



The Lion's Roar

TENDING THE TREE ... THE SHY SIDE OF KINDERGARTEN SUCCESS

About halfway through the year, one of our students decided to draw on the side of the building with chalk. Most teachers would view drawing on a wall as a poor choice for a student. In this case, we didn't. You might ask "Why?" She took a risk, stepping out of her comfort zone.

Typically when one hears "success" in a school setting, they associate it with academics. While that is something we focus on in kindergarten, we find it important to begin with the basics – emotional and social success. You might ask "What does the success cycle look like in kindergarten?" It is no different than what happens for a child in any other grade. We focus on something the child needs help with and each day we work toward growth in their need. The goal may be long- or short-term, and really depends on the situation and the child.

One example is of the kindergarten student mentioned above who had a challenging time opening up. She was very timid, afraid to

ask questions, became embarrassed easily, and did not partake in whole-group discussions. Since the student was well-behaved, a great listener, eager to learn, and academically performing above a typical kindergartener, she could have slipped through the cracks.

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The success cycle is nurtured in kindergarten with Birchwood's caring teachers, (L-R) Mrs. Hallett and Mrs. Chen, who focus on growth within each student.

UNDER THE CANOPY NEWS FROM BIRCHWOOD

Mr. Debelak is Recognized as an Honored Educator

Congratulations to Mr. Debelak for being recognized as an Honored Educator at the 2019 Northwestern University's Midwest Academic Talent Search held at Northwestern University in late June. He received this honor along with 17 other educators and was the only Ohio educator nominated.

Northwestern University's Midwest Academic Talent Search (NUMATS) is known for recognizing high achieving students. However, their mission also incorporates parents and teachers in a quest to support gifted students. In fact, elementary and middle school students who are recognized based on their exceptional PSAT™ 8/9, SAT®, or ACT® scores can, in turn, nominate their teacher.

Congratulations to Mr. Debelak on this well-deserved honor.



Mr. Debelak was nominated for special recognition by a student in Northwestern University's Midwest Academic Talent Search.

REFLECTIONS BY CHARLES DEBELAK

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

My experience in education has taught me to never question a child's capacity for high achievement and excellence. Year after year I am reminded of the strength, intellectual power, and the potential for excellence, hiding within children, waiting for the opportunity to blossom.

But my experience has also taught me that these hidden potentials may never see the light of day. Why? Because these potentials require opportunity. Opportunity is like a playing field. It invites participation. It offers the chance to discover abilities and talents. Opportunity answers the request of potential, "Let me grow. I want to grow. I can grow." Potentiality becomes actuality if children are

given opportunities to grow and flourish. Without opportunity, potential lies dormant.

Yet there is more to this picture. Meaningful opportunities must be based upon meaningful expectations. If expectations are low, then performance and achievement will be low and potential undeveloped. But if expectations are set high then one's performance and achievement enable the discovery of a pathway for continuous growth which leads to realized potential. Greater achievement and greater growth blossom in the company of greater expectations.

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"Greater Expectations" is the title of William Damon's book subtitled "Overcoming the Culture of Indulgence in Our Homes and Schools." William Damon, a professor at Stanford University is America's leading thinker on the moral development of children and adolescents. "Greater Expectations," published in 1995, exposed the low standards of expectation that children confront within our homes, schools, and throughout our culture. The challenges Damon addressed continue today, and in some cases, expectations have fallen even further.

In an educational setting, the cornerstone of meaningful achievement is setting realistic expectations. Realistic expectations drive achievement. Whether in the classroom, on the athletic field, or in the music room, if you take a peek behind excellence you will find meaningful expectations. When expectations are set realistically high, achievement soars. When expectations are set low, achievement lags. Expectations create an environment that determines whether talent and potential have the opportunity they need to blossom.

Opportunity is like a playing field. It invites participation. It offers the chance to discover abilities and talents.



"KEEP 'EM BUSY AND PRODUCTIVE FROM MORNING 'TIL NIGHT"

When my wife and I began our parenting lives in the mid-1970s, we, like all responsible, thoughtful young couples panicked! We were certain that something we would do or say would permanently traumatize our children and thwart whatever potential their young lives held.

After pouring over parenting books and articles, I raised a skeptical eye. "How do I know what these people are saying is true? What do their kids look like?" With these questions a light bulb went on. Maybe the best thing I could do is to ask experienced parents whose children became noteworthy young people – accomplished, considerate of others, socially adjusted, and even charming. "I'd be happy with that!" I said to myself.

Fortunately we had such dear friends. This couple had raised four beautiful children and so I asked "How did you do that?" expecting a well-researched and detailed plan. Embarrassed and with humility (probably part of their secret) they told us, "From the time our children were pre-teens, we kept them busy from morning to night. It cost us money; it cost us time. But we made sure their waking hours were engaged in healthy activities and in positive environments."

"That's it? That's all you did?" I wondered skeptically at the time. But now, if you were to ask me about their comments 40 years later, I could speak endlessly and in detail about their "folk" wisdom.

Sure, I believe children need "space," they need "down time," and they need to relax. But always and only in measure. In fact, the happiest young people I have known through my 45 years of being a teacher, coach, and mentor, are those who have filled their life with purpose. They spent their time and exhausted their energies on meaningful activities – school, sports, music, theater, art, and helping others.

*Charles Debelak
Head of School*

OUR MISSION IN PRACTICE

POTENTIAL IS A GIFT – EXCELLENCE IS A HABIT

A key aspect in the development of habits and virtue are our daily openings which seek to inspire children each day with a story or biography. Stories have the power to instill mental images of inspiring moral conduct and have a way of working in the conscience for many years. They stimulate the desire to do right; they inspire a love of goodness. We have always maintained that no one story changes a life, but the drip-drip-drip each morning over eight to 11 years has an accumulative effect. I recently canvassed the homeroom teachers in order to give you a snapshot of Birchwood's opening times:

In preschool, one of their recent favorite books has been "Officer Buckle and Gloria" by Peggy Rathmann. Officer Buckle talks to children about school safety. It isn't until he gets a police dog to accompany him to his school talks about safety that the children really begin to see the importance of Officer Buckle's tips. The officer and the dog make a good team, and the moral of the story is "stick close to your buddy."

Seedlings have also explored the topic of friendship. "Pete the Kitty and the Groovy Playdate" by James Dean and Kimberly Dean helped to explore kindness. Pete the Kitty shows his emotions as he tries to navigate playing with a friend who does not want to share. In the end the two friends decide it is much more fun to share than to play alone. Following the book read the children discussed as a group what a good friend does or does not do.

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In kindergarten, students have been building their character through listening, discussing, and role playing books from the series Learning to Get Along by Cheri J. Meiners, M.Ed. Some examples include, "Talk and Work It Out" and "Be Honest and Tell the Truth." They are practicing working out problems by using their words and coming up with solutions as needed. They are also learning the importance of being honest even when no one is looking – they are taking pride in how it feels when they do the right thing.

The first graders began the year with "The Little Engine That Could" by Watty Piper and memorized the poem "Try, Try Again" in order to encourage the students to try things that are hard for



Opening reading in fourth grade with Ms. West has included reading and discussing "True Stories of Heroes" by Paul Dowswell.

them and to learn to persevere. They also read books by Roger Hargreaves – "Mr. Rude," "Mr. Quiet," "Mr. Noisy," "Mr. Chatterbox" – that led to discussions about how to be a good friend.

The openings in second grade have been focused on friendship, kindness, following routines, and making good choices. They accomplish this through readings, discussions, and videos.

Third grade is emphasizing the words "considerate" and "respectful" in the context of being a friend of others. Reading began with the biography of Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross, who learned compassion as a child. Currently, the class is reading the book "Wonder" by R. J. Palacio, the fictional account of a boy who was born with a disfigured face who learns that what is inside people is more important than what is on the outside.

Fourth graders have focused on kindness by memorizing the school quotes, practicing ways to show kindness, and by reading and discussing "True Stories of Heroes" by Paul Dowswell and "50 American Heroes Every Kid Should Meet" by Dennis Denenberg and Lorraine Roscoe.

Ms. Bottini's homeroom is reading "Endurance" an autobiography by Scott Kelly, the astronaut who spent a year aboard the International Space Station (ISS). Through the story the students learn about his childhood struggles in school. They learn about the courage and perseverance needed while experiencing the extreme challenges of a long-term spaceflight. They discover how individuals from many different cultures and backgrounds live together on the ISS through kindness and a common goal to explore science.

Ms. Brown's homeroom is in the middle of "Carry On, Mr. Bowditch" by Jean Lee Latham, a 1956 Newbery historical fiction novel. It lends itself to so many character lessons such as hard work, developing a mindset for learning, responsibility, and kindness.

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COMMUNITY MATTERS AT BIRCHWOOD



The Birchwood Fund is our annual fundraiser. Each year alumni, parents, grandparents, faculty, staff, and friends come together to demonstrate their commitment to Birchwood's mission by making a gift to the Birchwood Fund. It is the school's top fundraising priority.

The Birchwood Fund helps to bridge the gap between tuition revenue and the true cost of a Birchwood education. This unrestricted funding is directed to areas of greatest need and helps us to keep tuition at a level of accessibility that promotes a diverse student body.

Birchwood School of Hawken is no different from all independent schools and universities in asking for philanthropic support in addition to tuition. Gifts to the Birchwood Fund support the people and programs that make Birchwood so special – talented faculty, small class sizes, Signature Programs, etc.

Every gift is both a symbolic and tangible vote of confidence in Birchwood School of Hawken. It allows us to show strong constituent support and engagement when we approach outside sources for contributions. Participation in the Birchwood Fund demonstrates to corporate and outside donors that our community supports our mission and goals. Every gift, no matter the amount, is greatly appreciated and important to our success.

We hope you will make Birchwood a priority. There's no expected gift amount – we ask simply that you contribute at a level that is personally meaningful and that makes sense for your family. Every year, every gift to the Birchwood Fund matters and makes a difference for Birchwood School.

Do *your* part toward making the **Thirty First Time Donors by Thanksgiving** campaign a success. No matter the amount or payment method, don't delay – donate today! **Every gift matters - including yours!**

Donate or pledge online at BirchwoodSchool.org/GiveNow or mail your gift to school.

Thank you!

Pillar IV: We urge everyone associated with Birchwood School to assume personal responsibility for the welfare of the Birchwood Community at large.

GRASS ROOTS

Talent Development

Since my office is connected to one of the fifth through eighth grade math spaces I've had the opportunity to watch Mr. Debelak, Mrs. Gregory, and Dr. Haskins train students according to the Birchwood "Talent Development Model." This process is impressive because it allows all children to be taught according to their individual internal drives and abilities and, consequently, the sounds of success are a daily occurrence.

It is not uncommon for me to overhear a student exclaim, "I don't understand," during class. This is soon followed by a further explanation to an individual or to a group. I've caught myself waiting for a student's gleeful reaction, "Ohhh, I get it!" or a triumphant cheer as a group of children celebrate their victory over some perplexing problem.

It is not just one or two students that I hear experiencing success in math. They are each being coached to overcome their next mathematical hurdle. One student might be tackling fractions, another-integers, or a group is finding the area of a triangle. Regardless of the mathematical concept, the teachers are coaching students at their individual levels of understanding. This approach leads to student success, class after class, and allows them to take their



By nurturing talent in all subject matter each student is being helped to excel.

talents as far as they can each year. When a child needs more explanation it is provided. And they all experience the joy of learning, growing, and becoming the best mathematicians they can.

*Cindy McNaughton
Director of Marketing & Public Relations*



Using Birchwood's Talent Development Model, teachers seek out the internal talent drives of each student.

Just as a football coach grooms the talent of a young quarterback, or a

pianist cultivates the talent of a young prodigy, or a writer directs the talent of an aspiring author, teachers at Birchwood are nurturing talent in mathematics and all subject matter, helping children achieve and excel.

CLASS NEWS

Seedlings

Ms. Jessica's and Ms. Becky's Seedlings class has been exploring books by Robert Lopshire. The book "Put Me in the Zoo" inspired giggles and the children expressing that they would like to create their own animal from the story. The class resumed the series with "I Want to Be Somebody New" and discussed the different animals that they could be. They also discussed as a group something about each of them that makes them special for who they are.

The children have been exploring upper and lower case letters. They have used a variety of materials from letter tiles to stampers to visualize and name each letter of their name. They have also begun tracing their names for early writing practice.

The children have been practicing counting with the book "Teddy Bear Counting" by Barbara Barbieri McGrath. The book uses simple colored bears in a variety of sizes to teach concepts of small, medium, and large as well as addition and subtraction. The teachers use these same concepts throughout the day to inspire counting of everything around us, from the children in our classroom to the number of rocks they put into a pile.

Seedlings have been exploring social and emotional concepts through the book series "Elephant and Piggie" by Mo Willems. The stories "A Big Guy Took My Ball," "Can I Play Too?," and "Should I Share My Ice Cream?" allow children to explore visual cues of emotions and concepts like sharing and how it makes



(L-R) Grace and Edyn explored outdoors under the shade of a tree.

someone feel. It also helps the children to make predictions as to what the characters should do to have a positive outcome.

The pleasant weather has given the class ample time to explore nature outdoors. The children have had interactions with worms and bugs that they dug up in the dirt. The class has also used sticks as fishing rods and a tree canopy as a meeting spot.

The class has come a long way as a group in both their communication and cooperation with one another.

This great teamwork has led to group building projects and games of throw and catch. The children have learned to form lines and take turns, making for fair play and fun.



(L-R) Elliot and Valerie practiced tracing letters in their names.

Sprouts

Mrs. Brady's and Mrs. Moreno's Sprouts have been enjoying the world of scientific discovery. Students recently planted carrot, radish, and onion seeds. They made predictions as to which ones would grow first and how tall the plants would become. The class agreed that seeds need water, soil, and light to grow. The carrots were the only plant that grew, but the students noticed that the onions and radishes did have roots because they could see them growing through the transparent pot. They quickly realized that some plants may grow slower than others. The students continued to process this idea further by comparing plants to people. In conclusion the students realized that humans grow at different times because some of us are taller or shorter than others.

Sprouts observed the results of another experiment. By placing a stalk of celery into a cup filled with water and blue food coloring the celery turned blue. The students had several different ideas as to why the celery stalk changed colors. Sprouts decided that the, "celery must be drinking the water through the stalk," changing it from green to blue. Great observations for the scientists.

Sprouts are discussing kindness. The class is learning how to care for others and be a good friend. Sprouts are becoming great helpers in the classroom community. They are participating in projects that require cooperation and working together.

Building, constructing, planning play activities, and working on large floor puzzles were all ways the Sprouts are expanding their team working skills!

Sprouts enjoyed their first field trip to The Music Settlement where they explored their outdoor learning environment. Upon exploring several work stations, Sprouts experienced firsthand how composting works. The best part was actually getting to hold the worms!

Next, children had the opportunity to plant tomato seeds and pick a few tomatoes to eat. Then they made predictions as they estimated how many pitchers of water it would take to fill a large bucket. The interesting part of this team effort was that the water came out of a pump. Sprouts worked together as each student pumped the water into the container, then poured it into the bucket. It took teamwork and lots of muscle power, but the Sprouts did it! The class also had the opportunity to enjoy a "free play" time where they played musical instruments, spray painted, rolled giant wheels down a hill, had a tea party, and explored dinosaurs.

The best part was that it was outside as outdoors is definitely the Sprouts favorite place to be.



Sprouts used teamwork to pump water during their field trip to The Music Settlement.

CLASS NEWS *continued*

Sprouts made spiders and danced with their creations to the song, “There is a Spider on the Floor!” Sprouts looked forward to taking their spiders home to share. Not only did the Sprouts dance with their spiders, but they also enjoy dancing with ribbons and scarves. Music is a favorite in the Sprouts classroom.

The next class field trip will be exploring the preschool area of The Music Settlement’s indoor classroom for a “musical experience.” Sprouts will dance to rhyming songs and learn more about rhythm and beat. Mrs. Brady’s and Mrs. Moreno’s Sprouts are looking forward to the next trip. Although the field trip is exciting the students agreed that riding on the school bus is the best part.

Kindergarten



Kindergarteners enjoyed tasting maple syrup while hiking on their field trip.

Mrs. Chen’s and Mrs. Hallett’s kindergarten students took their first field trip to Rocky River Nature Center. On nature hikes, they used their senses to find animal habitats, sort colors of leaves, smell a spice bush and mint leaves, and taste some homemade sweet maple syrup tapped from a tree! The students also met some of the center’s resident animals and explored inside the nature center. The tree house was a big hit with kindergarten “critters” making their way through. They thoroughly enjoyed their time and everyone enjoyed the

bus ride. Thank you to all the chaperones who came on the field trip. It was both fun yet exhausting!

K Exploratory Learning

In October, the kindergarten students continued to tinker outside. Students built with wood cookies, sticks, pine cones, acorns, rocks, driftwood, corks, strands of colorful twisted string, and seashells.



Loose parts play in kindergarten included castle building outdoors.

Some of the creations explorers made were elaborate houses, a mermaid pool, an amphitheater, a train station, a castle, and lots of towers. Students also made self-portraits with loose parts. There was a lot of creativity, innovation, and cooperation built during these times.

Mrs. Chen’s and Mrs. Hallett’s kindergarten explored changes of color, especially shades of brown to resemble skin tone. Did you know that people get their skin color from their parents/ancestors, the sun, and

melanin? Students heard rich and beautifully illustrated literature like “All the Colors We Are: The Story of How We Get Our Skin Color” by Katie Kissinger, “The Colors of Us” by Karen Katz, “All the Colors of the Earth” by Sheila Hamanaka, “Shades of People” by Shelley Rotner, and “Happy in our Skin” by Fran Manushkin. Afterwards, the kindergarten students took their time to create self-portraits. First they mixed different shades of paint to closely resemble their skin tone. Then, they looked very closely at their faces using mirrors to draw, step by step, their eyes, noses, ears, and lips. They tore, twisted, cut, and curled paper to represent their hair. Finally, the students revisited words in each story that deliciously described the colors of the characters and made a list to pick from. One student described themselves as the color of “peachy cinnamon.” Another student said they were the color of “chocolate toast.”

K Math

Mrs. Chen’s and Mrs. Hallett’s kindergarten mathematicians continue to work hard in their math groups. They start each day with an exercise song that excites them with kinesthetic math practice. It not only helps students focus for the remainder of math but also builds in practice of basic math skills. Students are growing in their understanding of number sense. Why is it important to teach number sense? It encourages students to think flexibly and promotes confidence with numbers. Students who lack a strong number sense have trouble developing the foundation needed for simple arithmetic. Some ways the kindergarten mathematicians are building their number sense is by working on recognizing numbers up to 100 using a hundreds chart, counting by ones, twos, fives, and tens from any given number, recognizing and writing teen numbers, learning how to properly form numbers 0 through 9, and learning what it means to subitize: recognize the number of a group of items at a glance without counting. This skill helps children learn addition and multiplication without them knowing it.

K Reading

Kindergarten students have learned that they are all readers: even those who do not yet know their letter sounds. Did you know that there are three ways to read a book? The students have learned that they can read the pictures, the words, or retell the story. Mrs. Chen’s and Mrs. Hallett’s readers are enthusiastic about learning how to read and spell sight words. They are learning to be super spies by finding sight words in our environment and in the books they read. One of the students’ favorite activities is the “Sight Word Tales” read aloud. They love to read the books over and over again during transition time and at home. This repetitive reading helps with building fluency and accuracy of reading.

1st Math

One of the major emphases of the math program is gaining a solid foundation in addition and subtraction. Mr. Sprau’s and Dr. El Sady’s first grade mathematicians have been diligently practicing their skills in a variety of ways. Dr. El Sady’s group is improving

CLASS NEWS *continued*

their basics by employing a variety of tools, including flashcards, games, and time sheets. One favorite game that the students have been enjoying is “Around the World” where they try to make it all the way around the classroom back to their original seat by being fast at their addition facts. They also do regular fact assessments, in order to help gauge their progress. It is encouraging to see just how quickly some of these young mathematicians are growing.

Mr. Sprau’s group has been learning to apply more advanced addition and subtraction of multi-digit numbers through problem solving. They began with problems that require only one step to solve, either adding or subtracting. They learned to identify key words or phrases in the problems, such as “more” or “fewer” in order to determine the correct operation. After becoming quite proficient with one-step problems, they were introduced to two-step problems; problems that might require them to add, then subtract, or vice versa. One important skill for problem solving is the ability to read fluently. Children who have acquired this skill are then ready to combine reading with mathematics through the exercise of problem solving. The children are becoming competent at this task.

1st Spanish

Señora Rodriguez and the first grade class had a wonderful time working on numbers up to 20 and colors. They practiced the number words as well as counting cookies, coloring butterflies, and had fun connecting dot-to-dot. They watched videos and learned a song describing numbers and colors. The children liked to color pictures and worked on an art project related to colors.

1st-2nd Computer

Mrs. Waldal’s first and second grade classes have been exploring drawing shapes in MicroWorlds JR. Students have learned about the geometry of squares, rectangles, and triangles. Students are learning about combining various commands and procedures to create digital art. They used these skills to be creative and try new ideas on their own and with each other.

1st-2nd Creative Problem Solving

Mr. Boyer’s and Mrs. Alicea’s first and second grade Creative Problem Solving classes are truly embracing their creativity and lateral thinking. To celebrate the children’s growth so far this quarter, students will be conducting a classic egg drop experiment in which they will be designing and creating a contraption that will prevent an egg from cracking when dropped from a height. Students are currently engaged in analyzing the forces at work during the drop and working with materials to identify which has the properties they need for a successful drop. Next, students will move onto designing and building their contraptions, followed by our much anticipated testing day. We cannot wait to see the results of their work.

1st-2nd Language Arts

Budding writers in Mrs. Mamone’s and Mrs. Sprau’s first and second grade classes read and modeled stories from “Aesop’s Fables.” First graders read “The Lion and the Mouse” and then wrote stories about something little helping something big. Second graders read “The Crow and the Pitcher.” They wrote stories that showcased the lesson in the fable “little by little does the trick.” The first graders continued their Wednesday creative story writing time by writing memoirs in a variety of ways. They used “When I was Young in the Mountains” by Cynthia Rylant as a mentor text to learn how to write a memoir with a repeating phrase such as “When I was young in Cleveland” or “When I was young in the city.” They then wrote stories about a time they didn’t give up after reading “Winners Never Quit” by Mia Hamm. The second graders had the opportunity to write either an original or modeled fairy tale incorporating components of the genre. They illustrated pictures to go along with the fairy tales and their finished work was hung in the hallway just in time for Birchwood’s open house. Look for illustrated samples of their work in the first and second grade wing.

1st-2nd Reading

The first and second graders in Mrs. Mamone’s and Mrs. Sprau’s classes were whisked away by the magic of fairy tales as they learned about famous fairy tale authors like Hans Christian Andersen along with compilers of fairy tales such as Charles Perrault and the Grimm brothers. They read classic versions of European fairy tales like “Little Red Riding Hood” and then compared/contrasted them with modern American versions such as “Petite Rouge: A Cajun Riding Hood” by Mike Artell. The children became adept at identifying the components of fairy tales including magic, royalty, good/bad characters, a lesson, and the special numbers three and seven. Stop by the first and second grade wing to see our timeline which includes information on fairy tale authors/compilers and crafts inspired by famous fairy tales.

1st-2nd Science

Mrs. Miller’s and Mrs. Bottino’s first and second grade science classes have been classifying and experimenting in their respective science topics. After meeting and observing salamanders and birds (one of the birds, a cockatoo, even told a student “I love you!”), first graders concluded their vertebrate unit with a trip to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, where they met many of Ohio’s native vertebrates, including owls, coyotes, porcupines, eagles, and many more. Students are currently investigating the world of invertebrates and have had a chance to meet snails, praying mantises, grasshoppers, crickets, and beetles.



One of the birds that the young scientists met and observed was Mocha the ring-necked dove.

CLASS NEWS *continued*

The second grade botanists have finished their plant parts and plant needs experiments and presented to the class what their group discovered about why plants need water, sunlight, or soil. The scientists took a trip to the Cleveland Botanical Garden where they learned more about plant life cycles and how people use plants. They are also beginning an exploration of habitats throughout the world. These young scientists know that plants and animals need to meet their needs in their habitats, but while their basic needs are the same, they meet those needs in different ways and must live in the kind of habitat where their needs can be met. So far, students have learned about temperate forest and rainforest habitats, and are exploring which plants and animals are able to meet their needs in each habitat.

1st-2nd Social Studies

Mr. Boyer's and Mrs. Alicea's first and second grade social studies classes have completed the unit on safety and have recently moved onto acquiring map skills. Students interacted with various types of maps and globes and discovered symbols and keys that help to read a map correctly. Students examined the directional concepts of near/far, right/left, and the cardinal directions. Students were introduced to the seven continents and five oceans that make up our Earth. They displayed understanding of their place within the world by completing a "me on the map" project. Moving forward, the class will be creating maps of Birchwood by identifying landmarks to include and designing a map key.

2nd Spanish

Señora Rodriguez and the second grade class were happy working on their first conversation. Each student had a partner and asked questions about name/age and used polite words. They watched videos and learned a song describing professions and colors. They liked to color pictures and worked on an art project related to colors.

2nd-4th Math

Helping children gain an on-ramp to the success cycle is an important element in our math program. When children can see their own success, they tend to aspire to achieve even more. For this reason Mr. Sprau and Mrs. Uechi implement a



The second graders proudly displayed their awards from October's speed drills.

variety of ways to assess the children's progress, while both demonstrating and promoting it to the children themselves. Because so much of their progress is dependent on knowing the basic computational skills, the teachers give monthly "speed drills" which measure their fact fluency. The children know that practice makes

perfect and the hope is that each month the children will progress a bit more than the month before. The children love to hear their name called during the awards ceremony and proudly come forward to get a pencil, T-shirt, certificate, or trophy, depending on their achievement. In addition to the speed drills, the teachers track each child's progress with their "Mathematician's Toolbox" book. Each time a level is completed, the child proudly adds a sticker to their row on a display in the hallway outside the math room.

3rd Reading

Third graders in Mrs. Konopinski's and Ms. West's reading class have discovered that characters in Beverly Cleary's books are immensely relatable. Each student has been reading an individual Cleary book while also reading either "Henry Huggins" or "Ramona Quimby, Age 8" in one of two class groups. In their groups, the students have learned to summarize the main event in each chapter and write the main character's reactions down on their chart. Parallel to the Cleary unit, third graders have also been reading Betty MacDonald's "Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle" as a class; uproarious laughter can be heard coming from the classroom as they read about her magical cures and how she treats children with any kind of bad habit you can name!

3rd Social Studies

Mr. Boyer's and Mrs. Alicea's third grade social studies classes have embarked on the government unit. Students have begun to study the three branches of our national government and how nonpartisan checks and balances within our government works. Moving forward, students will begin to compare and contrast how these same branches operate at the state and local levels. The class will be receiving a visit from local councilman Mr. Brian Kazy to discuss what his role is within our local government. Students will then participate in a mock classroom government where each small group of students will take responsibility for a different classroom government department and develop a budget based off of local "citizens" wants and needs.

3rd Spanish

Señora Rodriguez and the third grade students worked on what to do and buy at the supermarket. They talked about breakfast, lunch, and dinner and what food they eat for each meal. Using plastic fruits, vegetables, and food, they practiced buying food at the supermarket or preparing the meals. The students were enthusiastic and participated very well on this topic.

3rd-4th Computer

Mrs. Waldal's third and fourth grade students have been working on learning to type properly. Using TypingClub.com students are progressing in using proper finger position and learning to touch type quickly and accurately. Students will continue practicing typing all year so that they can use Google applications and the Chromebooks effectively.

3rd-4th Creative Problem Solving

Mrs. Bottino's and Mrs. Miller's third and fourth graders were shown the Pixar Animation Disney movie "WALL-E" and were tasked with thinking about the problems they observed while watching the movie. "What caused the problems?" and "How they would try to prevent those problems from happening?" Students were then presented with a real video that had striking similarities to "WALL-E," depicting the massive amounts of plastic that are produced and used by humans today. Students inventoried the plastic items all around the classroom and throughout their homes. Students also read an informative article together about plastics which lead to an inquiry discussion about whether plastics are good or bad. Good arguments were presented for why plastic can be both good and bad. Students will continue this discussion further during the second half of the year to determine if the students at Birchwood can figure out ways to help solve the problem of plastics.

3rd-4th Language Arts

The third and fourth graders in Mrs. Konopinski's and Ms. West's class continued to learn, discuss, and practice grammar concepts in their writing. They have been focusing on the four types of sentences that are useful to use in their writing: declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory. They practiced writing stories with a more interesting beginning than "one day" to draw the reader in immediately. Students listened to "Water Hole Waiting" by Jane and Christopher Kurtz and "Mammoths on the Move" by Lisa Wheeler which are both packed with interesting verbs, before trying their hand at incorporating vigorous verbs in their own writing.

3rd-4th Science

Mrs. Bottino's and Mrs. Miller's third graders have continued their exploration of life cycles. Students made scientific observations of their Wisconsin Fast Plants as they grew from seeds to seedlings to flowering plants. Students learned about pollination, the importance of pollinators, and proceeded to pollinate their own Wisconsin Fast



(L-R) Sofia and Chrysanthi pollinated their Wisconsin Fast Plant.

Plants. Students also dissected flowers in order to understand how pollination is necessary for flowering plants to create new seeds. In addition to plant life cycles, students discovered that different animals go through different life cycles and began researching the life cycle of one animal. Students will then write and illustrate the life cycle story for their animal.

Mrs. Bottino's and Mrs. Miller's fourth graders have been busy with their genetics unit, discovering some of the inherited traits they possess, comparing their traits with their classmates, and seeing how unique the combination of their traits are. Fourth grade scientists have also been conducting a quarter-long plant genetics experiment to observe how the trait of stem color is passed down through three generations of plants. Students have observed the parent plants ("P1" and "P2" generation) and their offspring, the "F1" generation plants. Students then pollinated their "F1" generation plants. Once they produced seed pods, students harvested the "F2" generation seeds, planted them, and eventually observed the color stems the "F2" generation plants inherited. Through this experiment, students learned about dominant and recessive traits and practiced using Punnett Squares to determine the genotypes and phenotypes of their plants.

4th Reading

Fourth grade readers in Mrs. Konopinski's and Ms. West's class have been wowed by the people they have been reading about in the biography unit. Through individual biographies, each student has been exploring the lives of world leaders, inventors, athletes, and other renowned historical figures. In class, the students have been reading about Abraham Lincoln and developing note-taking skills by keeping a guided journal as they read their class book. In each Lincoln journal are Lincoln's influences, key events in his life, and even funny, sad, or inspirational anecdotes about the president.

4th Social Studies

Mr. Boyer's and Mrs. Alicea's fourth grade social studies classes have continued to explore trailblazers within Ohio history as they received their first visitor from the past, Madame Glacier. She brought students the story of how the land of Ohio as we know it was shaped and forever changed by her advancement and retreat. Students then moved on studying the First Peoples of Ohio and how the Paleo-Indians lived and survived. They next moved onto the Archaic time period where they examined how humans adapted to their environment and changed. Students then moved onto the Woodland period in which they examined how various cultures evolved over this time period and began to invent and utilize tools that forever changed human existence. In addition students pondered Ohio's mysterious earthen mounds that have interested and mystified humans for centuries. The fourth grade concluded the Woodland period by taking a field trip to visit a historic set of effigy mounds located within Cleveland Metroparks.

4th-5th Spanish

Señora Rodriguez and the fourth and fifth grade students worked on conversational calendar vocabulary where students learned useful Spanish while they talked about the days of the week, months, seasons, weather, numbers, colors, and compared these with other Spanish-speaking countries. They had a partner and memorized vocabulary together. Working with a partner requires students to also do independent work and achieve the communication objective.

CLASS NEWS *continued*

5th Computer

Mrs. Waldal's fifth grade students created digital art in Micro-Worlds EX by writing a simple program. They experimented by changing variables within their code to create a unique and beautiful digital image which they exported and then imported into a Google doc template. Then they went back and copied the code they wrote and pasted it into their document. Students were able to use multiple applications to produce a document that was printed and posted for Birchwood's fall open house.

5th Creative Problem Solving

Ms. Bottini, Ms. Brown, Mrs. Miller, and Mr. Parrino proposed two "fuzzies" (problem situations that involve a number of facts) to their fifth grade Creative Problem Solving students. Their current fuzzy looks at the problems that would occur when the Metric system is imposed in the U.S. They are in the process of finding the underlying problems. The next step will be solution finding.



Mr. Parrino worked with the Creative Problem Solving team of (L-R) Caroline, Carrine, Eric, and Stephen.

5th Language Arts

Fifth graders in Mr. Debelak's and Mrs. Seward's language arts class are exploring the art and mechanics of good writing. Students are practicing how to "show" vs. "tell" in their storytelling, including the use of specific, concrete language and strong verbs. Fifth graders are also learning to add liveliness to their sentence structures through tools such as compound verbs and participial phrases. Foundations have been another focus for this group, with attention to cursive, spelling, and grammar review. Fifth graders are thoroughly enjoying Mr. D.'s animated reading of "Holes" by Louis Sachar and "Boy" by Roald Dahl, both colorful writers who are serving as role models for students in their own composition.

5th Reading

Mrs. Debelak, Mrs. Owen, and Ms. Grogan have completed "In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson" by Bette Bao Lord, along with the attendant biography unit, which had students read about famous athletes who've overcome difficulties on their way to glory, and have left a legacy as a role model for others to emulate. The written portion of this lesson required students to compose a three paragraph essay detailing the childhood, achievements, and legacy/character aspects of these heroes. The class will soon

embark on the historical fiction, "The Sign of the Beaver" by Elizabeth George Speare, exploring the idea of cultural perspective as experienced by a boy on his own in the wilderness and an Indian boy who eventually befriends him. Also discussed are the various conflicts that arise in the novel, as well as those common to literature. Students are also being introduced to their first poems in preparation for the poetry show.

5th Science

Ms. Bottini's and Ms. Brown's science students have almost finished writing their background information (review of the literature) for their science fair experiment. Students spent the month of October, finding information and taking notes on the projects they chose. They discovered and investigated the science behind their wondering. Students took notes and wrote a synthesis of their work in a review of the literature. Students are continuing through the scientific process by creating procedures and beginning to test their scientific question. While working on science fair, students also studied different types of waves and how they travel. They enjoyed a program by the American Red Cross called the "Pillowcase Project," in which weather based emergency safety and preparation was shared with the children. They each received a pillowcase to color and fill with items to create their own emergency bag. Save the date for Science Night on Thursday, Jan. 16, 2020.



(L-R) Gage and Maya colored their emergency bags as part of the American Red Cross "Pillowcase Project."

5th Science Exploration and Science Reading

Miss Bottini's fifth grade science exploration class began the year with an engineering design challenge about buoyancy. In teams, the students designed and constructed aluminum foil boats to test the amount of mass their design would hold. After their first trial, students were able to go back to the drawing board and make improvements based on their results. Students tested their second designs and reflected on their improvements through discourse and writing. Finally, the students took the data from the whole class and created a double line graph representing their first trial mass and second trial mass. During science reading, students often practiced reading short scientific passages with quick comprehension assessment through think-pair-share activities. Students had the freedom to use the science library, use the time to research their science fair topics, or spend time reading current scientific findings in Science World Magazine and Science News.

CLASS NEWS *continued*

5th Social Studies

Students in Mrs. Miller's and Mr. Parrino's class continued piecing together the factors that led to the development of sophisticated civilizations in the early Americas. Researching everything from agricultural development to conquering kings, the students created



Learning about the Northeast Woodland Indians during a visit to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History taught the cultural diversity of these early explorers.

visual motifs to show the progression from agriculture to cultural diffusion among the Maya, Aztec, Inca, and Mound Builders civilizations. Their engaging displays are hanging outside the social studies room on the first floor.

The students also had the opportunity to visit the Cleveland Museum of Natural History for an absorbing look at the cultures of various Native American groups. The educator from the museum was extremely knowledgeable and engaged the students with her presentation of the cultural diversity of these early Americans. Next up will be a unit on explorers.

5th-6th Math

Mr. Debelak's, Dr. Haskins', and Mrs. Gregory's classes are developing their mastery of the toolbox skills. The goal in the fifth grade is for the students to master the orange toolbox, which includes long division, fractional operations, and decimal operations. For sixth grade, the goal for the students is to master the purple toolbox by the end of the year. Purple skills include mixed number operations and more complex decimal operations. The purpose of the mastery of these skills is to provide students with the fluency necessary to do more difficult problem solving and content work, without being restricted by computational mistakes. So far, both grades have done a fantastic job meeting these individual goals.

6th Computer

Mrs. Waldal's sixth grade students in the programming and robotics elective spent a few weeks designing, creating, and programming games in MicroWorlds EX and another in Scratch. They learned how to create multiple procedures that interact with each other and with user input. The students were encouraged to debug their program and to make it more complicated to make the game exciting and challenging.

6th Language Arts

Students with Mrs. Tzeng and Mrs. Seward continued writing descriptive essays on places and people, painting with sensory

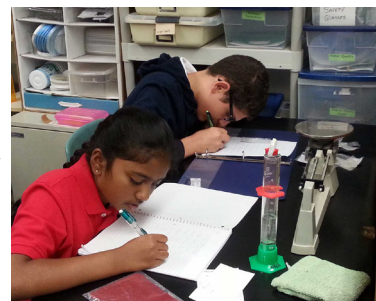
details, strong verbs, and analogies. View their revised pieces about the preschool playground, depicted with decorative borders, on display on the top floor hallway. The hallway itself was another exercise in observation and sensory description for the students, who successfully showed the transitions that occur from tranquility to commotion, replete with auditory effects. Currently, they are finishing a portrait description of an old woman, where details build up to intensify their focus in the piece.

6th Reading

Students in Mrs. Debelak's, Mrs. Owen's and Ms. Grogan's class have been reading "Number the Stars" by Lois Lowry. This Newbery title covers the time of the German occupation of Denmark and the secret rescue and transporting to Sweden of the more than 7,000 Jews who were Danish citizens. Lowry accurately portrays the restrictions of daily life under occupation as the class learns of the strong presence of German soldiers, rationing, curfew, illegal newspapers, and the resistance. The class is exploring and discussing significant concepts, such as how the Danish people acted as "bodyguards" to the Jews and how they "numbered" (cared for) the Jews "one by one," despite the danger to themselves. Following discussion, students wrote two paragraph theme essays and composed original poems in appreciation of the Danish people who risked their lives to save the Jewish population of Denmark. The class is also reading a variety of fiction and nonfiction books about the Holocaust and related topics and sharing orally in order to expand knowledge of this period of world history. Students are also getting into Poetry Show preparation as we anticipate a wonderful evening for family and friends.

6th Science

Ms. Brown's and Ms. Bottini's sixth grade science students have made great strides on their science fair projects. Students are turning in a review of the literature that is a synthesis of the science behind their question. Students spent October reading rigorous scientific resources to prepare them. They are now in the process of creating a procedure, defining variables, accumulating materials and testing their experiment. Ms. Bottini's group concluded the unit on plate tectonics by writing an essay that compared and contrasted continental drift and seafloor spreading. While completing science fair sixth graders also investigated minerals. They practiced identifying minerals using multiple methods and are able to define the properties of a mineral. Ms. Brown's class used a class period to design a rescue to get Fred (a gummy worm) into his lifesaver without touching him. They were allowed two paperclips as rescue tools. Save the date for Science Night on Thursday, Jan. 16, 2020.



(L-R) Aanya and Alex calculated the density of quartz. They found the mass and then used water displacement to find the volume.

6th Social Studies

Mrs. Miller's and Mr. Parrino's students began the month immersing themselves in ancient Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization. As geographers, they uncovered the reasons people settled near two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. They journeyed on to another great river-based civilization, ancient Egypt. Often called the gift of the Nile, ancient Egypt was a highly advanced civilization which lasted for a few thousand years. Students have chosen one topic related to Egypt and have begun their most in-

Students have chosen one topic related to Egypt and have begun their most involved research project yet, using a variety of sources for their information.

volved research project yet, using a variety of sources for their information. They will learn to lay out a storyboard and following that, each one will construct a web-based presentation using Prezi, an online presentation tool.

Many of the sixth grade students are also continuing down the History Day road. After choosing some excellent topics, they began their research and have already passed their first checkpoint. They're proving to be a very eager group of historians!

6th Spanish

Sixth grade students worked on ¿Cómo somos? as they identified and described people and things. Besides telling where someone was from, they expressed opinions about them. Señora Rodriguez and the students reviewed adjectives, nouns, and articles as well as the verb ser necessary for descriptions. They worked with a partner and included each topic in their own conversation. This way Spanish became useful and increased their interest to keep learning.

7th Language Arts

After completing several memoir pieces, students are now immersing themselves in short stories. Mrs. Tzeng and Mrs. Seward are introducing short classical pieces as well as winning entries from Scholastic Writing Awards. After myriad prewriting activities, students will be crafting their own pieces in their category of choice for the competition. This is an opportunity for them to experience the entire writing process, from inception to submission. Naturally, this led to a healthy discussion about plagiarism and its inherent dangers as well. Note that Friday Power of the Pen sessions are optional but open to all who wish to participate in this competition or simply practice formulating ideas. Although teams will not be picked until January, note that competition dates are Saturday, Feb. 8 and March 14, and the Friday before Memorial Day 2020.

7th Reading

Practice for the Poetry Show (Friday, Nov. 22) is underway. In the seventh grade students are brought into the creative process of both poem selection and decisions about blocking and dramatic elements. After first hearing and reading a wide range of poetry from curated lists presented by Mrs. Debelak, Mrs. Owen, and Ms. Grogan, the seventh graders analyze them for how they relate to the theme of the show and for how each poem speaks to them. Choices are prioritized and narrowed down to show length. Students mark up their copies with vocal aspects such as articulation, pace, volume, and expression, and then tackle the hard work of memorizing. The teachers are amazed at how undaunted they are due to the memorization skills practiced in earlier years of poetry shows. Even more impressive is the excitement the entire class feels when it comes to bringing the poems to life as they practice on stage. For adolescents to love poetry is awesome! In addition, the class engages in various writing activities since writing clarifies comprehension and deepens thinking. For example, after the last unit, students first discussed and then wrote their grasp of this excerpt from John Keat's poem ("Ode on a Grecian Urn"): "Beauty is truth, truth beauty – that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." Also, they are learning to read primary sources in the style of a journal and are choosing from among an array of historical diaries including: "The Journals of Lewis and Clark," "The Civil War Diary of Sarah Morgan" (and Elisha Hunt Rhodes and many others), "The Diary of an Early American Boy," "The Diary of Anne Frank," and many others.

7th Science

Ms. Brown's and Ms. Bottini's seventh grade science students continue to fine tune their science fair projects. Students spent much of the month of October researching their topics and writing a review of the literature (background paper). As the students gained science knowledge on their topics they developed procedures to begin testing. Even during science fair prep they dove into the world of physical science, exploring matter and the different ways to classify it. Both classes created graphic organizers including examples and descriptions to help organize the ways to classify matter chemically and physically. Ms. Brown's class also engineered and tested trebuchets. Save the date for Science Night on Thursday, Jan. 16, 2020.



(L-R) Dilan and Ryan work together on building their trebuchet in Ms. Brown's science class.

7th Social Studies

Mrs. Miller's and Mr. Parrino's students are bracing for "The Shot Heard 'Round the World!" The upcoming unit features a showdown between Americans ready to run their own affairs and a mother country resolved to keep their colonies in line. Students have followed the escalation of hostilities from protests over stifling laws to a defiant dumping of Great Britain's property into the harbor. They have themselves debated the validity of Britain's heavy-handed response. Now it's time to engage the inevitable battles: both the ones with muskets and those with quills. Students will memorize sections of the Declaration of Independence, compare King George III to a dinosaur, march in the antiquated columns of 18th century warfare and spotlight the women who contributed to the colonies eventual victory. Interspersed between these history lessons, students will continue research on their History Day projects. By the end of the month, students should have taken enough notes from secondary and primary sources that they should be able to tell the story of their topic in full detail.

7th Spanish

Seventh grade students worked on how to describe friends, both their looks and personality. The theme of the conversation was friendship. They used nouns, adjectives, articles, and the verb *ser* to describe people. Some of the students described celebrities and others selected a friend or a sibling. They liked to engage in conversations and Señora Rodriguez used this as a way to memorize vocabulary and increase confidence in speaking the language.

7th-8th Computer

Mrs. Waldal's seventh and eighth grade students have been designing, creating, and coding their robots during the first quarter. Students have been creating interactive games, animated stuffed animals, a machine that turns pages of a book, a robotic car, an automated stapler, and a project that helps to sort recycled materials. Students have worked on problem solving, hands-on building, and coding to create their projects.

7th-8th Latin I

The eighth graders in Dr. Haskins' class have been working hard to understand how the Nominative and Accusative case endings work in Greek sentences. They memorized a great deal of material this quarter and their reading passages have given them ample opportunity to recognize these forms "in the wild" as it were. They will return to studying Latin in the second quarter. Seventh graders have been reading a very elementary connected story about a Roman family whose children don't always behave properly. By memorizing a large number of vocabulary words, they are able to read the Latin stories without too much help. They will be working on more Greek in the second quarter.

7th-8th Math

Dr. Haskins' and Mrs. Gregory's classes have been working diligently on their content. The goal within these classes is to continue to develop not only their content understanding, but their independent working skills. The main focus for these students are to train them in focus, goal setting in regards to math, and build up collaborating skills. As students move ahead, they will need these skills to reach their goals but also learn how to converse with classmates to solve difficult problems that arise. By building up these work habits, the students are fostering independence and building agency within their learning.

The goal within these classes is to continue to develop not only their content understanding, but their independent working skills.

8th Galilean Learning Project

Galilean Learning is a program title coined at Birchwood. Galileo learned how to learn via hands-on experiential inquiry.

From Sept. 23 through Oct. 11, Peter Debelak from Soulcraft Woodshop taught a class in design thinking to the eighth grade math class. Design-thinking, at its core, is creative problem-solving, with hands-on projects. Students are introduced to a design-objective, using new and foreign tools. In this fall class, students are learning the 3D modeling program, SketchUp. Students develop their own furniture designs, and then use the tool to implement their designs. While the program is instructing them on the basics of design principles and teaching them a new software, the students simultaneously engage in the more abstract conversation about learning how to learn. By learning a new tool (like SketchUp, in this case), students must confront obstacles



Sofia used SketchUp to design her table during design thinking class with Peter Debelak of Soulcraft Woodshop.

in their learning in an environment that has a quick feedback loop. Within even one class period, students face mistakes and even failure, as well as utilizing resources to overcome. The entire process of learning, and understanding how one learns, happens in a quick successive cycle. In the spring, the students will turn their digital designs into real-life pieces of furniture, as they go through the process again, but in a woodshop, to create their own designs.

8th Language Arts

Witness the power of observation in the writing of Mrs. Tzeng's and Mrs. Seward's students, who have described the intricacies of their own hands in compositions posted along the top hallway. Currently, students are finishing initial drafts about a personal treasured object. These pieces should be a culmination of both memoir and description, including vibrant details, meaningful reflection, and significances based on a mentor piece. Soon they will be embarking on stories for the Scholastic Writing Awards. In addition, practices for the Power of the Pen competition are on Fridays; note that competition dates are on Saturday, Feb. 8 and March 14, and the Friday before Memorial Day 2020.

8th Reading

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poem selection and decisions about blocking and dramatic elements. After first hearing and reading a wide range of poetry from curated lists presented by Mrs. Debelak, Mrs. Owen, and Ms. Grogan, the eighth graders analyze them for how they relate to the theme of the show and for how each poem speaks to them. Choices are prioritized and narrowed down to show length. Students mark up their copies with vocal aspects such as articulation, pace, volume, and expression, and then tackle the hard work of memorizing. The teachers are amazed at how undaunted they are due to the memorization skills practiced in earlier years of poetry shows. Even more impressive is the

excitement the entire class feels when it comes to bringing the poems to life as they practice on stage. For adolescents to love poetry is awesome! Furthermore, the eighth graders will help in all aspects of production including lights, props, and program design. Students have also finished discussions and debate on the class book, "The Trumpeter of Krakow" by Eric P. Kelly, and are writing a persuasive essay: "The complex character, Kreutz, displays both weakness and strength; portray the arguments on one side, present the counter argument for your interpretation, and clinch your case based upon the final episode."

8th Science

Ms. Brown's and Ms. Bottini's eighth grade science students finalized their review of literature for science fair. Students created procedures, obtained materials, and defined their variables to prepare for testing their experiments. Save the date for Science Night on Thursday, Jan. 16, 2020. Ms. Brown's class wrestled with cell transport. They designed and performed the egg osmosis lab and write up. Several eighth grade students spent a Saturday afternoon competing in Young Astronauts Day at NASA Glenn Research Center. Students completed engineering tasks related to aerospace engineering problem solving. Ms. Bottini and Ms. Brown were very proud of their work!



During the egg osmosis lab James and Rohan were surprised by the egg that was in Karo syrup.

8th Social Studies

Mrs. Miller's and Mr. Parrino's students are pushing away smoke clouds and street litter to get a better look at the nation during its Second Industrial Revolution. The pace of change at all levels of society was heart-pounding. New industries and inventions sprung from Americans with many backgrounds. Wealth piled up in bank accounts as never before. Midwest cities like Cleveland sprouted up to rival the traditional population centers back East. Problems in these boomtowns such as crowdedness, pollution, and worker exploitation piled up too. America struggled to cope with its rapidly accelerating reputation as a land of opportunity for the tired, poor, huddled masses around the world. Students will peer inside the lives of immigrants who came over in waves during the latter 19th and early 20th centuries. They will weigh the shifts in power from the haves and have nots. And finally, they will debate the historical and ethical implications of America's grand entrance onto the world stage. Interspersed between these history lessons, students will continue research on their History Day projects. By the end of the month, students should have taken enough notes from secondary and primary sources that they should be able to tell the story of their topic in glorious detail.

8th Spanish

Señora Rodriguez's eighth grade students talked about packing for a trip, getting to the airport, being on an airplane, and arriving at their destination. They studied regular and irregular verbs and their conjugations as well as a new vocabulary about the airport, planes, and travel to compose a friendly conversation with their partners. The presentation day was special as they enjoyed the use of the language together in class.

Head of School, *Charles Debelak*
Director of Curriculum, *Helene Debelak*
Questions and suggestions are welcome:
clipboard@birchwoodschool.org
Clipboard Editor/Layout, *Brenda Spicer*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday evening, November 22

Poetry Show for Grades 5-8

Tuesday, November 26

Preschool & Kindergarten Thankfulness Brunch

Tending the Tree ... The Shy Side of Kindergarten Success

continued from page 1

We received an email early in the school year from the student's mother in which she told us that her child was too afraid to ask for help or clarification. Our team quickly developed a game plan for this child: daily check-ins to build rapport and make the student feel at ease; follow-ups during math and reading groups to ensure this child felt comfortable asking questions; quiet praise when the student did raise her hand; and encouragement to share during our weekly Show and Tell and Brain Power.

By January, we were starting to see an entirely new student. She began approaching us during transition times to say, "My mom told me to tell you to help me with (my supplemental homework)." Instead of relying on emails from her mom, the child felt comfortable enough to come to the teacher herself for help. Each request was music to our ears. There were even a few times when we had to remind the student to wait her turn to talk!

We often are asked how we measure success when it comes to a social or emotional goal we set. If a child needs support with impulse control, following directions, or self-awareness, we provide a chart to help them meet their goals. They are slowly weaned off the chart, which then helps us know they have become successful. Another way we measure success is simply word of mouth or emails from parents. At the end of the school year, we received the most beautiful email from this child's mother that will be forever cherished and solidified in our belief in our abilities to achieving our goals: "On the way to school this morning, [my child] was giggling in the back seat – innocent and joyful giggles that only a six-year-old can make. I asked what was so funny. Then, she told me about her friends, graduation songs, and anything that could usually happen at school. As a parent, I love to see my child enjoying every moment at school. Mrs. Hallett and Mrs. Chen, you have created an environment in which [my child] could grow so much. You helped her come out of her shell."

What helped with the success? The student's willingness to try as well as the relationships built with both the student and parent is what drew this child out of her shell. We know that she will most likely be somewhat shy throughout her education. There's nothing wrong with that. But her success in our class to ask for help, to join in and play with others will expand her comfort zone to new emotional and social ground.

Casey Hallett and Ester Chen
Kindergarten

OUR MISSION IN PRACTICE

Potential is a Gift – Excellence is a Habit

continued from page 3

One important lesson in Nat Bowditch's life is to "sail by ash breeze." When the wind is not blowing the sailors get out "ash" paddles to power the ship and the students don't quit when it is not easy, rather they put in the hard work to go forward.

Sixth grade students listened to stories of brave people around the world who fought for good in their societies by way of nonviolent resistance; these have included Gandhi in India, Thich Nhat Hanh in Vietnam, Charles Perkins in Australia, and Rosa Parks in America.

In the seventh grade the emphasis has been on "makers," people who have made something happen: 1) A commencement speech about working hard to "make things happen," using the illustration of how an academically poor math student fought repeatedly against all odds to master algebra. 2) A piece about a coach who turned around a bottom-of-the-barrel girls' basketball team inside an Indian reservation through a "no-excuse" approach.

Openings in the eighth grade introduce students to what we call "The Ben Franklin Initiative." The focus is to inspire young teenagers to become "great" people. In the first quarter of school, students participate in discussions relating to: 1) Courage – the capacity to sacrifice to reach the goals we set for ourselves. 2) Self-control/temperance – the capacity to balance our leisure activities so that they do not interfere with our goals. Inspiration came via the stories of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan in the film, "The Miracle Worker" – and through biographies of George Washington and Eleanor Roosevelt.

All of Birchwood's teachers have enjoyed a wonderful and engaging beginning to the school year with their students.

Helene Debelak
Director of Curriculum

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