallways to apply geometric principles on angles by using miniature golf as their experience. And the teacher was actually in the corner of the classroom, teaching a small group of students who didn’t understand some concepts. So she was revisiting that with them and making sure they understood it. And then you saw other students sitting around a laptop, doing research or working on their paper. So you see variety, you see activity and you see multiple things happening, instead of a very single-dimensional, sit-and-get, passive direct-instruction approach.”

On the same day I read those two stories, I met with a group of six middle school students to guide them in the final edits of a letter they had written to Max Ventilla, founder of the AltSchools in California, and Dominic Randolph, Headmaster of Riverdale Country Day School in NYC. Ventilla and Randolph wrote a series of five letters about school reform, published online under the title Build on This. The 41 Post Oak Middle School students each wrote a “sixth letter” responding to these two educational leaders. Then through a series of collaborative steps, those 41 letters were amalgamated into one. (Don’t try that at home!) That’s the letter they were editing with minimal guidance from me.

And speaking of coincidences, one of the six middle school editors just published a letter, “Going Green,” in the Bellaire Buzz.

Below is a letter I just sent to the parents of the six editors:

Dear Parents:

I had the pleasure and privilege today of working with six middle school volunteers on a collaborative editing task. The group was comprised of ___ and ___ and ___ Sitting in my office just before lunch, each of us, myself included, had a laptop open to a document in Google Docs, a four-page letter. Each of them was seriously committed to the task at hand, and after the briefest of introductions, which satisfied my need to formally open our session, the six of them launched into a collaborative process unlike any I have ever seen. It had more in common with stockbrokers on the trading floor than the contemplative writing and editing process I am currently engaged in. Six leaders and six followers sent their cursors skittering simultaneously in and out of the text on the screen, all of which was fully visible to each of us. They methodically edited paragraph by paragraph, reading aloud the paragraph in question, debating the merits of various alternatives, and then cutting and adding words or whole blocks of text concurrently, contradictorily, contentiously, and finally reaching consensus that it was right and ready to move on to the next. I say they were methodical; Shakespeare might have said there was a method to their madness.

In the midst of this kinetic and madcap process, there were serious discussions about punctuation, vocabulary, sentence structure, clarity of meaning, and strength of message. And as much as that list sounds like an agenda out of the teacher’s guide, it did not come from me,
2016 POST OAK FUND DRIVE

Making a Difference TOGETHER

Our list is still growing. Thank you!

Congratulations

to the classes reaching 100% parent participation:

Emily Hansen
Errol Pinto
Maya Pinto
Simran Sood
Anita Taj Mahmood
Miriam Winton
9th Grade

Please send in your contribution today to support the school and get your class to 100% participation.

Several Classes Are on the Verge of 100%!

The development office will continue reaching out to 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!

Your matching gift can make you a leadership circle member and join in the fun at the party!

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!
It’s Time: Planning for Gala 2017!

GALA CHAIRS ANNOUNCED

Every two years, the Post Oak Parent Association hosts a grand gala to bring together our parent community and raise funds for the school. Our next gala happens in spring of 2017, and planning for this fabulous fête has already begun. I am delighted to announce our 2017 Gala chairs will be: Jennifer Chavis and Stelli Parsapour. Both women have been stand out volunteers on various events. Stelli has co-chaired Field Day and co-chaired the auction in our last gala. Jennifer has co-chaired POPA Dinner and also worked incredibly hard on last gala’s auction. They are excited to be given this opportunity to work with Post Oak volunteers and will be reaching out to get folks signed up on the many subcommittees. Currently they are working on a venue and theme...no spoiler alerts here!

Please thank Jennifer and Stelli for taking on this heroic volunteer role—one full year of planning! And when they ask you to help, please say yes!

—Christina Kopanidis-Cantu, Development Director

These Middle School students had hammered away at the letter for a week and the session with me was the final step. Wow.

The result will be published in several venues and the entire Middle School will be credited as its authors. What is completely invisible behind their document is the process and the metaskills required to produce it. That’s why I chose to write this color commentary. I hope you consider it an addendum to their recent semester reports. If every student everywhere demonstrated such a high level of engagement, such commitment to the craft of writing, such willingness to work through lunch, and such high-level collaborative and leadership skills, there would be no national debate about the purpose and form of education.

Regards, John
© John Long and The Post Oak School
J-Term Courses 2016

by James Moudry, High School Director

This year, the high school J-Term courses continued the Post Oak traditions of student choice, independent work, and deep exploration. Students last month enrolled in one of five course intensives that ran for three weeks and replaced the usual high school schedule.

The planning for the J-Term courses began last October with students and faculty members collaborating on laying out the options for the J-Term courses. Curriculum was outlined, supplies identified, experts scheduled, and travel reservations made. By the end of December the courses were set.

Mostly.

Two students proposed and had approved individual J-Term experiences that would take them on solo travel adventures during the month of January. Their initiative demonstrated exactly what Post Oak is about: finding your voice, advocating for yourself, and working hard to do more. Their two independent study courses joined the five J-Term courses to round out the offerings.

The five courses this January were: Falmouth Field School, The Art of Cooking, Electric Vehicle Conversion, Positive and Mindset Psychology, and Filmmaking. In addition, ('19) created his own independent study course, “Alternative Medicine Internship,” in Hawai’i. ('18) followed up a project he did last year with a trip to India to implement his vision of distributing laptop computers in orphanages. Reflecting on his field work during the J-Term presentations last week, joked, “It was one of those project proposals you do for a class that you're not sure if it will go anywhere and you send a bunch of emails to people kind of hoping they won't email back. Then they did and it became this real thing and I got to make it happen.”

The real work study and field exploration isn't over yet.

As the second semester started up this week, plans were in high gear for the next high school interim session in late March and early April. A-Term will include courses on: Electric Car Conversion; Eastern Disciplines; Rock Climbing; Civil Engagement in Managua, Nicaragua; and Paleontology Field Studies.

Doing more—Post Oak high school students just can’t seem to stop themselves. •
Post Oak’s Culinary Adventure

by [High School student]

We at the Post Oak High School are concerned about our connection with our community and our environment. One of the ways we connected this semester was through a January culinary class in which over a dozen students participated.

We connected through the development of our cooking skills. In the process, we increased our knowledge of the local food community, as well as where our food comes from, how it gets to our table and what happens in the meantime.

On the first day of the term, we visited Recipe House, where we would be preparing our dishes under the leadership of Chef Justin for the next three weeks. Recipe House also doubles as the headquarters of Recipe For Success, the organization with whom Post Oak partnered to offer this opportunity to students. We started our lessons with knives and the proper methods for handling them, emphasizing proper safety in the kitchen. We also learned over the three week period how to make vinaigrettes, bake sourdough bread from scratch and sauté different types of food, such as vegetables and meats. Additionally, we reviewed the safe way to handle raw meats and other food safety practices and habits.

During the course we toured a commercial kitchen, Trevisio; worked at an urban farm, Finca Tres Robles; and had a hands-on honey harvesting class. We also examined what would be the most cost-effective and nutritious way to create a meal at home, while adhering to a budget for a given a number of people to feed. Many of the students have been asked to cook for their own families, with a few students tasked to do so on a daily basis. Other students displayed their baking proficiency, and constructed many savory pastries!

In conclusion, this experience was incredibly insightful and very well received by everyone who participated in the course, providing many lasting and tasty memories for years to come. 


My Dad

by [blank] High School student

For as long as I can remember, Sundays at Dad’s has meant waking up to the smell of pancakes freshly cooked from the stovetop, his grin with the crinkled, blue gray eyes and floury hair telling me good morning. One Sunday, I set a timer for 8 a.m., the equivalent of 3 a.m. for my 11-year-old self, so I could wake up and see how he made them. I remember walking into the kitchen, eyes ricocheting from the containers of white flour to the golden egg yolks to the vibrant orange pumpkin puree. My dad took me through the process of making pancakes and once I understood, I knew cooking to be even more magical than I had ever imagined. And so, I began cooking myself.

It started with making my first batch of brownies which evolved into waking up every morning at 6 a.m. for two years so I could practice and make them better. My father began to teach me more, everything from grilled chicken to mango souffles. I have cooked many things over the past five years yet my father’s pancakes will always be home to me. They are his winding laughter and crinkled eyes, the way he pores over his computer every day for work as a computer scientist yet always made time to make me those magical pancakes. And that is why I love cooking; it unites people regardless of distance.

A Montessori Meeting

From Post Oak parent Katie Orr:

I thought you might enjoy a picture of our students meeting Pulitzer Prize winning author Anthony Doerr [a former student of Head of School John Long]. It was a meeting of like-minded Montessori students with an immediate familiarity...

All the students were very proud of their Montessori and Post Oak credentials.
COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

Appalachian State University, Texas A&M University—College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, University of Houston, The University of Southern California, The University of the South (Sewanee), Willamette University

Austin College
Barnard College of Columbia University
Babson College
Colorado State University
Elon University
The Evergreen State College
Hanover College
High Point University
Indiana University at Bloomington
Louisiana State University
Marquette University
Oklahoma State University
Parsons School of Design—The New School
Rhodes College
Southern Methodist University
Southwestern University
St. Edward's University
Texas A&M University—Dwight Look College of Engineering
Texas Christian University
Trinity 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.

Our students LOVE LEARNING. Come find out WHY.

HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSION OPEN HOUSE

Wed., Feb. 10, 7 p.m.
MUSEUM DISTRICT CAMPUS
1102 AUTREY ST., HOUSTON

THE STIMULATING SEVEN SENIOR IB ART EXHIBITION

TUES., MARCH 1, 6:30–8:30 P.M.
ONE NIGHT ONLY
GLASSELL JUNIOR SCHOOL
5100 MONTROSE BOULEVARD
Notes on a Successful Basketball Season

by Coach Tucker and Coach Trevino

6-7-8 GIRLS

Our second ever girls basketball team finished their season with a final record of four wins and seven losses. Our team worked hard at practices to show improvement over the season and grew together as a team. Coach Trevino and I enjoyed working with the girls all season and are very proud of how they played together and were always pulling for each other.

6-7-8 BOYS

This group of boys finished with a record of 15 wins and four losses, which is a Post Oak School record for wins in a season. They also finished second in the Regional Championship game, a very exciting down-to-the-wire finish, losing by one point 52–51 to Yellowstone Academy. The boy's team grew over the season and showed much improvement, especially in the area of teamwork. The boys also finished in second place in the Fallbrook Holiday Classic last December, only losing to a public middle school team from Baytown.

HIGH SCHOOL

The High School finished the season with a record of six wins and five losses, which included winning the Regional Championship game against Esprit by the score of 43–28. This team was led by seniors [name], [name], and [name]. We will miss you guys next year! The team was coached by Cliff McBride, our coach for the High School athletes.

Our basketball teams played over 40 games this season, the most ever for Post Oak. Thanks for a great season!
POST OAK PARENT EDUCATION EVENTS

FISH
FAMILIES INTEGRATING
SCHOOL & HOME
presents

Weave a
Wondrous Tale . . .
Open Books
for an Open World

Fri., Feb. 19 at 9 a.m.
in the Common Room

Facilitated by
Primary Teacher
Tamara Townsend
& Librarian
Cory Eckert

The Post Oak Book Fair is
coming April 17 at Brazos
Bookstore!

PRIMARY PARENT EDUCATION EVENT

How Emotional Development Supports Cognitive Growth in Children
facilitated by Dr. Michelle Forrester

Tues., Feb. 23, 6:30 p.m.

Child care provided for Primary and Elementary age children, including a light dinner (pizza, fruits, and veggies) for the children.

Parenting the Love & Logic Way®
presented by Post Oak Counselor
Phylis R. Tomlinson, LPC, LMFT, ATR-BC

This series offers solutions for families with children from early childhood to beyond adolescence. Previous participants are encouraged to return to share experiences and reinforce skills. Care givers 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

phylistomlinson@gmail.com | 713.668.6558
Primary Parent-Child Night
Thurs., Feb. 11
Group 1: 5–6 p.m.
Group 2: 6:15–7:15 p.m.

Childcare is available for Elementary siblings (not for Primary-aged children). Please call the front desk to make a reservation.

Coffee with the Elementary Director
Wed., Feb. 10 at 9 a.m.
in the Common Room
Join Elementary Director Jeff Schneider along with Elementary students as they present examples of collaborative work.

Upper Elementary History Fair
Thurs., Feb. 18
7–8 p.m. in the gym
STORYTIME with Cory

A new theme each time, including...

farm animals, spring, & food

March 30, April 6, and April 13
at 2 p.m. in the Post Oak Library

For parents and children in Young Children’s Community & Half-Day Primary

There are also two planned storytimes at the annual Book Fair, Bookapalooza, April 17 at Brazos Bookstore.
Stay tuned for more fun activities!
Important Dates

2016 END OF YEAR

May 26  Last day of school and HS Commencement
May 27  In-service day
May 30  Memorial Day—school closed
May 31 & June 1  In-service days
June 6  Summer school & HMI begin

2016–2017
CALENDAR SUMMARY

Aug. 5 Summer school & HMI ends
Aug. 15 Faculty/staff return
Aug. 23 Middle & High School students return
Aug. 29–Sept. 2 First week for all YCC, PRI, and EL students
Sept. 5 Labor Day—school closed
Oct. 10 Columbus Day—school closed
  Employee retreat/in-service, no childcare available
Nov. 23–25 Thanksgiving Break—school closed
Dec. 16 Early dismissal
Dec. 19–30 Winter Break—school closed
Jan. 2 Teacher In-Service—school closed
Jan. 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day—school closed
Feb. 20 Presidents’ Day—school closed
Mar. 13–17 Spring Break—only students with expanded-year contracts attend
April 14 Good Friday—school closed
May 26 Last day of school

Teacher In-Service
Fri., Feb. 12
Classes not in session: only students with expanded year contracts attend

AND

Presidents’ Day
School closed
Mon., Feb. 15

SUMMER PROGRAMS for YCC, Primary, and Elementary Transition are available online. Class sizes are limited—register today! Visit our website: www.postoakschool.org/postoak/SummerPrograms.asp or www.postoakschool.org/postoak/Download_Forms.asp to download the brochure with application.
1. Care of the environment in a YCC classroom also develops fine motor skills.
2. A YCC student builds his vocabulary, learning the names of different vehicles.
3. Adding with the stamp game in Primary.
4. Students hop like kangaroos in PF.
5. A Primary student studies continents with the world map.
6. Another Primary student focuses on multiplication bead bars.
7. EL students work together to identify common multiples.
8. Students gather for a Lower EL Spanish lesson as one of our MPRC visitors observes the class.
9. Multiple-digit multiplication in Upper EL.
10. An Upper EL student diagrams parts of a circle.
11. After-Care students gather to hear a story read by a Middle School student.
CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 7–13

Mon 2/8  Chinese Lunar New Year

Tue 2/9  Mardi Gras

Wed 2/10  Coffee with the EL Director 9–10 a.m.
          HS Admission Open House 7 p.m. (Museum District campus)
          Ash Wednesday

Thu 2/11  PRI Parent/Child Night
          Group 1: 5–6 p.m.
          Group 2: 6:15–7:15 p.m.

Fri 2/12  Teacher In-Service
          Classes not in session: only students with expanded year contracts attend
          Re-registration deadline for returning students

Fri–Mon 2/12–2/15  AMI-USA Refresher Course in Los Angeles

FEBRUARY 14–20

Mon 2/15  Presidents’ Day: school closed
          Nirvana Day

Wed 2/18  Upper EL History Fair 7–8 p.m.

Thu 2/19  Families Integrating School and Home (FISH) meeting 9 a.m. (Bissonnet campus)

NOTICE BOARD

RE-REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR RETURNING STUDENTS

Re-enrollment contracts are now available in My BackPack. Please submit your contracts online along with the deposit by Friday, February 12, 2016.

DATE CHANGE

The last day of school has moved to Thursday, May 26. It will still be an early dismissal day for all students.

Please see page 9 for a full list of important upcoming dates.

FOUND!

LUNCH BOXES, JACKETS, SWEATERS, AND MORE…

Reclaim your child’s lost item from the treasure chest in the front lobby by Thurs., Feb. 11. All remaining items will be donated to charity on Tues., Feb. 16.

Note: If clothing or lunch boxes have 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!

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

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