

Birchwood Clipboard

The Lion's Roar

ACHIEVEMENT AND SELF-CONTROL

Citing research from the Department of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, Martin Seligman quotes, "Underachievement among American youth is often blamed on inadequate teachers, boring textbooks, and large class sizes.

We suggest another reason for students falling short of their intellectual potential: their failure to exercise self-discipline ... We believe that many of America's children have trouble making choices that require them to sacrifice short-term pleasure for long-term gain, and that programs that build self-discipline may be the royal road to building academic achievement."

He also notes that self-discipline out predicts IQ for academic success by a factor of about 2.



UNDER THE CANOPY NEWS FROM BIRCHWOOD

Independent Schools Association of the Central States Accreditation

This summer, Birchwood School received full accreditation from the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS). Their report mirrored our self-study that took nearly two years to complete. It was a thorough analysis of everything Birchwood does from academics to student life to administration and governance.



The underlying intent was to assess whether our programming, organization and daily operations align with our mission. The visiting team made specific commendations and recommendations for every area of study. The recommendations became part of the framework for constructing our nine-year expansion plan.

The entire accrediting process is seven years. We are now in the fourth year. Our responsibility this year will be to respond to the ISACS report, explaining how we will address the recommendations. During the course of the year, we will share with you ISACS findings and discuss our response plans.

Growth and Sustainability Plan

For the past two years, amidst the daily school activity, Mr. Debelak and the Board of Trustees have been developing a growth and sustainability program for Birchwood School. In 2011-12 Mr. Debelak worked with instructors at Baldwin Wallace University developing a business plan for the school.

In 2012-13, the Independent School Association of the Central States (ISACS) visited Birchwood School, evaluated our programs, awarded us accreditation, and made important recommendations for our growth and sustainability.

This summer, Mr. Debelak and the Board of Trustees synthesized the previous two years of work into a nine-year growth and sustainability program, which they will communicate to all of Birchwood's stakeholders during the course of this year and as the plan proceeds forward.

Plan to attend the first community update on Tuesday, October 15 at 6:30 p.m. Babysitting will be available.

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Enhanced Communication Between Home & School

One recommendation from the ISACS study, that mirrored our own assessments, was the need to enhance communication. We started with a new website that rolled-out at the beginning of the school year. But we also plan to engage interested parents to help us develop a more robust and thorough communication between home and school. Keep your eye out for an invitation to join this discussion. For your reference, notes home and Parent Committee information can be found on the website under the Community header at birchwoodschool.org.



School Enrollment Increase

School enrollment is hovering around 175 students. That is an increase of 25 students since last year and places us ahead of schedule to achieve our nine-year enrollment goal. To accommodate learning needs, we have hired or reassigned teachers in order to have two teachers per classroom whenever enrollment goes above 16 students. This affords children in these classrooms a wonderful teacher-pupil ratio. Quality education always comes first.

New Faces at Birchwood

A warm welcome to the new faces on our staff:

- Ester Chen**, kindergarten
- Diane Coury**, 1st - 4th grade language arts
- Ellen Dye**, 3-year-old program – “Seedlings”
- Becky Hoelter**, 4-year-old program – “Sprouts”
- Mely Sato**, director of external affairs
- Krystyna Moreno**, school secretary
- Nicole Sautter**, 3-year-old program – “Seedlings”
- Jeanne Simons**, 1st grade and 3rd grade reading and language arts
- Rosina Ziamba**, kindergarten

Thank You! To Our Birchwood Families

We can't say it enough – thank you to all of our parents for everything they do for the school. During the 2012-13 school year the Parent Committee raised funds through the International Festival and Auction (IFA), the Scrip program, Scholastic Book Fair, rewards from Heinen's, Lands' End, Target, and Giant Eagle plus sales from Birchwood's Spirit Store.

Through your efforts the Birchwood School Parent Committee was able to fund:

- **New stools** for the art room – \$1,150
- **Chairs, carpet** and other comfort items for the 3rd and 4th grades
- **A \$20,000 donation** to support the creation of two new preschool and kindergarten classrooms
- **Refrigerators and microwaves** for the preschool and kindergarten rooms – \$1,300
- **Travel scholarships** for students traveling to national competitions – \$4,400
- **New desks** for the new 5th grade classroom – \$800
- **Colonial Williamsburg Electronic Field Trips** for Mrs. Miller's classes – \$700
- And more!

The total given to the school was over \$30,000 and doesn't include the \$8,000-plus raised during the IFA's “fund-a-need” to support Birchwood's music program.

Please check birchwoodschool.org for details on all of our fundraising activities. Remember ... we do not SELL cookie dough, gift wrap, or magazines ... we simply ask you to participate in activities you already do.

Thanks, again, for contributing to the Birchwood community.

Save-the-Date 19th Annual International Festival and Auction

Saturday, December 7
noon - 4 p.m.

Be sure to save the date for the 19th Annual International Festival and Auction (IFA). Look for information coming soon on how everyone can help make this the best IFA yet.

Parent Questions? Comments? Activities!

The Parent Committee has its own email:

parentcommittee@birchwoodschool.org

Please let us know your ideas and comments. Also visit birchwoodschool.org and look under the Community header for up-to-date Parent Committee activities.

REFLECTIONS BY CHARLES DEBELAK

THRIVE

Last year, the *Clipboard* essays focused on teaching children how to be creative. We have learned that the development of creative and innovative thinkers can transcend social, economic, ethnic, racial, or gender advantages or disadvantages because the focus is upon internal attributes rather than external opportunities. The cultivation of internal qualities empowers individuals to become creative in their approach to life regardless of external circumstances.

The creativity essays made two assumptions. First, whenever creative and innovative work emerges in any field, it is inspired by people who themselves are creative and innovative. Whether the field is art, literature, science, or technology, creative people produce creative work. In other words, if an individual develops the attitudes, habits and skills consistently found among accomplished creators and innovators, an individual will be creative in his or her chosen field of work. The second assumption follows from the first. To varying degrees, since much of creativity can be a compilation of learned attitudes and skills, anyone can learn to become more creative. Some will change the world. Others will simply bring vitality and newness to everything they do wherever they are. This latter form of creativity is what we called “everyman’s” creativity.

Let’s briefly review the main points of those essays. It starts with attitude. Creative people possess a creative attitude toward life, that is, it is purposeful and productive. As a matter of habit and disposition, it proactively identifies problems, rises to meet challenges, and grasps opportunities. Furthermore, creative people are dedicated to their work. They understand that without industry, perseverance and a measurable plan of action, there will be no success. Finally, creative people demonstrate the ability to approach problems and challenges with fresh eyes. Though highly knowledgeable in their respective fields, they can throw off convention. Granted, to some extent these abilities are innate, nevertheless, researchers have shown that many creative thinking skills can be learned, practiced and perfected. Anyone can become more creative.

When these characteristics are nurtured in children and young adults, they become creative people. As such, they will bring their innate and developed creativity and innovation to whatever field of life they choose. The result is creativity – whether in the scientist’s laboratory, a software design lab, a policy analysis meeting, the musician’s practice room, or mom’s kitchen.



This will be the guiding thought behind the *Clipboard* essays this year – the cultivation of internal qualities. We will look at internal qualities as they apply to an important attribute that I believe will be critical for children and young adults in the 21st century – “thriving.” “To thrive” is a verb that implies an energy of life that spawns ideas and aspirations. It describes the process that leads to growth, improvement and well-being. The dictionary defines thrive as “to grow vigorously ... flourish ... prosper ... progress toward a goal.”

*“Thrive ...
to grow vigorously
... flourish ...
prosper ...
progress toward
a goal.”*

Think of a thriving community or a thriving family. Both are filled with life, activity and direction. They are marked by new ideas, aspirations and hope.

Things are happening. They are moving forward.

Given time, we see achievements, attainments or fulfillment of intentions. The thriving community is blossoming, establishing new businesses, adding new residences, improving the city’s services, building new schools and a recreation center. In the thriving family, children are growing, achieving and accomplishing. Parents are planning, organizing and directing. They are working to fulfill their hopes and expectations.

In contrast, imagine the opposite condition, one of entropy – “the degradation of matter and energy ... to a state of inert uniformity.” It is a state of diminishing life power where activity languishes and productivity ceases. The environment is flat, old and degraded. In a community, services wane, buildings deteriorate, institutions close, businesses fail. In a family, there is a general unhappiness individually and collectively. Children lack meaningful direction; parents are weighed down and overcome by the circumstances of life.

Next month, we’ll discuss characteristics of thriving children.

CLASS NEWS

CLASS OF 2013 GRADUATION

We are proud to share the matriculation for the class of 2013. The June graduation ceremony included distinctive and inspirational speeches by eighth grade parent, Dr. Dasarathy, and alumnus, Hannah Miller, a recent graduate of the Syracuse University School of Architecture.

Just as impressive were the speeches by each graduate, expressing their appreciation for their Birchwood education as well as their aspirations for the future.



Class of 2013 Matriculation

Anthony Chin-Wing – St. Ignatius High School

Dhweeja Desarathy – Hawken School

Maya Farhat – Lake Ridge Academy

John Hessler – St. Ignatius High School

Anna Hollweg – Hathaway Brown

Adam Issa – St. Edward High School

Prathna Kumar – Hathaway Brown

Pheby Lin – Hawken School

Ammar Lone – Hawken School

Megan Porter – Gilmour Academy

Michael Tsou – Hawken School

Haley Yahraus – Hathaway Brown

CLASS OF 2013 LEGACY ESSAYS

We invite you to read the 2013 Legacy Essays written by members of Birchwood's class of 2013. Each year, following the year-long Ben Franklin Initiative, eighth grade students write a legacy essay to share with younger students. Their inspiring essays reflect what they have learned about becoming a "great person."

Birchwood's Ben Franklin Initiative is an extension of the eighth grade character development program. It is an opportunity for students to learn skills that promote independence, goal-setting, self-reflection, responsibility, collaboration, and planning. The initiative speaks to the best intentions of young teens and inspires them to fulfill their potential.

To learn more about the Ben Franklin Initiative, including its connection to Ben Franklin, please visit birchwoodschool.org and look under Character Education & Training listed under the Academics header.

Self-Motivation by John Hessler

I came to Birchwood in the end of the sixth grade. When I arrived, I was amazed by the work that the students at Birchwood do. I never thought that I would be able to do the projects and competitions that everyone else [did] ... I had been a do-as-little-as-possible person, and had gotten away with it.

My first full year was tough. I barely got through the seventh grade at Birchwood. I tried, for the first time, to get better at my school-work. My grades all hovered below 90-percent, and I became discouraged. I do feel that the 2011-12 school year was very important for me though. That was my one year of catch-up before high schools started to look at my grades. I got a tutor to try to help me develop work habits and spent more time on home-work when I was at home. That year was extremely necessary.

My eighth grade year, this year, has been awesome. It was the hardest by far. [But] my hard work paid off. My grades were the best they had ever been and my projects were getting more and more well done.

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“My experiences and successes have been great, but the ideas I will take with me are even more so.”

CLASS OF 2013 LEGACY ESSAYS *continued*

The most important thing Birchwood taught me though is actually a realization. [Birchwood offers you] a chance ... to make yourself the best you can be. [It is] simply an environment for success ... it teaches the qualities that are needed for being successful, among these, self-motivation, work ethic, mental stamina, service, and determination.

Self-motivation is what gets the kids at Birchwood to reach their goals, another huge part of the learning. The teachers cannot hold a student's hand their whole life. This is the place where kids say, "I want to succeed." Ultimately, it is the student who decides what they want to do. Birchwood teaches that better than anywhere else. My experiences and successes have been great, but the ideas I will take with me are even more so.

Wisdom by Haley Yahraus

Great people tend to be goal-oriented. [They] desire to ... reach their full potential. The main quality they possess is wisdom. Wisdom consists of responsibility, kindness, confidence, and optimism.

Wisdom, I believe, relates to responsibility, making wise choices that will better one's future. For example, skipping out on homework or doing poor quality homework shall not help at all. Working diligently and efficiently is necessary. Quitters never achieve their goals. To become a doctor, teacher or whatever one desires to become will take time, effort and frustration. Don't be down when you hate homework. We all do. But it takes a steadfast person to endure the pain it brings, don't forget that.

The other part of wisdom is kindness/friendliness. All of us know, "Do onto others as you would have them do onto you." Treating others poorly is immature. You will hurt others, but mostly you will hurt yourself. And what if you fall in life? The people you have wronged are unlikely to help you get back on your feet. Making good relationships is vital for success.

Confidence is the third part of wisdom. Without confidence, one will never achieve anything. A confident person doesn't give up in times of hardship, because he or she knows hardships will make him stronger. Harry Truman once wrote, "A pessimist makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist makes opportunities of his difficulties." An optimist is not reckless only wise because he knows that everything shall come and go. And only wisdom shall remain.

"Wisdom, I believe, relates to responsibility, making wise choices that will better one's future."

Self-Discipline by Michael Tsou

One of the greatest traits I have learned from my years at Birchwood is self-discipline. Self-discipline has trained me to keep what is fun in check. What I mean by that is, I am able to focus on the agonizing Birchwood homework even though YouTube is one click away or I could easily go play outside for a half hour and then finish my homework. [Self-discipline] will really develop you as a person both physically and psychologically. You may not realize it now, but this will continue to help you throughout your entire life.

Another trait that I have learned is self-motivation. Throughout my years at Birchwood, I have experienced some of the hardest math problems, toughest music pieces, and many difficult essay assignments. There is always that voice inside my head that says "Why don't you just give up and go outside?" or "Who cares about this German Bach composer guy anyway?" But I have learned that you have to be able to ignore this voice if you want to succeed. This voice will only hinder you from becoming the great person you are destined to become. I feel I can achieve the high goals that I set for myself because I was able to develop self-motivation.

Throughout these years at Birchwood, I have learned to appreciate each day. The teachers have taught me many valuable lessons. I have thoroughly enjoyed these years at Birchwood.

Being Great by Maya Farhat

Being a great person isn't just given to you at birth; it's something you have to work toward. Being great is not merely becoming rich and famous. It is the kind of person you make yourself into. For example, Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers, could be considered a great man not just because of his fame. He set goals. He never gave up and he strived to be exactly what he wanted to be. That's a great person. Throughout my seventh and eighth grade years at Birchwood, I learned how to be a great person.

During my eighth grade year during the Ben Franklin Initiative class, I began learning how to be a great person. For me it was working hard and setting goals. We first began by thinking of two goals, one academic goal and one personal goal. My academic

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"Throughout these years at Birchwood, I have learned to appreciate each day."

CLASS OF 2013 LEGACY ESSAYS *continued*

goal was to finish Algebra 1 by the end of eighth grade. Before I could even work my way to achieve this goal, I had to spend a few study halls with Mr. Debelak thinking of ways I would be able to accomplish my goal. He taught me to think of the obstacles that could keep me away from reaching my goal. One of the many obstacles I faced was laziness, something that overpowers me in whatever I do. "Just leave that for later," I thought. Luckily, there was always something inside of me that made me want to push myself even harder to finish algebra. Because of this "thing" inside me, I worked hard to finish Algebra 1.

"Thank you, Birchwood School, for turning me into a great person."

Another aspect of being a great person is learning not to cheat on your work. You have to work hard and not slack off. This skill assisted me in striving to finish Algebra 1. I had to work every night on algebra whether I liked it or not. Cheating your work is one of the easiest things you could do in trying to avoid something. If I were to have skipped a day of studying algebra because I didn't feel like it, it could've come back and hurt me in the end. Missing a day can turn into missing weeks and months of studying. If I were to have skipped these days, I may not be where I am in algebra today.

Thanks to Birchwood I've learned to work hard, set goals, and not cheat on my work. What I learned at Birchwood will carry on with me for the rest of my life. Thank you, Birchwood School, for turning me into a great person.

Life Lessons Ammar Lone

After eight years at Birchwood School my perception of what makes a person great has changed drastically. For example, I used to think Abraham Lincoln was great because he was a president. While that is a notable accomplishment, it was the qualities that won him the White House that made him great.

Abraham Lincoln was a hard worker. Despite growing up in an isolated, log cabin with few learning materials, Lincoln worked hard to learn to read and write. To reach the top position in America, Lincoln was honest and earned votes not from lies or false promises. He gained the respect of the American people by being honest and truthful in everything he did and said. At

"Through my own experiences at Birchwood I learned several life lessons that will serve me in the future."

the height of the Civil War when rumors about his dismissal from office began to spread and his son was killed in the war, Lincoln remained optimistic. He told jokes and smiled to reassure his co-workers that everything would eventually work out. These qualities made Lincoln great.

Though it is helpful to learn from great figures from the past such as Lincoln, there is no better teacher than personal experience. Through my own experiences at Birchwood I learned several life lessons that will serve me in the future. Firstly, a lesson that I am still having trouble grasping is responsibility. Frequently, throughout my time at Birchwood my trapper was stuffed with unneeded paper I was too lazy to get rid of or clean. Though I still am struggling to keep my trapper clean it is exponentially cleaner than before because a clean trapper saves me so much time. Another lesson I learned at Birchwood was the power of self-motivation. Through the Ben Franklin Initiative I have learned to continuously motivate myself to achieve the goals I set – even when it becomes tough. In high school I won't have the Birchwood teachers constantly pushing me and fixing my mistakes, but learning these lessons now will help me achieve my own goals.

Through my experiences with teachers and friends at Birchwood, my character has grown in ways I didn't think possible. My time at Birchwood has provided a great base for success as I take the next step in life.

Self-Control by Anna Hollweg

Self-control is one of the key elements of being a great person, so listen carefully. You know that feeling after you get home from school and realize that you're not done with work yet? When you've been working all day, and you get home and you've still got a good two hours left?

There's always a voice in your head that says, "You've been working all day – take a break! You deserve it." That voice is evil. I mean, it has a really good point, but if you listen to it you'll never get anything done!

"Self-control is one of the key elements of being a great person ..."

You have to keep control and work hard, ignore distractions, and finish your work before you take the rest of the day off. While this is only a small part of greatness, if you can achieve it on a regular basis, without great struggle, then you're well on your way to becoming a great student.

CLASS OF 2013 LEGACY ESSAYS *continued*

What is my Legacy? by Anthony Chin-Wing

What defines a legacy? Of course, by a rudimentary and literal definition, it is that which is left behind post-humously by one. The events and memorabilia of a lifetime. The impact of a lifetime. Yet, what truly defines a legacy in a practical, contemporary manner?

I feel that it is not necessarily the stated literal definition; it is not an overall perspective of impact or contributions or anything like that. It is, rather, the main events of a person's time and how they have changed the world. The impact of these actions on a large scale is what I would define as my legacy. And every event changes the world, no matter how small or large, no matter how significant or insignificant it may seem.

"I have learned not to fear failure, but to embrace it with open arms."

Allow me to elaborate. Were a man and his vision to have built a nation, he would be hailed as great. That nation would be his legacy. But, is it truly? Or, is what he has changed and what he has allowed others to change, would that be his legacy? The latter is not necessarily more definitive than the former, it is not necessarily truer than the former, yet it is far more significant.

This is what I would define as a legacy. Now, to put everything into a context of sorts. I have attained several great achievements in nearly every aspect at Birchwood. I have also failed equally. So, what would be my legacy? Which would be more significant, the victories in several competitions or the failures here and at home? The latter is that which I feel is my legacy. The failures shall stand as my legacy. And why is it to be so? "A poor artist practices until he or she attains the desired goal. A good artist will practice until failure." These failures are flaws within us all, and they are to be mended. They are lessons to be learned from the most sacred of instructors, time.

Great, poor, weak, strong, good, evil ... they are all relative. They are all subjective. And they are indefinite as a whole, to be defined differently by different people in different contexts. When one realizes what is the proper good and evil, what is the proper great and poor for whatever scenario they may find themselves in and for whatever mindset they bequeath unto themselves, then that is when I feel they are always defined as great. And, of course by this nature, several will be inclined to disagree. That is but an inevitability.

This is what my legacy at Birchwood is. This is what I have discovered here, perhaps vicariously, yet it was intentionally so. I have learned not to fear failure, but to embrace it with open arms.

I have learned to change my viewpoint of that which is good, that which is in a best interest, to the environment accordingly. And so I leave this legacy behind for others that they may know of this knowledge by means aside from experience. I walk into a new world inculcated with this knowledge, armed with this incentive. I know I will succeed, and I know I will fail. It is in the best interest of all to embrace these both with an indifference towards one another.

Goal Setting by Prathna Kumar

My years at Birchwood have taught me much about academics, arts and athletics. Apart from that, I have learned the innumerable traits of a good person.

From the days in Mr. and Mrs. Sprau's classrooms reading moral books in opening and character class, reading about honesty and friendship, I've learned things the not-so-easy way – through experience, not just books. I've learned to work hard, be motivated and inspired, to have the determination, willpower and perseverance to carry out your goals. Goals – that is probably the biggest thing I learned here at Birchwood.

"Part of reaching a goal is learning sacrifice and delayed gratification."

The first step to reaching a goal is goal setting. As I learned in the seventh and eighth grade through the Ben Franklin Initiative, setting a goal is choosing one or two things that you really want to accomplish, something to work for. Usually, goal setting can be done to accomplish or do things you have rarely, or never, done, such as getting an A on your report card for a certain subject, or making the merit or honor roll. I had a number of goals this year, from becoming a national finalist for National History Day to making state Power of the Pen to getting all nines on my ISEE to completing an online chemistry course on time.

After goal setting comes the hard part – working to reach that goal. I made schedules, revised those schedules, and worked to keep up with them. Using all the resources available, the computer, books, parents, teachers, and friends, I worked on my History Day paper tirelessly, prepared for the ISEE day and night, and did math problem after math problem preparing for MathCounts.

Part of reaching a goal is learning sacrifice and delayed gratification. To reach my goals, I had to sacrifice a lot, from missing parties to work on school things to missing ice-skating competitions to attend MathCounts and Power of the Pen. Back then, I wasn't happy about those sacrifices, but looking back, I am glad I did, otherwise I wouldn't have attained my goals of reaching both state MathCounts and state Power of the Pen.

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CLASS OF 2013 LEGACY ESSAYS *continued*

Also, these past years at Birchwood taught me delayed gratification, saving the fun for later. I learned to work hard at the moment, and have fun in the future, after reaching my goal. To reach your goal, you need to be focused on your goal, not get distracted.

The final thing I learned about goal-setting and great people in general, is that they know how to fail. If you want to be successful, you need to fail first. As the saying goes, you learn from your mistakes.

To make yourself better, you need to assess what went wrong, what you did wrong, and fix that the next time. Also, after a failure, great people don't quit. This is where perseverance, willpower and determination play in. After failing, they try again until they succeed. We memorized a poem in Mrs. Sprau's class: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again." At Birchwood, we accomplish great things, but not without failing first. Unlike last year, I didn't make it to National History Day this year. I won't let that failure get me down, though. I will do History Day again next year, trying again to make it to the national competition.

I've learned so much about being a great person. The character, attitude, responsibility, and work habits that a great person has. I am trying to attain to as many of those qualities as I can, to make myself the best I can be.

Greatness by Pheby Liu

Everybody has a different definition of greatness. The subject itself is very subjective – kind of like writing. My class has discussed the topic of greatness and what makes a person great extensively. I have come to a conclusion that great people don't have just one thing that makes them great. If you are extremely wealthy or extremely smart, that does not make you a great person. The truth is, great people possess several admirable qualities that enable them to be great. These qualities can actually all be found in our Birchwood school song – portrayed as the lion, ox, eagle, and man.

A very great person has a lion inside of them, ready to charge and burst out. The lion is courageous and bold, which is sometimes how we need to approach life. Be bold towards new opportunities and experiences. Don't shy away from them. Also, have the courage to stand up for what is right and what you believe in. The bravery of a lion plays a part in tackling challenges. Lions are not cowardly. They fight for their survival and always get back up when they are knocked down. A great person also bears the kingliness of a lion. He always holds his head up high, full of respect for himself and others as well. He refuses to be trampled upon and be unnoticed by the world.

Secondly, great people portray the qualities of an ox. The ox is steadfast and persistent. He will not stop at anything until he gets

the job done. Whether it's two and a half hours of homework or practicing an hour of violin, you should do it, and do it completely. This also applies to reaching any goals that you have set. Never give up on a goal that seems too high out of range. Keep striving, and if you fail, just pick yourself back up and try again. The ox is never distracted from his job, either. While plowing, if a boulder lies in his path, he will not go around it. He will try to break the boulder to continue his path. Just the same, great people do not take the easy way out or circumvent the obstacles in their lives. They are strong enough to carry the load on their shoulders.

Then comes the eagle, spreading out its massive wings and soaring above the ground. Great people are the ones who soar. They are able to fly above everyone else. Eagles are independent and self-sufficient, not relying on others to survive. Great people, like eagles, are the ones who are able to work by themselves and do everything they can do before asking for help.

They do not need to mooch off of others' success. These birds are natural leaders, dictating their own lives and destinies. Like them, we should be able to exercise self-control and leadership qualities to bring up the people around us.

Lastly, great people portray the common man. What I mean by that is they show humanity. This humanity deals with the morality aspect of the characteristics of great people. They choose mercy over judgment and display compassion towards others. If you pay close attention, you will notice their gratitude for everything in their lives, and they rarely complain. They have the ability to turn any circumstance into something special, making the most out of everything. Their empathy and care for mankind make them stand out, remembered and loved.

The attributes found in the lion, ox, eagle, and man encompass the remarkable qualities in a great person. Most of us have at least a few of these qualities and are still trying to acquire the others. The majority of us understand these traits and want to display them, but that's just it – it is extremely difficult to actually live out all these characteristics. To show these qualities in daily life is another thing altogether.

Birchwood has taught me all those crucial qualities to become a great person, but I have yet to display them all. Birchwood has also taught me to never give up and never stop trying. So, I will keep striving to achieve these qualities and perfect the ones I already possess.

"The truth is, great people possess several admirable qualities that enable them to be great."

CLASS OF 2013 LEGACY ESSAYS *continued*

Mental Stamina by Dhweeja Desarathy

I'm like every other kid. It's not that I like to sit down with a textbook and try to read the tiny words. Everything seems so hard, especially after that tiring eight-hour day. Now I have two-and-a-half hours of homework and then dance and then I have to do my History Day and then my other math. The feeling is similar for me as it is for you. I want to take the path of least resistance – I want to go to my couch with a bag of popcorn and watch a movie. I really don't want to have to sit for two-and-a-half hours to do homework and then have to do more work.

But that's what mental stamina is – the ability to push through obstacles and challenges, and push away from the beckoning movie. But more than that, the ability to focus and do a good job of what you are doing. Yes you could say that I finished all my homework in 30 minutes today. But, how fast you did something without it being good quality is not something that distinguishes you as being a great person. It is the ability to do everything you do with good quality and the ability to focus even when you don't want to. Some days, I want to finish my homework in 20 minutes. But then I think about how that's going to help me for my test in a few days. How about postponing my reading homework even though it's a good book? No. My mind has built itself to say no to a lot of things. But the ability to read that book for 30 minutes or write an essay for half-an-hour shows mental stamina and persistence.

So through my experiences at Birchwood, I have learned that one of the most important steps in becoming a great person is by focusing on one thing at a time, and that quality is better than quantity. I hope that all of you learn mental stamina – I promise it will greatly help you at Birchwood.

“... I have learned that one of the most important steps in becoming a great person is by focusing on one thing at a time ...”

Being Inspired by Megan Porter

Throughout my journey both as a student and an athlete, I have been forced both to inspire myself and to put everything in a positive context. This came easier to me from an athletic standpoint because it is much easier to convince yourself to give it your all on one race rather than two hours of homework.

Eventually, I was able to convert the passionate energy from my swimming into my academics, and I almost immediately noticed a significant difference in my study habits, aptitude for learning, and my progress as a student.

Although some might think that being “inspired” has little to do with being successful, it has helped me immensely throughout my journey at Birchwood. Being inspired is something I try to do every day; it's almost the same as remembering to keep my room clean or do my homework.

Finding a source of inspiration every day keeps me motivated to achieve my goals and strive even higher. Being inspired and goal-oriented also means that you have to set goals and be willing to achieve them.

Keep in mind that your success level is not based upon whether or not you achieve your goals. I have learned that being inspired to achieve more than I thought possible has helped me through some of my toughest moments and will continue to be one of my key elements of success.

Another key element of success is a positive outlook. Have you ever noticed that the more you dread that upcoming math test, the harder it seems to get? Instead, think about how well you want to do and improve upon your last score. That way, the test doesn't seem like a black hole ready to swallow you up. Changing the way you look at tough situations can completely reframe your perspective. When you are able to put everything in a positive context, you are more apt to learn under high-pressure situations.

If I have learned anything at all about being successful, it is that you should never be afraid to fail. Believe it or not, failure means that you put in a lot of hard work, but you always have to be willing to get up and try again. I have failed miserably a lot more than achieved greatly. What is most important is figuring out where you could improve and channeling that inspiration and positive outlook to help you continue to grow.

“Although some might think that being ‘inspired’ has little to do with being successful, it has helped me immensely throughout my journey at Birchwood.”

Perseverance by Vinayak Kurup

Over the course of my Birchwood journey, I have learned of many characteristics that make men great. The two greatest traits are perseverance and goal setting, which, when [working] together can produce phenomenal results in both schoolwork and competitions.

Firstly, in MathCounts, I set the high goal of making it to nationals. The first year, I strove towards my goal, and although I did quite well, did not reach the top four. The next year, the effort into MathCounts was minimal, as I was riding on my laurels and

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CLASS OF 2013 LEGACY ESSAYS *continued*

focused on other areas. The result was devastating as I was demoted in rank compared to the year before. However, instead of giving-up, this event fueled my efforts, and the next year I won 6th, comparably better [than] 60th.

Secondly, in the Future Problem Solving scenario, I set the high goal of making it to the International Competition and winning 1st there also. The first year I competed, I placed 4th at state and my scenario was not sent on. The next year, however, through the perseverance of both myself and Mrs. Tzeng, I was able to win 1st at state and 3rd at the International. Learning from MathCounts, I did not reduce my effort, but strove harder the following year, sometimes waking up at 5 a.m. to submit a revision that same day! However, the effort paid off – I won 2nd at state and also 2nd at the International Competition.

Finally, I set the goal of getting a perfect score on the Math Olympiads tests – the George Lenchner Award. Although, the first year, I did not do as well as I had hoped, I strove to be more meticulous and put in more math practice and the next year I won the Lenchner Award.

Goal setting and perseverance are not only seen in the school environment. Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak persevered to make their idea of the idyllic computer a reality. Bill Gates worked tirelessly for hours on his software, now known as Windows. Mark Zuckerberg even dropped out of Harvard to pursue a budding web idea known as Facebook, now a thriving, flourishing social networking giant.

“Perseverance and goal-setting are not only valuable characteristics of a great person, they help facilitate future success.”

Perseverance and goal setting are not only valuable characteristics of a great person, they help facilitate future success. In Birchwood, these characteristics are valuable in succeeding at such a hard school. Hence, the two major characteristics I have learned through my years at Birchwood are perseverance and hard work, and I hope to mold myself into a better person in the year to come.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Many of Birchwood’s class of 2009 headed off to college this fall ... from the University of Michigan to the University of Notre Dame ... Birchwood graduates are on the move.



Matriculation to College Class of 2009

Jacob Broida – Carleton College

Serena Chang – University of Pittsburgh

Oliver Deak – Denison University

Jacob Dennis – University of Michigan

Ilona Kereki – Pace University

Thomas Wasserbauer III – University of Notre Dame

Issac Yeh – Case Western Reserve University

UPCOMING EVENTS



Wednesday, October 2

Parent/Teacher Conferences – No School

Friday, October 11

Grandfriends’ Day

Preschool & Kindergarten from 10:15 a.m. - noon

Grades 1 - 4 from 11:15 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Tuesday, October 15

Community Update

6:30 p.m.

See *Growth and Sustainability* on page 1 for details