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Eloise Rochelle, Editor

A Vision from the past

One of our very early alumna found a vintage photo she thought we would like to see. Anita Pool was here in 1964 and this is her class, making whoopee for someone’s birthday. Anita is the little one with dark hair, just left of center.

Anita’s daughter, Olivia Gierman, is an 8th grade graduate (1998) of School of the Woods and is a featured alumna in our magazine, View From the Woods, just out.

Parents’ Organization will focus on Spring Picnic at April meeting.

Put a big red circle around April 6 – just a few days away – on your calendars. That’s the date our Parents’ Organization meets and the big purpose of this meeting is masterminding all those great things we do at our Spring Picnic on May 1, planning the Bridge Meeting on May 11 for parents of students moving up grade-level, plus discussing the May 4 Thank You Coffee.

The meeting will be held at the main building at 8:45 AM and plenty of refreshments will be on hand.

Circle May 4, too – it’s the traditional Thank You Coffee, the final PO meeting of this year. Volunteers will be recognized for their outstanding work during the 2010-2011 school year.

The Parents’ Organization was honored to have Dr. Betsy Coe as a guest speaker at the March 2 evening meeting. Dr. Coe is a wonderful asset not only in our children’s lives but for parents, as well. See page 5 for more details.

We apologize . . .
In the new issue of our magazine, View From the Woods, we inadvertently left out the names of two donors to the School’s new scoreboard, page 23.

Kuang Lin and Jackie Zhao, parents of Daniel Lin, were also among the strong supporters of this fine addition to our sports program.
Lunch: From the Earth to Tummy

When they are given the facts, most children seem naturally drawn to and fascinated by the connection between food and the garden.

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

Earth

Involving children in gardening is a great vehicle for encouraging them to make good food choices. Many will gladly try a food they have picked fresh from the garden that they would reject if it just appeared on their plates. It also creates opportunities for learning, helps to build a love of nature, and stimulates social interaction. Gardening can provide a special time for you and your child to spend together.

We are lucky that we live in Houston where gardening can be experienced 365 days out of the year. Even if you are limited in time and space, a pot or two on a patio filled with rich, organic soil can produce a bumper crop of tomatoes, beans, lettuce, or collards with little effort. You can encourage enthusiasm in young children by planting seeds that mature quickly and are large enough for a child to handle. Vegetables are a good choice; they germinate quickly and can be eaten when mature.

Lunch

Too many of the food choices available to children today are processed and include many ingredients that are not actually food or they have too much salt, fat, and sugar added. A good rule of thumb for choosing foods is that the closer the food is to its natural state, the better it will be for your child. Children are naturally attracted to foods smartly packaged with cartoon characters and toys, yet these are often the very foods that are lacking or out of balance nutritionally.

The adults in a child's life have more influence over a child's food preferences than we might think: according to one study, "children's food preferences and food-intake patterns may be shaped largely by the foods parents choose to make available to children and persistence in presenting a food that initially is rejected." Offer your child a lot of different foods, even if he is quick to reject new foods. It can help your child learn to like a variety of foods. If children have repeated opportunities to sample new foods, then at least some of them will be accepted.

Giving your child plenty of fruit and vegetables every day helps ensure a healthy diet. One idea for including plenty of fruit and vegetables is to think of foods that your child already likes to eat, like smoothies, muffins, or yogurt, and find recipes that allow you to include more fruits and vegetables.

Creative ways to get your child to eat more vegetables can include adding them in with other foods, like chopping up and mixing vegetables into pasta sauces, lasagna, casseroles, soup, omelets, chili, etc. or adding veggie toppings to pizza. You can even find recipes for things like banana raisin pancakes, carrot beef meatballs or zucchini cookies, that your child might enjoy. Children often enjoy chopped veggies with a dip and vegetables in a stir-fry.

It is important to allow your child to help prepare meals and lunches so they become a part of the process.

Some book suggestions for young children about growing food and the garden:

- The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss
- Carlos and the Cornfield (also Carlos y la Milpa de Maiz) by Jan Romero Stevens
- Garden of Happiness by Erika Tamar
- Growing Vegetable Soup by Lois Ehlert
- One Small Square Backyard by Donald M. Silver
- Planting a Rainbow by Lois Ehlert
- Roots, Shoots, Buckets & Boots: Gardening Together with Children by Sharon Lovejoy
A GREAT SONG FOR TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT THE SOIL

**Dirt Made My Lunch**
by Steve Van Zandt and
The Banana Slug String Band

**VERSE:**

Dirt is a word that we often use,
When we're talkin' about the earth beneath our shoes.
It's a place where plants can sink their toes;
In a little while a garden grows.

**CHORUS:**

Dirt made my lunch,
Thank you Dirt, thanks a bunch,
My milk and my munch 'cause
Dirt, you made my lunch.

**VERSE:**

A farmer's plow will tickle the ground,
You know the earth has laughed when wheat is found.
The grain is taken and flour is ground,
For making a sandwich to munch on down.

**REPEAT CHORUS**

**VERSE:**

A stubby green beard grows upon the land,
Out of the soil the grass will stand.
But under hoof it must bow,
For making milk by way of a cow.

**REPEAT CHORUS**

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**Building a special garden house for your child in the back yard:**

Take four bamboo poles approximately 6 feet long. Place them in the ground to form a space large enough for your child to sit in and angle the poles so they meet about five inches from the top. Tie the poles together where they meet with twine.

At the bottom of each pole plant three or four morning glory seeds. Be sure to keep the ground moist while the seeds are germinating.

If you plant in April the vines will be blooming by early summer.

Composting kitchen scraps that will be eventually end up in the garden will give your child a complete picture of the cycles embodied in all of life on earth.

There are many composters on the market today that are easy to use and that will not create unpleasant odors or attract animals to your yard.

Children become enthusiastic recyclers when given the opportunity; they love the idea of being heroes for the Earth!

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**Favorite gardening and food resources in Houston:**

- Urban Harvest Farmers Market at Bell Tower Center, Wirt Rd., Wednesdays, 2-6 PM and Eastside on Saturday mornings-fresh local foods, flowers, soaps-you get to talk to the growers.

  (Urban Harvest also offers gardening advice, classes, and tree sales).

- Wabash Antiques and Feed Store on Washington Avenue-organic soils, mulches, and plants as well as lots of fun animals to see.

- Buchanan's Native Plants on 11th Street-large selection of plants, in season vegetables, and soil amendments
Ride ‘em, Cowpersons

These photos of our Early Childhood students on Western Day, prove that they can Rodeo with the best of them.

It’s a fun day for the children – this year, March 2 -- and is a School of the Woods tradition of long standing. Each child makes his/her own personal steed.

Photos by Heidi Roeder
Great day in the morning! Raise the Roof Raffle happened

Last Fall, the School’s Board of Trustees authorized a raffle to support construction of the all-school gymnasium phase of the Woods High School Complex. After months of raffle ticket sales, the big day finally arrived.

On Wednesday, March 2, Barbara Bends of the Advance ment Office coordinated a joint meeting where the raffle drawing took place. The joint meeting included the entire Woods High School student body and faculty, all persons with an interest in the drawing, and the Parents’ Organization for its regular monthly meeting. The PO provided enough healthy morning consumables to feed the small army.

Every morning at WHS starts with a Community Meeting of all students and faculty to disseminate information, discuss issues, or talk about interests of the day. This day’s meeting was led by student Alicia Neeley. The big issue for students and faculty to discuss was the upcoming Intersession trips.

After that part of the agenda was finished, it was time for the drawing. A different student volunteered to make the draw for each prize. The $2500 prize was won by the Deden family; $1000, by The Firm (aka the high school teachers); $500, by Ira and Lisa Gross; and $250, by McCabe-McNidder family. Barry and Susie Fantich won the special participation prize drawing. A donation in any amount or raffle ticket purchase was all it took to win a very cool iPad.

Afterward, the Parents’ Organization general meeting was held. A second PO meeting was held that evening, with Dr. Betsy Coe as guest speaker. She presented an overview of how the brain changes as children grow and described various behaviors due to those changes. She assured parents these are normal and appropriate.
The Component of Humanness called “Purpose”

From the moment that human beings first stared into the sky, contemplated their place in the universe, and tried to create something that bettered the world and outlasted their lives, we have been purpose seekers. “Purpose provides activation energy for living,” psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi told me in an interview, “I think that evolution has had a hand in selecting people who had a sense of doing something beyond themselves.”

In his book called Drive, Daniel Pink describes the meaning and benefits of adding purpose to our lives:

“The first two legs of the Type I [intrinsic motivating people] tripod, autonomy and mastery, are essential. But for proper balance we need a third leg - purpose, which provides a context for its two mates.

“Autonomous people working toward mastery perform at very high levels. But those who do so in the service of some greater objective can achieve even more. The most deeply motivated people-not to mention those who are most productive and satisfied-hitch their desires to a cause larger than themselves.”

It is not enough to teach a man a specialty. Through it he may become a kind of useful machine but not a harmoniously developed personality.

It is essential that the learner acquire an understanding of and a lively feeling for values. He must acquire a vivid sense of the beautiful and of the morally good. Otherwise he - with his specialized knowledge - more closely resembles a well-trained dog than a harmoniously developed person. He must learn to understand the motives of human beings, their illusions and their sufferings, in order to acquire a proper relationship to individual fellow men and to the community.

These precious things are conveyed to the younger generation through personal contact with those who teach, not - or at least not in the main - through textbooks. It is this that primarily constitutes and preserves culture. This is what I have in mind when I recommend the 'humanities' as important, not just dry specialized knowledge in the fields of history and philosophy.

Overemphasis on the competitive system and premature specialization on the ground of immediate usefulness kill the spirit on which all cultural life depends, specialized knowledge included.

It is also vital to a valuable education that independent critical thinking be developed in the young human being, a development that is greatly jeopardized by overburdening him with too much and with too varied subjects (point system).

Overloading necessarily leads to superficiality. Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as a valuable gift and not as a hard duty (Albert Einstein, "Education for Independent Thought").

Current brain-based research on adolescent development reveals the fact that it is a strong sensitive period for social information-processing. Montessori would have had “the whole life of the adolescent revolve round this idea of society, its structure, and its obligation” (E.M. Standing). It is during this period of growth that the individual explores and is primed to learn the functioning of societies and relate that to their individual purpose.

Dr. Montessori leaves us volumes and detailed descriptions on the first two Planes of Development (0-6
and 6-12). She didn’t go into such detail on adolescence, but she did make some astute observations and suggestions: “Whereas in the preceding epoch the individual tended to be an extrovert, [adolescence] is one of those mysterious periods when something is being transformed which does not yet exist; a mystery of creation which is taking place within him independently of his own will—the creation of the socially conscious individual.”

Dr. Montessori saw a keen need to reform education and developed practices based on the needs of each stage of human development, providing autonomy, engagement, and purpose from infancy all the way to the age at which one enters into adult society.

... Elizabeth Stepankiw

No education a la carte for Kyle Weaver

In large high schools, subjects are often kept far away and isolated from each other. They do not stray outside their secured 55-minute havens, buffered by six-minute barriers—no man’s zones protecting math from science, science from English, English from music, and music from math.

Unfortunately, the mind often models itself after the schedule. The brain puts each discipline into cubicles and then further partitions academic and nonacademic pursuits.

I believe that my greatest intellectual asset is a natural tendency to notice and discover connections and relationships between disciplines. I pour the contents of my classes into one big vat, let them interact, and observe the results. I then enjoy discussing and sharing these observations.

I believe that the relationships I find between subjects are not created, but discovered. After all, the universe is not segregated into abstract parts. Nature does not subscribe to “Algebra II” or “Physics I.” Nature exists: it exists as an infinitely complex whole of math, physics, biology, chemistry, music, and art collectively. Even the social sciences, centered around the study of man, contain their own laws and theories which sometimes parallel those of the natural sciences. (“E=mc²” is not unrelated to “There is no such thing as a free lunch.”)

Mathematics interests me not only for its aesthetic beauty, but for its utility as a language in science. English should not be considered merely a language class of sentence structure, but a means of communicating and empathizing. Like music, English can create emotion, purge the soul and free the mind.

Sometimes, as I listen to the last reverberations of a pleasing interval or triad, I am awed to think that the harmony results from a simple mathematical ratio between the pitches.

The partition between the academic and nonacademic worlds is also a false barrier. This summer, I learned as much about nature, culture, and spirituality from my experiences living on the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana as I ever could have learned from literature and lecture. On the reservation, I witnessed the merging of an urban culture (25 high school students from northeastern cities) with a nature-based one, and I saw that nature can be understood spiritually as well as intellectually.

More importantly, I came to realize that spirit and intellect are symbiotic. The unification of heart and mind creates wisdom. To me, wisdom seems the greatest peace of mind one can attain: a fully developed sense of right and wrong, a conscience for what should be, ideally, and an awareness of what is, realistically.

... Kyle Weaver

Kyle Weaver was a student at School of the Woods from 1984 until he graduated 8th grade in 1990. He completed the International Baccalaureate program at Lamar High School and then went to Stanford. He now lives in Boston. He wrote this essay in 1994 for a college application.

E = mc²

SQUARED