POP A
COFFEE | WORK
Day

Wed., Mar. 1, 8:45–noon

Parents, grandparents, & friends are invited!

Hosted by our POPA Chairs, this is a great way to meet other Post Oak parents and friends while helping our teachers accomplish a variety of easy-to-do projects for their classroom.

These gatherings generally fall on the first Wednesday of each month. Please join as often as you can!

PRI Parent-Child Night

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16

GROUP 1: 5–6 P.M. | GROUP 2: 6:15–7:15 P.M.

On this evening, children bring their parents to school and demonstrate to them the work they do during the day.

Childcare is available for Elementary siblings only. Email frontoffice@postoakschool.org.

ON THE COVER

During J-Term, High School students unearthed two intact bowls at the Kent Taino site in Jamaica. See more J-Term photos on page 8.

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

www.facebook.com/thepostoakschool/  twitter.com/postoakschool
www.facebook.com/postoakhighschool/ twitter.com/postoakhs

2016–2017
POST OAK
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I recently remembered several articles that caught my eye last year about how multi-tasking is not as useful as we think it is. I think it came to mind because I was trying to finish a report I was writing, looking through some educational posts, and making chili all at the same time. (Can you picture my laptop next to the cutting board?) In other words I was multi-tasking, that is, doing several things at once, except that I really wasn’t. One article in particular was written by neuroscientist Daniel Levitin, out of McGill University in Montreal, entitled “Want to Learn Faster? Stop Multitasking and Start Daydreaming.” The article confirmed that my attempt to get everything done at once is just a game I play with myself, because my brain really doesn’t work that way.

There is current research (Stanford University’s work in this area has gotten the most press in the past couple of years) that shows that the brain is NOT working on two things at the same time. Rather different tasks are handled by different circuits or parts of the brain—forcing it to switch back and forth. From Levitin’s article, which references the Stanford research: “If you’re studying from a book and trying to listen to a conversation at the same time, those are two separate projects, each started and maintained by distinct circuits in the brain. Pay more attention to one for a moment and you’re automatically paying less attention to the other.” That’s why my chili came out so flavorless and why I failed to mention an important detail in my report. It is also why I was so tired as the study also revealed that this “switching back and forth” between tasks uses up glucose, which neurons need to function optimally. So when I do try and multi-task throughout the day, I describe myself as brain dead and apparently I am in a way. This may have implications for me (and my chili) but it has bigger implications for students and the process of learning. That glucose is vital to staying engaged and focused. Levitin states: “Students who uni-task, immersing themselves in one thing at a time, remember their work better, get more done, and their work is usually more creative and of higher quality.”

But it was not the researchers at Stanford who taught me that single-tasking is a better way to function and a better way to learn. My Montessori students taught me that back when I was a classroom teacher. Children who begin in one of Post Oak’s Montessori environments at either the YCC or Primary level are introduced to tasks in a very special way. Teachers present a material one-on-one with all of their focus on the task and the child. The presentation is designed specifically to draw the child’s interest to the movements of the hand and the point of the activity. Teachers model this singular focus by concentrating on the individual student and the work they are doing. The early presentations designed to build coordination and control of movement, are ones in which the teacher does very little talking. Words will distract the child from what is in front of them, and listening and doing requires them to multi-task. Similarly, with a language lesson, the teacher guides the student to focus on what she is saying. She will over-enunciate, speak very slowly, and not be doing other things at the same time, so that the child is focused only on the language. Without the Stanford study, Dr. Maria Montessori knew that a child’s brain works best when concentrating on one thing at a time.

As the children build up their bank of individual lessons, they build their ability to concentrate and work for longer periods of time on a single activity. Many of you noticed this during your tour before you enrolled at Post Oak—children knowing what to do, choosing an activity, and focusing on it independently, or with some help from the teacher. As the child grows and moves onto the Elementary level this ability to focus takes on a new twist—doing so in a collaborative project. Elementary presentations are mostly small group lessons and involve students with a variety of skill levels and

continued on page
talents. These presentations still maintain that Montessori tenet of introducing one specific concept at a time and so the students continue that singular focus, even with the added complexity. Students now have to engage in conversation and planning with others about their project or activity, and there are more organizational elements to the work, but they are still doing one task—it just happens to use many skills.

This continues to be true at the adolescent level, where the deep dive into one area of study helps the students internalize the concept and produce high-quality, creative work. One of the best examples of this is the just completed J-Term at the High School (see photos on page 8 and article in last month’s *Post*). A singular focus over a period of time can create a learning experience that will not be easily forgotten. At the Middle School level this happens throughout the cycle of the year, with a curriculum organized around a single theme, like Law and Government or Classical Civilizations.

One of my favorite things to observe in classrooms at all levels is what happens in between teacher presentations and that deeply focused work. After students have put forth great effort, concentrated for long periods of time, and are satisfied with their completed activity, often they rest their bodies and their brains. We often see a child go get a drink of water, wander over and stare into the fish tank, sit down and have snack, or just take a walk around the classroom looking at all the materials on the shelf. I have described this to parents as the children “re-charging”. Levitin’s article supports my description: “Healthy breaks can hit the reset button in your brain, restoring some of the glucose and other metabolic nutrients used up with deep thought.” That little break serves a purpose and helps them get ready for some more focused effort. As the parent of a teenager, I have to remind myself that some of that “adolescent inertia” might just be doing some good!

I know that I have to stop kidding myself into thinking that I am a “good multi-tasker.” I need to learn from the students and make sure that my focus is on one thing at a time. This is for the sake of both my brain and my chili.

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GALA AUCTION IS LIVE ONLINE
Visit www.501auctions.com/gatsby/register to register and provide dietary restrictions.

GALA ATTENDEES
If you are attending gala, physical tickets are not issued. Your name will be on a list at check-in.

PLEDGES DUE 2/10
All gala pledges for underwriting, tables, or individual tickets are due February 10.
A Parent’s Montessori Journey

by Sandhya Sabhnani, Post Oak parent

I had the opportunity to attend Montessori Journey at The Post Oak School last month. I am thankful to Jackie Pourciau, a fellow Post Oak parent, for strongly encouraging me to register for this event. For me, the journey was powerful, rewarding, and even emotional.

This is our fifth year in the Montessori system as parents to a second grader and a second-year Primary student. Before becoming a Montessori parent, I was familiar with Montessori as many of my friends and family members started in Montessori. My cousin was a Montessori teacher as well. I have spent over 20 years in the education industry as an educational technology professional and a seventh grade-math teacher in Title I schools. After my Montessori Journey experience, I want to go back to school as a student! In fact, I was so excited that I asked Maura if I could participate in Montessori training.

We spent the first evening silently going through each grade level. I liked this opportunity because it allowed me to plan mentally for the next day. I observed the similarities in the materials across the grade levels. I could see how the students added to their knowledge of a concept throughout their Montessori experience. Of course, I was thrown off when my daughter Arya (Primary) told me the next morning what she wanted me to learn. But she also kindly reminded me that my lessons are my choice, and it’s my business!

On Saturday, we were able to dive into the lessons that were set up prior to us entering the classroom. There were plenty of choices across the entire curriculum. I received lessons from Emily Hansen, Cynthia Blessman, Elizabeth Dickson, Lindsay Mistretta, Maura Joyce, Maya Pinto, Monica Lundeen, Jeremy Grisbee, and Matt Jacobs. I also worked on some items individually and followed the instructions with the material.

I identified insects with cards and objects. I manipulated a trinomial cube. I added four digit numbers with beads. I worked with sandpaper letters. I identified sentence structures with symbols. I multiplied four digit numbers with a checkerboard. I used physical objects to show the relationship between a circle’s diameter and its circumference, and then used measurements to calculate Pi. I even made my own coaster on a laser cutter in the High School. The list goes on. While there were plenty of lessons—and not enough time—in Middle School we also participated in a facilitated discussion on Maria Montessori’s vision for the future.

I revisited the trinomial cube in Upper Elementary to connect it to polynomials. To be honest, I needed more time and a lesson to process. I also needed more time to process my lesson on exponents. Despite having taught math, the Montessori methods were a fascinating learning experience for me. I was so enlightened that I honestly wish I had these tools as a student and when I taught math students.

The Montessori Journey allowed me to connect with the staff but more importantly with my children. I better understand how my children spend their time and why they sometimes spend what seems to us like so much time on one area. I could see where my kids are, how they come up with their answers and where my children will be as they continue their Montessori education.

While observations and parent nights are important to understand the Montessori environment at Post Oak, I strongly recommend the Montessori Journey for parents who wish for a more detailed and hands-on understanding. I was moved by the experience and feel empowered. I am very thankful I attended.
Book Fair Pre-orders & Be a Friend

Thanks to all of you who turned in your 2017 Book Fair pre-orders! We were inspired by the overwhelming response! For those of you who missed the pre-order, the curated lists and forms are still available at the front desk. You can fill them out and bring them to the Book Fair at Brazos on April 2.

—Nikayla Thomas & Katie Padden, Book Fair Chairs

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.

Student Work at CAMH

High School Senior Ian has a piece in the Origins of the Self exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston on view January 28 to May 7, 2017.

Fellow seniors Isabella and Matthew are on the Teen Council and helped organize the show.

From the museum:

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston’s Teen Council is pleased to present Origins of the Self, a group exhibition featuring work by Houston-area teen artists. Focusing on themes surrounding personal identity, the exhibition presents 86 artworks by 63 teens in a variety of media including photography, painting, video, and sculpture. Origins of the Self is the 10th biennial youth art exhibition organized by CAMH’s Teen Council.

Every other year, CAMH’s Teen Council organizes an exhibition in the Zilkha Gallery featuring new work by young, Houston-area artists. The Teen Council members work collaboratively to select the theme, title, and artworks featured in the exhibition while assisting with the design, installation, printed exhibition catalogue, and related programming. Drawing from an open call, the Teen Council received almost 400 submissions responding to the questions: What is the real you? Where is the real you? How do you define the real you in a constantly changing landscape?

Visit camh.org to read more about the exhibit.

February 10, 2017
Re-enrollment Deadline

Enrollment contracts are available through My Backpack, and must be completed by Friday, February 10. Please contact the admission office if you have any questions.

March 10, 2017
Financial Aid Applications Due

The school uses the FAST financial aid program provide by Independent School Management (ISM). The application for 2017–2018 is available online through a link in My Backpack.
Post Oak Board Brief

NEWS FROM OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

by Vean Gregg, Post Oak Parent, Chair of the Finance Committee

Financial stewardship is among the many important responsibilities of Post Oak School’s Board of Trustees. World-class, AMI-trained faculty and staff; long-established programmatic vision and excellence; highly adapted classrooms and facilities; and innovative, Montessori-community proven leadership; is just a short list of the many essential attributes of Post Oak that must be financially provided for every year—month in and month out—without exception. A stable financial foundation is critical to the long-term uninterrupted success of the institution.

What does financial stewardship mean? Since joining the board in 2014, I’ve observed that the board has a healthy, almost innate routine of continuously monitoring the school’s financial condition and outlook. Some aspect of the school’s financials is addressed at every board meeting and often accompanied by vigorous discussion. This volunteer board is fortunate to have many individuals who bring relevant skills and experience in all disciplines including finance. More importantly, all board members take a sincere interest in the school as most board members are also parents and therefore have a firsthand sensitivity to potential community impact when making financial decisions. Long-term sustainability is a key focus and responsibility of the board and as such, a key duty of each trustee.

Financial planning is a year-round continuous process that is led by the head of school, CFO, and Finance Committee; and then approved by the board. Every August (early in the fiscal year) the board conducts an in-depth review of Post Oak’s five-year strategic plan that analyzes and aligns the school’s financial outlook against key strategic goals for the next several years. Annually, these goals are translated into the budget, which is the basis for tuition setting (in this case for 2017–2018). For many years, the Post Oak Board has successfully followed the guidance of the Independent School Management’s stability model, which specifies that tuition should seek to cover all program costs. Additional income, through very generous giving from our school community, alumni, and foundations, is used for longer-term programmatic goals, investments in facilities, building up operating reserve, and steadily growing Post Oak’s Endowment Fund.

Your family should have recently received the 2016 Annual Report which reviews many of the school’s accomplishments last school year and provides year-end financial information. Fiscal 2015–2016 was a big year for the school as we made substantial progress on the Big Work capital project. Now that we’re halfway through 2016–2017 and the dust has mostly settled, we’re happy to report that the school is on firm financial footing (as projected a couple of years ago). While we deliberately took on some additional long-term debt given the long-term nature of the project, we did so at a low, fixed rate allowing future financial flexibility. In 2017–2018, we’re expecting more than 500 students with both campuses at or near full occupancy. Overall, Post Oak’s long history of responsible financial stewardship is deeply programmed, and the institution is well positioned for many decades and future generations.

Please feel free to contact me directly on vjgregg@swbell.net if you wish to discuss anything to do with the school’s financial condition in more detail.
HS J-Term

The High School’s J-Term wrapped up with student presentations that included slide shows, videos, and answering the audience’s questions.

Also, the Farming and Social Practices class was on the Eco-logy show on KPFT FM 90.1 discussing their experiences with Pat Greer. Listen here: [http://kpft.org/programming/newstalk/eco-ology/](http://kpft.org/programming/newstalk/eco-ology/).

We’re already looking forward to what A-Term brings! 🎉

College Acceptances

- Academy of Art University
- Goucher College
- Marlboro College
- Montserrat College of Art
- The University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Denver
- University of Houston
- The University of Texas at Austin

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.

OPEN HOUSES FOR HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSION

Wed., Feb. 8, 7 p.m.
Museum District Campus
1010 Autrey Street
One night only!
THE SENIOR IB ART EXHIBIT
Fifteen Minutes
Thursday, February 23
6:30 p.m.–8 p.m.
Glassell Junior School

The entire Post Oak community is invited to the seniors’ IB art exhibition. Brayden, Jodi, Amber, Matthew, and Ian will have art on view for one-night-only at the Glassell Junior School.
SCENES
from
The Post Oak School

1. This January, Half-Day YCC teachers held the first sing-along for students and their families.
2. Primary students work on division with the stamp game.
3. Lower Elementary students paint together in art.
4. Students in Errol Pinto’s Upper Elementary class celebrated the Chinese Lunar New Year.
5. Middle School students focus on their work.
Bearkats Basketball 2016–2017

by Mark Tucker, Athletics Director

HIGH SCHOOL
This was our first year having separate High School girls’ and boys’ teams, and there were some growing pains. We had some injuries and illness that kept our numbers down for the girls’ team and our younger Middle School girls were able to help out in a few games over the season. We will get stronger each year, and I know the girls are looking forward to next year.

Girls that played on the team were:
Pragya  Dua’a  Carly
Ana Luca  Ellen
Lydia  Isabella and Emory

Our High School boys also had an injury that kept their numbers low but they did have enough players to complete a 15-game season. The overall record of 5–10 does not reflect the toughness the boys played with. The team faced several older teams throughout the season and it actually helped them as they moved into conference season.

The Bearkats swept two games with Esprit and split a pair of games with St. Stephen’s, which left them tied for first place and a championship game to come.

In a hard fought game, our Bearkats prevailed in the TCSAAL-PSL Championship game by a score of 47–44. This makes the second year in a row for the Bearkats to win the championship game.

The team members were: Cole  Xander  Elliott  Ilan
Arjhong  and Nathan with Gerard helping out as an eighth grader in a few games.

MIDDLE SCHOOL
Both the Middle School teams had great seasons from start to end. The girls team won the TCSAAL-PSL conference by going undefeated in league play and the boys went 3–1 and tied Yellowstone for the lead, with Yellowstone taking the first place trophy by a point margin. The boys team also won the Fallbrook Holiday Classic by going undefeated in their bracket. The girls finished with an overall record of 7–3 and the boys final record was 14–2.

Girls team: Pragya  Madison
Hannah  Josie
Anne  Ana Luca  Ellen
Lydia  Isabella  Sutton
and Emory

Boys team: Gabe  Andreas
Jackson  Gerard
Asher  Fabricio  Tyler
Beck  Luke
Clark  Charlie
Henry  Sammy and Jonathan Redding.

Girls that played on the team were:
Pragya  Carly
Ana Luca  Ellen
Lydia  Isabella and Emory

Boys that played on the team were:
Gabe  Andreas
Jackson  Gerard
Asher  Fabricio  Tyler
Beck  Luke
Clark  Charlie
Henry  Sammy and Jonathan Redding.

Boys team: Gabe  Andreas
Jackson  Gerard
Asher  Fabricio  Tyler
Beck  Luke
Clark  Charlie
Henry  Sammy and Jonathan Redding.

Girls team: Pragya  Madison
Hannah  Josie
Anne  Ana Luca  Ellen
Lydia  Isabella  Sutton
and Emory

Boys team: Gabe  Andreas
Jackson  Gerard
Asher  Fabricio  Tyler
Beck  Luke
Clark  Charlie
Henry  Sammy and Jonathan Redding.
NOTICE BOARD

DON'T FORGET!

FRI, FEBRUARY 17
TEACHER IN-SERVICE

Classes not in session: only students with expanded year contracts attend.

MON, FEBRUARY 20
PRESIDENTS DAY

School closed

THURS, FEBRUARY 23
ADMISSION DAY FOR PRIMARY

YCC, EL, MS, & HS in session; expanded-year contract day for Primary

FRI, FEBRUARY 24
ADMISSION DAY FOR PRIMARY & ELEMENTARY

YCC, MS, & HS in session; expanded-year contract day for Primary and Elementary

STORY TIME

with Cory

For parents & their children in YCC & Half-Day Primary

THEME: Things that Go

February 22 at 2 p.m.
at The Post Oak School Bissonnet Campus

HMI Trainees Seek Accommodations

Post Oak community, do you have a spare room or living space available for rent? Houston Montessori Institute trainees return to Houston to complete their AMI Primary Training June 5–July 12, 2017, and are seeking lodging. If you are able to provide housing accommodations, please email Jenna Pel at info@hmiusa.org.

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.

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).

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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.