



Birchwood Clipboard

The Lion's Roar

ACHIEVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

If motivated, every child will learn. From this simple premise, educators rightly conclude, "We must motivate our students." The conclusion is true, but it is only half the story. We need good teachers who can motivate students, but students must assume personal responsibility to be motivated.

Children should understand there are reasons why they must be engaged in their learning whether they are intrinsically motivated or not. Laurence Steinberg, distinguished professor of psychology and an expert in youth development, writes in *Beyond the Classroom*, "It is important that educators continue to search for ways of making learning intrinsically motivating, but given what we know about the motivational histories of students once they have reached high school, it is equally important that students believe that success in school has extrinsic rewards as well."

Steinberg explains further that parents should cultivate the value of a good education, even at an early age. If students grow up understanding and embracing the value of an education, they will also be motivated to apply themselves to schoolwork even when they enjoy or do not enjoy their coursework. Their motivation will be linked to purposes beyond how they feel at any given moment or what they like to do at any given moment.



UNDER THE CANOPY NEWS FROM BIRCHWOOD

Growth & Sustainability *Maintaining the Mission*

Our most important question we asked ourselves about growth and sustainability was "How do we maintain our mission into the future?" After all, Birchwood School is the Birchwood mission and the Birchwood mission is embodied in and among the people working at Birchwood. The school equals the mission which equals the people who have helped build the school.

Our first step was to define and articulate, succinctly yet comprehensively, what are the major components of a Birchwood education. During the past two years, after much reflection and collaboration, we crafted four statements, four pillars if you will, that embody the essence of the school and its mission. Each pillar declares what we do and thereby lends itself to a plan of action that can lead to sustainability.

In a sense, our four pillars are our "constitution." They form a document that frames why we do what we do, and how we do what we do. Like the U.S. Constitution that supports and protects the tenets and mission of a free country, Birchwood's "constitution" is being written to ensure that our mission will continue long after the founding "framers" have moved on.

More on this "constitution" next month.

A Word From the Director of Advancement ...

EDUCATION GRANTS AWARDED

This year has already been a busy time for the Advancement office. We are happy to announce two grants totaling \$25,000! The Hershey Foundation awarded Early Childhood Education \$10,000 in support of its programming and growth while the Alcoa Foundation granted us \$15,000 in support of STEM education. This latter award will also enable the development of a mentorship program that will pair science students with Alcoa volunteers.

ANNUAL FUND KICK-OFF

We are also kicking off this year's Annual Fund. Unlike grants and sponsorships which support specific programs and projects, the Birchwood School Annual Fund provides unrestricted dollars for the school's best use. These contributions are vital and allow us to continue providing world class education at a literal fraction of the cost of our academic peers.

continued on page 2

CONTENTS

October Snapshot	
Grandfriends' Day.....	2
Budding Young Scientists.....	2
Speech Fest.....	2
Leadership Program.....	2
Reflections by Charles Debelak	
Three Skills Needed to Thrive	3
Parents' Corner	
IFA Preparations Underway.....	4
Board Update.....	4
Class News.....	4
Upcoming Events.....	11

UNDER THE CANOPY *continued*

They also allow us to enhance our community in every area ranging from facilities to scholarships. And so, we thank all those who have been supportive and we encourage all our families to continue your support. In honor of our 30th anniversary, we hope to reach 100% participation in this year's annual fund.

Birchwood's October Snapshot

GRANDFRIENDS' DAY

Over 100 grand-friends visited the preschool through 4th grade classrooms for Birchwood's annual Grandfriends' Day in October. The day was filled with singing, fun activities, lunch, and games. Thank you, dear grandfriends, for making the day so enjoyable.



STUDENT-LED FUNDRAISING

Stella, Sophia V., Sousou, Mira, and Dina took the initiative to raise money for Birchwood School's language arts program by hosting a bake sale in October. The \$220 dollars raised will be used to purchase a set of books for their classroom. Outstanding initiative; and great results ladies.

Science Club

Twenty-nine, 4th - 6th grade, students came to the first Science Club meeting. Each week they learn about three Science Olympiad events. They earn points for coming to practices after school on Wednesdays and for completing assigned homework. In December, the final competitive team will be chosen and the student with the most points will have the first pick of events. The student with the second highest points will have the second pick, and so on as team members begin to specialize in one or two events and prepare for the competition on March 1.

Budding Young Scientists

First through 4th grade science students had an exciting month, with seeds sprouting in the classroom, two excursions, and a science-themed poetry contest.

BOUNTIFUL BASEMENT GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

The first excursion was a trip to the Bountiful Basement garden located in back of the school. The garden is run by Mr. and Mrs. Simmonds, of Blessed Trinity Church, and provides fresh produce for patrons of the Bountiful Basement. Students learned about

compost and were able to help by planting peas or harvesting produce such as peppers, broccoli, tomatoes, cauliflower, collard greens, figs, and more. The trip was enjoyable for the students and truly helpful to Mr. and Mrs. Simmonds.

CLEVELAND METROPARKS NATURE ADVENTURE

Next, on a beautiful Friday, the young scientists ventured to Cleveland Metroparks for a scavenger hunt and a nature hike guided by our own Ms. Strieter (who has experience as a naturalist). Thank you to all parent drivers and chaperones.

NATIONAL CHEMISTRY WEEK POETRY CONTEST

Finally, students celebrated National Chemistry Week October 20-26 by creating poems for an illustrated poem contest. Working in both language arts and science, each student wrote and illustrated a poem about this year's National Chemistry Week theme, "Energy: Now and Forever."

Speech Fest

On October 16, the 7th and 8th graders presented the annual Speech Fest to an audience of parents and judges. At this special event an array of famous speeches in history are presented with poise and expression. Thank you to Michelle Ehlert, Carl Nilsen and Peter McNaughton (Birchwood alumnus) for their expert written feedback for each presenter. See pages 10 and 11 for a listing of students and speeches.

Leadership Program

The Leadership Program for 7th and 8th grade provides an opportunity to practice principles of service and leadership.

Students are provided with realms of responsibility in which to practice: library, recycling, gardening, hallway bulletin boards, lost and found, Box Tops for Education, office, inspirational openings for



younger students, computer maintenance, school store, and end-of-day help in the lower grades.

Birchwood School is truly helped by their efforts and the young leaders, in turn, grow in confidence and maturity. After receiving lessons in etiquette, they have also assisted with school tours for grandfriends and at the fall open house.

continued on page 11

THREE SKILLS NEEDED TO THRIVE

Three requirements are necessary for internalizing the attitudes and skills needed for thriving – language, experience and unrelenting support. Language and experience work together to shape habits and, as a result, shape character.

A child who learns to thrive has first received the language of thriving. Language directs and guides how a child understands and internalizes his experiences. Language implants words and pictures inside a child’s mind and heart. It frames how a child perceives his world and teaches him how to behave in his world.

Experiences guided and directed by language, become consistent behaviors. Over an extended period of time, language and experience work together to shape habits, and the accumulation of habits forge character. In other words, the language of thriving, defines and guides the experiences of thriving, and gradually produces the habits of thriving. Over the course of time (often years), the attributes of thriving become internalized. The child thrives in every environment because they have learned to thrive through language, experience and habit formation.

An illustration will help explain how language and experience work together to produce habits. Imagine that you want your son to be polite when he arrives at school each morning. You would like him to say “good morning” to teachers and friends. You start with language. Upon meeting a teacher, you tell your son, “Be polite, Tommy. Say, good morning.” Obediently, Tommy says, “good morning.” Tommy has no internal drive to say good morning. Mom asked him to say “good morning” so he says good morning with all the sincerity of a brick wall. Nevertheless he says it. He does not yet own it, but he said it.

The next time you and Tommy pass an adult in the morning you draw upon this language and direct Tommy’s behavior. Of course again, Tommy has no interest in offering a morning greeting. He is a self-absorbed little boy, just like every other little boy. He only cares about his own world. That’s normal. But you, ignoring what Tommy prefers to do, tell him, “Be polite Tommy. Say, good morning.” He obeys, again with very little sincerity, and you know he does not mean it. Nonetheless, you are not dismayed, you know that over the course of time, perhaps a few years of incessant reminders, Tommy will begin acting like a polite person in the morning, smiling and greeting people with a warm, “good morning.”

Language introduces behavior: “Say, good morning.” It also frames behavior, placing it in a broader context: “Be polite, Tommy.” Consequently at a later date when mom repeats the language to Tommy, the behavior is reinforced in its entirety and reminds Tommy what he is to do and why.

Language requires an experiential framework. Within an experiential framework, language defines good behavior and reinforces it until it becomes habit. In the illustration above, the experiential framework is the daily practice at school. Mom, walking



beside Tommy at school in the morning hour, insists upon the appropriate behavior each time they meet a friend or adult. At each encounter mom begins, “Be polite. Say good morning.” Tommy obeys, and despite Tommy’s lack of sincerity he performs the behavior again and again and again. He is internalizing the language. It is shaping how he looks at the world and how he behaves in his world. Given time, Tommy even says, “good morning,” without prompting.

Furthermore, since this action connects Tommy to some of his own basic human needs, in this case, attachment to other people, the behavior becomes rewarding to Tommy (we will discuss the need of attachment later). He discovers the joy of being friendly in the morning and he enjoys the response he receives from others. The language, through practice, is becoming Tommy’s habit. Not just any habit. It is a habit that benefits Tommy because he is learning how to become a friendly person. It is also a habit that can help him build good relationships with others.

“Language implants words and pictures inside a child’s mind and heart.”

Next month, we’ll discuss learning to thrive through experience and unrelenting support.

PARENTS' CORNER

International Festival and Auction (IFA) Preparations Underway

November is a busy month for the Parent Committee and all of the International Festival and Auction (IFA) volunteers. We are gathering and packaging silent auction items, arranging decorations and set-up logistics, and more. All for our wonderful, casual, family-friendly, fundraising event. If you have never been to the IFA you are in for a treat. Fabulous food – thanks to potluck dishes provided by our families, kids games, auctions, raffles, and more.

But we can't do it without you. Please remember to sign up for a volunteer shift on the day of the event and to bring a dish to share. Our multicultural buffet is a highlight and we need lots of food. You can cook it, buy it, or get it donated. Just bring it. We will feed 350 to 400 people so you can imagine how much food we need.

Pre-registration for the IFA is open online at birchwoodschool.org/International-Festival-and-Auction. Pre-registering gets you into the event rapidly and makes checking out at the end a breeze.

Remember, this is our largest fundraiser of the year and the money raised is returned to the school and families in the form of supplies and equipment for the classrooms, scholarships for contest travel, funds for staff development and more. For more information, please check the IFA at birchwoodschool.org/International-Festival-and-Auction.

BOARD UPDATE

Community Meeting Recap

Thank you to the parents who were able to attend the community meeting on October 15. Mr. Debelak told the history of the school with humor and passion. He discussed the six problems identified when he and Mrs. Debelak realized the school would be permanent and what actions would be needed to address them. These included how to sustain the mission, developing a financial vision, finding adequate facilities, building an effective administration and Board of Trustees, and having a pattern to follow since they were educators at heart and not necessarily school business managers.

This thoughtful process has laid a firm foundation for preserving the school long into the future and is one that the board is fully behind. We will be posting highlights of the meeting on birchwoodschool.org so all families have an opportunity to hear the comments and questions that were posed.

Thanks to our fine babysitters (Julia M., Jack B. and Amir I.) who made it possible for parents to attend. It is so nice to have a cadre of eight Red Cross trained babysitters available to help with homework or play with the children while their parents attend meetings.

The board continues to fine tune the future of the school. We meet every other month. Look for an update from our November meeting in the December *Clipboard*.

CLASS NEWS

PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN

K - 8th Visual Arts

The school year started off with several collaborative visual art projects with the 1st through 3rd grade. These types of projects are a wonderful learning opportunity to work together and celebrate all our creativity. All the Birchwood students worked hard on our first art installation of Pinwheels for Peace in celebration of International Peace Day. Hopefully the extended Birchwood community enjoyed watching the pinwheels spin in the breeze on the front lawn of the school. We hope to make this an annual event that will continue to grow.

October began with several projects that reflect the change outdoors. Projects range from colored tissue paper mosaics, water color resist, to drawing in the missing half of fall leaves. We are continuing to chip away at our schoolwide projects of crayon and bottle cap mosaics. We are continually collecting old broken crayons and plastic bottle caps in all shapes and sizes. Thank you to the kindergarten class that has collected the most thus far! The 5th - 8th graders are getting excited about the 30th anniversary T-shirt contest that is in the works. Keep a look out for more information about the details.

Seedlings

We had a fun and busy month in the Seedlings classroom. Our class, enjoyed welcoming grandfriends and were excited to read stories and sing our favorite letter songs to them. We also liked decorating fall trees and tasting apples with our guests.

In October, we went on our first field trip to Mapleside Farms. We toured the farm while riding on a tractor, which was a big hit with the preschoolers. We learned about all the different types of apple trees that grow on the farm. After the trip we made delicious apple-sauce in our classroom with some of the apples we picked.

Seedlings have also been working on letter sounds. Every week we focus on a new letter of the alphabet. Students enjoy bringing items from home that start with the "letter" to share with the class.

We have also been working on our counting and patterning skills. We have made many patterns with leaves and acorns this fall. The children also enjoyed graphing our favorite types of apples. This was a great way to work on our counting skills. We are looking forward to another great month.

continued on page 5

"All the Birchwood students worked hard on our first art installation of Pinwheels for Peace ..."

Sprouts

Sprouts (4-5 year olds) have been enjoying all that fall has to offer. The children recently went on a nature walk and collected leaves, acorns and twigs. We brought our nature collection back to the classroom and graphed the materials on a large graphing mat. We have also been making leaf rubbings and nature collages using our leaf, twig and acorn collection.

Sprouts made apple prints using apples cut in half and red, yellow and orange paint. Many of our fall art, math, reading, and science activities have evolved after the children listened to the story: *Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf*, by Lois Ehlert.

Sprouts have also been busy learning how to print the alphabet in clay and in sand. We have challenged them to see how many words they could come up with that related to our letter of the week. So far the record is 28 words that begin with the letter 'd.'

The preschoolers cannot stop talking about our field trip to Mapleside Farms. One of the most exciting experiences for the students was riding on a yellow school bus to the farm and back. The tour guides at Mapleside Farms showed us all kinds of apple varieties both in the orchard and in the apple processing barn. The hayride around the farm allowed us to get an idea of just how many apple trees are growing on the property.

K Fall Field Trip

Both the kindergarten and preschool classes went on their first field trip of the school year. We visited Mapleside Farms where we had the opportunity to go on a hayride, learn all about apples; including, seeing how they are washed and sorted. We even got to jump on a giant pillow, which was a lot of fun. Thank you to all of our parents to joined us on this fun field trip. We look forward to many more in the future.

K Grandfriends' Day

Grandfriends' Day in the kindergarten classes was a great success thanks to the room parents and other parent volunteers who came to help. Grandfriends enjoyed listening to songs the kindergartners learned in Spanish and Chinese classes. They made a keepsake with handprints cut out from construction paper and a photograph of the student and their grandfriends. The grandfriends and kindergarten students also enjoyed doing M&M'S math by sorting, counting, making patterns, and of course, eating them.

K Reading

We are happy to note that all of our kindergarten students are reading. Students continue to work in reading groups with Sra. Rodriguez, Mrs. Chen and Ms. Ziamba as well as in phonics groups with Mrs. Sprau. Some of our students have also started reading with a partner. Everyone is very inspired to finish reading

stories because we have started the *Read Your Heart Out* program. Each student gets to stamp our monthly poster once he/she finishes a story or book.

K Science

The kindergarten class enjoyed learning all about my plate and living a healthy life. We spent time sorting our foods into five categories on our plate. We also created an ABC chart of healthy living. We came up with numerous ways to keep our bodies healthy. Next, we will be learning about the weather.

“Kindergarten science students created an ABC chart of healthy living ... and sorted food into five categories on our plate.”

K Math

Kindergarten mathematicians continue to understand more about numbers. They learned how to count up to 100 by twos, fives and tens. They continue to work in their Singapore books with addition up to 20 and subtraction from 20. They enjoy working with puzzles, interactive wipe away pages, math BINGO, and manipulatives that help them practice these skills. They are also working on problem solving skills.

K Social Studies

Kindergartners are learning all about community helpers and how they help our community be safe, clean, healthy, growing, and moving. Students came up with an extensive list of community helpers and everything they want to know about them, including interview questions and project ideas to get an in-depth study of each community helper.

Thanks for all the parents who came in to speak about their jobs and contribution to the community. Thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Ronayne, Mr. P. Debelak, Mr. Musson, Mrs. Neider, Mr. Gordon, Mr. and Mrs. Balanson, Mr. Ollison, Mr. Chen, and Mrs. Del-Rio for wonderful presentations and providing hands-on activities with students. The students learned a lot from these visits and sent thank you letters to each guest speaker.

FIRST AND SECOND

1st - 2nd Computer

First and 2nd graders have been working on learning to use Microsoft Word. We have practiced typing in our names and some fun poems. They changed the fonts and colors to make them beautiful. They are having a lot of fun learning how to type in and make it look the way we want.

continued on page 6

1st Math

Each of the three, 1st grade math groups continue to develop their computation skills with addition and subtraction. The “Oxen” group has made great progress in three and four digit addition with regrouping. The “Lions” are now practicing three digit subtraction with regrouping, while the “Eagles” have begun learning problem solving skills. Besides working in these three groups, the children enjoy, as a class, an occasional game of math BINGO, which helps to reinforce the fact families. Fluency in basic facts is essential for future success in mathematics and the children have made great strides since the beginning of the year.

1st Spanish

First graders continued working on the subject “objects of the classroom.” They practiced the correct pronunciation and spelling of new words and connected new words with math. They loved playing games, listening to the words, and matching the pictures. They liked the two new songs, “Los Colores,” and “Elefantes grandes” and had a good time watching and playing games with a fanny parrot called “El professor Perico.”

1st - 2nd Reading

Following in the Birchwood tradition, the 1st and 2nd graders are becoming avid readers. They enjoy reading and being read to several times every day. We start each day with a read-aloud story that matches a weekly character theme.

In literature, both grades continued to read fairy tales this month. Students also read books of their choice independently. In addition, each class has a chapter book that is being read aloud to them. The 1st graders are listening to *Pippi Longstocking*. The 2nd graders are listening to *Gooseberry Park*.

“Following the Birchwood tradition, the 1st and 2nd graders are becoming avid readers.”

Reading continues in social studies with a picture book related to the day’s topic and the children pouring over books related to the unit, playing “I Spy” with geography books, and reading *Time for Kids*. They are indeed voracious readers.

1st - 2nd Science

Toward the middle of October, the young botanists went through the scientific method to answer the question, “Will bean seeds germinate inside of coffee filters in baggies?” Once the seeds began

to grow, the first and second graders planted them in soil. Though they have nearly completed their studies of plants, the students will continue to care for their own plants and observe and record their growth over time. We’ll also experiment to see how manipulating variables like water and sunlight affect the plants.

1st - 2nd Social Studies

This month the budding historians started learning about famous scientists and inventors; the characteristics that set them apart and their impacts on society. They read about Galileo and made three-dimensional stars highlighting facts from his life. They learned about the Montgolfier brothers from France and their invention of the hot air balloon and created their own models. They were fascinated by all of Benjamin Franklin’s experiments and inventions and conducted some of their own with static electricity. The students were amazed to see that static electricity can separate pepper from salt.

2nd Math

Second graders have been vigorously practicing their basic facts. In September and October they were tested on their fluency with addition and subtraction. The goal is that by the end of 2nd grade they can complete 30 addition and 30 subtraction facts, successfully, in one and a half minutes each. So far, three children have done so. Congratulations to Ani, James and Leah for their success. After learning to tell time to the nearest minute, the 2nd graders are now calculating elapsed time using timelines. This is a skill that takes some practice, but we began slowly and are taking it step-by-step.

2nd Spanish

Second graders worked on the theme “My house.” They learned vocabulary related to rooms of the house. They followed oral instructions in order to add missing parts of the house and had a lot of fun chasing the cat “Negrin” around the house.

THIRD AND FOURTH

3rd - 4th Computer

Third and 4th graders have started to learn how to type properly. We use an online program called typingweb.com. Students’ progress is tracked as they learn about proper posture and finger positions. It has been quite a challenge to use the proper fingers on the proper keys but with practice and patience students will progress. We will continue to work on our typing skills throughout the year. Students can practice at home if they choose and it does pay off. We have 8th graders that can type over 80 words a minute.

continued on page 7

3rd Math

Third graders are wrapping up a unit on tables and graphs. During this unit they learned the uses of a bar graph, a line graph, a circle graph, and specific applications of each type of graph. There are two groups in the 3rd grade. One group focused more on reading tables and graphs and solving various problems involving bar and line graphs. The second group applied what they learned by making a double bar graph that displayed the results of a class survey that was done with all of the 3rd graders.

3rd Spanish

Students worked on the subject “Que hora es?” (time) and planned one day from morning to evening talking about different activities during that day. They played detective and found out who took the missing food from the kitchen; looking at clues and using time and food vocabularies.

3rd Reading

Third graders began a new unit on historical fiction. They each set goals for the unit, stating how many books they hope to read over the next few weeks, how many pages they hope to read every night, and what types of individual extra effort activities they hope to complete before the unit is over. Third graders were very excited to use the “radical reader” chair for the first time and use the special pen and hat that is reserved for signing reading contracts. They are each reading an individual book while as a class we are reading *Sarah Plain and Tall*. Students are learning to appreciate the quiet, beautiful tone of the story and the writer’s style. They are identifying with characters in the story and answering comprehension questions and completing a variety of journal activities to help them understand the story.

3rd Social Studies

Third graders have continued to study different communities and cultures around the world. They enjoyed a visit from Mr. Samulak who spoke about his visit to Africa. He shared many pictures and told stories about his experiences there. Mr. Samulak wrote a book called *A is for Africa* which includes fun rhymes and authentic native African illustrations. Third graders had their first states quiz on the southeast region of the United States. Congratulations to the class for studying hard and doing well on their quiz. They have also been researching a historical event of their choosing. They will use at least five facts from their research to write a poem which they will enter into a *Storyworks* poetry contest.

3rd - 4th Science

This month, students began their plant studies. Due to a generous donation from the Parent Committee, 3rd and 4th graders are able to participate in Veggie U (veggie.u.org), a national non-profit that supplies classroom garden kits for elementary classrooms. Veggie U is interested in increasing kids’ awareness of healthy food options and the importance of sustainable agriculture. The program is affiliated with a farm in Huron called The Chef’s Garden. The Veggie U kick-off was quite exciting. Students were able to taste a variety of fresh vegetables and microgreens (picked just two to three days prior). Ms. Tagliarina was proud that most students tried everything, from colorful carrots and cauliflower to green pea tendrils, popcorn shoots and micro anise. The fun didn’t end there. The next day students received a shipment of redworms. Each class created a worm farm and learned just how wonderful worms really are. Finally, students planted squash seeds which have sprouted. More gardening and botany is on the menu for November.

“The Veggie U kick-off was quite exciting ... students were able to taste a variety of fresh vegetables and microgreens.”

4th Math

Like the 2nd and 3rd graders, 4th graders were tested on their basic facts in September and October. However, their goal is fluency in all four operations – addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division – by the end of the 4th grade. In just over one month, almost 100% of the children improved their scores. Congratulations to Paul, Peter and Sal for successfully completing all four operations in the targeted time. After a brief review of tables and graphs, including how to find the mean, median, mode, and range of a data set, students are now applying what they have learned in the book, *Challenging Word Problems*.

4th Spanish

Students continued working on objects of the classroom. They memorized vocabulary and learned the formation of plural. Students used question words *Que?* and *Quien?* (what and who) to answer questions related to the vocabulary. They also worked on big numbers and completed exercises in the workbook.

continued on page 8

4th Reading

Fourth graders began a new unit on Laura Ingalls Wilder. During this author study, students are learning about pioneer times. They are able to compare the way we do things today with the way people did things in the past. To practice comprehension, students are asked to answer and discuss comprehension questions. We are also focusing on challenging vocabulary words throughout the book. The students are asked to keep track of words they don't know and look them up in the dictionary. From there they will practice writing their own sentences using these vocabulary words.

4th Social Studies

Fourth graders have been studying the southeast region of the United States. They are learning through reading in their textbooks, and answering various questions. They took their first states and capitals quiz. Congratulations to the 4th graders for shooting for high effort grades and doing well on their quiz. Fourth graders have also researched a historical event in history. They are using encyclopedias to take notes on a topic of their choosing. They will include at least five facts from these notes to write a poem for a *Storyworks* contest.

FIFTH AND SIXTH

5th Language Arts

Students, and their teachers, have been hard at work preparing entries to two different writing contests with very close deadlines. Entries to the fall Creative Communication essay contest were sent in on October 15. Students wrote about any non-fiction topic of their choice. Mrs. Kufahl also received word from this contest that her grant proposal to enhance the language arts program has been funded. Thank you to Stella, Sophia V., Sousou, Mira, and Dina who did some fundraising of their own. These girls initiated and carried out a bake sale to benefit the language arts program and raised \$220. Proceeds from their hard work will be used to buy class sets of books for story modeling. Students have also produced and sent entries to the October *Cricket* magazine story writing contest, proving that they can create engaging stories about a dream even within a limited amount of time. Finally, Zuha J.'s story from the May 2013 contest received an honorable mention, and her name was published in the October issue. Zuha's story was created in response to a prompt in which writers were asked to compose a story with a moral. Her entry told the story of a poor girl in India who studied hard and earned a position in the government despite the odds being against her.

5th Social Studies

Having completed book one in the Joy Hakim American history series, students launched into their first research project of the year, during which they learned valuable skills that they will implement in preparing their History Fair projects. After brainstorming a list of traits that all great explorers must exhibit, each student chose an explorer and studied four or more sources to learn about his life, accomplishments, voyages and the lasting effect of his work. They also analyzed whether this person possessed the qualities of a great explorer. The end product was a colorful brochure full of text and graphics which was on display at the fall open house. In addition, the class enjoyed the first of their Colonial Williamsburg electronic field trips earlier this month, a somewhat scary portrayal of what American life might be like had our Founding Fathers not had the wisdom to include a Bill of Rights in the Constitution. Many thanks to the Parent Committee for funding this opportunity. Students have also begun the process of searching for a topic for their History Fair project. This class will be the first group of 5th graders to do an extensive history research endeavor of this kind.

5th Spanish

Children worked on vocabulary about clothing. They had fun complimenting their classmates on their clothes. But not all the clothes fit well; some were too short or too big. They wrote answers about mannequins at the mall using the expression "como le queda." Students read "La ropa y la historia" about clothes worn by men and women throughout history. Well done 5th graders.

5th - 6th Computer

Fifth and 6th graders have been learning more about how to use their Google docs accounts. We practiced making simple spreadsheets and charts. We also started a slideshow presentation about their goals for the year. One of the best things about Google docs is that we didn't use USB drives that can be lost or broken.

5th - 6th Mathematics

Mr. Sprau, Mrs. Samulak and Mr. Debelak have been rethinking and reworking our program for developing computational skills. Our purpose is to make sure children are forging a strong foundation for middle and high school mathematics. Mr. Debelak has found that in the upper grades, a child's capacity to succeed in advanced math studies is directly proportional to his or her fluency in math computations. Getting children ready to study high school algebra or geometry by the 8th grade (something most Birchwood students achieve) is like constructing a building. The foundation

continued on page 9

CLASS NEWS *continued*

is fact fluency followed by whole number computational fluency – addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Then students should become fluent in computations with fractions and decimals. Only at this point will they be prepared to face the challenges of advanced mathematics. We will be monitoring progress much more closely.

5th Reading

Last week, the class presented a “Sports Gallery Walk” for the 4th grade class. All students participated, from creating an invitation to ushering to reading picture books to acting as a docent. The sports gallery was artwork students created with pictures and main events of persons such as Jackie Robinson, Jesse Owens, Wilma Rudolph, and Jim Thorpe, all noted for overcoming barriers to make a difference. Some were Olympians; all possessed strong characters inspiring to all of us. Each docent stood in front of his/her art and gave a one- to two-minute talk. I was proud of the students; the morning was a success.

“... the class presented a ‘Sports Gallery Walk’ for the 4th grade.”

Presently, the class is finishing a group reading of colonial era historical fiction. A few of these stories are true. The time period is during the French and Indian War, and in these stories English settlers are taken captive by Indians. The topic is engaging and the writers are Newbery winners who know how to skillfully approach their young audience. Students are journaling in the first person, relating some of the main events and learning how to include personal feelings. The focus is character development.

5th Science

Fifth graders are actively pursuing their inquiry projects (Science Fair). There are numerous components that go into the process that take time and much scaffolding. Several short experiments served as models for student projects and it was impressive to see that they knew how to format their projects based on the models. They learned how to use a Google doc and share it, and how to use spreadsheets and graphs in Google docs. In preparation for note-taking, students found that social studies and science have two different ways to write bibliographies. Scientists call them “references.” That means the students learned a new way to write a reference for a book. Each day brings a new skill to learn and practice. Some of the students also took the challenge provided by

the American Chemistry Contest. They ran the two experiments, charted the results, and then answered a series of application questions. That means they had to learn about heat transfer and insulation in materials.

6th Reading

The 6th grade class is just finishing up a survival unit. They have been reading Newbery titles and classics such as *Julie of the Wolves*, *Maniac Magee*, *Lassie Come Home*, and *Treasure Island*. There is a plethora of material in this genre, and one goal has been avid reading to allow students to read several titles. Many days have been spent in quiet reading, an infrequent treat. Evaluation has been directed toward the specific title, either worksheets, study guides, or creative plot posters. In a couple of days we will wind up with “Survival Jeopardy,” which is being eagerly anticipated.

The class is just beginning a medieval period historical fiction unit. Setting, context and vocabulary is challenging, and students are learning to adjust their reading pace. Two qualities of a good reader that are being stressed are reading stamina, and appropriate strategies to use when a reader gets “stuck.” I love this unit because I have the opportunity to weave history into our reading study. All students are focused and engaged with this fascinating time period.

6th Science

Last year’s students learned the process for science fair. This year we reviewed by conducting short experiments and doing write-ups, including graphs and spreadsheets using Google docs. Last year’s students are chomping at the bit to get started because they know what to do. That allows some extra time to work with those new to the experience. Science fair projects are exciting for the students because it allows them to maximize their individual potential while working on “their” projects. Not only do they learn to think like a scientist, science projects provide an ideal context to use critical thinking skills as they take a problem and study the effects. Many skills are strengthened and stretched: reading, language and writing. Also, this month many students took the challenge provided by the American Chemistry Contest. They ran three experiments, charted the results, and then answered a series of application questions.

6th Language Arts

Sixth graders continued to paint pictures with words: describing the cacophony of sounds in the hallways, the raucous lunchroom, picture portrait of an old woman which you could physically test out in the 5 - 8th language arts room.

continued on page 10

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH

7th Science

Since students studied forces, motion and fluid pressure, they were challenged to create a “boat” out of a 5cm x 5cm piece of aluminum foil that would carry the most grams. After several days of testing and modifying, Nikhita created a boat that carried the most grams; Favian was a close runner up. This month many students took the challenge of the American Chemistry Contest. They ran three experiments, charted the results, and then answered a series of application questions. This year science fair for 7th graders is a new requirement that allows each student to read, think and communicate at a more rigorous level than in prior grades, with an aim of taking their projects to one of three science fairs in March.

7th Spanish

Students finished working on the Repaso B “En casa y en la escuela.” They learned vocabulary associated with home and school activities. In addition, they worked on the present tense of irregular verbs *ir*, *dar* and *estar*. (to go, to give and to be) and the use of contractions. They liked to read dialogs and answer questions according to the information of the conversation.

7th Reading

Seventh graders all worked hard to select, edit, understand, and polish a famous speech which was presented to a panel of judges and an audience of parents at Speech Fest on October 16. The selections were as follows:

Cameron – Branch Rickey: “The Quality of Greatness”
Farah – Samantha Smith Shares Her Vision of the Future
Julia – Lucy Stone: “A Disappointed Woman”
Jad – John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address
Rae – Sojourner Truth: “Ain’t I a Woman?”
Michael – Chief Joseph: “I Will Fight No More Forever”
Olivia – Abraham Lincoln: The Gettysburg Address
Nikhita – Mark Twain Discusses Stage Fright
Aliaa – Angelina Grimke: “The Evils of Slavery”
Maya – Maria Stewart Advocates Education for Black Women
Abigail – Susan B. Anthony Argues for Rights for Women
Favian – Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man
Rami – Vince Lombardi to the Green Bay Packers
Kevin – General Eisenhower’s “Order of the Day”

7th - 8th Language Arts

Seventh and 8th grade students are revisiting the tried but true skill of “showing instead telling.” Seventh graders are practicing sound-track and motion picture verbs, while the 8th practiced adding participial phrases, absolutes and appositive phrases for sentence variety. Eighth graders have their essays on treasured objects and their hand descriptions on display in the upper south wing.

7th - 8th Latin I

Beginning Latin students worked hard to memorize the present tense in all four verb conjugations. They are also keeping up with long weekly vocabulary lists. We are using a more rigorous textbook series this year, the *Oxford Latin Course*. The second-year students are just completing a review of last year’s forms with the slippery third declension noun and adjectival forms. The book challenges the students to spend a good deal of their time translating at a level slightly outside their comfort zone. Both classes have also just begun a Greek mini-unit.

7th - 8th Mathematics

Our emphasis this quarter can be seen in a quote Mr. Debelak repeats to his classes: “If you can’t explain it, you don’t know it; you might be able to explain it, but you don’t know it.” This describes a phenomenon common among young teen mathematicians. They learn enough mathematics to be able to complete their assignments and perhaps get a “B” on their exams. Within a month, however, they have forgotten what they learned and they are not ready to advance. They are coasting through their math course without gaining a firm grasp of the material. In classroom practice students are observed solving problems, they will be asked to explain what they are doing and why. This is to make sure they not only can explain what they are doing but that they also use the correct math language. This will help them retain what they have learned.

7th and 8th Computer

The 7th and 8th graders are getting ready to dive into programming, designing and building in a virtual world. This is the third year we have partnered with the Air Force Research Laboratory in Dayton. The Virtual Academy will be hosted on a server in Dayton, and we will access it in class. Students will be working on building a virtual world and learning how to program and manipulate the objects they build.

continued on page 11

CLASS NEWS *continued*

8th Reading

Eighth graders were given the option of presenting a Shakespeare monologue at the Speech Fest on October 16. All students chose a challenging selection and each presented a thoughtful interpretation and poised performance. Here is the impressive line-up in order of appearance:

Ying Ying – Katherine of Aragon from “Henry VIII”
Maryum – Rosalind in the Epilogue from “As you Like It”
Vinny – Andrew Hamilton: “Defense of Freedom of the Press”
Grace – Helena from “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”
Julia – John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address
William – Abraham Lincoln: The Gettysburg Address
Caroline – Queen Margaret from “Henry VI, Part 3”
Crystal – Cardinal Wolsey from “Henry VIII”
Amir – King James I – “Kings are justly called gods”
Jack – Lincoln’s Peoria Speech “The monstrous injustice of slavery”
Anika – Lady Macbeth from “Macbeth”
Topstone – Macbeth from “Macbeth”

8th Science

Eighth graders tackled a multi-day engineering challenge: use one piece of printer paper and four paper clips to construct a bridge that would hold the most pennies. Ying Ying and Crystal created a bridge that held the most number of pennies; Anika R. and Julia M. were the closest contenders. Science fair projects are new in the 8th grade curriculum. It is truly amazing to see these young people attack the problems; they come in and start working. It is evident that they are reading more rigorous articles and delving deeper into their projects.

UNDER THE CANOPY *continued*

8th Spanish

Students worked on the chapter “Una rutina diferente.” They talked about the daily routine and packing to go camping. They used vocabulary related to parts of the body in combination with reflexive verbs to write sentences and practice conversations related to the subject.

Leadership Program *continued from page 2*

At the end of each day, 7th and 8th graders assist students in the younger grades to pack up, put on coats, line-up, and walk outside. Others help out in the office. In the beginning of the year, the 8th graders rendered a great service to younger students who needed help finding their way or carrying their belongings to their classrooms. Below is a list of leadership responsibilities and the students who participate in each activity:

Box Tops Program Coordination – Favi, Nikhita, Jad, Rami, Cameron

Library – Maya, Julia, Rae, Farah, Aliaa, Maryum, Caroline, Grace

Opening for Younger Grades – Michael, Aliaa, Grace, Ying Ying, Crystal, Julia

Lost and Found – Abby, Cameron, Michael

Odd Jobs – Rami, Jad, Favi, Cameron

Gardening – Crystal, Olivia, Abby, Anika

Bountiful Basement Delivery Assistance – Anika, Jad, Favi, Maryum, Rami

Computer Maintenance – Amir, Kevin, Topstone

Recycling – Rami, Jack, William, Vinny

School Store – Vinny, Jack, William, Julia, Ying Ying

Hallway Awards Bulletin Boards – Anika, Olivia

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, November 13

Half Day – Early Dismissal at noon

Wednesday, November 27 -

Sunday, December 1

Thanksgiving Break

December 2 - 6 & December 9

Book Fair open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Saturday, December 7

International Festival and Auction (IFA) noon - 4 p.m.

Book Fair noon - 4 p.m.



Reworking Birchwood’s program for computation skills - see page 8.