



# Birchwood Clipboard

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## In this issue

Class News

Poetry Show

Leadership Training

## Class News

### **1-2 Computer**

One of the favorite software programs that the children enjoy is *Kidpix*, a multimedia “studio” program that lets the user create art and animation. There are six different projects that allow the user to create designs, drawings, paintings, and even a slide show.

### **1-2 Computer - Thinking Technology**

In addition to their other computer classes, first and second graders take Thinking Technology once a week. They are currently learning MicroWorlds Jr. This program has painting tools, stamp-able shapes, text, buttons, multiple pages, and techniques to create simple animation, and makes it possible for children to explore numbers, movement, and onscreen interactions through the use of an iconic programming and control language (Logo Computer Systems Inc., 2004. MicroWorlds Jr. LCSJ). Students have created a self portrait and have created patterns using the stamping tool.

### **1-2 Language Arts**

First graders are learning to write sentences with proper capitalization and punctuation. They have learned how to model stories written by others to give their own creations good form. We have enjoyed listening to their versions of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *The Lion and the Mouse*.

The second graders are improving their manuscript handwriting and do weekly journal entries on a variety of topics. In creative writing, they have written stories modeled after the books, *Seven Blind Mice* and *An Extraordinary Egg*. We always enjoy sharing and listening to one another’s stories on Thursday afternoons.

### **1-2 Math**

We’ve spent the first few weeks of school exploring numbers, number patterns, sequences and place value. We’ve also begun working on the Wood Math

program, which gives the children a lot of practice with basic calculation skills.

### **1-2 Reading**

The first and second graders are being whisked by the magic of fairy tales. We are reading classical versions of European stories and comparing and contrasting them with modern American versions.

### **1-2 Science**

This year our theme is life, and we are exploring all kinds of life. First we are examining animal life. We found that scientists divide the animal kingdom into two groups, vertebrates and invertebrates. So far, we’ve investigated mammals and reptiles, which are vertebrates. One day, a real snake came to visit the classroom!

### **1-2 Social Studies**

The first and second graders finished a unit on safety in September. We started out leaning about safety at home, on the playground, and while traveling. The children practiced what they learned by conducting a home fire drill and school fire and tornado drills. They also made safety posters to remind others to play it safe!

### **1<sup>st</sup> Spanish**

The first graders have been working on greetings and polite words such as Hello, how are you? What is your name? How old are you? Please, Thank you, and I will see you later. Also, they have been working on counting up to twenty and how to write out numbers. They learn Spanish with the presence of Plim Plim and Plom Plom the two Spanish clowns making the children laugh and learn at the same time.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Spanish**

The second graders learned numbers up to 20. They have counted objects, learned how to write out numbers, and resolve math problems. The students love to sing, they are learning La Reina Batata (The Sweet Potato Queen) a song written by Maria Elena Walsh, who is a famous Spanish children’s literature writer.

### **3-4 Computer**

Besides an introduction to computer rules, procedures, and Internet safety, unit one involves hardware and software basics. After discussing what the children know, they then do online research to find definitions and explanations for various hardware and software terms. Unit two will be an introduction to Microsoft Word.

### **3-4 Language Arts**

Both the third and fourth graders have been busy entering a number of writing contests. All students wrote an entry for the September *Cricket* competition. The prompt, which instructed writers to compose a story about a quest, elicited a wide range of responses. Some students told of their quest to find a perfect gift or buried treasure, while others recounted exotic journeys to underwater places or humanitarian quests to save people in danger. The third graders are now composing exciting tales of Sam the chameleon's adventures for a *Fandangle Magazine* contest, even as the fourth graders put the finishing touches on their *Important to Me* essays for a *Creative Communications* competition.

### **3-4 Reading**

The third and fourth graders are currently reading all different types of mystery books. You wouldn't believe how many we have read already, and we can't wait to read more! We are practicing how to read with fluency, endurance and focus, and how to retell with accuracy. We are also working on pinpointing the mystery in each book, and the important steps the detective takes in order to solve the mystery. We have started working on our Virtues Poetry Show, we know that the show will be a success and we can't wait until our performance!!!

### **3-4 Science**

We've started off the year with plants and all their main classifications. We got a closer look at the inside of a seed and found baby plants ready for planting. Then, the students enjoyed watching photosynthesis in action with a water plant experiment. Next, they looked at celery under the microscope to see the affect of food coloring in the water supply. We also have been hypothesizing and observing plants that had a key element of photosynthesis taken away (we took away sun, CO<sub>2</sub>, or water and have been observing what happens to each plant). As some parents have unavoidably noticed, students have been making

themselves at home in some of their parent's gardens, pulling out plants to bring as examples of different root types, etc. (your sacrifice has been greatly appreciated!).

We will be moving on this next month to animals with backbones, so don't be surprised if your child wants to research an animal that strikes their curiosity. Ask your child about "finders/keepers".

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Social Studies**

The third graders will be studying various types of communities throughout the year. They completed mobiles, which display many of the communities to which each of them belongs. They have also learned the five Great Lakes, four oceans, and seven continents and are busy memorizing all the Southeastern states. In addition, they have constructed globes, made collages of several geographic types of communities, and produced play-dough models of common geographical features.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Social Studies**

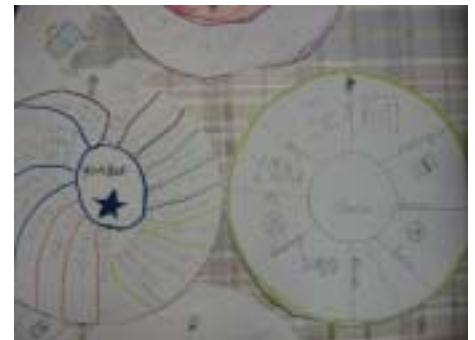
The focus of fourth grade social studies is to learn about the different regions of the United States. To kick off the year, each student worked as part of a team to study one particular region. This two-week research project culminated in a poster that displayed why their region was the best. The children presented their posters and then enjoyed a very special lunch at the end of the unit. Students and several parents brought in delicious food and treats that highlighted some of the many food products grown and produced in the United States.

### **3-4 Spanish**

The students were working on numbers up to 39 and they learned the number words. They have counted objects and resolve math problems.

### **3-4 Thinking Skills**

Each student created a wheel about who they were and their world.



### **5-6 Computer**

Besides an introduction to computer rules,

procedures, and Internet safety, unit one involves hardware and software basics. After discussing what the children know, they then do online research to find definitions and explanations for various hardware and software terms. Unit two will expand their knowledge of Microsoft Word. Fifth graders work with charts and tables while sixth graders are introduced to Mail Merge.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Language Arts**

The students' first three narratives have given me a good idea of their writing abilities. The first was a personal narrative based on a short story from our textbook. The children had to develop the details and climax of the story. In the second narrative entitled "The Challenge" children modeled the short story by Leonard Q. Ross *Who's There*. Our third narrative was entitled "The Surprise" and was modeled after Arthur C. Clarke's *Who's There*. Our focus is word usage, paragraphing, story structure, and correct punctuation and spelling.

### **5-6 Math**

Assessment, assessment, assessment. What do you remember? How much review do you need? What level have you reached in mathematics?

These are the questions we've been wrestling with in fifth and sixth grade math, and even up to the date of this Clipboard publication, we are still making adjustments. One thing is sure, we have quite a few very, very strong math students, and I will have to muster all my energies to keep up with such bright and hard-working groups.

We are also beginning some early preparation for this year's series of math contests starting in early November.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Reading**

The fifth graders just finished reading Hatchet, and other books by Gary Paulsen. Throughout the unit, the focus has been on 1) reading with a mind to connect characters and setting, 2) envisioning, 3) loving words, and 4) linking events. Discussions are always lively and interesting with these readers. While reading Hatchet, students kept track of different animals from the story, problems the main character faced, and the main character's accomplishments. We just started reading Summer of the Swans by Newberry author, Betsy Byars. Students also set

reading goals for this new unit. We are currently practicing for the Virtues Poetry Show, which we can't wait to perform for the entire Birchwood Community!

### **6<sup>th</sup> Reading**

The sixth grade is off to a wonderful start for the year. We began the year sharing our favorite summer reads, and discovered that many in our class are voracious readers, with diverse tastes ranging from graphic novels to Harry Potter to the classics. We moved right on to discussing our summer reading, The Door in the Wall and Journey to Jo'berg, diving into both medieval Europe and South Africa during the time of Apartheid. Now we are exploring survival novels, and have just finished our first, Number the Stars by Lois Lowry, set in Nazi-occupied Denmark. In addition to enjoying the novel, the class has developed a fascination for Europe during World War II, and many students have explored the topic more deeply through additional reading and internet research. We have also begun practicing for this year's poetry show, which promises to be another excellent performance. Somehow we have also managed to squeeze in time to enjoy our class read-aloud, The Real Thief by William Steig.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Science**

The "challenge eaters" (coined by Sean) are rising to the challenge! They practiced and honed their scientific processing skills through a sea shell and a rock unit and are learning to do their own inquiry.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Science**

Beans and corn, oh my! The class has been abuzz as students observed, measured, weighed tested (and learned) about plants as they grew pinto beans and popcorn from seeds. They will finish the unit using the textbook "facts".

### **5<sup>th</sup> Spanish**

The fifth graders were working with polite expressions and practice simple conversations. They use the dictionary to look up the translation of the words.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Spanish**

The sixth graders use a text book called Paso a Paso and work with a partner in order to practice conversations. The textbook has nice and colorful pictures. The comments about the culture are in Spanish. They are easy to read and understand.

## **7-8 Computer**

In the first few weeks, students review school rules and procedures and discuss the importance of making appropriate decisions when facing ethical questions about technology. In unit one students study computer basics to practice for (7<sup>th</sup>) or pass (8<sup>th</sup>) the eighth grade Computer and Technology Exit Exam. In unit two the seventh and eighth graders take a typing exit exam with a goal to reach 35 wpm or 40 wpm with accuracy of 90% or 95% respectively.

## **7th Math**

Two groups, one in pre-algebra and the other taking an algebra 1 high school course, have jumped head long into a very challenging year of mathematics. We are spending a good deal of time with algebra word problems that challenge students' ability to reason and translate word problems into algebraic sentences. It takes awhile to learn how to attack problems logically and systematically. "Show your work! Show your work!" has become my daily mantra, goading the students to learn patterns of *how* to solve problems.

## **8<sup>th</sup> Math**

What a great bunch of eighth grade math students!!! One group is working on an algebra 1 high school course, another group on a high school geometry course, and yet another group is working on a Northwestern U. online course in pre-calculus. In each case the material is very challenging and the students realize that success will require a great deal of hard work. The classroom atmosphere tends to be rather serious since the content is rigorous, nevertheless, this group loves good humor and there is always somebody ready to liven up the atmosphere.

## **7<sup>th</sup> Reading**

*Harriet the Spy* offered us an opportunity to analyze a complex adolescent as we delved into questions such as: Why does she spy? Why does she keep a journal? How did her relationships present challenges to her? When did her behavior turn from reactive to proactive? What are benefits of keeping a diary? We all keep journals on Harriet and are also practicing a reflective observant life through writing. Alongside this, we will read historical diaries and examine the uses of diaries to the writer and the times as well as to us when they are taken as primary source material.

*Fine Arts: We are listening to the waltzes of Strauss and reading/sharing poetry on the theme of courage to pursue dreams. Each student completed a construction paper art project using their name and an original clerihew (biographic quatrain poem). Optional ensemble sessions for those who want small group singing and instrumental experience begin this week.*

## **8<sup>th</sup> Reading**

For the 8<sup>th</sup> graders, this is the year for "polish". Students held group discussions and wrote essays on *The Bronze Bow*, but as a further analysis of the theme students prepared selected passages to read out loud in a poised expressive manner. They will prepare an oral presentation for the current world historical fiction unit as well. They are learning to take the "ums" out of their speech, to stand straight with poise and eye-contact, and to read with meaning. Not only will they be sent off to high school with the ability to think and write, but these Birchwood "products" will be shined and polished this year. Serving as poetry show announcers and participating in a speech contest in the first half of the year will provide further opportunity in reading class.

*The Trumpeter of Krakow* -with its world of medieval cities, Polish names and places, Tartar invasions, and alchemists - introduced the class to books with more complex settings and characterizations.

Fine Arts: Medieval and Renaissance music is integrated with our current emphasis on medieval and world settings in literature. Each student completed a construction paper art project using their name and an original clerihew (biographic quatrain poem). Optional ensemble sessions for those who want small group singing and instrumental experience begin next week. Eighth graders are also studying/analyzing poetry with a more formal approach along with reading/sharing poetry which reflects virtues for the poetry show.


## **7<sup>th</sup> Science**

Students practiced finding the density of different objects by the water displacement method as they studied the four general properties of matter. Finding the mass of the object on a balance, calculating the volume in water and then dividing produced the mysterious "density" number.

## 8<sup>th</sup> Science

Students experimented with the store-bought-little animals in gel capsules. First they tried anything to make them hatch the fastest. Next, they looked at water temperature as the requirement for rapid hatching. Then they tried acid as the requirement for rapid hatching. Finally, the question was “Was it the acid or the high temperature?” Their conclusion was that temperature was the deciding factor, whether water or acid.

The first two weeks were a review of ecology and the second two weeks they looked at the cell. Groups of students made post cards from an organelle in the cell. See if you can tell from where this post card originates:

<p>Dear Friend,</p> <p>Help me!! I'm trapped inside a large irregular structure and I can't get out! I'm forced to work all day and convert sunlight into energy for the cell. Help!! Chlorophyll</p>	 <p>Nucleus and Chromosomes #1 Center of The Cell Road Plant Cell</p>
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## 7<sup>th</sup> Spanish

The seven graders have a text book called Juntos. They will study three chapters this year and complete the book next year. Juntos has a workbook to practice what has been taught in class. The students have oral quizzes every class and written quizzes every other week.

## 8<sup>th</sup> Spanish

The first two weeks the students listened to a CD with an extensive vocabulary. They memorized the words and used them to practice conversations. In the third week they started using the book Juntos from chapter 3 and studied the verbs, know and want. They have also begun to put sentences together using the verbs.

## Poetry Show

Plans for the poetry show on October 26<sup>th</sup> are gearing up. Watch for further information from your child's reading teacher. If anyone would like to help Mrs. Debelak with two overall needs, you can contact her: 1) Advance advertising and 2) Videotaping & copying.

## Leadership Training

The Leadership Program for seventh and eighth graders gives students at Birchwood an opportunity to learn and exercise leadership skills. It has two components – learning about leadership in the classroom and practicing leadership

under teacher direction.

The classroom-learning component is designed to present models of great leadership. Under the guidance of their homeroom teachers, students study the characteristics and accomplishments of great leaders in history presented. In the eighth grade, during a year-long series of short talks from the Head of School, students learn about the Greek cardinal virtues and are shown how to develop their own innate potential in order to become great young men and women.

The second component of the leadership program focuses on opportunity and practice that follow several guiding principles.

First, we understand that children learn responsibility by having opportunities to practice responsibility. Teachers have created “fields of practice”, realms of meaningful school responsibility – librarians, office helpers, aids in primary classrooms, indoor recess helpers, managers of inspirational hallway bulletin boards, even chances to be inspirational speakers to younger children by reading stories and poems. Students also help organize school-wide service projects such as gathering and boxing materials to send to the poor.

Next, we believe that as students learn elementary levels of responsibility they can be entrusted with greater responsibilities. Students first learn how to be responsible for *themselves*; then they learn how to be responsible for *things*; and finally they learn how to be responsible for *people*. The school understands that learning responsibility takes time and there will be mistakes. But under patient and kind adult supervision, leadership can flourish.

*The third principle understands the relationship between responsibility and privilege. As students become more responsible, they are given greater privilege within the school setting to arrange, manage, and use their time.*

*Fourth, because roles of leadership vary, we provide different opportunities to lead. Some students can head up committees or lead programs that require leading and organizing people. Other students shine when they are asked to organize and manage data or produce a new school program.*

*Fifth, contrary to popular belief, middle school students thrive when given a chance to lead and be of service to others. When they understand the importance of what they are doing, and they are given the nod of confidence from respected teachers, young teens innately respond to the respect and responsibility given to them. Such opportunities can place a very big part in affirming self-esteem and self-confidence.*

Sixth, compassion and empathy are synonymous with personal responsibility. Young leaders need to understand their responsibility to younger students and their own peers. Therefore, our leadership program gives each middle school student opportunities to serve the other children at school. Sometimes they help with school functions; other times they conduct school wide campaigns like Harvest for Hunger. We also ask all our middle school students to help younger children at the end of the school day with organization of backpacks and preparation to go home. On a larger scale, these students participate in community services that benefit people in need.

Finally, we try to leave these students with a lasting impression that it is their duty and responsibility to “give back.” They should recognize the people and institutions that have benefited them, and in turn, young people should seek to find something that they can do in return to show their appreciation.



## ***Clipboard Delivery Preference Form***

October 1, 2007

Dear Birchwood Parents,

Currently, we deliver the Birchwood School *Clipboard* in hard copy form and via email every month. We would like to provide you the opportunity to indicate your delivery preferences below. You may request to receive the *Clipboard* via email only instead of a hard copy.

**Note: If you would like to continue receiving a hard copy, no action is required.**

If you would like to only receive an email notification when the online Clipboard is available please fill out the form below and return it in your child's Parent Correspondence folder.

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Yes, I would like to receive the *Clipboard* via email only and understand that no more hard copies will be sent home. I realize that:

1. This affects only the *Clipboard* and no other Birchwood School documents.
2. I have the option at anytime in the future to request the *Clipboard* in hard copy form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

You will receive an e-mail confirmation that we have received this Clipboard Delivery Preference Form. If you do not receive an email within two weeks, please contact the school.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Burkholder