Ready, Set, Go . . .

Book Discussion Group
Tuesday, March 24, 7 PM

Drawing on four decades of scientific research on human motivation, Pink exposes the mismatch between what science knows and what business does—and how that affects every aspect of life. Pink also gives his readers advice from six other motivational business thinkers that always get the job done.

Everyone has ample time to give it a good reading, so start now. The group will meet again at the home of teacher Bridget Tomlinson, 8841 Cedarbrake.

Good deed for those in need

We are happy to report that in December, our Elementary and Upper Elementary students and parents provided a nice selection of new children’s gifts to the Houston Area Women’s Center. The gifts were placed for sale in the Center’s Holiday Store. The Center is located at 1010 Waugh Drive.

Good ol’ Holiday times . . .

The gentleman on the left above has just off-loaded a short ton of gorgeous Poinsettias and our crew of volunteers is standing by ready to begin the sorting-out process.

Joseph’s Nursery in Pearland has been our supplier of these superb plants and greenery for the past 10 years!

In this issue . . .

1……Book Discussion Date
1……Children’s Gifts for Women’s Center
1……Poinsettias to make us happy
2……Recommended Books, new titles published in 2014
3……Effective Communications
4……History Lesson No. 1
5 . History Lesson No. 2
6-7…..Creating Optimal Environments for Adolescents
8……Calendar

Edited by Eloise Rochelle
**GREAT NEW BOOKS**

**Clammy Clam**, by Chris Raschka. This is a book about feeling shy. Introducing Clammy Clam! He refuses to say a simple “hello.” In this tribute to the silent type, readers are reminded that kids can be unpredictable, requiring improvisation and compromise. The expert balance of visual and textual humor will bring even the shyest of readers out of their shells! 24 pages, 2014, ages 2-4.

**Betty Goes Bananas**, By Steve Antony. This book is a perfect opportunity to openly discuss emotions and behavior. Meet Betty, a gorilla. She wants to eat a banana, but she can’t open it! Her frustration quickly becomes a great BIG tantrum. Luckily, Mr. Toucan is at hand to peel the banana. Both preschoolers and parents will laugh out loud at this hilarious picture book about tantrums. 32 pages, 2014, ages 2-5.

**A Perfectly Messed Up Story**, by Patrick McDonnell. A story about embracing life’s messes. Little Louie's story keeps getting messed up. What is the point of telling his tale if he can't tell it perfectly? He stops and takes a deep breath, then realizes everything is just fine, imperfections and all. 40 pages, 2014, ages 4-8.

**Circle Square Moose**, by Kelly Bingham. A simple concept book about shapes represented by different items – a button for a circle, sandwich for a square, slice of pie for a triangle. The Moose raises havoc in the story with his antics as more shapes are included. Things get really frantic till finally Zebra arrives to salvage the situation. 48 pages, 2014, ages 4-8.

**The Book With No Pictures**, by B.J. Novak. This wildly funny read-aloud book will be a Must-Have. A book with no pictures might seem boring but here’s how the book works. Every thing written on the page has to be said by the person reading it. Even if the words say...BLORK. Or BLUURF. Even if the words are a preposterous song about eating ants for breakfast, or just a list of astonishingly goofy sounds like BLAGGITY BLAGGITY and GLIBBITY GLOBBITY. 48 pages, 2014, ages 4-8.

**The Farmer and The Clown**, by Marla Frazee. Visually poetic and wordless, this is storytelling at its finest. A clown toddler falls off the caboose of a circus train. A farmer rescues him, takes him home and cares for him, teaching the child all about farm life. When the circus train reappears to rescue him, farmer and child part with hugs all around. 32 pages, 2014, ages 3-9.

**Neighborhood Sharks**, by Katherine Roy. Subtitle: Hunting with the Great Whites of California’s Farallons Islands. A few miles from San Francisco lives a population of the ocean’s largest and most famous predators. In 2012, Katherine Roy visited the Farallons with the scientists who study the islands’ shark population. It is a wildlife refuge, strictly off-limits to all but the scientists who work there. 49 pages, 2014, ages 6 to 10.

**The Madman of Piney Woods**, by Christopher Paul Curtis. Benji and Red couldn't be more different. They aren't friends. They don't even live in the same town. But their fates are entwined. A chance meeting leads the boys to discover that they have more in common than meets the eye. Both of them have encountered a strange presence in the forest, watching them, tracking them. Is the Madman of Piney Woods real? 384 pages, 2014, ages 9-12.

The Heart Of Relationships: Effective Communications

To know who our children really are, we need to observe our children at work and play. J Krishnamurti, the Indian philosopher, wrote that the highest form of human intelligence is observing without evaluating.

The more I observe the more I understand Krishnamurti. Observation and evaluation serve us best as separate activities. Observing people’s behavior and keeping the observation free of the evaluating components of judgment, criticism and psychoanalysis can be challenging to say the least.

Some might say impossible.

Observing the child having a temper tantrum, we tend to think and judge: My, what an awful child.

Criticism enters: Why don’t the parents do something?

Analysis begins: Poor child. Not enough sleep or adult guidance. A good snack and a nap will fix that.

Even if we can avoid judging, criticizing or analyzing, other tendencies creep into our observations. Labeling and classification begin with thoughts such as—Oh, that child’s trouble, is spoiled rotten, has bad parents, needs medication, should see a doctor, and on and on.

Name-calling and pigeonholing, though, doesn’t help the child or strengthen our relationships. One of the inherent problems with language is the difficulty we have in making words represent a world of change, growth, processes, and other dynamic functions. With every experience, we are all changing. How can our thinking and language embrace that change?

Observing while withholding evaluation aids us in finding the complexity in situations, as well as understanding the inadequacy of language to define a constantly changing reality. Language limits our perception of the whole child, the whole person and the whole world.

As we observe we need to train ourselves to be aware of how language, a static process in a dynamic activity, makes it easy to judge, criticize and analyze other’s behavior.

Unfortunately, recipients usually perceive our name-calling and labeling as critical and judgmental, and not as an offer of help or guidance.

The words, always, never, every, whenever, as well as frequently and seldom, exaggerate a situation and create defensiveness in the listener while confusing observation and evaluation within the speaker. A few examples follow:

Evaluation: He always throws a fit.
Observation: This past Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings for about ten minutes before dinner he has laid on the floor, cried, and kicked his feet.

Evaluation: His parents never make him behave.
Observation: On two occasions I saw him throw books off the shelves with no interference from his father.

Evaluation: He is just hungry and overtired.
Observation: He didn’t eat any lunch and was up at 5:30 this morning.

To communicate effectively and understand how to strengthen a relationship, practice observing behavior without evaluation. Edit out the judging, criticism, analyzing, name-calling and labeling that prevent honest expression and compassionate listening, the two key components to effective communication.

The heart of our relationships lies in our ability to communicate honestly and with compassion.

Maren E. Schmidt
www.kidstalknews.com

Lines and Squares by A. A. Milne

Whenever I walk in a London street,
I’m ever so careful to watch my feet;
And I keep in the squares,
And the masses of bears,
Who wait at the corners all ready to eat
The sillies who tread on the lines of the street
Go back to their lairs,
And I say to them, "Bears,
Just look how I’m walking in all the squares!"

And the little bears growl to each other, "He’s mine,
As soon as he’s silly and steps on a line."
And some of the bigger bears try to pretend
That they came round the corner to look for a friend;
And they try to pretend that nobody cares
Whether you walk on the lines or squares.
But only the sillies believe their talk;
It’s ever so ‘portant how you walk.
And it’s ever so jolly to call out, "Bears,
Just watch me walking in all the squares!"
History Lesson No. 1

The Way We Were

Many of our school parents may have recently come to Houston, others may have only sketchy knowledge of West Houston’s history. But it’s an interesting history and this short summary may give you the flavor of it.

The Memorial area and Spring Branch area share a common birthing. In the earliest days, Spring Branch included all of today’s Spring Branch and all of the Memorial villages – bounded by Hwy 6 on the west, old Hempstead Hwy on the north, what is now 610 Loop to the east, and Buffalo Bayou to the south.

Spring Branch’s earliest settler was here in 1830, much earlier than New York’s Allen Brothers (1836). He was Karl Kolbe, who came from Germany and settled on the banks of Spring Branch (the stream) where it joined Buffalo Bayou. That location was nine miles from the beginnings of Houston.

When Texas became a state in 1845, new settlers were needed and that news was sent out to other states as well as to other nations. Germany’s citizens were especially in need of new opportunities and began arriving, many settling in this large Spring Branch territory. They were the families of Daniel Ahrenbeck, Frederick Schroeder, Jacob Schroeder, Louis Hillendahl, Henry Hillendahl, Wilhelm Rummel, Siegesmund Bauer, Moritz Pech.

Many streets in the Spring Branch and Memorial areas bear the names of the settlers: Kolbe, Hillendahl, Sauer, Schroeder, Hedwig, Bauer, Witte, Campbell, Look, Tappenback, Beinhorn, Rummel, Clay, Ojeman, Oberpriller, Telchow, Tendlor, Mueller, Neuens, Kuhlman, Bingle, Riedel, Reichard, Beutel, Pech, Burkhardt, Emmor, Fredrich, Hufmeister, Weiman, Koehn; even more.

The original settlers first built a log cabin church, but this was replaced in 1848 by the more durable St. Peter’s Church, still active today at Long Point and Campbell Road. Most of the settlers, including Hedwig and Henry Schroeder, are buried in the cemetery at St. Peter’s, but the Hillendahl family had its private cemetery on its property, centered at Long Point and Pech Road. It is still there, now an officially-designated cemetery.

Hedwig Jankowski was a late-comer (1906); a single woman of 19, she met and married Henry Schroeder (born here in 1864) that same year at St. Peter’s Church. They owned 150 acres around Smithdale Road, and raised pigs and other farm animals. She later generously made it possible for the development of Hedwig Village, named in her honor.

The Beinhorns were prosperous farm owners in the Memorial area and had a grocery market. The Oberprillers managed a mercantile store in Spring Branch. The Riedels provided a feed store. Conrad Sauer was a dairy farmer; William Sauer made sausage. And so on.

The first public school was opened in 1889 by the church and later became the Spring Branch Independent School District. Many of the schools in the Memorial area are thus in the SBISD, as they were in the beginning.

Much of the Spring Branch-Memorial area was still composed of small farms in 1955, but times had changed, and with veterans having returned from World War II, with burgeoning families and no place to live, residential building changed this area, as well as the whole city of Houston.

The schism between the two areas was likely set in motion by the laying of the M-K-T railway from Houston to Katy in 1895. It followed a simple dirt road which started life as a part of the Old Spanish Trail, a vast system of informal trails begun by early Spanish explorers 450 or more years ago (1528), and including existing Indian trails. It began in St. Augustine, Florida and finally ended in San Diego.

After the railway was operational the stage was set for cultural and commercial changes. As with any kind of split-off, evolution took the two sectors down divergent paths. As commerce and population grew, the roadway changed, too. First, as simply the San Antonio road, then the Katy Road, later becoming US Highway 90, and now Interstate 10. The railway became abandoned, but the tracks remained a mere 20 ft. or so north of the I-10 feeder, until removed in 2002.

It is instructive to reflect a bit, though. As recently as 1975, Riedel’s Feed store was still on Gaylord, just across the street from the now-parking lot of Salt Grass Steakhouse; a cement street name post still stood at the corner of Echo Lane at LouAI, proclaiming it to be Schroeder Road; a herd of buffalo was kept on acreage on Smithdale Road.

And if you could magically lift up the four-story office building at 952 Echo Lane, you might see a tiny white frame house, enclosed by chain link fencing, with dozens of chickens pecking around; and with a hand-made sign in the front yard, saying ‘Eggs For Sale.’

Sources: Diana J. Kleiner, Spring Branch, TX (Harris County). Handbook of Texas Online; History of Spring Branch website; Spring Branch Oaks Civic Assn. Website; Spring Branch, by George Saugher; www.springvalleytx.com; Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia; Creative Commons Attribution/Shawe-AIke; USGenWEB Archives, St. Peters Cemetery by John Worn; Wikipedia-Mike Breiding’s Texas; Website The West Houston Archives.
Meet Ernest And Hilda Wood

School of the Woods is indeed fortunate to have had Ernest and Hilda Wood involved in its establishment, for they were both purposeful individuals.

Ernest Egerton Wood -- born in Manchester, England, 1883, educated at Manchester College of Technology in chemistry, physics and geology -- embraced the larger world by joining the Theosophy Society and going in 1908 to Adyar, India, the Society’s world headquarters. He married Hilda in 1916 and they lived in India until 1945-46.

Now, here’s an interesting thought: In 1939, Maria Montessori was persona non grata with the fascist government of Mussolini for refusing to do its bidding. The Theosophy Society extended an invitation to her to come to Adyar. She accepted it and lived there from 1939 to 1948, the same timeframe as the Woods. During those years, many Montessori schools were founded in India and both Hilda and Ernest and Maria Montessori were vital forces in their founding, as well as with other kinds of schools. It’s reasonable to assume that, being in the same vicinity and working toward the same goals, there must have been considerable interaction among the three.

A Sanskrit scholar, Ernest Wood’s main focus was teaching and writing. He published more than forty books on Yoga, Eastern and Western Philosophy and religions. Many of those titles are still in print and can be purchased online. One of his books, a Sanskrit dictionary, earned him accolades from world scholars, and until his death, he was recognized as the world’s foremost authority on that language.

During his early career in India, also, he was headmaster of several schools and colleges founded by the Theosophical Society, and later, was Professor of Physics, and president of Sind National College and the Madanapalle College, both teaching colleges of the Bombay and Madras Universities. Dr. Wood was also one of the organizers of the Indian National University.

Toward the end of his time in India, he became disillusioned with the Theosophy Society and devoted himself to Yoga. After World War II, 1945, he came to the US to be President and Dean of the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco. Following that, he came to Houston, accepting a teaching position at the University of Houston.

One fine day in 1959, Ernest and Hilda appeared at the door of the (Spring Branch) Unitarian Fellowship, which had just been organized weeks before. They soon became stalwarts of the Fellowship – Hilda focused on developing a Fellowship library and began talking about establishing a Montessori school – Ernest was frequently asked to deliver inspirational talks. Some Fellowship members have commented that the Woods could frequently be seen flying around the neighborhood in their small, right-hand drive English car.

In early 1962, Dr. Wood offered the Fellowship $8,000 for a down payment on permanent property, needed after several years of using ad hoc meeting spaces. That benevolence resulted in the Fellowship buying part of the property the School now occupies. The parcel of land was 1321 Wirt Road, 1 ¼ acres with a main house, a cottage and a Quonset hut. It was acquired just three months after the offer. Hilda Wood immediately started organizing the Montessori School she wanted. It opened that Fall with a student body of children of mostly Unitarian parents. She and Ernest ordered all the Montessori materials and Montessori’s writings from India – presumably not much existed in the 1962 United States. Initial interest in the Montessori concept had declined and lain fallow since 1912, when the first Montessori school opened in New York.

Ernest Wood was president of the first Board of Trustees. Board members insisted that he and Hilda would occupy the cottage. Somewhere along the line, he was diagnosed as having cancer of the esophagus, and by 1962, was becoming increasingly frail. Members of the Unitarian Fellowship took care of both Woods during their last years.

It doesn’t really seem mystical to think that Ernest Wood is still with us. He died September 17, 1965, right here on campus, in that cottage – now occupied by the School’s Advancement Office. Hilda followed him a few years later – 1968, after a second mastectomy. Her final act: willing another $8,000 to the Unitarian Fellowship.

Almost by sheer willpower, Ernest Wood refused to die before he finished another translation of a Sanskrit classic, Shankara’s Viveka Chudamani. It was finished just days before he died and published after his death.

Hilda Wood immediately started organizing the Montessori School she wanted. It opened that Fall with a student body of children of mostly Unitarian parents. She and Ernest ordered all the Montessori materials and Montessori’s writings from India – presumably not much existed in the 1962 United States. Initial interest in the Montessori concept had declined and lain fallow since 1912, when the first Montessori school opened in New York.

Ernest Wood was president of the first Board of Trustees. Board members insisted that he and Hilda would occupy the cottage. Somewhere along the line, he was diagnosed as having cancer of the esophagus, and by 1962, was becoming increasingly frail. Members of the Unitarian Fellowship took care of both Woods during their last years.

It doesn’t really seem mystical to think that Ernest Wood is still with us. He died September 17, 1965, right here on campus, in that cottage – now occupied by the School’s Advancement Office. Hilda followed him a few years later – 1968, after a second mastectomy. Her final act: willing another $8,000 to the Unitarian Fellowship.

Almost by sheer willpower, Ernest Wood refused to die before he finished another translation of a Sanskrit classic, Shankara’s Viveka Chudamani. It was finished just days before he died and published after his death.
School of the Woods began its secondary programs 36 years ago by adding a few 12-to-14-year-old students to its late elementary class. During our school’s history, each level has been added after the faculty felt that the previous level was well-developed.

In developing Woods Middle School then and Woods High School in the late ’90s, I remembered Montessori’s appraisal that “Schools as they are today are adapted neither to the needs of adolescents nor to the times in which we live,” and the Carnegie 1989 statement that there is a volatile mismatch between the psychological and intellectual needs of adolescence and the curriculum and structures of schools today.

I sought to provide an environment that met the needs of this unique age group, based on my experience and credentials in Montessori at previous levels, on rereading Montessori’s works from the perspective of the adolescent, on adolescent psychology, research on brain theory and learning strategies, and current trends and issues in education.

**The Adolescent Period**

*Montessori Secondary School Vision.* Adolescents need:

1. Activities that encourage self-construction – exploring oneself and one’s place in the world. Realizing one’s cosmic task.
2. Opportunities to work and learn in a trusting community that foster deep connections with others.
3. Academically rigorous and transdisciplinary curriculum that illustrates the interconnected nature of the world and prepares our young people to solve current and future challenges.

Adolescence is a time of applying previous knowledge to action projects and developing more independence and interdependence. Adolescents are seeking to find their cosmic task and where they will fit into the world. They want the curriculum to be relevant and meaningful to their lives.

Developmentally, early adolescents are going through rapid physical and cognitive changes. This then has an impact on their psychosocial and moral development.

easily get overwhelmed. They are also egocentric, have ups and downs of moods, and experience physical changes.

These changes can inhibit focus and concentration and spawn needs for movement and sleep in school. They are changing their friends from those in proximity to those in same-interest groups and exploring new activities and passions.

Research indicates that there are eight developmental years in each group of 13-year-olds. Psychologically, Montessori expresses it this way: there are doubts and hesitations, violent emotions, discouragement, and unexpected decrease of intellectual capacity.

The difficulty of studying with concentration is not due to a lack of willingness, but is really a psychological characteristic of this age.

Older adolescents are in a different place in their development, having moved through many of the changes. They have a greater ability to see the points of view of others, to focus and concentrate and they have developed their new interests and desires.

However, we have to remember that they are still in need of adult guidance, even though it may not be evident in their personae. They still remain greatly influenced by the media and peers. They are clarifying their sexual identities, values and goals for the future.

Older high school students are very independent and able to drive automobiles to go places, can focus for long periods of time, are community oriented, and care about others. They work with much depth and critical thinking at a college level in most disciplines and are very creative in their projects.

I have remarked many times that it is wonderful to see the fruits of our labor from the other levels of the school.

I would like to identify some of the elements that I believe are necessary in a Montessori secondary program and differences that I have found between implementing middle and high school programs. I have found the elements (see list, pg. 7) to be the same; however, the depth, time and amount of student responsibility are expanded for the high school program.
But, above all, it is the education of adolescents that is important, because adolescence is the time when the child enters on the state of manhood and becomes a member of society ... a transition from the child who has to live in a family, to the man who has to live in society.


Key Elements of a Montessori Secondary Program

- Community building/student leadership/Activities in social life
- Large periods of time for in-depth learning
- Balance of personal work and work in small groups
- Time and activities for self-construction
- Student-led family conferences
- Multiage grouping
- Teachers as facilitators
- Interdisciplinary curriculum/meaningful work
- Strong academic program
- Practical life skills/field studies
- Global/peace education
- Service learning
- Career education
- Economic exploration
- Technology as a tool
- Creative expression/electives
- Erdkinder/Outdoor education
- Immersion weeks, change in pace and renewal opportunities

This is the first part of an article which appeared in Montessori Life Magazine, Summer 2003. It will be continued in subsequent issues of Inside the Woods. Next: Community Building and Student Leadership.

---

### ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

#### Early Adolescence (12-14 years)

**Physical Development**

- Many toddler-like experiences (teething, don’t know body spaces)
- Growth of feet and hands, then limbs, finally trunk; clumsy
- Noses, ears grow before face enlarges, matures
- Increase in weight, height, heart size, lung capacity
- Unrefined muscular strength
- Bone growth faster than muscle growth; vulnerable to breakage
- Bodies change faster than ability to use them
- Mature at varying rates of speed/rapid growth spurts
- Need for motion/activity
- Ravenous appetites, may overtax digestive system
- Sexual characteristics; voices change

#### Cognitive Development

- Potential for new and different way of thinking (transitional formal operational thinking) which can create worry
- Reasoning with hypotheses involving 2+ variables
- Can plan ahead to anticipate/formulate goals
- Working on organizing thoughts, work, time, self
- Understand analogies, puns, metaphors & symbol system
- Question previously unquestioned attitudes, values
- Intensely curious; need to experiment safely
- Prefer active learning experience with peers
- Operate in the present
- Want to learn things they consider useful, real
- Practice megacognition (thinking about their thinking)
- Have new interests they want to explore

#### Psychosocial

- Test out many roles; push limits
- Egocentric (everything revolves about them and their needs; “everyone’s picking on me”)
- Pseudo-stupidity (overwhelmed easily & shut down)
- Imaginary audience (they’re always looking at me)
- Personal Fable (it will happen to everyone but me); unique and indestructible
- Meaningful relations with peers; peers important
- Interested in social order and justice
- Autonomy: independent / interdependent
- Want significant adults to accept them; adult rejection can drive them into the relatively secure social environment of the peer group
- Experience conflict due to loyalties to peer group and families
- Defining gender roles and identity/valorization
- Making new friends based on interests instead of proximity
- Saying goodbye to old friendships

#### Moral/Spiritual

- Idealistic; want perfect friends, school, parents, self
- Not always able to follow the logical actions to create idealistic results; thus, apparent hypocrisy
- Seek information about big ideas and questions
- Can begin to see multi-perspectives
- Confront moral and ethical questions for which they may be unprepared to cope
- Cosmic task of self-perfection and their place in the world
- May make poor judgments due to lack of life experiences

---

#### Middle Adolescence (15-17 years)

**Physical Development**

- Most girls have completed their physical growth
- Boys will experience most of their growth spurt
- Increased sexual drive, learning to express and control this drive
- Conscious of self and body
- Concerns about sexual attractiveness, sexual identity

**Cognitive Development**

- Developing and using abstract thinking
- Understand cause and effect well
- Beginning to understand consequences of behavior
- Can imagine the future and begin to make plans for the future, higher level of concern for the future
- Increased intellectual ability and creativity, intellectual interests gain importance
- See the impact of academic success on the future
- Greater capacity to set goals and follow through
- More defined work habits

**Psychosocial**

- Experiment with different roles
- Answering the question, Who am I?
- Stress on personal dignity and self-esteem
- Sorting out values and beliefs in relation to those of family, friends and community
- Able to accept criticism and advice
- Personal fable continues
- Experiment with different behaviors
- May have more conflicts with parents
- Feeling of love and passion, tenderness and fears shown toward opposite sex
- Frequently changing relationships
- Efforts to make new friends
- See self as member of a peer group, need for belonging

**Moral/Spiritual**

- Development of ideals and selection of role models
- More consistent evidence of conscience
- May temporarily reject family values
- Interest in moral reasoning
- Examination of inner experiences, capable of useful insight
- Thoughts about one’s role in life