

Birchwood Clipboard

The Lion's Roar

ACHIEVEMENT AND TIME-ON-TASK

Increased time-on-task equals increased achievement in school. It is a simple equation most people recognize intuitively. While there is an obvious argument for the benefits of raw talent, the fact is, if children spend time practicing they will improve their achievement. Whether the subject is mathematics or writing or reading, time-on-task plays a major role in achievement. And if we can believe the volumes of research coming out of the field of positive psychology, it plays even a greater role in achievement than raw talent.

Martin Seligman, author of *Flourish*, writes, “The leverage you have for more achievement is more effort. Effort is no more and no less than how much time you practice the task. Time on task acts in two ways to increase achievement: it multiplies existing skill and knowledge, and it also directly increases skill and knowledge. The

best news is that effort is very malleable. How much time you devote to a task comes from the exercise of conscious choice – from free will.” (p. 125)

While 21st century technology has opened powerful new doors for student learning, technology cannot replace a child’s effort to learn. That effort is realized in time-on-task. There is a high probability the student who is focused on his studies at school, and diligently completes his homework, is also the student who is achieving.



UNDER THE CANOPY NEWS FROM BIRCHWOOD

Growth & Sustainability *Maintaining the Mission*

Sustainability and transition is a great challenge for Birchwood School. Making it happen has required considerable study not only of our own history, but also that of other institutions. According to our understanding, the most enduring institutions are first created by people, individuals whose personality, vision and dedication coalesce into a mission that defines the institution. Sustainability and transition, however, requires that the founders’ vision and mission is worked out in practices, policies and traditions which can be continued and even enhanced by the next generation. These practices, policies and traditions are what we are calling our “constitution” and we have framed this constitution according to *four pillars*. Pillar #3 is below:



Pillar #3: *We promote home/school collaboration that insures student achievement and growth.*

We have always identified Birchwood School as a tool

in the hands of parents who seek to give their children a superior education coupled with training in character development. Home/school collaboration is essential for student achievement and growth.

Collaboration is based upon a robust conversation which revolves around mutual understandings. On the parents’ side, they need to understand the school’s mission and educational philosophy especially as they apply policies and practices concerning high level achievement and character development. Parents should understand why we do what we do. Teachers must understand that according to research and history, parents are the primary drivers of high quality education. As parents, they have the most intimate knowledge of their child, and teachers need to know and appreciate the parents’ perspective in order to render the best effort. In the spirit of mutual understanding and trust, parents and teachers can become a team that will provide the best guidance for student achievement and growth.

CONTENTS

Student Awards	2
Reflections by Charles Debelak Experience and Thriving	3
Parents’ Corner	4
Class News.....	5
Board Update	11

UNDER THE CANOPY *continued*

District Science Awards

Several students competed at the following science competitions in order to qualify to compete at the state level:

District 2, University of Toledo
Favian, 7th grade, "Spin to Win"

District 15, University of Akron
Tejal, 6th grade, "Neutralizing the pH of Stomach Acid with Different Antacid Tablets"

Topstone, 8th grade, "Development of Computerized Capitulation of Diverse Frame-Worked Documents Programmed by Python and PHP Languages"

Ying Ying, 8th grade, "Do Games Help Kids to Focus?"

Crystal, 8th grade, "How is the Concentration of Bilinguals and Monolinguals Affected by Distracting Factors in the Environment?"

District 18, Lake-to-River Science Day
Kevin, 7th grade, excellent, "How do Different Factors of a Paper Helicopter Affect its Flight?"

BEST Medicine Engineering Fair
Julia, 8th grade, bronze, "Hand Function Restorer Brace" & recognition for her entry in the "Personalized Wellness Management Cartooning Competition"



Northeastern Ohio Science & Engineering Fair

Winning eighth grade Birchwood students at the Northeastern Ohio Science and Engineering Fair (NEOSEF), were:

Anika, 2nd place, "The Effectiveness of Spices Against Food Spoilage Bacteria"

Maryum, honorable mention, "Which Smoothie Would You Like?"

Young Naturalist Award

Eighth grade student, Caroline, is a Young Naturalist National Award Semi-Finalist for her essay "Finding Temperatures Effect on Composts." Sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History, this is a research-based science competition to promote participation and communication in science.



National History Day / District Level Awards

Birchwood students had a stellar showing at the district level of National History Day on March 15. Fifteen students advanced to the state competition in April. Congratulations to these students for their hard work and success:

Historical Paper

Caroline, 3rd, Fight for water rights along the Colorado River

Individual Website

Asim, 1st, Jackie Robinson

Farah, 3rd, Henry Spira and his fight for animal rights

Group Website

Crystal & Ying Ying, 2nd, Japanese-American internment in WWII

Anika & Maryum, 3rd, Uncle Tom's Cabin

Individual Documentary

Amir, 1st, Outer Space Treaty by the United Nations in 1967

Favian, 3rd, Berlin Wall

Group Documentary

Jack & William, 1st, 1969 Cuyahoga River fire

Individual Performance

Julia, 2nd, Holocaust (and recognition from the Maltz Museum)

Group Performance

Abby, Nikhita and Olivia, 1st, Women in workforce during WWII

continued on page 4

EXPERIENCE AND THRIVING

While we hold many aspirations for our children, I remain convinced that if we teach our children how to thrive in any circumstance, how to grasp new opportunities, how to struggle through any adversity, or how to rise up to any challenge, they will have the tools to grow, blossom, overcome, and find personal fulfillment in the 21st century. Being able to thrive simply means children have cultivated the habits and attitudes to profit and grow from any situation that life throws at them.

I believe thriving is so important because it is universally applicable. It transcends personal or environmental limitations. It transcends having privileged or underprivileged circumstances. Its power subordinates intellectual or talent advantages. If we give our children the tools for thriving, we will have done our utmost to prepare them for their future.

The capacity to thrive is built upon attitudes and habits nurtured over time. As we have discussed, it begins with the language of thriving. Language, whether through lessons, stories or real-life examples, inspires the heart and educates the conscience. The language of thriving is like a seed of virtue that informs and internally directs a child's life.

In order for children to become thriving young adults, language needs the complement of experience. Through experience, the language of thriving is forged into habits and attitudes. Whereas language creates awareness and aspiration for thriving, experience makes thriving a habit. Combined, they create character, a disposition whose direction and effort in life is to grow, produce and profit others.

In previous essays, we focused on language and how it fosters thriving. Now we will look at how experiences can shape the habits and attitudes of thriving.

Toward this effort, there are three realizations that parents and educators should have. First, children have an *innate drive to thrive*. They want to grow, mature, blossom, and become everything that they are capable of becoming. When children are learning or achieving or overcoming they are alive and vibrant. They are developing self-worth and confidence.

The second realization parents and teachers need is that children *do not like the process of learning how to thrive!* This is because they have another innate drive – one that psychology calls entropy, the tendency to “preserve energy,” to do as little as possible, therefore living for immediate gratification and following the path of least resistance. When children succumb to this drive, they don't grow well, and they squander their talents. Unfortunately, this drive toward dissipation is the natural tendency. Unless there is adult intervention



that guides children toward a higher plane of life, children invariably walk the easiest path. The problem is obvious. Parents want their children to learn how to thrive, and at one level, children also desire to thrive, yet at the same time a child's natural preference is to do as little as possible and to squander whatever he or she has.

This internal dichotomy is striking – an innate longing to thrive coupled with an innate force toward dissipation. Which drive wins? That depends upon the environment, and that environment is shaped primarily by parents and supported by educators. This environment, composed of positive language and training, is a

bridge that connects innate potential to a thriving character. It forges the development of good work habits and productive attitudes. If you take away this positive influence, the drive toward dissipation will almost always win out. In most children it is a much more powerful drive.

This brings us to the third realization. While parents hope their children will learn how to thrive, they may not appreciate that the onus of this burden will fall on their own shoulders. Before children develop the habits of thriving, parents

must recognize it will be their own sacrifice and perseverance that will make this happen. Remember, although children by nature desire to thrive, they do not like the *process of learning* how to thrive. Don't be surprised if they fight against your every effort. When you teach them self-control, hard work or responsibility, they will resent your lessons and they will resent your discipline. When you attempt to explain why they should delay personal gratification, they might accuse you of being mean, or they may even tell others that you are a bad parent.

Do you want your children to thrive? Get ready for a long battle. Navigating between the two internal drives will require wisdom, patience and dedication.

“If we give our children the tools for thriving, we will have done our utmost to prepare them for their future.”

UNDER THE CANOPY *continued*

continued from page 2

Letters About Literature

Birchwood fifth and sixth grade students were excited to receive a large envelope from Cleveland Public Library's Center for the Book. Prior to winter break, students composed entries for the Letters About Literature competition. This national contest for fifth through eighth grade students receives tens of thousands of entries.

In Ohio, 1,283 students submitted a letter and 286 of these (22%), were selected to go on for further judging.

Of the 11 fifth grade girls statewide in Level I (4th-6th graders) who earned this honor, eight were from Birchwood School; of the 12 fifth grade boys selected, two were Birchwood students.

Congratulations to the following students:

Round 1 Fifth Grade Winners:

Erhan, Stella, Makenah, Isabella, Zuha, Mira, Karim, Sousou, Lilah, and Shruthi

Round 1 Sixth Grade Winners:

Aasma, Derzan, Steven, Jane, Tejal, and Channin

Future Problem Solving Achievements

Congratulations to Birchwood's four teams and two individual writers who will be moving on to the state competition in April:

Eighth Grade Team:

– Crystal, William L., Topstone, Ying Ying

Seventh Grade Teams:

– Maya, Julia F., Farah, Abby

– Olivia, Favian, Nikhita, Rae

Sixth Grade Team:

– Jane, Alia B., Channin, Tejal P.

Individuals:

Vinayak, Anika

Math Olympiads Contest #5

Gold: Jane, Tejal, Ying Ying, Anika, Alex M.

Silver: Derzan, Steven, Crystal, Topstone, William L., Sousou, Praveen, Rishav, Terek

Bronze: Channin, Vinayak, Jack, Amir, Farah, Kevin, Avi, Shruthi, Lilah, Stella, Alex D., Makenah, Mira

Continental Math League Contest #5

Gold: Jane, Tejal, Channin, Topstone, William, Anika, Vinayak, Kevin, Avi

Silver: Steven, Ying Ying, Crystal, Farah, Michael H., Julia F., Lilah, Stella

Bronze: Derzan, Maryum, Grace, Nikhita, Cameron, Maya, Sousou, Alex M., Shruthi, Karim

MathCounts State Finals

Congratulations to Birchwood's MathCounts Team of Vinayak, Anika, William, and Topstone. They came in 12th place in the state.

Individually, Vinayak placed 13th, Anika placed 35th, and William placed 54th. Given that the best math students in Ohio competed in this competition, Birchwood students did an outstanding job.

Birchwood Alumni Success

Kavya Ravichandran was the 2014 Best Medicine Engineering Fair Grand Prize Winner (grade 6-12). She was offered a biomedical engineering internship instead of advancing to the International Science and Engineering Fair due to regulations regarding her high school hosting its own Intel-affiliated fair. Taking her place at the prestigious international competition is fellow Birchwood Alumni, Dhweeja Dasarathy.

PARENTS' CORNER

End-of-Year Excitement

The school year is rapidly moving into the fourth quarter and before we know it we will be in the last weeks with the upper grades Poetry Show, the 30th Anniversary Gala and the Ice Cream Social, followed by field trips, field day and eighth grade graduation. All that will happen in a span of six days. My, how time flies when you are having fun, and we sure do have fun at Birchwood School.

Volunteer Opportunities

In the meantime, please check the Thursday eblasts and your parent folder for word on volunteer opportunities, especially if you still need to fulfill your family's five hour requirement. The list is updated each week. Thank you so much to the families who helped in February and March with the Poetry Show, Sharing Show, Potlatch, 100 Day Celebration, and field trips to Cleveland Metroparks for Maple Sugaring and to Soulcraft woodshop.

Parent Committee Meeting

There will be a Parent Committee meeting on Friday, April 11 at 8:30 a.m. We will start the morning with Mr. and Mrs. Debelaks rescheduled chat about competitions, which was cancelled due to a snow day. We will also be talking about leadership for next year and finalizing financial plans.

We have also realized that there are not any bylaws for the Parent Committee (or they disappeared long ago) so we will look at creating bylaws to give the committee a basis for continuity. We are no longer a small group of parents, but now a large group of involved parents and bylaws will help to keep us tuned in to our mission.

CLASS NEWS

Seedlings

Seedlings did a wonderful job in the Sharing Show. Students performed three songs for their parents: the “Letter X,” “Pete the Cat,” and the “Seedling/Sprout” song. The theme for this month was community helpers. Students learned about the different jobs people have and how they help the community. We had two guests come in to speak with students about their professions. We have also hung artwork in the hallway depicting what each child would like to be when they grow up.



Sprouts

Sprouts had an eventful month practicing and preparing for the Sharing Show. The children sang “Today is Monday” by Eric Carle. Each child wore an animal hat and held up the food that related to the day of the week. Sprouts were so excited to stand on the stage while singing their songs. The children also sang “I’m a Little Seedling/Sprout,” written by the children and staff at Birchwood. The students concluded with a few Spanish songs about colors, numbers and animals.

We have also been exploring nursery rhymes. The children have been memorizing rhymes like “Miss Mary Mack,” “Hot Cross Buns,” “Hey Diddle Diddle,” “Jack and Jill,” and “Mary, Mary Quite Contrary.” Some activities with nursery rhymes carried over to math as children worked on word problems using pretend hot cross buns and pennies. “If each bun cost a penny, how many pennies would you need to purchase hot cross buns?” We also worked on circling and memorizing sight words in the nursery rhymes. The Sprouts and teachers look forward to “waking up” the playground and gardens in the next couple of months.

Kindergarten

Our Sharing Show was a wonderful success. All the students did a fantastic job and we are so proud of each and every one of them! We would like to thank Mrs. D’Souza for all her hard work with the props and for writing our program.

K Math

Kindergarten students have finished their first Singapore book and are moving onto their second book. Students have finished their time unit by making their own clocks and are eager to tell the time during the school day. They are now learning two digit addition and subtraction with regrouping. Students are hard at work and improving their arithmetic skills through playing games and using flashcards that help them add and subtract mentally.

“Students finished their time units by making their own clocks.”

K Reading

Kindergarteners are building fluency and confidence in reading more and more every day. They have begun to take books home to read to their parents each night and love doing so. We continue to build our vocabulary through our weekly sight word books as well as writing in our daily journals. We read over 450 books last month as part of our “read your heart out” program. Our readers get so excited when we come together to count how many books we’ve read each month.

K Social Studies

Kindergarten historians are diving into the world of art. They are learning about how art has changed the world and some of the famous artists around the world. They will travel to the Cleveland Museum of Art to take a studio class that will focus on impressionism and post impressionism, and apply what they learned at school as they admire masterpieces in the museum’s collection as well as create their own artwork. Students will use impressionist techniques and color theory to create a still life or landscapes using chalk pastels and paper. At school, they will join Mrs. Nilsen, Birchwood’s art teacher, to create a panel of artwork that resembles the artists they have learned about.

K Science

Our kindergarten scientists have become astronauts and will blast off into space to begin exploring the moon, stars and sun. We will track the phases of the moon and understand why the moon can sometimes be seen during the day. We will also explore the sun as a primary source of energy and as the cause of our shadow. Finally,

CLASS NEWS *continued*

our astronauts will recognize and identify stars in our galaxy. We will discuss that stars can be visible at night, while others are visible in the evening or morning and some are brighter than others. This will lead us into our unit on Earth Day and recycling. We will learn how we can help keep our environment clean and safe for ourselves and others.

1st Math

First graders recently completed a unit on fractions. They learned that a fraction represents a part of something larger, be it a pizza or a group of children. Using lots of real-life examples, they learned how a fraction is written and what each part of the fraction represents. One activity that helped illustrate the concept of fractions was when a group of six first graders lined up and were asked questions such as, “What fraction of the students are boys?” or “What fraction of the girls are wearing pink?” Through such real-life activities the children were able to apply their understanding of fractions in a meaningful way.

1st Spanish

First graders reviewed “animals” and “weather,” reinforcing their vocabulary. They also worked on the themes “months” and “holidays.” They had a map of a land called “Fantasia” where they drew in rivers, lakes and mountains, and selected what kind of weather was in each part of the land. The first graders love to sing, play games and speak Spanish.

1st-2nd Reading

After spending most of February perfecting their performance for the Poetry Show, each class was videotaped during dress rehearsal. In reading class, each student then complimented and critiqued their own performance. This exercise enabled them to make adjustments during the remaining practices and to “nail” their performances on show night. Great job students. Students also finished the literature unit on books that have won the Randolph Caldecott Medal for illustrations. Samples of their modelings from award-winning illustrators adorn our classroom wall. Ten students participated in the optional Caldecott Reading Challenge and read more than 100 different Caldecott Books.

1st-2nd Social Studies

First and second graders completed a unit on national holidays, monuments, songs, and symbols. They enjoyed learning about all the special monuments in Washington D.C. and singing along with recordings of favorite American songs such as “The Star-Spangled Banner” and “Yankee Doodle.” Second graders made simple models of their favorite landmarks from our capital. These are on display in the first through fourth grade hallway.

1st-2nd Science



The most recent topic of study in the first and second grade science classroom was the human body. Students learned the functions of many organs and practiced identifying and locating organs in various ways, including on an “anatomy apron.” They also enjoyed using real stethoscopes to listen to their own and each other’s heart rates at rest and after different types of activities.

During their extra science/technology class, second graders had a blast testing their foil and craft stick boats to see which would hold the most pennies. This was the second round of testing; after the first, students analyzed the designs and rebuilt, incorporating features of some of the best float-

ing boats. Eighty percent of the students built a more successful boat the second time. Congratulations to Marko and Adam, first place winners of each round.

For more information and photos of what goes on in our science classroom, visit “What’s going on this week?” at Ms. Tagliarina’s website at <https://sites.google.com/a/birchwoodschool.org/ms-t/>.

2nd Math

Second graders are completing a geometry unit. As they discovered, geometry is a subject that has its own language, and being able to “talk-the-talk” is the key to understanding geometry. As the children were introduced to new concepts, they created their own geometry book, full of many of the terms and ideas they learned in each lesson. These attractive handbooks are packed with useful information and illustrations that summarize a busy but fun unit.

Recently the second graders participated in the final round of the Continental Math League contest. Congratulations to the following on their success:

Gold Medal

Carter, James, Eve, Serena, and Leah

Silver Medal

Dhruv and Adam

Bronze Medal

Sofia, Andrew, Dhyani, Alexandra, and Eden

CLASS NEWS *continued*

2nd Spanish

Second graders are spending the first 15 minutes of each class conversing about their name, age, names and characteristics of their parents, favorite activities, and favorite foods. This month they reviewed all the subjects learned during the last quarter in order to meet the requirements for the next year.

3rd Math

Third graders are working in groups, one under the guidance of Mr. Debelak and the other, Mr. Sprau. Mr. D's group is working on advanced computation skills, including fractions and decimals. In addition, they practice their problem solving skills. Mr. Sprau's group just completed a unit on geometry and continues weekly practice on computation skills with whole numbers. Third graders recently participated in the final round of the Continental Math League contest. The following are recognized for their success:

Gold Medal

Sylvia, Ehren, Leo, and Ben

Silver Medal

Sean, Jaden and Eric

Bronze Medal

Arman, Omar, Danny, and Van

3rd Reading

Third graders did an awesome job in the Poetry Show. It was their best performance to date and each and every one of them should be proud of their hard work. They finished their unit on folktales and fairytales and moved on to an author study on Beverly Cleary and Betty MacDonald. The girls are reading *Ramona Quimby, Age 8* while the boys are reading *Henry Huggins*. They are enjoying reading the same book and discussing it with their classmates in small groups. As a class we are reading Betty MacDonald's *Hello, Mrs. Piggie-Wiggle* which tells the story of children that have different "illnesses" that a woman named Mrs. Piggie-Wiggle has to "cure." Third graders are enjoying humorous stories about children that cry too much, show off, bully, whisper, or are slowpokes.

3rd-4th Social Studies

Third graders have been reading about Cleveland's rich history. They have been learning how to write an outline using their Cleveland books to fill in some words on a pre-made outline. They are also practicing properly answering written questions by using complete sentences that restate the question. Fourth graders received a new textbook all about Ohio. The class was split into groups and students are being asked to read a chapter or two from the book. Students will then have to teach the rest of the class about the section of the book that they read. They can use their creativity and teach the lesson through an art project, game, song, etc. Both third

and the fourth graders began studying the Western region of the United States. After the quiz on this final region, they will have the challenge of trying to fill in all 50 states (and capitals for fourth graders) on a blank map.

3rd Spanish

Students worked on vocabulary related to ocean life. They learned the name of marine species. One of their favorite activities is writing answers from the book. They are proud of using the correct Spanish structure. In addition to writing activities they are reviewing vocabulary. The children are grouped in four teams. The first 10 minutes of each class they have a competition on vocabulary making the class more interesting.

3rd-4th Science

Thanks to the parents who drove to the History of Maple Sugaring field trip in Cleveland Metroparks. Students learned how to identify a sugar maple tree and saw different methods of tapping trees used over the years. They also witnessed the process of turning sap into syrup and tasted some delicious maple sugar candy.

In the classroom, students continued the hands-on human body curriculum module by Foss, which focuses on the musculoskeletal



system. To get a sense of how important opposable thumbs and the joints in our fingers are, students performed common tasks with their first fingers and thumbs taped together, then their index and middle fingers splinted, and finally their thumbs splinted. Tasks included tying a shoe, fastening a button and zipper, writing their names, stacking pennies, linking paper clips, rolling a newspaper, and more. They've also each assembled a moveable "Mr. Bones" human skeleton using paper fasteners, and dissected owl pellets and reconstructed the bird or rodent skeleton found inside.

For more information and photos of what goes on in our science classroom, visit "What's going on this week?" at Ms. Tagliarina's website <https://sites.google.com/a/birchwoodschool.org/ms-t/>.

CLASS NEWS *continued*

4th Math

After completing their unit on geometry, fourth graders began a unit on measurement. We started with customary and metric units of length including practicing conversions from larger to smaller units and vice versa. We also spent some time reviewing more advanced operations with whole numbers, focusing most of our attention on long division.

Fourth graders recently participated in the final round of the Continental Math League contest. Congratulations to the following students for their achievement:

Gold Medal

Paul, Praveen, Peter, and Josh

Silver Medal

Neige, Kabir, Abeedah, Dalila, and Nathan

4th Reading

Fourth graders performed fabulously in the Poetry Show. It is obvious they put forth a lot of time and energy to prepare for the show. They finished their tall tales unit and moved on to a biography unit. They are reading and discussing several books on Abraham Lincoln while filling in a journal with facts they learned as well as drawings, ideas and opinions about Lincoln. They are also enjoying reading about other famous people such as John Glenn, Harry Houdini and Walt Disney.

4th Spanish

Students worked on verbs in present time and personal pronouns in order to apply the conjugation. They composed oral and written sentences, enjoyed reading articles about Latin American culture, and completed activities in their books.

5th Language Arts

Fifth grade students (and their teacher) were very excited to receive a large envelope from the Cleveland Public Library's Center for the Book recently. In November and December, students spent many hours composing and revising their entries for the Letters about Literature competition. This national contest for fifth through eighth grade students receives tens of thousands of entries. In Ohio alone 1,283 students submitted a letter, and 286 of these, or just 22%, were selected to go on for further judging.

Of the 11 fifth grade girls statewide in Level I (4th-6th graders) who earned this honor, eight were from Birchwood School; of the 12 fifth grade boys selected, two were Birchwood students. Congratulations for reaching this level of judging.

Round 1 Winners & Authors They Wrote to:

Erhan, Rose McDonald

Stella, Shel Silverstein

Makenah, Ms. Russell

Isabella, Ms. Kessler

Zuha, Thanhha Lai

Mira, Lois Lenski

Karim, Gail Herman

Sousou, Pearl S. Buck

Lilah, Lois Lowry

Shruthi, Hope Solo

After composing stories based on *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, the class is now embarking on a month-long mystery-writing unit in which students will look at mysteries, identify necessary elements, and then do extensive planning of all the elements in their stories before writing an illustrated mystery of their own.

5th Reading

The class is currently reading *Amos Fortune: Free Man* by Elizabeth Yates. It is a true story of a slave who lived in the north, bought his freedom, and then in the midst of our own country's fight for freedom waged his own personal war, purchasing freedom for several other black slaves. Amos was a successful tanner who eventually bought his own land and built an extensive farm in the shadow of Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire. Meaning "mountain that stands alone," it was here that Amos found solace in a time of personal crisis. After discussing this part of the story, students will write a poem about their "special" place where they can go to find comfort, strength and wisdom. A theme the class has discussed a few times is "the light and shadow of freedom."

"The 5th grade reading class is currently reading Amos Fortune: Free Man by Elizabeth Yates."

We just received news of two additional student winners for *Cricket* magazine's fall poetry contest. Congratulations to:

Sophia, honorable mention, "Christmas Morning"

Stella, honorable mention, "Seeing Nature in Action"

5th Social Studies

After celebrating the success of presenting our History Fair projects with a party, the class eagerly returned to Joy Hakim's rich text, *Making Thirteen Colonies*. While exploring the colonies one-by-one, students are discovering each existed quite independently of the others, and conditions were very different in each place.

Students loved learning about the small farmers' "keep to yourself" attitude that allowed Blackbeard and other pirates (including some women) to operate for decades off their coast. They also applied their critical thinking skills to take notes and then write about why Virginia with its tobacco plantations might have given rise to so many of our country's founders.

CLASS NEWS *continued*

While studying Maryland, students role played characters including slaves, indentured servants, yeoman farmers, planters, merchants, and ship captains. After becoming knowledgeable about their particular character's station in life, they gave first person accounts telling how certain events in Maryland's history would affect them. In this way, students realized that wise rulers need to consider all stakeholders before making decisions. Students are now studying Georgia and the unique, idealistic vision that James Oglethorpe brought to his colony.

5th Spanish

Students are learning verbs in present time and personal pronouns in order to apply the conjugation. They completed oral and written sentences. They liked learning how to prepare tortilla española and took notes from the recipe. Students are also reviewing vocabulary focusing on the next year's curriculum.

5th Science

The young electricians had a few days of free-play engineering. One group attempted to light a fluorescent light bulb using batteries, others tried making cars move with helicopter blades, motors and batteries, and several groups used snap circuit kits to create elaborate creations. Now all is strangely quiet, except for the excited cry of, "it grew," as they study corn and beans.

6th Language Arts

Like many of the fifth graders (see 5th Language Arts), several sixth graders were selected by the staff at the Library of Congress to have their letters move on to the next round of judging. Out of 48 sixth graders selected in Ohio, six are Birchwood students:

Aasma, Derzan, Steven, Jane, Tejal, and Channin

Currently, students are putting finishing touches on their essays for the Family Nature Summit, an affiliation of the National Wildlife Federation. The great incentive is to be awarded a scholarship to join a week-long nature summer camp in California with an adult guest. Best of luck to these students.

6th Reading

Students are finishing a world folktale unit by rewriting a tale of their choice and condensing it from six-to-eight pages to just two pages. Each student will draw and color a picture of a scene from their folktale and we will create a book to donate to the classroom. Students are also producing plot posters for a Newbery book that they have read.

We just received news of an additional winner for *Cricket* magazine's fall poetry contest. Congratulations to:

Derzan, 2nd place, "Winter"

6th Science

Students completed their ecology unit with the study of the nitrogen and carbon cycles, food chains and food webs. Probably their favorite part of the unit was playing their biome games on the game boards they created.

6th Social Studies

Students wrapped up their ancient Greece unit by constructing posters depicting one topic they researched in depth, ranging from the ancient Olympics to Greek architecture. Their colorful posters are on display outside the social studies room. Currently they're working through a unit on ancient Rome and realizing how much Roman culture affects our culture today, especially our language.

We also received notice from the National Geographic Bee that Jane, our school Geography Bee winner, qualified to advance to the state bee in Columbus. Jane had to take a rigorous multiple choice exam, the results of which qualified her to be one of 100 state finalists. She will compete in Columbus on April 4.

6th Spanish

Students are working on adjectives, personal pronouns, possessive adjectives, and expressions using the verb tener (to have). Archeologist and former Peace Corps volunteer, Dr. Michael Ballis, visited our class to present a talk on Peruvian heritage and culture dating back to the time of the Incas.

7th Reading

Students read *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London. While not a long book, it is packed with difficult vocabulary. In addition, it places high demands on the reader to read deeply to follow changes in character, setting and plot action.

As a class, students applied several strategies to practice reading a more complex text. These included keeping a running list of characters and places, reading a set of questions before each chapter that would drive the reader through the text, reading the same set of questions again after the reading, applying skimming and scanning to locate interpretive passages, and making an issue out of big words and descriptive phrases. The discussions were lively each day because the students were so well prepared.

Students eagerly shared favorite sentences and words by shouting "eureka," writing them on gold strips and posting them on a map of the Klondike region. This process brought them to a point at the book's end in which they were able to decipher that London may also have written the story on an allegorical level. Not many classes achieve this level of understanding.



7th and 8th Social Studies

Birchwood students had a stellar showing at the district level of the National History Day competition on March 15. Held at Case Western Reserve University and the Western Reserve Historical Society, 15 students advanced to the state competition which will be held on April 26 at Ohio State University. The theme this year is “Rights and Responsibilities” and students competed in seven different categories.

Beginning with the historical paper, Caroline placed third with her paper on the fight for water rights along the Colorado River.

In the individual website category, Asim placed first with his focus on Jackie Robinson and Farah placed third with her website on Henry Spira and his fight for animal rights. In the group website, Crystal and Ying Ying placed second with their focus on Japanese-American internment in WWII. Placing third were Anika and Maryum with their website on Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

In the individual documentary category, Birchwood students garnered a first and third place. Earning the first place trophy was Amir with his documentary on the Outer Space Treaty created by the United Nations in 1967. Favian earned the third place trophy with his focus on the Berlin Wall. In the group documentary category, Jack and William placed first with their focus on the 1969 Cuyahoga River fire.

Julia placed second with her individual performance on the Holocaust and the group performance presented by Abby, Nikhita and Olivia placed first. Julia also earned special recognition from the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage for her performance.

Congratulations to all our students for their hard work and success.

7th Spanish

Students worked on “En tu tiempo libre,” entertainment, and talked about birthday parties, concerts, movies, and museums. They read articles about Hispanic art and music, learned the past tense of regular verbs, and composed interesting sentences. The group is working hard and showing interest in learning the language.

7th-8th Language Arts

We focused a bit on transitions in some of the expository essays the students completed this quarter. Beyond the simple one word transitions students frequently use (for example: furthermore, also, finally, then), they were introduced to idea hooks, embedded hooks, or various combinations to make their writing more cohesive.

In the seventh grade homeroom, they set a goal to do errands around the house to raise money for the Syrian American Medical Society. We’ll see if they can meet their goal in the remaining time.

7th - 8th Latin I

All of the Latin students did ongoing individual and team reports on aspects of the Latin language, such as derivatives, phrases in English that come from Latin, and famous mottoes in Latin. They also reported on aspects of Roman life, such as the rooms in a typical house, foods and Roman names for points around the Mediterranean Sea. This work helped them prepare for Birchwood’s second year in the National Classical League’s annual exam competition. On the grammar side, students continued to grapple with making adjectives agree with nouns, a great application of all the forms they have been memorizing. We look forward to warmer weather so we can practice writing giant declensions in chalk in the parking spaces again.

7th Science

Our study of our sun is over and we are on to bigger things – stars, galaxies and the universe. Probably the activity we enjoyed most was using the Heliviewer website to find out what solar activity was occurring on students’ birthdays.

8th Reading

The class read the memoir *Night* by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. After sharing phrases that had an impact on them as

*“The 8th grade reading class read the memoir **Night** by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. After sharing phrases that had an impact on them as they read, they wrote poetry to share these reactions.”*

CLASS NEWS *continued*

they read, they wrote poetry to share these reactions. A winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, the author has spent his life advocating for peace all over the world. The class read excerpts from his inspiring speeches and found places in the book where kindness and compassion brought light to this dark situation. Based upon this second discussion students wrote poetry expressing hope or light. These contrasting poems are in the hall outside the reading room. Students also created a class poem in which each contributed key impact phrases written in the author's prose. Now they are reading a second memoir, *Death Be Not Proud* by John Gunther.

8th Science

Students completed a unit on viruses, bacteria, protozoa, and fungi. There were quite a few writing assignments that contrasted the different protist and "mystery descriptions of the organisms with a goal to understand the material well enough to communicate it. They looked at different fungi under the microscope learned how to "do" scientific drawing.

8th Spanish

Eight grade students continue preparing for the Spanish National Exam that will help them during their high school years. The exam includes extensive grammar, reading and comprehension, and communication sections.

BOARD UPDATE

Board Welcomed New Member

In March, the Board of Trustees welcomed new board member, Summer Paris, who fills a position left vacant by the resignation of David Jenkins. Ms. Paris works at ArcelorMittal Cleveland as corporate responsibility & communications manager and is a Birchwood parent. Her term will run through July 2016. Board of Trustees' terms run for three years. Our year runs August 1 - July 31 to coincide with the school's fiscal calendar.

Lifetime Trustee

We were also honored to bestow "lifetime trustee" status to Joseph Tzeng, a founding board member. Mr. Tzeng was a trustee for nine years and offered guidance to the school for years before that. We thank him for all of his service and look forward to his continuing relationship with Birchwood as our first lifetime trustee.

Birchwood Facilities

The board continues to work on securing a long-term lease or the purchase of our building to ensure permanence in our location. There are many aspects to the negotiation, including canon law, insurance requirements, assessment of facilities and grounds, property valuations, needs of the school, etc. The board and administration are being thoughtful in this process and, while we wish it could go faster, we do know that progress is being made.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, April 17

Spanish Show at 10 a.m.
Early Dismissal at noon

Friday, April 18

No School - Good Friday

Monday, April 21

No School - Teacher Professional Day

Friday, May 30 - Sunday, June 1

Birchwood School's 30th Anniversary Gala Weekend



Celebrate Birchwood School's 30th Anniversary weekend May 30 - June 1.