



Birchwood Clipboard

The Lion's Roar

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In This Issue

Special Program
Highlights

Awards Preview

Class News

Essay from
Mr. Debelak

Upcoming

ISACS visiting Team
April 14-17

Jump Rope for Heart
Event
April 16, April 19

FPS State Bowl
April 19

OAA Test and ITBS
Testing
April 22-26

Special Program Highlights

Achievement = Skill x Effort

Martin P. Seligman, leading researcher in the emerging field of positive psychology, writes in his new book *Flourish* that an important component for lifelong happiness is achievement. Achievement supplies us with a sense of satisfaction and is realized through a combination of skill and effort. Noting that increased achievement in any field is within anyone's grasp, he states; "The real leverage you have for more achievement is more effort. Effort is no more and no less than how much time you practice the task. Time on task acts in two ways to increase achievement: it multiplies existing skill and knowledge, and it also directly increases skill and knowledge. The best news is that effort is very malleable. How much time you devote to a task comes from the exercise of conscious choice – from free will. Choosing to devote time to an endeavor comes from at least two aspects of positive character: self-control and GRIT."

When we teach children about effort and self-control at an early age we are giving them a head start on the character qualities that can lead to continuing achievement throughout their life time – and to greater personal happiness, a happiness that endures.

Awards Preview

This month's awards include (but is not limited to) published poets, grand prize Science Fair Winners, and seventy-five percent of Birchwood participants travelling to Columbus for the state level of National History Day. We begin with the kindergarten class (15), who have read 288 books since October as part of the "Book It" program. Both **Dhruv** and **Mark** (1st grade) had poems published in the March edition of *Spider* magazine. **Praveen, Isabella I, Alexander M, Tejal, Annessa, Derzan, Shruthi, Zuha, Favian, Cameron, Farah, Nikhita, William L, Vinayak, and Dhweeja** scored a perfect score on the last Continental Math League Contest. **Lilah** was chosen as a top ten finalist for the *Storyworks* poetry competition. **Pheby** received an Award of Excellence for "The New Voices Young Writers Competition." At the Ohio Science and Engineering Fair (NEOSF) **Dhweeja** was chosen as one of two entries for the 7th-8th grade Grand Prize Winners for her project: "Energy expenditure is related to body composition and functional consequences in children: a prospective study. **Vinayak** earned a Silver medal for his project: "Role of ethnicity in cardiovascular health in urban teenagers." **Anika** earned a bronze medal for her project: "Artificial Photosynthesis: Splitting of Water by Metal Catalysts." **Favian** also earned two Superior rankings for his project. The following students all finished 3rd or 4th place in the recent Science Olimpiad competition: **Maya D, Isabella I, Farah, Tejal, Julia F, Julie, Jane, and Shruthi**. Both **William L** and **Anika** received a perfect score on the last Math Olimpiads Contest. **Jane** scored in the top 100 in the state for the National Geographic Geography Bee and will compete in the state competition in Columbus. The Birchwood Power of the Pen team had spectacular results at the regional competition which resulted in bringing home the three-foot travelling Sweepstakes Trophy, and the first place eighth grade team trophy, as well as many top individual performances led by **Vinayak** and **Prathna**. **Ammar** won a Best of the Best of Rounds from a district prompt and **Prathna** and **Vinayak** both received a Best of Rounds recognition. Many of these same students also competed in the National History Day — District Competition and had outstanding results. Seventy-five percent (15 in all) of Birchwood students who participated won top spots in their categories and have advanced to the state level of competition. **Prathna, Vinayak, Ammar, John, Maya F, and Pheby** all placed first in their categories. **Haley, Maryum, Michael T, Adam, Jack, Amir, and William L** all placed second in their categories. **Dhweeja** placed third and **Megan P** received Honorable Mention and both will advance to the state competition later this month. See full stories...

Visits and Speakers

Linda Chojnacki from the *Plain Dealer* came to interview **Dhweeja** and **Vinayak** about their achievement at the recent Northeast Ohio Science and Engineering Fair. They will be featured in the Metro Section "In the Spotlight" in an upcoming edition. The third and fourth graders recently welcomed **Ms. Amy** from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History for the hands-on Forces and Motion program.

Mrs. Waldal attended the iCan iPad workshop at Hathaway Brown. She learned more about how others have implemented one-to-one iPad program in elementary and middle schools. The workshop proved helpful in considering our own direction for technological development in the coming years. With such rapid changes in technology today, we are looking at what we can do to best prepare our students for their future.



Class News

Preschool

Over the past month we have been very busy with many activities. We began our month on a unit, "all about me". We talked about the differences and similarities of our hair, eye and skin color. We decorated self-portraits using cut out shapes of our bodies and spent time making each one a reflection of each child in the classroom. We also made some thumbprint art creations and observed our prints using a magnifying glass. We were fascinated at looking at the differences in all of our thumbprints. We also talked about some of our favorite things: foods, colors, toys, places to go, etc.

Our pet unit began by surveying the children to ask what their favorite animal was and dog was the winner. The children brought in their favorite stuffed animal pets from home and created plays and stories to share with their friends. We made a collage by cutting out pictures of pets and ways to care for them, such as food, water, exercise, and love. We also played a game by guessing which animals our friends were acting out during circle time.

The preschoolers have loved playing in the snow. The whole class worked together to make a snowman family complete with a mom, dad, and baby snowman. We are looking forward to spring weather and cannot wait to dig in the sandbox and dirt around the playground.

Kindergarten

On March 21 the kindergarten class celebrated the arrival of spring. Special guest David Yeh taught the students how to make balloon animals. The students also wrote poems about spring and created a class book. Each student received a poetry award during this special spring celebration.

In reading, the students continue to enjoy participating in the "Book It" program. Each time a student finishes a book or story, he/she gets to add a stamp to the monthly reading poster. Since beginning the program in October, the kindergarteners have read 288 books. At the end of each month, each student receives a coupon for a free pizza. Speaking of pizza, the students created their own pretend pizzas using paper plates in a lesson about fractions. Everyone continues to work hard in math. Several students have completed their first Singapore math workbook and have moved on to the second workbook.

Students enjoyed their science unit on magnets. They tested out different objects to see whether or not they were magnetic. They also learned about poles and the strength of various magnets. The class even created a compass using a sewing needle. In social studies the class began a unit on geography. This included learning about rocks, mountains, continents, and oceans.

Kindergarten Computer

We are learning to create shapes using procedures or "trains." We learn to use lots of trains together to create different shapes. We also discovered Microworlds Jr. music. The students have been composing their own music and listening to the classical music that Microworlds has within the program.

1st Math

The first graders are becoming avid problem solvers in the current math unit. Using the series, *Challenging Word Problems*, they are learning to apply some of the addition and subtraction algorithms that they have learned during the year.

1st Language Arts

The first grade room is a hotbed of authors and poets. The students actually ask for more writing time during class! This month, in conjunction with their literature unit, they focused on modeling stories by Dick King-Smith. They practiced writing about something they are passionate about by modeling *All Pigs Are Beautiful*. Inspired by Dick King-Smith's *Animal Friends*, they wrote memoirs about their experiences with animals.

Congratulations to Dhruv and Mark for becoming published poets. Their poems, on the theme of "My Favorite Holiday Tradition" were printed in the March edition of *Spider* magazine. Dhruv's poem was entitled "The Important Thing About Halloween," while Mark wrote "My Birthday."

1st Spanish

The first graders have been working on the theme ¿Qué mes es? (What month is it?). They conversed about the month and the weather and liked to make silly sentences. **Marko** told the group that it snowed in July and **James** pretended that he swam in a lake in January.

1st-2nd Reading

The first and second graders started the Junior Great Books program this month. This program is designed to allow children to enjoy quality literature, develop comprehension and interpretive thinking skills, and express themselves orally and through written and, in first grade, artistic work. The first graders have enjoyed stories and poems from England and Scotland. The second graders have immersed themselves in stories about friendship.

In conjunction with our literature unit on the works of Dick King-Smith, the students were issued a challenge to see how many of his books they could read by the end of March. Several first and second graders have taken on this project and are avidly reading King-Smith's farmyard fantasies and writing summaries to inspire their classmates to read the same books.



1st-2nd Computer

We have been discovering digital music within Microworlds. The students are composing their own music and then adding it to a scene with characters that move to create a story. We have been very creative with all the options of different instruments and effects within Microworlds.

1st-2nd Science

Geology studies wrapped up as students learned about the processes that shape our earth including water and ice, earthquakes, volcanoes, and people. They discovered that most of the things we use fall into one of two categories — mined or grown — as they learned about the natural resources available to us. Finally, the young geologists read about how plastics, metals, paper, glass, and clothing are recycled. They each chose a few pieces of “trash” and used them to create something new; inventions ranged from boats and cars to homes for small pets.

1st-2nd Social Studies

The first and second grade “pioneers” continued their journey by experiencing prairie farm life through books and artwork. The students made models of log cabins and created watercolor paintings to show the various moods and feelings of prairie life. See the hallway outside the second grade homeroom for a display of their work!

2nd Math

After completing their unit on geometry, the second graders spent time practicing and polishing their computation skills. Each day they worked in groups according to the individual skills that needed more work. The first group practiced multiplication facts, the second, division facts, and the third group, problem solving skills.

2nd Language Arts

This month the students wrote poems about a superpower they would like to have. Their creativity was overflowing as they wrote on topics ranging from the power to fly to the power to talk to animals. These poems have been entered into a contest for *Spider* magazine. Students also began writing their own original stories to turn into a book. Learning cursive handwriting continues to be an exciting skill for the second graders. They have learned all the lowercase letters and are eager to begin writing in cursive.

2nd Spanish

The second graders have been working on the theme ¿Qué te gusta? (What food do you like?). They memorized the vocabulary about food. They wrote sentences describing what kind of food one girl in the picture was dreaming about. They loved making menus using plastic food and pretending they were picking food at a cafeteria.

3rd Spanish

The third graders have been learning grammar. They memorized adjectives and used them on different activities. They made sentences matching nouns with adjectives and they enjoyed making funny sentences. They played a game imagining that the TV set lost its picture but they could still hear the sound and draw pictures that matched the description.

3rd Social Studies

The third graders have been studying the West region of the United States and had their final states quiz. They also finished reading the *Cleveland: From Wilderness to City* and the culminating activity for this unit was a trivia game. The students had to create questions that were used in the game. The teams were The Clevelanders vs. The Thunderbolts. Both teams did very well answering questions and the scores were very close. The third graders learned a lot about Cleveland. They have moved on to a unit about pilgrims. They are doing a simulation of the first year at Plymouth Colony. The class was broken up into four teams: Scrooby, The Survivors, Squanto's Friends, and Mayflower. Each team has to work together as they take a closer look at the struggles that were a part of life in Plymouth Colony. The third graders will vicariously experience the hardships of life in the New World as they make decisions (in their teams) and face consequences just as the pilgrims did.

3rd Math

The third graders began a unit on fractions. On any given day the third grade math class is buzzing with three busy groups, each learning a different aspect of fractions. One group is learning to identify improper fractions and to convert them into mixed numbers. Another group is learning to add and subtract mixed fractions. The third group is solving word problems involving fractions.

Congratulations to the following third graders for their achievement in the third and final Continental Math League contest: **Praveen** (gold), **Neige, Kabir, Joshua, Abeedah,** and **Nathan** (silver), and **Paul** and **Peter** (bronze). The overall winner for the year was **Praveen**, who earned 17 cumulative points.

3rd-4th Computer

We have been creating PowerPoint presentations. Students learned how to create wonderful presentations with pictures and text. Then we added animations and transitions to give lots of character to the presentations. Third graders did a presentation on their goals for the year and the fourth graders did their presentations using a poem from Fine Arts Night. What inspiring work.



3rd-4th Reading

The third and fourth graders had a lot of fun writing poems about what superpower they would like to have. Their poem had to be ten lines or less, and is for a *Spider* magazine contest. Congratulations to **Lilah** who was chosen as a top ten finalist for the *Storyworks* poetry competition we entered several months ago. This poem had to have at least three homophones in it (**Lilah's** had many more than that). Her certificate and her fabulous, creative poem, "When Homophones are Concerned" are hanging in the third and fourth grade wing. The third graders did a great job on their biography book talks and have moved on to an author study. They are reading books by Beverly Cleary. The boys started reading *Henry Huggins* and the girls are reading *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*. As a class they are reading *Hello, Mrs. Piggle Wiggle* by Betty MacDonald. The third graders are getting a big kick out of the bad habits different children have in the book, such as showing off too much and crying too much. Mrs. Piggle Wiggle has to find cures for both children (and others) before the boy seriously hurts himself from doing various stunts and before the girl drowns in her own tears! Meanwhile the fourth graders have moved on to a biography unit. As a class they are reading a couple of books on Abraham Lincoln and they are each keeping a journal as they read. They are learning to extract facts as they read biographies about other people in history, writing down the main accomplishments of the person as well as their birthplace, birthdate, what their childhood was like, and their main qualities.

4th Math

For the past two months the fourth graders have been expanding their skills with fractions. They have come a long way. Many are now quite capable of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing both fractions and mixed numbers. Now they are applying these skills to problem solving.

Recently, the fourth graders completed their fifth and final Continental Math League contest for the 2012-2013 year. Congratulations to the following students for their achievement: **Isabella I** and **Alex M** (gold), **Stella** and **Shruthi** (silver), and **Naya**, **Zuha**, **Mira**, **Julie**, **Siham**, **Lilah**, and **Terek** (bronze). The overall winners for the year were **Alex M.** and **Shruthi**, whose cumulative scores tied at 26.

3rd-4th Science

The students finished their rock and mineral unit by identifying three unknown minerals using the field tests they'd learned to perform, an activity which required comparing, contrasting and analysis. Next, they read about some of the many uses of rocks and minerals. Then, the budding geologists revisited the list of questions they had created at the beginning of the unit and found they could answer many now. They also made a new list of the many things they'd learned. After the wrap up of geology studies, students moved on to forces and motion. To introduce Newton's Three Laws of Motion, a visitor from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History came to Birchwood and led students through a hands-on program. Students will have the opportunity to apply what they've learned when they build and launch rockets.

3rd-5th Language Arts

This month has been a good mix of fiction and non-fiction writing. The third grade students have been asking since the day they sent in their entries whether *Creative Communication* has contacted us about their stories, and the editor finally has. No winners yet, but a nice commendatory letter stating that it was refreshing to read so many well-written essays from one school when usually over half are rejected for publication. These students have also written stories modeled after *Berlioz the Bear*. Fourth and fifth graders have been preparing for the *Pasta Tales* essay-writing contest. The theme is "What would you do to fight hunger in your community?" Since these students have worked on the school Harvest for Hunger campaign for two years, they bring some degree of experience to their writing. In addition, the fourth grade students are writing a new Curious George adventure, while the essays the fifth graders wrote to describe a parent would bring a smile to even the most sober reader's lips.

4th Spanish

The fourth graders have been working on verbs and conjugations. They conversed about the activities they liked to do using the verb *gustar* (to like). They elaborated interesting sentences using nouns, conjugated verbs and adjectives. At the same time they learned prepositions to connect the parts of the sentences.

4th Social Studies

The fourth graders have been studying the West region of the United States, reading all about things like the transcontinental railroad, the gold rush, migrant workers and farming in the west, harvesting forests, and how air and space flight changed in the United States. The fourth graders then moved on to reading about how all of the regions of the United States are linked together. They read about changes in transportation and communication that helped to unite the nation. As they read in groups, they took notes and prepared for a trivia game. The students will be graded on the notes that they took, their ability to come up with challenging, important questions which will be used in the game, and how well they do answering questions in the game.

5th Science

Students learned about the current model of the atom. While most fifth graders learn nucleus, proton and electron, the fifth grade has ventured into quarks, mesons and gluons (and leptons too). They understood that the electrons determine many chemical changes, static electricity and current electricity. Their knowledge of the atom allowed them to understand how static electricity and current electricity work. Sometimes the lab was a noisy place with buzzers, bells and "it works!"



5th Math

We have made wonderful progress in the Singapore math class. Students have gained a working knowledge of percent, rate and ratio. Mom and dad, let them figure out the tax on your next shopping or restaurant bill. If you run a business, ask them about percent of markup or percent of discount. They should be pretty good at both. Also in the fifth grade, the Art of Problem Solving Group has completed a unit on solving linear equations with one variable. They have also learned to apply geometric formulas to a variety of shapes in order to determine area or perimeter.

5th Reading

The new literature unit is the fantasy title *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt. In their reading, students will explore many story elements: cause and effect, character, theme (good vs. evil), and style. One of the traits of a good reader is the ability to make connections, and this will be emphasized in this unit, especially the cause and effect aspect of the storyline. The annual poetry competition deadline is coming up, and in the next few weeks we all are immersing ourselves in poetry, with imagery, word music, and the element of rhythm.

5th Spanish

The fifth graders have been working on conjugated verbs and personal pronouns. They were able to converse about their favorite activities. In addition, they memorized the vocabulary "Partes de la casa" (parts of the house) and wrote questions about their homes.

5th-6th Computer

The students have been working on reviewing some basics of programming by creating some basic programs in Microworlds Pro. The programs create various graphic designs. The students experimented with different variables and combinations of commands to make really cool designs. They can then build on the programs to create other programs and designs.

5th-6th Computer - Logo Programming

The Logo students have been reviewing how to write procedures and nest them together as well as learned more about how to find mistakes in their programs. We have also been using the programs to create great graphic art.

6th Reading

Why study Greek mythology? There are several reasons. First, the dramatic beauty of many of the myths can catch the imagination. Also, great deeds can cultivate dreams of greatness. In addition, much of our language and thinking is full of words and ideas from mythology, and finally, Greek mythology lays a solid foundation for much of English poetry and for the reading of classical literature. Students made a valiant effort creating two graphic organizers: one of the Greek creation story, and one of the war in heaven between Titans and Olympians. Both of these are complex with many details. Special recognition must go to **Kevin, Sean, Avi, and Maya D** for their detailed, artistic renderings! And two students wrote musical parodies of a Greek god or goddess to a familiar melody. Currently, students are immersing themselves in both the reading and writing of poetry, paying attention to and using such elements as simile and metaphor, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and personification. Each student will contribute a poem to the upcoming *Creative Communication* competition.

6th Spanish

The sixth graders have been working on places and forms of transportation. They learned names of countries in Spanish and nationalities. They were using the verb "ir" (to go) to show places they visited. The children enjoyed reading *Desiertos Misteriosos* and completed the theme looking at pictures about Nazca, Pisco and Atacama the three desserts in South America.

6th Science

Students completed a unit on prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells using the text book, *Mr. Anderson*, and by doing lab work. They excelled in their introduction to the cell. They know the organelles and functions and were able to analyze why things worked as they do.

6th-7th Math

During the sixth and seventh grade school year, many students develop their sense of ownership about their math progress. They are making decisions about pacing for the next one or two years. Their interest and aspiration provide motivation to bear down on their math work and make progress. Due to their growing sense of responsibility, it becomes possible for me to give them greater liberty to progress through the math curriculum at an optimum speed while insuring mastery of content.



7th-8th Computer

The seventh and eighth graders have been exploring how technology is changing. We watched a video called “A Day Made of Glass” about Corning’s vision of the future of technology. They are starting to make their own one minute videos on how mobile computing connects us and can enhance our lives. They then have the option to submit the video to the Firefox Flicks video contest.

7th Reading

After reading and discussing *Johnny Tremain*, the students compiled all of their notes into a five-paragraph essay. In stages students learned how to write an introduction, three support paragraphs, and a conclusion. This process prepares them for English papers in high school. The current book is *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London, a novel that takes place in 1897 during the gold rush to the Klondike/Yukon Territory. Students are taking note of the author’s style and use of descriptive words and phrases — we call it hunting for gold. They shout “eureka” as they come across vocabulary and great passages.

7th Spanish

The seventh graders have been working on food and discussing meals in the Spanish speaking world. They learned how to order food and beverages at a café and compared the eating habits of people living in Spain, Latin America and the United States.

They practiced the present tense of regular verbs as well as adding the infinitive to expressions with “ir a” (to go to) “tener que” (have to) “acabar de” (to have just done something).

7th Science

Students spent hours using an interactive NASA website to analyze how different fins, nose cones, and body length affect the flight of water rockets. Then they built water bottle rockets. They learned about and practiced paper rocket flight by building rockets and using a stomp rocket launcher in the field.

7th-8th Latin I

In March, Birchwood students participated for the first time in the National Latin Exam, a middle and high school contest sponsored by the American Classical League. The seventh and eighth graders faced the challenge bravely, given that it is a new experience in the Latin program here. One of the seventh graders completed the quarter’s work early and invested the extra time in working ahead in the Greek textbook. Some of the eighth graders are looking ahead to high school placement exams, and all of them began their study of the pluperfect and future perfect tenses this month. Now they can work with such complex time sequences as, “I had already practiced, but will have practiced more by dinnertime,” and so forth.

8th Reading

Readings in Norse mythology have been completed by everyone. Soon each student will take on the persona of one of the gods and we will hold a summit in which they may all argue their cases that stem from the situations in the myths. Another unit recently completed is the memoir *Night* by Elie Wiesel. The author, a Nobel Prize winner and world advocate for justice, caused us all to reflect on the loss he experienced in the Holocaust. His millenium speech at the White House provided further food for thought on the ideas of gratitude, indifference to suffering, and human compassion. The students all wrote poems based upon their reflections.

8th Science

Students finished a unit learning and comparing invertebrate phyla. They learned and practiced dissecting techniques on pickles and then dissected an earthworm. Each student was able to find the three pairs of hearts and identify the organs of the digestive system. Several students performed their dissections with great skill.

8th Spanish

The eighth graders worked of the theme “en tren” (on the train). They used the vocabulary related to trains to discuss interesting train trips in Peru and Mexico. In order to have a conversation they had to use the preterit of irregular verbs, the verb “decir” (to say) and the prepositional pronouns. The students acquired the vocabulary needed to follow a conversation and have a good time in class.

8th Math

Since most high school decisions have been made, the eighth grade students are working diligently to align their math skills with the mathematics course they hope to start at in the beginning of their freshman year. It is encouraging and inspiring to see these young teenagers planning for and working towards rigorous high school math coursework. Knowing they will need to pass math exit exams to be placed in upper level math courses, they are patching up math “holes”, and accelerating their learning pace to be ready.



Specials/Awards/Contests:

New Voices Young Writers Competition, EPIC

EPIC, the Electronic Publishing Industry Coalition established The New Voices Young Writers Competition in 2005 to encourage literacy in schools. The eighth graders participated for the first time this year, submitting short stories in various genres. **Pheby** received an award of excellence and will be receiving prize packets for herself and the school. The judges commented that her story entitled "Letting Go" had it all: fascinating plot, developed characterization, and excellent dialogue. **Pheby** will also be published in this year's anthology, a copy of which will be in the school library.

Ohio Science and Engineering Fair

The 60th Annual Northeastern Ohio Science and Engineering Fair was held March 4-7 at John Carroll University. **Anika**, **Dhweeja** and **Vinayak** were the three Birchwood School students who entered (605 entries in all) and each earned recognition for the quality of his/her projects. **Anika** earned a bronze medal for her project: "Artificial photosynthesis: splitting of water by metal catalysts."

Dhweeja was chosen as one of two entries for the 7th-8th grade grand prize winners. She earned a 1st place award for her project: "Energy expenditure is related to body composition and functional consequences in children: a prospective study." In addition, she earned recognition from the American Statistical Association, the Cleveland Clinic Department of Quantitative Health Science and was selected for the Broadcom MASTERS Middle Competition. (She has earned the rank of semi-finalist twice.)

Vinayak earned a silver medal (2nd place in Health and Medicine) for his project: "Role of ethnicity in cardiovascular health in urban teenagers." In addition, he earned recognition from the American Statistical Association, the Cleveland Clinic Department of Quantitative Health Sciences, the Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Institute, the Cleveland Regional Council of Science Teachers, the Kaufman Center for Heart Failure Award, and he was nominated for the Broadcom MASTERS Middle Competition.

Favian, **Dhweeja** and **Vinayak** showed their projects at the Western Reserve District 5 Science Day at the University of Akron on March 16. **Favian** earned two superior rankings for his project: "What type of parachute will be the strongest and last the longest?"

Vinayak earned an excellent ranking for his project: "Role of ethnicity in cardiovascular health in urban teenagers," and **Dhweeja** earned two superior rankings and was invited to the State Science Day for her project: "Energy expenditure is related to body composition and functional consequences in children: a prospective study."

Science Olympiad

The 25 member Science Olympiad Team competed at Case Western Reserve University on Saturday, March 2nd. **Maya D** and **Isabella I** won a 3rd place medal for "Weather or Not;" **Farah** and **Tejal** a 4th place medal in "A is for Anatomy;" **Farah** and **Sophia V** placed 4th in "Bridge Building," **Julia F** and **Julie** placed 4th in "Amphibians and Reptiles;" and **Jane** and **Shruthi** earned 4th place for "Rock Hound." The other team members who competed were: **Alex M**, **Eric H**, **Karim**, **Stella**, **Zuha**, **Marta**, **Terek**, **Rishav**, **Maide**, **Alia**, **Channin**, **Steven**, **Annessa**, **Nikhita**, and **Olivia**. **Asim** was on the team, too.

Parents, thank you so much! **Ms. Zwolinski** and **Mrs. Haskins** judged an event for us. **Mrs. Baig**, **Mrs. Sun**, **Mrs. Foos**, **Mrs. McNaughton**, **Mr. Hollweg**, **Mrs. Sayed**, **Mr. Conley**, **Mrs. Ravichandran**, **Mrs. Roy**, **Mr. Seyhan**, **Mrs. Vlastaris**, **Ms. Hendrix**, **Mr. Cohen**, **Mr. Jaffar**, and **Mr. Massier** all helped escort students to and from events located in various buildings on campus.

Math Awards

Congratulations to the MathCounts Team for finishing in fourth place at the state competition in Columbus on March 9. This is a wonderful accomplishment since they are competing against the best math programs in all of Ohio. In the individual competition, **Vinayak** placed sixth, **Anika** placed tenth, **Prathna** placed 24th, and **Dhweeja** placed 53rd. Once again this is a striking accomplishment since these students are competing against the best math students in Ohio. **Vinayak** also came in first place in the Countdown Round, a competition in which students compete head-to-head attempting to solve complex math problems that are displayed on a large public screen. The format is much like a TV game show.

Math Olympiads #5

Gold: **William**, **Anika**

Silver: **Avi**, **Kevin**, **Cameron**, **Mihir**, **Michael H**, **Farah**, **Rami**, **Vinayak**, **Dhweeja**, **Prathna**, **Pheby**, **Haley**, **Maya F**, **Ali**

Bronze: **Christopher**, **Tejal**, **Jane**, **Derzan**, **Jad**

CONTINENTAL MATH LEAGUE #5

Gold: **Tejal**, **Annessa**, **Derzan**, **Shruthi**, **Zuha**, **Alex M**, **Avi**, **Cameron**, **Farah**, **Nikhita**, **William**, **Vinayak**, **Dhweeja**

Silver: **Jane**, **Asim**, **Kevin**, **Michael H**, **Abigail**, **Anika**, **Jack**, **Michael T**, **Ammar**

Bronze: **Layla**, **Rishav**, **Aasma**, **Maya D**, **Megan S**, **Julia**, **Olivia**, **Maryum**, **Caroline**, **Pheby**, **Haley**, **John**



2013 Regional Power of the Pen Results

Congratulations to nine students who participated in the regional Power of the Pen competition on February 23 at Perkins Middle School (Briar) in Sandusky. They brought back the three-foot travelling Sweepstakes Trophy, loaned to the middle school (for a year) in the Northwest Ohio region with the top cumulative scores from both the district and regional competition.

Also winning the first place team trophy is the eighth grade group: **Anthony C, Prathna, Pheby, Ammar, Megan P,** and **Michael T.** Representing the seventh grade were **Vinayak, William L** and **Anika.** A majority of these students received individual recognition for placing in the top 15 in their grade level:

- Anika** (7) — seventh place
- Vinayak** (7) — second place
- Megan P** (8) — 13th place
- Anthony C** (8) — 12th place
- Ammar** (8) — 11th place
- Pheby** (8) — fifth place
- Prathna** (8) — third place

Additionally, special awards were given by Best of Round judges to writers whose pieces stood out among all the others in each of the three rounds of writing:

- Prathna** — Best of Rounds
- Vinayak** — Best of Rounds
- Ammar** — Best of the Best of Rounds from a district prompt and \$25 award

Thank you goes to Mrs. Kufahl who not only transported the students but also served as an experienced judge for the competition.

National Geographic Geography Bee

After winning the school Geography Bee, 5th grader **Jane** took a difficult qualifying test to move on to the next round of competition. After the results were tabulated, she learned she had one of the top 100 scores across the state and will be competing in the state competition in Columbus at the beginning of April. Congratulations!

National History Day - District Competition

The 7th and 8th grade students had another stellar showing at the district competition held on March 23 at Case Western Reserve University and the Western Reserve Historical Society. Out of 20 students participating, 15 advanced to the state competition which will be held on April 27 at Ohio State University. The theme this year is Turning Points in History.

Beginning with the historical paper category, **Prathna** placed first with her paper on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and **Haley** placed second with her paper on Jonas Salk and the discovery of the polio vaccine. Birchwood swept the individual website category.

Placing first was **Vinayak** with his focus on the cracking of the German Enigma code in World War II. Earning a second place trophy was **Maryum.** Her website was also on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

Placing third was **Dhweeja** with her website on the Camp David Accords. In the group website category, both groups advanced to the state competition.

Placing first were **Ammar** and **John** with their focus on the Battle of Midway in World War II.

Placing second with their website on the Battle of Britain were **Michael T** and **Adam I.**

In the individual performance category, **Maya F** took first place with her performance on the Underground Railroad in Ripley, Ohio.

Pheby placed first in the individual documentary category with her presentation on the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. In the group documentary category, **Jack, Amir,** and **William L** placed second for their documentary on the Wright brothers. In the individual exhibit category, **Megan P** received an honorable mention and will also advance to the state competition. Her exhibit focused on the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. Also receiving a special prize was **Vinayak.** The Cleveland Grays gave his entry special recognition for his topic on military history. Congratulations to all these students for their hard work and success!



CREATIVITY

Building Knowledge and Defining the Challenge

As we have discussed during the past few months, innovation requires a rich knowledge base combined with creative thinking skills. Knowing their field, creative individuals have the capacity to “play” with their knowledge. They can manipulate it, reorganize it, view it from different perspectives, and make new or unusual connections among the component parts. From this context springs creativity and innovation.

In addition, we need to remember that we are making an important distinction between the creativity and innovation required among the 21st century workforce, and that which is relative to education for creativity among children and young adults. It is obvious most children are not going to make creative contributions to the society around them – at least not yet. But they can learn to become more creative people. This requires shaping attitudes about life and work. It also requires practice in applying creative thinking strategies to the affairs of life. As children develop skills related to creative thinking, they will be positioned mentally and attitudinally to make important innovative contributions to their professional life sometime in the future. Hence, education for creativity in children needs to focus upon a child’s personal life as it is today, addressing his or her own real-world struggles and opportunities.

This is why I prefer to address education for creativity through the lens of “everyman’s” creativity, or “normal creativity” a term Nancy Andreason, scholar, researcher and author of *The Creative Brain*, distinguishes from “remarkable creativity” and “extraordinary creativity.” Focusing on everyman’s creativity allows us to address the creative thinking process with children who do not yet possess robust knowledge in any field. We can focus on their studies, their hobbies, or their relationships with other children – things they know about. Creativity is just as important and viable in these mundane affairs of life as they will be in the future workforce. Addressing these affairs they will build habits related to creative thinking.

Let’s now resume the stages of creative problem solving.

Assuming you have identified a few challenges or problems from the mess finding stage, it is time to frame it. “The formulation of a problem is often more important than its solution . . . to raise new questions, new possibilities . . . to regard old problems from a new angle, requires imagination and marks real advance . . .” (Isaksen, Treffinger, 1986). John Dewey, among others, stated, “A problem is half-solved if properly stated.”

Foremost, the problem should be stated so that you can gather an abundance of ideas about how to solve the problem. You can use an invitational stem, for example, “In what ways . . . can I get better grades in school?” Or “What things might I do . . . in order to make the traveling soccer team this summer?” “What options are there to . . . make my summer productive?” Notice that stating your challenge in this manner allows room for uncertainty and helps avoid premature solutions. You are seeking an array of ideas and approaches to the situation.

The problem statement can also expand your thinking if you vary the action phrase. For example, in the effort to improve your grades you can propose, “How might I better **organize my time** so that . . .” Or “How might I **better arrange** my room Or study space so that . . .” Or “What people might be able to **help me study** so that . . .” If you wish to become a better baseball player you might ask, “What **camps can I attend** this summer so that . . .” Or “In what ways can I **strengthen my body** so that . . .” The action phrase will help focus your efforts and enable you to determine whether or not your strategy is working.

When problem solving statements are vague, “How can I get better grades?”, then usually the action or result is vague and hard to measure. Worse yet, it is ineffective. There is no way to develop an action plan nor is there a way to assess whether or not you are making progress. The problem statement and action verb should have the power to give you a plan of action, a clear means of measurement, and thereby function as a springboard for additional action.

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