



# Birchwood Clipboard

## The Lion's Roar

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### Upcoming New

Birchwood School  
website  
October 1  
(stage 2 to begin)

1st - 4th Grades  
Grandfriends Day,  
Thursday,  
October 25th

Open House for  
Prospective Parents  
Sunday, November 4  
(2:00-4:00 pm)

Fine Arts Night  
5th-8th Grades  
Friday, November 9

### Special Program Highlights

#### **Leadership Program**

Our 8th graders have completed their goal-setting for this year in the Ben Franklin Initiative with Mr. Debelak. Each student has chosen an academic and a personal goal, listed obstacles, noted what people and resources they would need to help them, and devised a specific plan. Each student will discuss their goals in a conference with their parents and Mr. Debelak.

All of the seventh and eighth graders have chosen an area of responsibility in which they can practice qualities of leadership while rendering real help to the school. In the process they are given freedom of movement around the school and, hence, gain an understanding of how freedom and responsibility work together in our society. These students are already a huge help around the school. Librarians - **Anna H, Haley Y, Caroline V**, hallway bulletin boards - **Anika R, Grace C**, computer maintenance - **Anthony C**, lost and found - **Pheby L, Vinny K, Amir I**, recycling - **Jack B, Amir I, William L, Caroline V**, office help and copying for teachers - **Megan P, Maryum A**, opening for younger students - **Dhweeja D, Maya F, Prathna K**, songbook support - **Pheby L, Anna H, Maryum A**, safety - **Michael T, Adam I, Ammar L**, fix-it and odd jobs - **John H**, school store (not begun yet) - **Michael T, Vinny K, Adam I, Ammar L, Jack B, William L**, gardening/plants - **Megan P, Michael T, Anika R, William L** lunch aide - **Adam I, Grace C**. In addition, just about every student helps in one of the lower grades at the end of the day and everyone helps count Boxtops and Campbell's labels when they can. Several students also hope to volunteer at the Bountiful Basement Food Center.

Parent volunteers are welcome for the following leadership groups: Boxtops, library, gardening, and school store. Leadership class is once a week. If interested contact Mrs. Debelak.

#### **Field Trips**

We know we are fortunate to be situated in such a rich city so we use it as our classroom! Field trips abound across grade levels and subjects. Some planned for the fall are: the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Western Reserve Historical Society, Playhouse Square, the Dittrick Medical History Center, Cleveland Public Library, the Great Lakes Science Center, NASA, and Cleveland Metroparks. Later on classes will attend concerts at Severance Hall and have outdoor education with the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center. We invite history speakers, musicians, authors, scientists, and artists to bring the field trip to us. We love Cleveland!

#### **Specials/Awards/Contests**

Alumnus, **Jacob Dennis**, was announced as a National Merit Semifinalist this month. He joins fellow alumni, **Nicholas Bashour, Shulamite Chu, Anirudh Dasarathy, and George Bashour** in receiving this honor. Since 2010 Birchwood has averaged 17% of our graduating 8th graders becoming National Merit Semifinalists. The national average is just under 1% of all students taking the test. The national children's magazine, *Cricket*, awarded prizes to three students for the May story contest. Fourth graders **Stella C** and **Zuha J** won second and third places, **Jane N** earned an honorable mention. See the full story on page 5.

**Vinny K** was featured as a Globe Star (Globe is an international network of scientists and students working together to learn more about the environment).

Birchwood School was named **Ohio's State Champion School for the President's Challenge** in physical fitness.

#### **Lecture Series**

We look forward to an evening lecture series beginning on October 25: "Educating Bright and Gifted Children: A Parent's Handbook for Developing Talent." **Mr. Debelak**, who has worked in the field of gifted education since 1978, will discuss the key factors for nurturing and supporting the education of bright and gifted learners. The lecture will start at 7:00 pm.

A question and answer session will follow.



## ***Visitors and Speakers***

We have already had visits from several alumni this fall. **Nate Calabrese** ('12) and **Naomi Wu** ('12) from Hawken, **Kavya Ravichandran** ('12) from Hathaway Brown and **Jorgen Kerens** ('12) from St. Edward--all used a day off from high school to come back to Birchwood to help around the school. We love hearing how well they are doing in high school. **Mark Kufahl** ('97) came for lunch. Alumni are always welcome.

The 6th-8th graders enjoyed a presentation by Chris Adams, the mural artist, who painted a mural in our library. He spoke about how he pursued his dream from the age of six. His journey entailed three degrees (fine arts, business, and design), many obstacles and hard work. Yet he shared with conviction that dedication to a goal will always reap rewards. Students were fascinated by how he conceived and carried out the covering of an entire wall in the Birchwood School library - applying principles of color, shape and line; and by how the finished product communicates the wonder, joy, and infinite possibilities of books.

The 5th-8th grade classes are hoping to have visits from grandparents this year. What better education than to hear stories from our own older generation! We encourage students and parents to help us make these connections. Contact your homeroom teacher to work out a time to share jobs, culture, travels, immigration experiences, hobbies, or special anecdotes. Grandfriends in the younger grades can look forward to a special day coming up later in the fall when their grandfriends can visit the classroom. But in the older grades we would like to hear your stories.

## ***A Word from our Director of Advancement...***

Birchwood is off to a great start with this year's fundraising efforts. Our Annual Fund efforts just began, and we have already enjoyed a great response! In fact, the BWS Board of Directors reached their fundraising challenge goal 2 months early! Thanks to their efforts the Science Olympiad team is receiving much needed support for supplies and preparation materials!

Join us in enriching the academic life of Birchwood students. Every gift matters no matter the size. Join us by making a meaningful gift for you and your family. Don't forget to double your donation by participating in your company's matching gift program.

Finally, the International Festival and Auction (IFA) is scheduled for December 1. The IFA is more than a school tradition, it's our single-largest fundraiser of the year, and with your support, we can make it more spectacular than ever. If you or your company is interested in sponsoring the event, contact Michelle Ehlert at [mehlert@birchwoodschool.org](mailto:mehlert@birchwoodschool.org).

## **Class News**

### ***Preschool***

Our natural playground equipment has arrived. We will be able to explore our environment by creating our very own obstacle course with logs, stumps, a wooden tunnel, and stepping stones. We will also be able to make music using sound tubes and banging on a "hank drum." We went on a nature walk around the school and field to collect leaves, twigs, rocks, grass, and dirt for our collection table. We have also made plans to plant some chrysanthemum plants in large pots to provide our playground with an array of colors before the winter months arrive. We are so grateful to the Hershey Foundation for making this delightful play space possible.

Over the past few weeks, the preschoolers have developed a love of counting and measuring objects around the room using linking materials. On a daily basis block structures take over the gross motor area of the preschool room where we see four or more students working happily together to build creative and elaborate buildings. Our four-to-five-year-old preschoolers are also exploring the concept of addition by connecting cubes together to make larger numbers and printing the numbers on clipboards.

We have gradually been learning all the letters and phonetic sounds of the alphabet in order to create, with a teacher's assistance, simple words to sound out such as: at, cat, bat, mat, pat, etc. Our preschoolers are very excited to be exploring their pre-reading skills.

Art has been a highlight in the preschool program. We have been exploring all kinds of ways to paint using watercolors, liquid tempera paint, sponge painting, and finger painting. Our brush strokes are also evolving into pictures of people, trees, animals, and shapes. Many thanks again to the Bruening Foundation for their support of our preschool.

### ***Gym***

The gym classes have exploded with activity ranging from football to badminton along with each class striving to improve their quarter, half-or mile-run time. In four weeks, 23 students have shaved 30 or more seconds off their time. These students are **Mira K, Siham M, Sophia V, Zuha J, Julie L, Derzan C, Christopher H, Channin M, Jane N, Farah S, Asim S, Maya D, Julia F, Jad K, Cameron K, Rae R, Mihir S, Megan S, Sean V, Maryum A, Grace C, Anika R, and Megan P**. Students have also been busy recording their 10-minute runs and have completed over 6,000 ten-minute runs, which is the equivalent of 100 hours of running. What a great start to the school year. Keep up the good work.



## **Kindergarten**

The kindergarten class has settled into the school year and is hard at work. All students are now working on Level A of the Singapore math program. Students are developing their addition and subtraction skills. We have a talented group of mathematicians. Special thanks to Mr. Paponetti for all his help during math time.

In reading, the class is continuing to learn four new sight words each week. The students love the entertaining sight word stories and enjoy making their own mini-books each week. The students are also continuing to work in small groups with Mrs. Sprau for phonics and Sra. Rodriguez for reading. Some students are working on completing book reports once they finish a book. Everyone has made excellent progress in the first month of school.

In social studies, the class has been learning about celebrations around the world. A few parents have visited to share information about celebrations in their native countries. The students are enjoying learning about how people around the world celebrate holidays and special occasions.

The kindergarten scientists have just finished their unit on what scientists do. Next up they will be learning about their five senses through books, interactive experiences, and art projects. This promises to be a fun unit.

## **K-Computer**

The kindergarten class is hard at work learning all about programming. They have learned how to change shapes, draw, make backgrounds, and give the turtle commands. They have done much exploring and show each other what they have discovered.

## **1st-2nd Computer**

The first and second grade classes have been working on new skills in Microworlds. We are learning how to combine the basic commands to make some very cool designs. This is a big step in programming to be able to combine steps to vary the outcome. They have also explored some of the sites linked on Mrs. Waldal's website, [waldal.com](http://waldal.com). The class favorite is Arcademic Skill Builders where they can play math games with each other online.

## **1st Math**

The first graders are off and running with addition and subtraction. Every day we practice foundational skills that are necessary to become competent mathematicians who know their stuff. Most recently the children have been practicing adding two digit numbers that require regrouping. Many are close to mastering this skill. We've also added subtraction to our list of frequently practiced skills. As the opposite of addition, subtraction can be rather mysterious for some children, more difficult to grasp, and more time consuming to perform. The key, as with mastering any new craft, is consistent practice.

## **1st Language Arts**

This month we focused on writing descriptive pieces about ourselves and on writing memoirs. The students illustrated their descriptive story, based on *I Like Me* by Nancy Carlson, and included it in the family history book that they compiled in social studies. Their memoir was modeled after Cynthia Rylant's *When I Was Young in the Mountains* and included use of repetition. The students practiced reading like writers to discern techniques that other writers use to make their writing enjoyable to read.

## **1st Spanish**

The first graders worked on the subject "objects in the classroom." They learned the correct pronunciation and spelling of new words. The children liked to play "Building Vocabulary Bingo" and said, "Lo tengo" or "No lo tengo" when they understood the meaning of the word. The students memorized the new words and answered riddles. They enjoyed playing memory and translation games. They learned two new songs, "Buenos Dias" and "Chocolate." Based on these songs, the children changed the words and are now able to answer questions about what foods they like.

## **1st-2nd Reading**

The first and second graders recognized International Literacy Day on September 7th. This day is designated to focus attention on world literacy needs. The students learned that 780 million adults around the globe cannot read or write and that more than 90 million children do not have access to education. To better understand what life is like for some of these children, we read *Waiting for the BiblioBurro* by Monica Brown while sitting outside in the grass. This book, based on a real biblioburro in Colombia, tells the story of a librarian who uses burros to carry books to children in remote areas who do not have access to schools. After reading the story, our students were grateful for an indoor school environment with lots of books and no distractions such as the glaring sun or spiders crawling in the grass.



### **1st-2nd Science**

During September, we continued our study of matter. The first and second grade students learned about the building blocks of all matter (atoms) and enjoyed making models of molecules with clay. In addition, they can now classify solids, liquids and gases, and name properties and examples of each. During a demonstration, the students observed water changing states. They practiced measuring solids and liquids - weight with balance scales, volume with measuring cups, and length with rulers, tape measures, and yard sticks. Finally, during a lab, the young scientists formed and tested hypotheses about whether or not certain items are waterproof. Using an eye dropper for precise measurements, they tested to see whether water soaked through things like wax paper, aluminum foil and construction paper. To conclude matter studies, coming soon will be a brief overview of physical and chemical changes with intriguing demonstrations of each.

### **1st-2nd Social Studies**

After completing the creation of their family history books (thank you, **Mrs. Spicer**, for helping us compile them), the students started learning about a larger component of their world-communities. They learned about homes and how the environment in which they are built impacts the choices of building materials, neighbors and how each person in a community has a job to do; and the three main types of communities (urban, suburban, rural). Throughout the year the students will use an hour of the monthly early dismissal days to complete service projects that will benefit our school, city, country, and worldwide communities. In September, the children learned about the 3R's - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - and made posters from repurposed materials to encourage others to engage in the 3R's at school and at home to help make our earth a safer and cleaner place to live.

### **2nd Math**

If you were to stop by for a peek into the second grade math room, you'd see a place buzzing with activity. We have three math groups, each with their own level of challenge. One group, which we call the Lions (refer to the school song: courageous, charging) is mastering advanced addition and subtraction, including finding larger sums mentally. The Oxen group (steady, determined) is following closely in the steps of the Lions, while the Eagles (soaring to new heights) are practicing problem solving skills.

### **2nd Language Arts**

The second graders recently wrote stories modeled after *The Great Blue House* by Kate Banks. Their stories were structured by the changing of the seasons, just like in the model story. In spelling, the students explored antonyms and words with short vowel sounds. They are working on mastering the difference between "there" and "their." The students are really enjoying their journal writing homework assignments. The second grade is filled with creative students who are overflowing with story ideas, and this is reflected in their journal entries.

### **2nd Spanish**

The second graders are working on "nuestra casa," our house. They memorized new words and combined them with colors and numbers to form longer sentences. They learned two new songs, "Buenos Días" and "Chocolate." Based on these songs, the children changed the words and are now able to answer questions about what foods they like.

### **3rd Math**

The third graders' week is currently divided into two types of skills practice: computation and problem solving. On the days that we practice computation, most are taking on the challenge of multiplying and dividing larger numbers, including division with remainders, with accuracy. A few are practicing computation with fractions and decimals. These skills strengthen the ability to perform more complicated word problems, which we tackle twice a week as well.

### **3rd Social Studies**

The third graders have been talking about communities and moving to new places. They made Venn diagrams to show the differences between migrating to a new place within a country and immigrating to a new country. The third graders also discussed urban cities, rural cities, and suburban cities. They made a chart displaying features of each and then practiced using classification (which is an important term to understand when talking about different communities) by grouping themselves in different ways. The third graders are also learning ways to study for their southeast region quiz, such as using mnemonic devices and making flashcards.

### **3rd Spanish**

Students worked on the vocabulary for rooms and objects in the house and learned the position words, "in, out, far, and near" by placing animals in the rooms of the house. During this month they are learning the verb "gustar" (to like) in combination with foods and school subjects. They like to solve crossword puzzles based on the same vocabulary.



### **3rd-4th Computer**

The third and fourth grade students are working on using their flash drives and typing documents in Microsoft Word. This prepares them for using Word efficiently and effectively in their other classes. We practiced changing colors, fonts, sizes, borders, and watermarks. Then we made sure we saved them to the flash drive and that they could print their files to the printer. They are ready to start typing out all those wonderful stories they are writing for Mrs. Kufahl.

### **3rd-4th Reading**

The third and fourth graders had a great first reading day on September 19th. They loved bringing in pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, and favorite books. The students were delighted that they were able to read all morning. They read a wide variety of materials including science-related magazines, *Storyworks* (a magazine containing nonfiction stories, fiction stories, plays, poetry, and more), and social studies (southeast states) books. The third graders had the opportunity to read with the preschoolers, while the fourth grade Lewis read with the kindergarteners. On the next reading day, the fourth grade Clark will read with the kindergarten. It was both a treat and a great learning experience for both the younger students and the third and fourth graders to be able to read with a student from another grade.

The third graders will be starting a unit in historical fiction this month. They will read *Sarah Plain and Tall* as a class and other historical fiction books individually. They will learn to appreciate the author's style, compare different settings, and identify with characters in the book. The fourth graders will begin a unit on Laura Ingalls Wilder. They will be reading *Little House in the Big Woods* as a class and other books about Wilder individually. They will learn about the setting and characters from pioneer times and about various procedures used to make things such as cheese and candy.

### **3rd-4th Science**

Students have continued their studies of matter. They've learned about the properties and molecular arrangements of solids, liquids and gases. In addition, the budding scientists have been tirelessly practicing the scientific method lately; they've come up with hypothesis, tested and recorded results for labs that measured density, tested evaporation rates, and compared dissolution rates. To wrap up the unit on matter, students were asked to distinguish between physical and chemical changes in a variety of hands-on experiments.

### **3rd-5th Language Arts**

Way back in May the current fourth and fifth grade students entered a *Cricket* magazine storywriting contest in which the theme was sports. Several happy and understandably proud children came in a couple of weeks ago carrying large envelopes containing certificates and prizes which announced that they had placed in the contest. Fourth graders **Stella C** and **Zuha J** won second and third places respectively while **Jane N** earned an honorable mention. Stella's story recorded her real-life experience of bravely diving to the bottom of a pool; Zuha's told of a girl's quest to play on India's first cricket team. Jane explored the theme of a girl training for a marathon despite teasing from some of the boys on the team. These students' stories and names appear in the October issue of the magazine. Look for the fourth and fifth grade students to begin work soon on their *Creative Communications* contest entries. Third graders will enter this contest in February after they accumulate a little more writing experience, which they are very eagerly doing from day-to-day. I'd like to extend my special thanks to the **Vlasteris** family for their generous contribution of a beautiful maple bookshelf to contain our growing library of stories after which we have been modeling our writing.

### **4th Math**

The fourth graders are continuing the unit on decimals. Currently, they are learning to add, subtract and multiply decimals. This can be tricky, since decimals are more confusing than whole numbers and placement of the decimal point is what leads to confusion. But, as with all things new, practice makes perfect and the children are catching on admirably. A few of the students are performing more advanced computation with both decimals and fractions and taking on the challenge of complex word problems.

### **4th Spanish**

The students worked with objects in the classroom. They memorized the vocabulary and learned the formation of the plural. At the same time they learned the question words "que" and "quien" (what and who) to ask questions. They also worked on number words in connection with math-related exercises that they completed in the book.

### **5th Science**

Students compiled all their data from the grow crab to create spreadsheets and graphs of the data. This was a good learning exercise for many of the steps of the science fair. They began the study of light, learning how to dig into the text and take notes. Later they will practice turning the notes into a paragraph about light.



### **5th Reading**

Students are completing Life Journey posters for a famous sports figure they read about. Included is a timeline of significant childhood events, personal accomplishments, contributions to society, and important character qualities that have enabled individuals to “cross barriers.” The class is beginning the book *Hatchet* by investigating different ways a writer can bring out suspense. Gary Paulsen is a master at this craft. This exercise dovetails beautifully with the first quality of a good reader-to notice and love words. We have had some good sharing on which phrases and sentences grab our attention.

### **5th Social Studies**

After writing some great reports on a Native American group, students are moving forward in “time” to take a look at the age of exploration. They are learning how a tremendous growth in sailing technology allowed the intrepid European explorers to head out into unknown seas. As they read and learn about this diverse group of men, they will each pick an explorer to study in more depth, with an accompanying connection to the use of technology (taught by Mrs. Waldal) to present their research.

### **5th Spanish**

The children learned the vocabulary for seasons and the characteristic weather for each season using the expression, “Que tiempo hace en” We extended this subject with the verbs “gustar” (to like) and “tener” (to have) while forming more elaborate sentences. They started on the subject of body parts and learned the irregular verb “doler” (to have aches or pain). This group has rapidly improved and shows a great interest in learning Spanish. I am so proud of them.

### **5th-6th Computer**

Fifth graders have set up their school email accounts through gagle.net. These accounts are monitored and are a great and safe way to explore email and social networking in a secure environment. The sixth graders logged in and added new friends and refreshed their memory on using email. Then we started our typing course on typingweb.com. Typing is a very useful skill and takes a lot of time and practice to build speed and accuracy. They will work on typing skills throughout the year and sixth graders should be able to type 30 words per minute with no more than two errors by the end of the year.

### **6th Reading**

The class has been enthusiastically reading a variety of Great Books. Currently, each student has selected one title for a creative project such as a newspaper cover page, pop-up book or mobile. Each project emphasizes the story element(s) that best match the book. With the variety of titles, students will share with each other about plot, characters, setting, and theme. Students are also learning how to distinguish between different genres. It seems realistic fiction is the most challenging to identify. *The Westing Game* is the class book we are just starting. Ellen Raskin weaves complicated plots that intrigue with entertaining stylistic nuances. I predict we all will be on the edge of our seats as we read to make sense of all the clues provided in solving the mystery of Sam Westing’s murder.

### **6th Science**

Many students took meal worms home to continue their observations of their life cycles. They are studying minerals and rocks. Along the way they learned how to identify minerals by color, streak, luster, cleavage, and density. They learned how to take notes in a web formation and then turn those notes into a paragraph. Besides testing density in the lab, they grew several kinds of crystals and observed them under the microscope.

### **6th Social Studies**

Students finished up work on their group posters showcasing their research on a country of the world. Look for posters packed with information on France, Italy, Greece, and Australia on the wall outside the Social Studies room. We are just beginning an in-depth unit on Ancient Egypt which will include a research project on a topic of their choice. Mrs. Waldal will help them learn how to turn their information into a great Prezi presentation.

### **6th Spanish**

They worked on vocabulary for the topic of sports and practiced the verb “gustar” (to like), memorizing the conjugation and forming sentences. This group also worked on adjectives, using them in a conversation to describe characteristics of people. Furthermore, they worked on connections with math, practicing number words.

### **6th Language Arts**

Students continue writing about people and places. Using preschool photos, they described classmates and themselves, adding recollection and memories to their personal description. Then using the rainstorm/thunderstorm game to simulate climax, students tried to portray the hallways before and after students explode on the scene between classes. In a few weeks they will be rereading their book of choice for the Letters about Literature writing competition in preparation for that writing.



### **6th-8th Future Problem Solving**

We are busy sharpening our process skills: How to read a one-page scenario and grasp all the data at hand plus stretch our thinking to consider implications of the facts from multiple perspectives; how to articulate these issues in problem statements; how to derive and formulate one underlying problem, and how to brainstorm solutions as a team. The current topic for the next month is The Cult of Celebrity. The next topic for November/December is The Robotic Age. We welcome speakers on these topics. See Mrs. Debelak or Mrs. Tzeng for more information.

### **7th Language Arts**

Practicing to write with a point of view and perspective, students described the south lot area initially through the second floor window before they approached and inspected the target object up close. Initial revision attempts on this and other pieces included organization, simple deletion of repetitive words and phrases, and particular word choices that would support their point of view.

### **7th Science**

Seventh graders are studying matter. They looked at physical and chemical properties of matter and what constitutes elements, compounds and mixtures. They got their hands wet during a series of density labs and had fun playing with mini vacuum chambers. They experimented to see what happened to materials in a vacuum and were able to boil water by lowering the air pressure.

### **7th Social Studies**

The 7th graders finished up a unit on European exploration. They also started a year-long colonization simulation in which they will work together to build up wealth units to buy supplies for beginning a colony in the New World. In addition, they're looking carefully at the growth of self-government in the thirteen colonies.

### **7th Spanish**

The students finished working on unit one. They learned the vocabulary associated with friends, family, and home. In addition, they worked hard on the verb "ser" (to be) and its uses. In addition, this grade level learned the use of nouns, articles, and adjectives. They read two cultural articles: one about Hispanic communities in North America and the other being the famous Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. The children were able to translate this story into English.

### **7th-8th Computer**

This year the seventh and eighth grade classes are gaining programming and technology skills in a Virtual Reality Academy that is supported by the Air Force Research Lab in Dayton, Ohio. We are the only middle school students in the region, and of course there's much excitement all around. The students are inspired to stretch themselves and learn more about the virtual world, designing and programming. This program was originally intended for advanced high school and college students, but Mrs. Waldal is confident that our students can excel and gain many skills in this innovative program.

### **7th-8th Latin I**

The seventh graders have spent some time getting an overview of the inflected nature of the Latin language, which, unlike English, changes most word endings to show meaning. These students have needed their rigorous preparation in grammar because knowledge of the noun declensions and verb conjugations avails them nothing without a good, firm grip on direct objects, indirect objects, and the like. Traditionally, the first quarter of eighth grade Latin has been a much-needed review of concepts and forms from the year before, and this year is no exception. The twice-a-week nature of the course demands that students become ever more self-disciplined and self-diagnostic so they can invest their study time to best effect.

### **8th Language Arts**

Playing amateur detectives, students were assigned to observe a stranger in the community inconspicuously. Using their observations, students would have to deduce the person's character, educational background, profession, economic status, and other interests and hobbies. These minute details, if students can eventually "show" them in a piece, are the makings of interesting writing - for "readers are bottom feeders," as a famous writing teacher used to say.

### **8th Science**

The eighth graders are studying the cell processes: diffusion, osmosis, respiration, photosynthesis and cell division. They have conducted several experiments while studying osmosis and learned how to do one lab write up.



### **7th Reading**

The class applied the tried and true method of reading nonfiction documents and essays: SQ3R. In fact they know a cheer for it: Survey! Question! Read-Recite-Review! We practice once a week with such documents as The Mayflower Compact, The Slaves Appeal to the Royal Governor, and Future Problem Solving articles from journals. The book *Harriet the Spy* is providing opportunity to love words as these characters are understood best by examining their actions. They march squarely, thunder, slam, and scribble furiously. These are cues to seeing connections within the entire novel. We enjoy getting out of our seats and mimicking the characters according to the strong verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Since Harriet keeps a journal, we do too, jotting our questions about the deeper meanings and noting our shrewd observations. And, of course, we are furiously memorizing poetry for the upcoming show: Playful Journeys.

### **8th Reading**

This class reviewed SQ3R (see 7th grade entry) and has begun learning other strategies for reading nonfiction including a device called “slug words.” By summarizing each paragraph with one word in the margin, one can go back through and recite an entire journal article with just the slug words for recall. The process of selecting and defending a slug word is a great exercise in critical thinking too. We’ve practiced comprehension and recitation with essays by T. Roosevelt and Daniel Webster and with Future Problem Solving articles. We also engage in critical thinking via a supplemental series by Critical Thinking Press covering such topics as: *What is the difference between a discussion, debate and argument?*, *When is it stupid to argue?*, *How do you find proof by a counterexample?* and *What is propaganda and how do we detect bias?*

Students are studying the literary genre of world historical fiction. In this unit they have utilized maps and encyclopedias to get a rich feel for how much setting influences plot when the author has done extensive background research. The class book is *The Trumpeter of Krakow*. We’ll also visit the Cleveland Museum of Art for a curated tour of the Medieval and Renaissance exhibits. One major choral presentation we have begun for the poetry show focuses on ancient Greek and modern poetry relating to the Olympics.

### **8th Spanish**

These students worked on the uses of the verbs “ser” and “estar” (to be). They also wrote compositions and practiced conversations using these verbs. Besides this, they learned the indirect object pronouns and the most common irregular verbs. The eighth grade students like to practice conversation as well translations.

### **8th Social Studies**

Students recently finished a homesteading unit. They looked at a variety of secondary and primary sources about the homesteaders’ experience. Following that, they carried out a homesteading simulation in which they had to determine, along with their fellow group members, what supplies they would need for moving out west via wagon, train or steamboat. Each group was allotted a specific dollar amount. The debate within the groups was lively and contentious as they tried to arrive at a consensus on what items were necessary. The class is now moving on to look at the industrial revolution and the great men of industry, with a particular emphasis on John D. Rockefeller because of his tremendous impact on Cleveland.



# CREATIVITY

## A Way of Life

Our goal in these essays is to explore how we can teach our children to become creative. Our strategy will be to connect what is known about creativity and creative production with the educational content, experiences and training that make creative thinking skills accessible to parents, educators and children. From here we can discuss ways to nurture the characteristics of creative thinking in our youth.

Prior to addressing this goal, there is a fundamental question: “Why even discuss creativity?” The first reason has to do with how we define creativity. The second relates to how human beings are “wired.”

There is a tendency today to look at creativity and innovation through an economic periscope, seeing the importance and value in the 21st century. It is expected that innovation and entrepreneurship will be the economic engine and American bulwark in an increasingly more competitive global marketplace. That’s accurate. But for purposes of teaching creativity to our next generation, it is also a narrow perspective. In reality, how many of our children will develop groundbreaking technologies? How many will be entrepreneurs who develop new businesses that drive our economy?

There is another way to define creativity; one that is supported by 60 years of research in creativity and provides opportunities for universal application. We will call this definition of creativity, “everyman’s creativity.” It is what Nancy Andreasen, author of *The Creative Mind*, calls “common creativity.” It follows the idea that creativity, as a set of skills and attitudes toward life, can be cultivated to varying degrees among all people.

Creativity, “everyman’s creativity,” describes a way of life. The creative person, or more broadly, the person who is developing creative thinking skills, will bring creativity to everything he or she does. The creative life describes the skill set, attitudes and behavior that empower us to make and remake each facet of our life. Whether it is our work, our relationships with others, or our leisure activities, the way of creativity makes things new, fresh, and productive. The creative process gives us the attitude to face problems and generate solutions. It helps us recognize opportunities and make the most of them. Creativity takes the initiative to identify challenges and find pathways to success. It is a vehicle to spark fresh interest and enthusiasm in our relationships with family, friends, and colleagues.

Abraham Maslow, renowned American psychologist, cited the creative thinking process as a means to enable people to fulfill their need for self-actualization, that is, to grow into the person they can become. To Maslow, the self-actualized life is a fulfilled life, and the creative thinking process plays an important role.

In his book *Flow*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi explains that the process of creative work and production, no matter how strenuous, is a deep source of happiness and personal gratification.

I would suggest that creativity, “everyman’s creativity,” can enrich and elevate the creator’s personal life while uplifting the people, places, things, ideas, and knowledge that surround the creator. If we accept the broadest definition of creativity, we may even say that creative thinking and creative work connect our hopes with their fulfillment. Although creativity will be important for future economic reasons, its value is far beyond economics. It will be useful to every individual who aspires to lead a rich and fulfilling life.

Next month we will discuss the second reason for addressing creativity - how we are “wired.”

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