On the Cover
Families gather for the Mystery Box Raffle Ticket drawing at Family Fun Day. Thank you to everyone who bought tickets and helped fill boxes!

Alumni Voices | Thurs., Jan. 18 at 6:30 p.m.
We are so excited to welcome back alumni to share their experiences and how Post Oak prepared them for higher learning and for life! Parents, save the date to hear first-hand what a difference a Post Oak education makes.

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POPA COFFEE | WORK Day
Wed., Dec. 7, 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!

PHOTO: AARON STIDWELL ON FLICKR, CC LICENSE 2.0
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Follow the Child on the Journey to Mastery

by Maura Joyce, Head of School

Do you remember the first time you saw a Montessori classroom? Was it familiar, similar to what you experienced as a child? For some of you, it must have been, because you attended Post Oak or another Montessori school. But for many of us, we didn’t understand what we were seeing and why it was designed so differently. I like to describe that difference in as many ways as possible to help parents (like me!) get a clearer picture of what we do in a Montessori environment.

In more traditional school models, TIME is a constant, while MASTERY is a variable. That is, each school day is broken down into multiple periods of time in which to address a specific subject (i.e., math, science, English). Students listen, read, study, and try to retain what they have learned in that period. The degree of mastery varies, as different students achieve different levels of mastery given the time frame. For example, some retain 93% of it and earn an “A,” others retain 75% of it and earn a “C.” In other words, time is the constant while the degree of mastery varies among students, which in turn is supposed to be reflected in their grades.

Montessori flips this convention on its head. In a Montessori school, MASTERY is the constant while TIME is the variable. In other words, it may take some students a few hours, or days to grasp a particular concept while others require two or three weeks to demonstrate knowledge of the same material or mastery of skill. But the Montessori teacher is focused on mastery instead of on time or grades. The goal is for each student to master the material regardless of how much time it takes. Teachers observe and re-present, challenge and offer support, so that the student can obtain that in-depth understanding. Our environments are prepared for them to discover, explore, work, think, share, interact, communicate, and meet their needs. Within that framework, we also know that children are all unique and different and that we need to be able to individualize the educational program for each student. So rather than following a curriculum, Montessori follows the child.

This aspect of our education system is really what sets it apart from the others: we follow the child. In a more conventional classroom, when the curriculum is at the center of the school, the focus is the “what” and how to get the students to know “things.” Teaching methods will vary depending on the school, the teacher, and the resources available, but most traditional models follow the curriculum and use various strategies to impart this knowledge to a large group of students. By contrast, at the center of the Montessori classroom is the child. For over a century, Montessori teachers have approached children with a view that is based on their physiological and psychological development. Our focus is on their growth: physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually.

This does not mean we do not have a curriculum—we have a very rich and comprehensive one! Nor does it mean we do not have deadlines as our students get older—we do! But on the road to mastery, there is a higher purpose of a Post Oak education, which is to help children learn how to learn. Following the child means helping them each step of the way on the road to independence—intellectual as well as physical. Deeper understanding and mastery comes from delving into a subject, exploring a material, puzzling through a challenge, making mistakes, drawing conclusions, sharing ideas, and researching. Methods that still insist on the “lecture—memorize—repeat back” process cannot make time for this depth of understanding, as the students have such a limited opportunity to engage themselves in the process. Even within a project deadline, we prioritize giving the students the time needed towards mastery. Blocks of work time are a feature at every program level at Post Oak.

There are opportunities to learn more. As fall conferences continue, parents engage in a dialogue with their student’s teacher (and at the upper levels with their child as well) about how they are doing academically, socially, and developmentally, based on their age and program level. Our conferences offer more than a
Congratulations to Cynthia Blessman’s, Emily Hansen’s, and Orly Kluk’s classes for reaching 100%!

Contact christinacantu@postoakschool.org for more information.
Middle School Humanities & Occupations

HUMANITIES ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS PROJECT

by Sophia — Eighth Grade

A few weeks ago the Middle School had their big ancient civilizations presentations! This project tied into the trip we went on to Flagstaff, Arizona, and the students were divided up into four civilization groups. All the students made a list of their first choice and second choice for what civilization they wanted to study. My first choice was Ancient Egypt, but I am actually glad that I ended up with my second choice, which was Mesopotamia. In our first lesson with our civilization group, we chose what topic we wanted to research. There were many other topics to research such as agriculture, art, mythology, architecture, government, vanity, trade, and defense.

Tuesday, October 17, was presentation day. I was so nervous! Each presentation had to last at least twenty minutes so my group decided to perform a play. Our play was about the demigod, Gilgamesh, who was played by Isabella. According to the Mesopotamian stories, Gilgamesh could live for five centuries, so we wanted him to look around his city and make sure everything was right, alongside King Sargon, played by Fabricio. The two checked that Mesopotamia was in order and visited many important sites. They stopped by the farms and also the Annual Mesopotamian Auction which sold pottery, jewelry, and mud-brick homes, that I took part in. They crossed the river where our audience could learn about the Mesopotamians’ transportation and trade. Gilgamesh and Sargon dropped by the scribe school, where cuneiform was taught to perfection and Jonathan was being beaten by his master, Taylor, for making mistakes on his clay tablet. Our play then took a turn and we went 500 years into the future. The audience viewed Jonathan, now a thief, steal a piece of pottery from me, the victim, and result in getting his hand cut off. This was based off of the deathly Code of Hammurabi. The punishment of death is mentioned thirty times, more or less. Then our audience witnessed Dori, a storyteller telling...
Family Fun Day

What an awesome day it was—thank you to the many families who came out for a day of fun. A huge round of applause to event chairs Laura De Vera and Jessica Matos for their hard work putting together (and rescheduling!) this celebration, as well as the many volunteers who are always at the ready to help—from set up to muffin making, you all rock! Visit the parent section of our website for the photo gallery.
a Mesopotamian myth about Ishtar, goddess of aggression, which was quite appalling. To end our play, Sam made his own rap, called the Gilgarap, about one of Gilgamesh’s adventures when he sought immortality. It was really great and I think my group and I did a fantastic job!

Of course, the other groups did a great job too. The Indus River Valley group did a play where Anna was Miss Frizzle from the Magic School Bus and she and her students went back in time to the Indus Valley. The Ancient Egypt group originally wanted to do a vlog of some sort but ended up doing a vlog-play. Madison and Asher were visiting Ancient Egypt and they explored the region and talked to many “locals” there. The Olmec group did a puppet show. I thought it was incredibly humorous because all the puppets looked so silly! Almost none of the puppets’ voices were in sync with their moving mouths. This group talked about each of their topics while a screen displayed a slideshow of pictures from the Olmec civilization.

I really liked performing and also watching all of these presentations and it was a really nice humanities cycle. I am looking forward to our next one!

**OCCUPATIONS AND CULINARY NEWS**

*by Gabriel Avritscher, Eighth Grade*

Meanwhile, the Middle School has kick-started what is definitely going to prove to be an exciting year in Occupations. In the hydroponics (or indoor gardening) area, we have started planting seeds that will soon be transported into our brand-new Tower Garden. The Tower Garden is an aeroponic system that uses a pump to transport nutrients up the tower and then back down. While this has happened with the indoor gardening group, the outdoor gardening group has raised the already existing garden beds and will soon start a butterfly garden there. On the other side of Occupations, culinary, it is the busiest time of the year, thanks to the heavy order of muffins for Family Fun Day, in addition to other products we are selling. The culinary group has been heavily studying marketing, and are excited to use their newfound knowledge at Family Fun Day.

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**Individual Photos & Retakes**

Look for photo packets to arrive soon! The retake dates have changed:

**NEW DATE**: Tues., Dec. 5 at 8:45 a.m. for Bissonnet and Museum District Campuses

If you would like to have your child’s picture *retaken*, please note the following:

- You must turn in the original picture before the retake day and accept the retake, even if it does not turn out as well.
- You may pay for a second package at the cost of $25, which must be paid in advance.

If you choose to have your child’s picture retaken, please contact Jenna Pel at jennapel@postoakschool.org and your child’s teacher.

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**Montessori Journey**

January 19–20, 2018

This two-day workshop offers parents experience at each level from YCC through High School. It is a powerful, hands-on approach to understanding how and what children are learning. Registration begins soon—watch the weekly Post Highlights email for details.
Post Oak Board Brief

NEWS FROM OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

By Erin Busby, Post Oak Parent and Board Member

Last spring, Alison Wong called me with an intriguing question: would I be interested in serving on Post Oak’s Board of Trustees? I immediately said yes, and Alison set up an interview for me with her and Maura Joyce. At the interview, we discussed the role of the Board and what I could contribute to it. I have always loved volunteering at Post Oak, and I was excited to be able to serve it in a new way.

We had our new board member orientation the afternoon before the Board’s back-to-school retreat (and the afternoon before Harvey hit). The four new board members heard from Maura about the history of the school. A lot of the early history of the school (particularly the time before the school moved to Bissonnet, and how it ended up there) was new to me, and I came away with real gratitude for the school’s benefactors and for the strong, capable leadership it has enjoyed from both administration and Board over the past several decades.

Also at orientation, we received a fat binder of information for trustees—everything from the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws to agendas for the next year of Board meetings and the school’s current financial statements. We also reviewed our duties as trustees. As the Trustee Handbook says, the Board “is responsible for fiscal well-being, for the philosophy and objectives of the institution (and their constant review for pertinence) and for effective implementation of the policies that it lays down.” To do those things, trustees need to prepare for and participate in board meetings and work on committees for particular functions or areas (like the Finance Committee, the Committee on Trustees, and the Audit and Risk Committee). And we always need to remember that the Board is in charge of long-range planning and high-level decisions—we don’t interfere in the day-to-day running of the school! The Board has properly delegated that role to the head of school and the highly capable people who work with her.

After the orientation, the entire Board assembled to hear from Walter Buckelew, a consultant from Independent School Management who has worked with Post Oak for many years. He explained a number of ways that we can assess the stability of the school. We were all pleased to hear that the school is on the right track in so many ways—financial and otherwise. After taking care of some other business—including making sure all of our committees were filled and ready to work—we wrapped up and headed home to ride out the storm. I know the Board is going to face challenges (a flooded school being the first one), but I feel confident it is up to the task, and I am so glad I get to help.

MMUN Moment

Middle School student Luke’s experience with the program was recently highlighted at the opening ceremony for the Montessori Model United Nations international conference in Hangzhou, China. “Luke, a Post Oak student, shared his experiences and growth through 6 years of MMUN participation, including increasing his proficiency in public speaking, expanding his inter-personal skills with fellow delegates, and developing an interest in global affairs.” Read more about the conference online.

Photo: MMUN participants and Post Oak students Luke (L) and Nathaniel (R) in China. Photo by Amy.
Our Bearkat MS Cross Country season was short but sensational! Even though we only had three meets, strides of improvement were made each week. At our final meet, the girls’ team placed second—division runner-ups—and received a plaque. The boys placed eighth out of 19 teams.

Thank you, cross country team, for your hard work and dedication so early in the mornings and on Saturdays. Go Bearkats!

Coach Kat Treviño, Physical Fitness Specialist

Our 18 team members:

8TH GRADE
- Gabe
- Andreas
- Hannah
- Josey (1 medal)
- Tyler
- Beck

7TH GRADE
- Luke
- Lydia
- Henry
- Sutton (2 medals)

6TH GRADE
- Sesily
- Sriya (1 medal)
- Aurora
- Sophia
- Daniel

Follow the Child
continued from page 3

conventional report card can. If you’re curious to explore the classrooms and materials at each level, Montessori Journey takes place January 19 and 20. Watch upcoming Post Highlights emails to register.

Whether your child is 14 months or 17 years old, they are on a journey of exploration, learning, reflection, growth, communication, and interaction. And, at Post Oak, we will be following them along the way.
Please be sure your family members RSVP!

If you would like your child’s grandparents or other relatives/friends to attend this year’s Grandparents’ & Friends’ Days, please visit www.postoakschool.org (left menu option) and make sure they RSVP either online or by mail. Invitations were mailed at the end of October, and additional printed invitations are available at the front office of both campuses.

If you have relatives or friends attending the event on either Monday (both campuses) or Tuesday (Bissonnet Campus only), here are a few of things to note:

- We are limited with space and ask that parents not attend. We promise to take good care of your guests!
- On both campuses, the event starts at 9:00 a.m. and concludes around 11:00 a.m. Breakfast will be provided.
- There will be parking and valet on both campuses. All employees will be parking elsewhere, so it might look like there is no parking because of cars on the street.
- For guests coming to see YCC and Primary students, they will view the students from the observation window. We do this to give grandparents and friends a true example of a Montessori classroom in action. Guests of older students are invited into the classroom to work with those students.
- If grandparents or friends plan on taking the student home, we must have written permission from the parent, as is the normal policy.
- Even if an RSVP has not been sent in, we welcome all visitors.

Thank you. —Christina Cantu, Development Director
POST OAK PARENT EDUCATION EVENTS

**Intro to Elementary for Primary parents**

Wed., Nov. 15, at 6:30 p.m.

Primary children are approaching an exciting time in their growth and development. As children approach 6 years of age, they are getting ready for the next step in their Montessori journey.

Join us to learn more about Post Oak’s Elementary program.

Childcare available | RSVP online

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**YCC Transition to Primary Meeting**

Thurs., Nov. 30
9–10:30 a.m.

This informational morning meeting by Early Childhood Director Mirani Smith is for parents of children transitioning from Young Children’s Community to Primary in the spring of 2018.

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**Primary Parent-Child Night**

Thurs., Nov. 30

Group 1: 5–6 p.m.
Group 2: 6:15–7:15 p.m.

This is an evening when children bring their parents to school and demonstrate to them the work they do during the day. This event gives your children a chance for your undivided attention and it gives you a chance to support and endorse the work they do at school. Since the classroom is crowded on this evening, we have divided the time into two groups; details to follow from the teachers.

Childcare is available for Elementary siblings (not for Primary-aged children) for $5 per child. Please call the front office to make a reservation (frontoffice@postoakschool.org).

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**Elementary Parent-Child Night**

Thurs., Nov. 16
6:30–7:30 p.m.

This is an evening when children bring their parents to school and demonstrate to them the work they do during the day. This event is very important to the children because it gives them a chance for your undivided attention and it gives you a chance to support and endorse the work they are doing at school. Childcare is available for $5 per child; call or email the Bissonnet Campus front office to make a reservation (frontoffice@postoakschool.org).

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**HS Admission Open House**

Thurs., Dec. 7 at 7 p.m.

1010 Autrey Street

Join us and bring or tell a friend!
In the days following Hurricane Harvey, our community came together to help each other and Houston. Entire families—from little children to grandparents—responded to the call to donate supplies, help with the drives, and even clean out strangers’ flooded houses. That week, we embodied the Post Oak spirit of teamwork, collaboration, problem solving, and civic responsibility. My children saw the adults in their lives working hard to help those impacted by the hurricane and learned that through small acts, they too could be part of the recovery process.

We now have the opportunity to continue that effort throughout the school year:

- **Veteran’s Day:** On Saturday, November 11, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., we will meet at a Salvation Army warehouse to box supplies for families impacted by the hurricane.

- **O**n Sunday, December 3, from 9:00 a.m. to noon, we will provide volunteer hours to the Food Bank. Volunteers must be at least six years old.

- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day:** On Monday, January 15, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., we will meet in our own gym to make blankets for a health clinic that serves low-income families. Stop by for all or part of the day.

**Because I must register families in advance, if you’d like to join us for any or all three of these days, please email POPA Helping Houston committee: John Duboise, Allison Wong, Stacey Martin, Jennifer Chavis, Nicole Pedersen, and Christina Cantu.**

We are also working with City Council Member Jerry Davis to provide peer to peer mentoring of students from the northeast side of Houston. Upper Elementary students who want to join and can commit to four Saturday afternoons, will learn how to tutor children in literacy and meet with kids from the northeast side neighborhoods. We will provide more info about this program soon.

I hope to see you this Saturday at the Salvation Army.

The POPA Helping Houston committee: John Duboise, Allison Wong, Stacey Martin, Jennifer Chavis, Nicole Pedersen, and Christina Cantu.

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**Note from the Nurse**

Dear Families,

I would like to gently remind you that I am happy to give your child any over the counter medication you may see them needing as long as you bring it in to the front office in its original container with a medicine dispensing form. We have had several requests for things like ibuprofen, Neosporin, and anti-itch ointment recently, but primarily for safety reasons, we do not keep a general stock of this medication on hand to give children. If you think your child might need these over the counter medications during the year and would like me to keep it on hand, please bring them in with the dispensing form.

All unused medication should be retrieved at the end of the year. Per policy, I will always call you for permission prior to dispensing, but this eliminates your child’s discomfort and prevents you from having to interrupt your day to bring medicine in. The mosquitoes seem to be especially bad this fall, and many children are coming in for itchy bug bites. Alternatively, consider putting repellent on your child before school. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me at katelagus@postoakschool.org.

Respectfully, Kate Lagus, RN BSN
1. A YCC student works with a dressing frame to build fine motor skills.
2. Decorating pumpkins in FDYCC
3. Cleaning her work surface in Primary
4. Primary students discuss the bead chains and their progress
5. Preparing for squaring with the decanomial square.
6. The stamp game helps Primary students with math skills.
7. Sam Houston made an appearance at Famous Person Day.
8. Upper EL students gave presentations for Día de los Muertos.
9 & 10. Upper EL students discovered the great outdoors at Nature’s Classroom Institute in Wimberley.
11. Post Oak Spirit is strong at the HS!
12 & 13. Students celebrate the Astros’ win by watching the parade!
NOTICE BOARD

CALENDAR CHANGES
Picture retakes: 12/5 (BC & MDC)
UE Spelling Bee: 12/8
Montessori Journey: 1/19–20
Funding the Four-Year College Experience: TBA
An updated version of the Family Calendar is available online under Calendar > School Calendar.

FOUND!
The lost and found is overflowing at the Bissonnet Campus. Stop by the Common Room next time you’re here to check the chest for your child’s lost treasures. Items not claimed by Dec. 15 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!

Help keep our community safe!
• Do not use your mobile phone while driving on campus. Please wait until you are safely parked.
• Watch for pedestrians and mind the speed limit.
• Please put your car in park when students are entering or exiting the vehicle to prevent accidents.

Happy Thanksgiving!
SCHOOL CLOSED
Wednesday, November 22 to Friday, November 24

Printed copies of the Family Directory and Handbook are available at our front offices.

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. Please direct all requests for permission to reprint articles to the communications coordinator.
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)
Bissonnet Campus: 4600 Bissonnet St., Bellaire, TX 77401 • Tel: 713-661-6688 • Fax: 713-661-4959
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To avoid the school’s email communications arriving in your junk mail folder, please add info@postoakschool.org to your safe sender list or address book/contacts.