Board Brief • HS J-term • UE Bee

Photo by Nancy Tucker
Read the Winter/Spring issue of CKW Luxe for an interview with Post Oak Head of School Maura Joyce (page 42). CKW (Caring, Kindness, and Wisdom) Luxe is a Houston-based philanthropic, inspirational, and quality living magazine whose profits are donated to various children’s charities.

Our thanks to the publisher, Connie Kwan-Wong, for providing our parents with copies.

ON THE COVER

Our Middle School boys basketball team brought home a trophy in December after winning the Holiday Classic with a 3–0 record.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for mid-week updates, photos, and more:

www.facebook.com/thepostoakschool/
www.facebook.com/postoakhighschool/
twitter.com/postoakschool
twitter.com/postoakhs
As we move into the new year and think about what 2017 will bring, I reflect back on what I learned from the last semester to help guide my focus in this next one. The Post Oak parents who attended the Montessori Outcomes presentation at the end of September were part of my teaching team. During that parent education event, groups of you were asked to identify and prioritize academic skills, social skills, and personal characteristics you hope your children master or exhibit at the end of their time here at Post Oak. The exercise itself was valuable, and the results were telling. At the top of two of the lists—social skills and personal characteristics—was the word empathy. Clearly important to you, but also to the rest of the world, empathy has been the subject of many research studies and articles over the past several years. Googling articles about empathy and education in 2016 alone yields about 2.9 million hits.

As a follow up to the parent event, we were motivated to post a sweet Sesame Street video about empathy on the Post Oak Facebook page. This was accompanied by an article that described a study revealing that empathy is not prevalent among most American children.

That article referenced the Making Caring Common project out of Harvard’s Graduate School of Education that aims to create Caring Schools. Richard Weissbourd who runs the project at Harvard was the featured speaker at the November ISAS Heads meeting that I attended in Phoenix.

Empathy is defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Why is it so important? As one Post Oak parent said at the Outcomes event, “It is the key to solving all the world’s problems.” Maria Montessori believed this too, and she made sure that empathy was a key element to her work with children. However, if you read all of her books and pore over the curriculum, you might not even find the word empathy, much less presentations or lessons that address it directly. In Denmark, preschoolers begin their empathy education looking at pictures of other children experiencing emotions and are taught to identify them and share how it makes them feel. This is one way to tackle it head on. Montessori took a different approach—one that I believe cultivates empathy within the classroom community by making sure the children understand a very basic premise: everything and everyone is connected.

The concept of connection is presented very early in a very simple way. Many of us grew up learning this as “sharing.” In a Post Oak classroom, by simply putting only one of each material on the shelf (with toddlers, no less!) the children learn that they “own” nothing and share everything. Simple lessons with our youngest children, like walking around another person’s mat or holding the water pitcher with the utmost care, sends a message. The practical life areas in Primary are described with the word “care,” “Care of the person” and “care of the environment” reinforces the idea that everyone and everything has value. In the structure of a Montessori environment, students learn that the limits of their freedom begin and end with the needs of all of the other people in their class. This is the foundation for understanding and sharing the feelings of your classmates.

In the Elementary, there is a beautiful presentation called The Chart of Interdependencies that shows a picture of the sun, earth, water, plants, animals, and human beings. This chart is continued on page 7
College Acceptances

College acceptances and scholarship awards are starting to come in for our High School seniors. As of December, the class of 2017 has been awarded $405,000 in merit scholarships.

- Baylor University
- Carleton College
- Colorado School of Mines
- Eckerd College
- The Evergreen State College
- Hendrix College
- Lynn University
- University of South Carolina
- Saint Mary’s College of California
- Stephen F. Austin State University
- Texas Tech University
- Trinity University

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

Books Matter!

Friends of the Library is a financial support group for the library. All funds raised go to support the Post Oak Library and book collections on both campuses. You can become a Friend of the Library (FOL) by making a donation online. FOL contributors’ children will be invited to attend a Stuffed Animal Sleepover Storytime later in the spring.

What is the Stuffed Animal Sleepover? Parents drop off young children for a pj storytime with their favorite stuffed animal friend who stays behind when the child is picked up. The stuffed animals have a fun-filled sleepover in the library. Mrs. Eckert will tell the animals stories and tuck them into bed, and when the children return for them in the morning, they will receive a photo of their animal friend’s adventure.

New this year! All families will receive an order form for the Post Oak Curated List of Books! Wondering which books to buy for your toddlers through teenagers? Post Oak teachers have excellent recommendations and you can pre-order these books via the order form and then pick them up at Book Fair happening April 2 at Brazos Bookstore. The order form will be distributed to Post Oak families Jan. 23 and are due back Jan. 27.

In Memoriam

Former board member R. Michael Moore passed away in November. His two daughters, Lindsey and Whitney, attended Post Oak through eighth grade. Former Head John Long remembers that Mike was the first parent to show up at the school, mop in hand, when the school flooded from Tropical Storm Allison in 2001. The family asked that memorial contributions be made to The Post Oak School for the scholarship fund.

We are truly grateful for his enduring kindness and service.
**Post Oak Board Brief**

**NEWS FROM OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

_by Melissa Coleman, Post Oak Board Chair_

Welcome back to the start of spring semester—with it, the Board of Trustees will be introducing a new column in *The Post*. We hope that this will allow the community to become more familiar with the work of the Board.

The purpose of the Board is to facilitate the school’s implementation of its mission and to provide support, stability, and solvency to promote growth and development of Post Oak’s students, faculty, and staff. The Board’s work is directed by a five-year plan in which annual goals that further the mission and vision of the school are established. This year, we are focused on a couple of key items; the first priority is to ensure a successful transition for the head of school. We are thrilled to have Maura leading Post Oak into the next stages of growth and continued excellence, and congratulate her on a successful first semester. The school is continuing to make progress towards ISAS (Independent Schools Association of the Southwest) re-accreditation.

Our commitment to AMI principles confirms that Post Oak follows the most rigorous path of Montessori education for both the mind and heart; ISAS confirms that the school excels in academics and governance.

The Board is made up primarily of parents who have professional and personal backgrounds in the skills required in managing a non-profit entity. The Board also strives to have at least one member not directly associated with The Post Oak School in order to provide an external perspective. The Post Oak bylaws call for at least 12 members on the Board, and we currently have 17 Trustees, and 6 Emeritus Trustees. Over the coming months we will try and introduce you to a number of the Board members; however, a list of Board members with brief biographies can be found on the school’s website.

One of the key responsibilities of the Board is in regard to fundraising. We’d like to take this opportunity to thank those who have participated in this year’s Annual Fund. The school has an annual goal to raise $300,000 with 100% participation, which goes toward faculty development and program enrichment, as well as permitting us to attract funding from foundations and other sources. The 100% participation goal is important because it demonstrates the strength of commitment to the Post Oak community, and we ask that each of you make a gift to recognize this. The Board of Trustees has a long tradition of participation at 100%, as do the faculty and staff. We’d like to encourage participation of the entire community at this level.

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**THE GREAT GATSBY GALA**

Friday, February 10
Hotel ZaZa

Gala Chairs
Jennifer Chavis & Stelli Parsapour

**DID YOU RECEIVE YOUR GALA INVITE?**
If not, please contact the development office or pick one up at the front desk.

**GET YOUR RSVP IN!**
If you want to be seated with specific individuals, please let us know by writing on the back of the RSVP card.
A gift of appreciated securities that you have held for more than one year is frequently the most economical way to give. You will be eligible to take a federal income tax deduction equal to the fair market value of the stock on the date of the gift for up to 30 percent of your adjusted gross income and will not have to recognize the appreciation as capital gain. Contact christinacantu@postoakschool.org for more information.

Congratulations to Lindsay Mistretta’s, Debbie Nickerson’s, and Simran Sood’s classes for reaching 100% parent participation!
usually presented in Upper Elementary, after children have a firm grasp of the relationship between the sun and earth, the plants and animals, the winds and the water cycle, etc. The lesson is simple and explains how the earth, sun, and water are interrelated and how the power of the sun makes water and earth affect one another. It shows how the plants and animals rely on the earth, sun, and water, and how animals and plants need each other for survival as well. Through a series of circles and arrows, as you move down the chart, you see how humans rely not only upon the sun, earth, water, plants, and animals, but also need each other.

This lesson about interconnectedness is a profound yet simple concept. It promotes that ability to understand and share other people’s experiences and feelings, because we know that children all over the world are waking up with the same needs—food, water, shelter—we all have, and we all rely on others to get those needs met. Empathy is only possible if there is an understanding and appreciation of interdependency—how we all fit together.

There is a purple circle in the center of the chart. This represents the collection of knowledge and technology and innovation, from farming to the pencil to the computer. The lesson talks about how once humans discover something it becomes part of our collective wisdom for all of humanity to use. The presentation emphasizes a sense of gratitude for those who came before us and made these contributions. None of us can do this alone.

Once again, Montessori is two steps ahead of everyone else. Montessori education doesn’t teach empathy as much as it cultivates empathy, makes it possible by laying the groundwork. As with the beginning of any new year, that understanding of the interdependency of humanity is critical not only for our children but for all of us to empathize with others.

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Montessori Journey

Friday, January 20
6–8:30 p.m.

& Saturday, January 21
8 a.m.–3 p.m.

facilitated by John Long

During this (adults only) two-day workshop, you will experience the six different classroom environments from the Young Children’s Community through High School, first as an observer and then as a participant receiving lessons and working with classroom materials. This workshop is a hands-on approach to understanding how and what your child is learning. Enrollment is limited to 40 persons and the charge is $30 per person.

Register on our website using the link in the left-hand menu.
High School J-Term Courses

FARMING AND SOCIAL PRACTICES
Students will learn about urban farming and various methods for sharing and distributing food within communities. Students will meet with a local composter utilizing local food waste, two urban farms, a food co-op distributing for the farms, a raw kitchen utilizing leftover organic produce, and an activist group preparing donated food for the homeless. Additionally, students will start a small garden, investigate the logistics of setting up a food co-op in an area known as a food desert, explore various social practices including Relational Art and the artist as catalyst, and plan an educational and/or artistic event related to food in the area.

THE ART OF COOKING
These are hands-on cooking classes designed to start or develop culinary skills and get an understanding of ingredients and cooking methods so that the student can cook confidently with and for others. Partnering with Recipe For Success, the teacher is experienced Chef Justin Kouri. Activities include: How to make a menu; making affordable meals with $4; try 30 vegetables in 10 days; field trip to an organic farm; social service with low-income teens and teaching them about nutritious affordable meals; setting the table; cooking appetizers; style of food; how to serve the dishes; how to clean the table.

CARDS AND DICE
$17.2 million was won a few months ago over the course of 72 hours. When we make decisions in life, factors like risk, benefit, likelihood, feel, or intuition motivate our choices. During J-Term, we will play and learn how to calculate and factor odds, probability, statistics, psychology, game theory, and effective decision making through Backgammon, Texas Hold’Em, and Blackjack. You will understand why some of these games relate directly to life.

COMPUTE A COMPUTER
We use computers every day with little thought in how the components under our fingers or in front of our eyes work or what is there. This course will teach students this with hands-on experience. First, students will build their own computer and learn how each part affects the device they are making. Then afterward we will test out an operating system. The goal of this course is for students to come out being able to explain what is in their computer and how it works. We will begin by learning what goes into and what are the parts of building a computer. Then we will research to make a list of necessary parts each person needs to get. They will use their given funds on the trip to MicroCenter to purchase the items they need. The rest of the time will be used to construct and experiment with the computers.

CREATIVE AND CRITICAL WRITING
This is an introductory course in creative writing and composing critiques of films, restaurants, and a theater production. Students will spend one week studying the fundamentals of writing and engaging in writing exercises. In the second week, students will develop either a collection of poems or a short story, working with writers in the University of Houston Creative Writing graduate program. To finish out the course, students will visit restaurants, attend a film screening, and a theater production in order to write critiques about them on the ‘Montrose Mavens’ blog.

FALMOUTH FIELD SCHOOL
In this ongoing course, students acquire a deep appreciation for the role played by the Jamaican port city of Falmouth in the sugar and slave trade of the 17th to 19th centuries and for the ways that the global economic system (in particular, cruise ship tourism) continues to transform the lives of the city’s inhabitants. Through their work in architectural restoration and other projects, students also help to improve the lives of the Jamaicans living in Falmouth today, as well as forming life-long relationships of empathy and friendship with the Jamaicans with whom they work.

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and live. In keeping with the field school model, students are encouraged to take the course as many times as they are able, strengthening their relationships with the Jamaican people, deepening their study interests, and expanding the scope of their individual projects over time.

**POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY**

Positive Psychology is the study of not only what makes people happy, but how happiness is, in part, created from one’s attitude, rather than externally. In this course, we explore several concepts about positive psychology, such as fixed vs. growth mindset, shifting attitudes about ourselves, and what constitutes happiness. We do field work exploring these ideas in a research capacity, and present to one another about concepts in the field. We hear from experts in the field via Skype or visits, and read current works. Assessments are on participation, presentations, papers, and journal reflections.

**DIY PRODUCT DESIGN**

Ever wanted to design and launch your own product line? This J-Term provides students with the opportunity to design an item and create the necessary components to take it from an idea to a fully-packaged ready-to-sell product. Students will work in small groups or individually to design the product itself, as well as the packaging, and will have a completed product that they will sell at a local farmer’s market by the end of the term. Potential ideas can range from laser-cut jewelry or household products, soap making, and leather work.
Up, Up, & Away
by Lindsay Mistretta,
Lower Elementary Teacher

One of my favorite things about elementary Montessori is the opening of the world to the children. While they’re in the Casa, their lives are very insular, and that is what they require at that age. But when they move up to elementary they want and need a larger environment in which they can stretch their legs, literally and figuratively.

To help the children take a more active role in the outside world, I give letter-writing lessons in the first year and often encourage them to write to people who interest them. Usually, they write to friends or family but this year Avi and Federico, second and third-year students who love all things relating to airplanes, were inspired to write to Delta Airlines and JetBlue Airlines. Federico was busy with other work, so on behalf of himself and Federico, Avi wrote the letters telling the airlines about how much they liked them and asking for a picture of an A320 aircraft. We edited the letters together, looked up the addresses, I showed him how to address an envelope, and we sent them off.

A few months passed and the boys didn’t hear back from either airline, and it was mostly forgotten. Then, one afternoon in mid-December, I opened the classroom door, and there was a big box sitting on the ground addressed to Avi from JetBlue. Much to the class’ chagrin, Avi had left early that day, and we had to wait until the next day to open the box. What we found was so much more than pictures of airplanes.

JetBlue had sent both Avi and Federico a plethora of JetBlue themed goodies, several hand-drawn and colored pictures from the marketing team, two beautiful and big model A320 airplanes, and an invitation to come to the airport to tour the aircraft.

Needless to say, we were all astounded. Avi and his mom sent a thank you email to the company and told them how happy and excited the whole class was with JetBlue’s response. JetBlue then responded by extending the tour invitation to the entire class. We are now planning our trip and can’t wait to see the plane in person.

Food Drive
Thanks

Mid-December, a group of Post Oak Elementary students loaded the bus with your generous donations for the Braes Interfaith Ministries Food Drive, and took off to deliver them. Thank you for making the drive a success and helping so many families in need!
Spelling Bee

The gym was abuzz last Friday as students spelled their way through the annual Upper Elementary Spelling Bee. There were hugs and high-fives of support all around throughout the two-and-a-half-hour event. Congratulations to our winner—second year in a row!—Olivia   for their spelling skills and perseverance.

Soccer Shots Spring Session Registration

Soccer Shots will hold classes with priority enrollment for Post Oak families this spring. Classes will be held at Bellaire Town Square on

3–4-year-olds: 4–4:45 p.m.
5–6-year-olds: 4–4:45 p.m.

3–4-year-olds: 5–5:45 p.m.
5–7-year-olds: 5–5:45 p.m.

Registration will open on Wednesday, January 18 at noon on the Soccer Shots website. To register, visit https://www.soccershots.org/houston/. Select “Enroll at a Site” from the top menu bar, then select “School Programs.” Choose the appropriate age group and time for The Post Oak School @ Bellaire Town Square sessions.

If the class is full, please register for the wait list. It is a free option and it is the only way Soccer Shots can capture the level of interest in the program and plan for possible additional classes.

This program is run independently by Soccer Shots and is a great way for Post Oak students to register for the same soccer class and enjoy the sport together.

Please note this program is not run by the school and is held off school property; parents are responsible for arranging transportation to and from practice, and arranging to have a responsible adult present during practice.

Please call Soccer Shots with any questions about age requirements or issues with registration. 281-995-7208 | houston@soccershots.org
Coffee with the Elementary Director

Wed., Jan. 11 at 9 a.m.
in the Bissonnet Common Room

Topic: Elementary lesson presentation

Parenting the Love & Logic Way®

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

Thursdays, Jan. 12, 19, 26, Feb. 2, 9, 16

9–10:30 a.m. at Post Oak
$130 individual, $240 per couple
Workbook (optional) $15

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

Afternoon Tea & Conversation with the YCC Teachers

Thursday, January 26
9–10 a.m.

All parents of young children are invited to these informal gatherings to hear and discuss current topics about developmental milestones in their children.

YCC & PRI PARENTED

Montessori into the Future

Wed., Jan. 25
6:30 p.m. Bissonnet Campus

Parents of YCC and Primary students are invited to learn more about continuing on a Montessori path into Elementary.
Redirecting Children’s Behavior
with Deborah Fry, Ph.D., C.P.E.

Tuesdays, Jan. 31, Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28, & Mar. 7
6:30 to 9 p.m. at The Post Oak School
$245 for one; $345 per couple
Register online at www.deborah-fry.com

As the teen years progress, we feel that our time with our children is “running out” and yet their needs (and challenges) are many. Despite the fast train to adulthood, our children still need our time, energy, and engagement in their lives. Positive Discipline is a tool created by Jane Nelsen that is based on some simple concepts about human beings: children are social beings, all behavior is goal-oriented, the primary goal of most children is belonging and significance, and a misbehaving child is a discouraged child.

As a trained Positive Discipline parenting educator for the past 10 years, Maura has led 7-week courses for parents of children from age 1 through high school and put those strategies into practice for herself as a parent. Our discussion will start at 7:00 p.m., but feel free to come at 6:45 so we have time to socialize!
SCENES from The Post Oak School

1–2. YCC students practice care of self and the environment.

3. A Primary student works on multiplication.

4. Sounding out vowels in Primary with sandpaper letters.

5. The Primary student is using the red rods to determine different lengths.

6. Lower Elementary students collaborate on a science experiment.

7. A Lower Elementary student works on math with the large bead frame.

8. Upper Elementary students practice for the spelling bee.

9. Another Upper EL class gets ready to play Hot Cross Buns on the recorder.

10–11. High School students undertake intensive courses during J-Term including Art of Cooking and the Falmouth Field School in Jamaica.
NOTICE BOARD

Spring Conference Registration Is Available Online

To receive a printed copy from your oldest child, or a PDF version online, submit letters, articles, or photos in electronic form to Communications Coordinator Elaine Schweizer (elaineschweizer@postoakschool.org) by 5:00 p.m. on the Monday one week prior to publication.

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)

ANNUAL REPORT COMING SOON

Look for the 2015–2016 Annual Report arriving soon! It includes the last school year’s donors, financials, activities, and more.

FOUND!

Lost and found items will be displayed in the Bissonnet Campus Common Room for students to retrieve on Wed., Jan. 11 and Thurs., Jan. 12. Items not picked up by Fri., Jan. 13 will be donated.

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 first Monday of the month during 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 to Communications Coordinator Elaine Schweizer (elaineschweizer@postoakschool.org) by 5:00 p.m. on the Monday one week prior to publication.

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Museum District Campus: 1010 Autrey St., Houston, TX 77006 • Tel.: 832-538-1988 • Fax: 832-538-1926

www.postoakschool.org | facebook.com/thepostoakschool

Don’t miss out on news from the school: please add info@postoakschool.org to your safe sender list or address book/contacts.

STORYTIME with Cory

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

January 11 at 2 p.m.

at The Post Oak School Bissonnet Campus

THEME: Winter

Spring Conference Registration Is Available Online

To register, please visit www.postoakschool.org and select “For Parents” and “Schedule/View a Parent-Teacher Conference” or a link can be found in the message center of MyBackPack.