

March 2012

INSIDE THE WOODS

This is the final week before our birthday party

Ju Wotring and Patty Keys, the co-chairs of our big celebration – A Big To-Do – want to remind everyone that it’s time to get your tickets, if you haven’t yet.

They have assembled a group of amazing volunteers who have designed the elements for a truly memorable evening. This once-in-a-lifetime event will take place at the Marathon Oil Tower, Tanglewood Terrace, 5555 San Felipe, Houston 77056. It will start at 6:30 and end at 10 PM. What to wear? Dressy casual is just the style.

Doors open at 6:30, with everything available – silent auction bidding and big board bidding. Scrumptious food will be at several buffet stations all during this time. All bidding will cease at 8:45 and a raffle drawing for an iPad2 will take place at 8:55.

Head of School Sherry Herron will present a round-up of the school’s 50 years, as the first item on our program for the evening. Then, a feature called “Paddles Up” will start, where bidders will answer the call for contributions for The Gift of Gratitude matching funds donated by the Fatica family.

Following that, members of Woods High School and Woods Middle School will perform a few songs from their recent musical show, “Once On This Island,” a Broadway show loosely based on “The Little Mermaid.” Checkout will begin at 9:45, ending a fantastic evening.

Hard-working volunteers have garnered the most attractive and exciting auction items you’ll ever see. Some of the most cherished items are those made by the students. We have two exquisite ottomans, one by students in Early Childhood and one from Lower Elementary. It’s too bad there are only two of them. Upper Elementary and high school students have created unique clocks.

50TH YEAR 1962 - 2012

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle

Other cherished items are those made by our talented parents, such as a chess table made by master woodworker Wayne Wilkerson, and a wood bench made by another master wood-worker, Brian Conner. There are other great items – see them at schoolofthewoods.org.

Committee members are Barb Bends, Katherine Bodron, Madelyn Mauritz-Bosse, Carole Brooks, Shawn Broussard, Melissa Couch, Joan Erickson, Cheryl Fowler, Guy Harrison, Karen Imas, Sarah Karst, Melissa Krauser, Lise Lawrence, Jill Lucas, Joshua Marino, Trisha Marino, Stephanie McGuire, Eugenia Miro, Tamara Moore, Cindy Oldham, Kathleen Packlick, Patrick Phipps, Stacey Raskin, Stephanie Smith, Brodie Thomson, Raz Thomson, Bridget Tomlinson, Alex Wilhite, Janet Williams, Kristen Wright, Ken Wright and Tara Zaafran.

Also lending support are Scott Bends, Mark Bodron, Liz Casagrande, Anu Chatufale, Stephen Couch, Lorie Clements, Kim Gleason, Lisa Gross, Gordon Grow, Staci Gwinn, Randy Keys, Diane Koonce, Solim Jang, Kim Lopez, Ramon Miro, Helen Pink, Tony Pink, Bridgett Pracht, Michelle Romero, Ellen Scippa, Ghazal Siddiqui, Ime Smith, Christine Stuart, Viula Torgerson, Janna Webber, Emily Weinstein and Earnest Wotring.

There is only one time you can have a 50th birthday and this is ours. Be sure to be there for this historic and fun-filled event.

What are metacognitive skills?

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

Developing metacognitive skills is one of the newest buzz phrases moving around today amongst educators. Metacognition is often defined as “thinking about thinking,” or “knowing about knowing.” But what does that mean exactly?

If we break the word down into its parts, we see the prefix “meta” is a preposition originating in the Greek language meaning “in the midst of” or “in common with.” The word cognitive is defined by Merriam-Webster as an adjective meaning “of, relating to, conscious mental activities (as thinking, reasoning, remembering, imagining, learning words, and using language).” We can think of metacognitive to mean “in the midst of our conscious mental activities.

Although numerous sources explain the various components of metacognition, it generally refers to being aware of what you are thinking and how you come to understand and assimilate information. A person with good metacognitive skills would have strategies that allow them to manipulate knowledge to better remember facts, names, and events and to come up with new solutions to problems. It means learning how your own brain works and using that information in your life’s endeavors.

Not only are these skills important for students, but they are also needed in

adult life. Alan Mumford (1986) has stated that the best managers are people who have learned to learn and can transfer learning from one part of their lives into another. Many of these skills are probably already part of your natural thinking processes.

Why is there now an emphasis on these particular skills even though these strategies have been written about as far back as the time of Aristotle?

Perhaps because the rapid changes brought on by technology, science, the job market, and global issues will require us to learn and adapt more than ever. It is no longer good enough to merely learn an increasingly larger amount of rote facts in school.

Exciting new discoveries regarding how our brains work compel us to arm our children with the knowledge of how to learn and problem solve so they will be able to thrive in a changing world.

Brain research of the last 20 years or so has revealed that we are born with an astronomical number of neurons (brain cells), which will be discarded early in our lives if unused (a process called pruning).

The useful neurons, based on experiences, will be strengthened and worked into connections between the different parts of the brain. This process is in rapid growth

mode for the first ten years of life, but continues all throughout our lives.

Evidence showing that stroke victims can recover many of the abilities they lose initially, with continued, targeted practice, makes it clear that our brains can be rebuilt if we put the effort into it. Brain scientist Jill Bolte Taylor, who has been through a stroke of her own, describes in her book, [My Stroke of Insight](#), not only the work she did to rebuild her lost brain functions but also the importance of the people who surrounded her at the time. (For a compelling lecture on this see http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/jill_bolte_taylor_s_powerful_stroke_of_insight.html.)

We know the most important idea children need to know is that brains change when they are exercised. This knowledge compels them to reject any notion that they can't learn something they want to learn and motivates them to do the necessary work. JoAnn Deak, another influential brain scientist, has written an excellent book by the title [Your Fantastic Elastic Brain](#) to tell children how their brains work and how to stretch them.

Past educational leaders designed schools and curricula based on the idea that intelligence was fixed and determined by inheritance. Neuroscience now tells us that our children's brains are in reality constantly busy assembling *new* neuronal networks. Maria Montessori recognized that the brain constructs itself through experience. She designed the classroom space and curriculum to aid the child's natural drive to build and organize knowledge.

We can stimulate thinking skills by becoming more aware of our thinking processes. What biases and assumptions are we carrying into a situation? Do we see mistakes as opportunities to learn and are we willing to change strategies when needed? In what kind of physical setting do we do our best work? How does prior knowledge relate to new learning? How can we organize and categorize information so it is easier to remember?

Your child will benefit from seeing you set goals and make plans to achieve them. Model thinking processes by talking out loud when you are thinking through something.

Ask questions and encourage your child to think of his own questions. Reflect on situations with your child and ask if what happened is what she thought would happen.

(Cont'd pg 4)

A CHOICE VERSE FROM DR. SEUSS

CONGRATULATIONS!

TODAY IS YOUR DAY.

YOU'RE OFF TO GREAT PLACES!

YOU'RE OFF AND AWAY!

YOU HAVE BRAINS IN YOUR HEAD.

YOU HAVE FEET IN YOUR SHOES

YOU CAN STEER YOURSELF

ANY DIRECTION YOU CHOOSE.

YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN. AND YOU KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW.

AND YOU ARE THE GUY WHO'LL DECIDE WHERE TO GO.

Example Chart

Organizational devices can make information more obvious when planning or making decisions. Following is a sample chart from *Helping Students Ask the Right Questions* by Cynthia Richetti and James Sheerin that can be used as a model for making family decisions as well as for classroom use.

The objectives (listed down the left side of the matrix) can be determined by asking a question such as, “What are some things you would like in a pet?” For the possible alternatives (listed across the top of the matrix) you can ask, “What kinds of pets might you like?” The cells of the matrix are completed using everybody’s input. The eventual goal in this process is to help children learn how to ask and answer their own questions.

The SELECT Problem-Solving Matrix

Objectives	Alternatives			
	Snake	Tiger	Fish	Puppy
Easy to take care of	Feed once a week	Needs cage and a lot of food	Feed each day—clean tank	Feed and walk twice a day
Can learn tricks	No	Yes, like at circus	No	Yes
Fit in apartment	Yes	Pretty crowded	Yes	Yes
Cute	Slimy	Baby tigers are cute	Maybe certain ones are	Yes
Not dangerous	Can bite; Can scare someone	Looks scary; Might go wild	Not dangerous	Not dangerous
Children evaluate the characteristics of potential pets				

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<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov99/vol57/num03/Helping-Students-Ask-the-Right-Questions.aspx>

Maria Montessori: The Discovery

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

"The child is richly endowed with powers, sensitivities, and constructive instincts that as yet have neither been recognized nor put to use. In order to develop he needs much broader opportunities than he has been offered thus far. Might not this goal be reached by changing the entire structure of education?" --M. Montessori, Education and Peace (1972, p. 31)

Dr. Montessori's work at the Orthophrenic School was the seed that grew to become the Montessori Method. She said the two years of practice she got in the Orthophrenic School were, "my first and indeed my true degree in pedagogy" (The Montessori Method, 1964, pg. 32). She had brought with her the intuitive idea that the methods she used with the institutionalized children contained more rational principles than those used with normal children.

As she worked in the Orthophrenic School, Maria became convinced that methods similar to those she used with the deficient children would have marvelous results when used with normal children. The evidence must have been conclusive when she saw the children reach the same level as normal children. Seguin, an educator whom she had studied and whose works she translated into Italian, also felt after 30 years of work with abnormal children that the physiological method should also be used on normal children and would, "show the way to a complete human regeneration" (The Montessori Method, 1964, pg. 42).

Maria left the institute and the school in 1901, and enrolled at the University of Rome as a student of philosophy. Her reasons for leaving may have had something to do with the marriage of the father of her child, Mario, whose birth date is not known exactly (she had been shunned by the father's family because her educational

level and work made her an unacceptable choice for marriage). She now devoted her study to finding out what it was that prevented normal children from reaching a higher potential.

In 1902, Maria summarized the results of her work in medicine and teaching at a national pedagogical congress in Naples. Two years later she was appointed to give a course in the Pedagogic School of the University of Rome, a position she held until 1908. The aim of the course was to lay a foundation for reform in the schools. She was appointed to the board of examiners for the degree of natural science in anthropology in 1906 and at the same time agreed to organize and manage groups of children in tenement houses in Rome.

On January 6, 1907, the first Casa dei Bambini opened in the tenement at 58 Via dei Marsi in Rome. Maria first began to use the methods she had proposed with normal children in this slum school. She noted unsuspected

powers of concentration as well as social changes in the children. She modified materials to adapt them to normal children and developed new ideas. Her students began to write, and then read spontaneously as a result. She also brought a unique respect for the children and their parents.

A second Casa dei Bambini was opened in April in San Lorenzo, and by 1908, the success of the schools became public knowledge. More schools opened, and in 1909, Maria gave her first training courses for teachers. She was encouraged by her friends to put her ideas and method in a book. Her first book, later published in English as The Montessori Method, would be followed by many others. During 1911, she worked on the materials for the six to nine age group.

By the end of 1911, the Montessori system had been officially adopted by the public

schools of Italy and Switzerland. Schools all over the world started using her method. Maria gave up all other activities except those of training and lecturing to promote the movement.

In January of 1913, the first classes were held in Maria's new headquarters in Rome. Many attending the course found not only a new educational method, but a philosophy of life. In the spring, Mario Montessori, Maria's son, asked to join his mother for a trip to the United States where she was to lecture at Carnegie Hall and visit the White House. He continued to accompany her and promote her method throughout his life.

Maria Montessori returned to America under the sponsorship of the National Education Association in 1915, to demonstrate her work. Although Montessori came to the United States at the enthusiastic request of people like Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison, circumstances surrounding attempts to establish schools and support organizations contrived to dampen the initial enthusiasm. Unfortunately, it would be another 40 years before her methods would be revived in the United States.

Next Month: The Later Years

Get going! Do some stuff. . .

Museum of Fine Arts/Houston

It's time to remind you that King Tut will not be in town much longer. His ticket to ride is dated April 15 so if you've not seen this remarkable exhibit there is still time.

Check various websites in connection with the Museum of Fine Arts for special ticket offers and discounts.

And make a date for this venture. . .

If you haven't been to Fort Worth recently, toss the family into the Tin Lizzy, crank 'er up and go. The main object of your trip will be a visit to the Kimbell Art Museum.

It was founded in 1935 by super-wealthy businessman Kay Kimbell and his wife Velma. Their vision was to have a small but perfect museum featuring the best of the best, and they succeeded superbly. Sister Wendy (remember her?) called the Kimbell the best small museum anywhere.

The Kimbell is currently presenting a special exhibit -- *The Age of Impressionism: Great French Paintings from the Clark*. This is the first-ever international touring exhibition of masterpieces from the Sterling and Francine Clark Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts. The Clark is best-known for its holdings in French Impressionist painting. Exhibit dates are March 11 through June 17, 2012. Check the Kimbell's website for ticket prices.



The Kimbell's permanent collection of about 350 works of notably high quality is always on view, free, too.

In addition to seeing this fabulous art, you will see some fabulous architecture. The original Kimbell was designed by Louis I. Kahn, and a second building, to open in 2013, is being constructed across the street, designed by Renzo Piano.

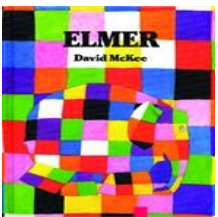
More about books

The books in this group are considered books that raise questions. The first six are picture books; the final four are longer books.



Emily is sick and Father is home to take care of her. He puts Emily to bed and

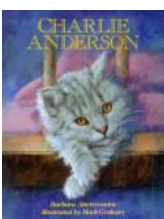
tucks her in with her stuffed animals. Before either of them knows it, Emily and Father find they've turned this sick day into a special day together. *The Sick Day* by Patricia MacLachlan.



Elmer by David McKee.

Elmer the Elephant is Bright colored patchwork all

over. All the other elephants laugh at him! If he were ordinary elephant color, the others might stop laughing. The surprising conclusion of this comical fable is a celebration of individuality and the power of laughter



Charlie Anderson

by Barbara Abercrombie. Charlie who now lives with two girls and their mother in a

country place. He is always home at nighttime but spends his day-times in the woods. One night he doesn't come home, and the girls learn his big secret.



The Bracelet by Yoshiko Uchida.

A story about the power of memory.

During the war with Japan in 1942, a Japanese-American girl must leave her home. She receives a good-bye gift from her best friend, but loses it. Emi is afraid that without the bracelet Laurie will disappear from her mind forever.



Uncle Jed's Barber Shop by

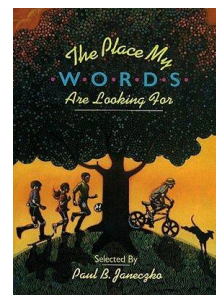
Margaree King Mitchell. In the 1920s, Sarah Jean's favorite uncle postpones his dream of owning a barbershop to pay for an operation to save her life. He finally realizes his dream at age 79.



The Wolf by

Margaret Barbalet. What is it, outside the house, that terrifies Tal and

his family? Why, for months and months must they stay inside, inventing new games and living by new rules? And what happens when Tal dreams he hears a voice saying, "Let it in, Let it in"?



The Place My Words Are Looking For, edited

by poet Paul B. Janeczko.

This is a collection of

poetry and commentary by 39 of our leading poets. They share their poems and their thoughts, unraveling their inspirations, reflections, methods and memories.

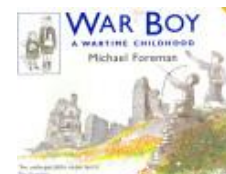
NEXT ISSUE
BOOKS THAT
REQUIRE INFERRING



Avalanche

by Stephen Kramer. Part of the Nature Series. Stirs young readers'

interest in science with dramatic photographs of the powerful effects of nature. This well-illustrated book details the causes of avalanches and the safety measures which should be taken by anyone venturing into snow-covered mountainous areas. It also includes a glossary and a section of interesting facts. 47 pages.



War Boy by

Michael Foreman is a book of boyhood

remembrances from World War II bomb shelters, local characters and sweetshop treats. The book combines pictures and quirky, sometimes dark memories. Foreman's memoirs charm and amuse while giving a close and personal view of the war. Altogether, this is an unusual and enjoyable book whose audience, while nonspecific, spans age groups and interests. All ages. 92 pages.



The Upstairs Room by

Johanna Reiss is a book set in Holland during World War II. The story is the account of two

young Jewish sisters who are hidden from the Nazis by families in Holland during the entire war years. 196 pages.