



# Birchwood MARCH 2008 Volume 14, 5 Clipboard

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## Class News

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

The first graders worked on foods. They memorized vocabulary, and completed exercises in their Spanish book. They also learned about professions and played a game called “Sobre el Puente de Avillon”.

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

The second graders learned about foods. They memorized new words and participated in a competition. Together with the first grade, they prepared a fruit salad that was delicious.

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

After spending several weeks writing “how to” paragraphs, the children are now composing interesting, and often funny, tales from their own life story. This has given them a break from preparing entries for competitions to write about the most interesting topic of all—themselves. Their stories will be compiled into a book that will (hopefully!) become a treasured keepsake.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Math**

Now that most of the students have learned their math facts, we have moved on to more complex multiplication and division. The students are currently learning long division, and will continue to focus on this over the next few weeks.

Others are working on, and will continue to work on, fractions, learning how to add, subtract, multiply and divide mixed fractions.

Please continue working with your children on their math facts. This will ensure continued progress with their mastery of all math fact operations and help lessen the frustration of learning more complex computation.

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

Some of the students are beginning to work on fractions, learning to add, subtract, multiply and divide mixed fractions. For those who still need it, please continue

working with your children on their math facts until they know them like they know their name. It sure does make life easier!

Others have finished up working on fractions and are now working on creating clear, precise graphing of data. A few have been working on Pre-Algebra concepts alongside fraction work for an extra challenge. Keep up all your hard work 4th grade!

### **3-4 Science**

We have been journeying through the human body over the past few weeks, taking a closer look at the workings of the digestive system. We had a guest speaker come in for the 4th grade to show us the inside scoop when it comes to the digestive system. Thank you Mr. Dasarathy! We have also been working on ways to keep our digestive system working properly through healthy eating and regular exercise. You’ve probably seen the charting the students have been doing the past week on their eating and exercise. Students were surprised to see how much, or how little, they ate from each food group on the food pyramid. Many students have made better choices as a result, such as eating breakfast and getting more vegetables and fruit in their diets.

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

The third graders recently completed their study of Native Americans with several engaging activities. These included making drums and rattles, performing dances, hearing “tell and draw” stories, and cooking slapjacks, a cornmeal pancake. Finally, the class took a field trip to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History for a tour of the Native American cultural areas exhibit.

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

The children are continuing their study of Ohio history. A favorite activity was making a batch of delicious cookies together that resembled in shape and color (but not in taste) the piles of hay that could be seen in many pioneer farm fields during the summer

months. These were appropriately called “Ohio Haystacks.” The class also journeyed to the Shaker Heights Historical Society where they observed a good number of interesting and creative Shaker implements and inventions.

### **3-4 Spanish**

The students worked with the calendar and seasons. They conversed about the seasons and activities they could do according to the season. They also completed activities in the Spanish book. They read the library books and each class they recite the new three words every week.

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

Students used this month to plan ways that they could earn money for Harvest for Hunger on Science Night. They planned fun activities for the whole school.

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

Starting from topic picking, students brainstorm, organize, write topic sentences, and supply details to write three-paragraph expository essays. On a cursory level, they have explored the negative side of snowfall, merits of recycling, entertainment with a mere piece of paper, instructions for a gamut of different activities. Students will also be submitting a short essay on how certain activities reduce global warming for the Earth Day Contest.

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

We used the first half of the quarter to work on a research paper about immigration in the United States. The students learned to take notes, assemble the notes into an outline, and then use the outline to write a 3-4 page paper. We also talked about how to write an introduction that draws the reader into the paper and states the theme. We also learned how to write a conclusion that summarizes the papers theme and the major points.

### **5-6 Math**

It has taken almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a year but the students are beginning to not only think like good mathematicians but also work like good mathematicians. A big part learning math is the ability to show your thinking in written format, step-by-step solutions to simple and complex problems. I told several of the students that their work is beginning to look like that of a professional engineer!!

A handful of students have begun dividing their math energies between solving plane geometry problems and how to solve algebraic problems. In both cases they had to learn rules and theorems which need to be applied creatively to an array of problems of varying difficulty. At the same time another group has been learning to work with ratio and proportion, especially as these relate to solving percent problems. Next time you go out for dinner, ask your son/daughter to figure the tax and tip.

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

We have been very busy! The sixth graders have just finished the Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH unit. In addition to examining the novel, we also considered the film version, *The Secret of NIMH*, and explored the similarities and differences of the two media. The class was very observant, and some were surprised that the images in the film were quite different from those they imagined while reading. This class is a group of voracious readers, and in the month of March, each student will give a book talk on some of their most enjoyable reads in the month of February. As we wait for spring, we have been enjoying the poetry of Bogin (“Cottontail”) and Roethke (“Old Florist”), marveling at the poet’s craft. The class will continue to write their own poems, and submit their best to a poetry contest in April. The class has also worked on their submissions to a nonfiction writing contest, due at the end of February.

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

This month is the culmination of science experiments. Paper airplanes: Alexander and Nikola. Heart rate and pulse: Brad, Sanjana, Hassan and Marla and Hannah. Ice melt: Max and Amir. Rust: Sean. Batteries: Alex. Bridges: Nicholas. Surface Tension: Trevor. Plants: Susmita and Sarah. Dominant hands and rate of clicks: Vikas.

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

Since this is their second year of science fair, they were focused knew what to do! Soon they will present their projects at the science fair. Miranda – Crystals. Deepak – Egg shell strength. Nardine – Water evaporation. Zaeem and Miguel- Curve balls. Nabil- Wind turbine. Brian – Coal and heat. Zach and Iman- Rockets. Hannah – Catapult. Carl- Generator. Clare and Nina – Music and memory. Munim- Blood pressure and stress ball. Tia – Calorimeter & energy from different breads.

### **7-8 Language Arts**

Students in language arts are honing the process of expository writing – to explain, to inform, to instruct. So far this quarter, they have written essays to analyze a short story by Chekhov, to grapple with “neurotechnology,” and to give instructions on simple projects. At the same time eighth graders will be writing essays to submit to “Women Making History” about women who had an impact in people’s lives while seventh graders will be addressing global warming for an Earth Day Contest.

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

Because we have so many strong math students in this group we have been spending time solving problems from old MathCounts contests. The work is both challenging and fun. Mr. Ravi Anaswami has given the students pointers on taking difficult problems apart piece by piece, or, as he says, “unpeeling them like an onion.” This has been so helpful as the students face ever more difficult work.

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

There is no time to relax during the last half of the eighth grade year. All the students are working especially hard to enable them to gain a solid footing in high school mathematics. Sometimes students are hoping to pass out of algebra and others geometry. That takes a lot of preparation and hard work. I am especially proud of this group because they know how to take ownership of their learning and therefore excel.

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

Students experimented with three kinds of friction: sliding, rolling and fluid. They found out that fluid friction was the least friction – whether the objects were small or large. They worked with the ideas of potential and kinetic energy, and velocity and acceleration as they created a marble run in which a marble took the longest time to travel.

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

The seventh graders finished the subject of Mexican food. The last day they learned how to make tacos and burritos. Each student brought on of the ingredients and together enjoyed a wonderful lunch at Birchwood Mexican Restaurant located in the kitchen.

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

The students keep practicing verbs in past tense. Some of them were irregular verbs. They also learned direct and indirect object pronouns. They started translating children’s literature books in order to enlarge their vocabulary.

## **7-8 POP**

Seventh and eighth graders joined twenty-four other area schools to compete in the district tournament of Power of the Pen on February 2, a unique interscholastic impromptu writing contest for junior high students. Birchwood fared well with our teams of creative writers.

Third Place among eighth graders: **Sahar A, George B, Shulamite C, Ani D, Stuart F, Sarah L**

Fourth Place among seventh graders: **Jacob B, Serena C, Jacob D, Sam J, Ilona K, Thomas W**  
Individually, **Ilona K** and **Thomas W** received medals for placing third and eleventh place, respectively. **Shulamite C** ranked eleventh and also received an award for “Best of Rounds.”

## **Speakers Program**

The 5th through 8th grade classes have had the privilege of hearing two very excellent speakers. Relating to the Future Problem Solving topic of simulation technology, Birchwood parent Mark Stewart gave a fascinating and clear explanation of how he applies it in his research at NASA on preventing the overheating of rocket engines. What also came to light for the students is the mixture of training involved in a career like this: math, physics, engineering, computer graphics, hard work and creativity!

The next topic for Future Problem Solving was neurotechnology, and once again we were fortunate to be able to tap into the rich resources of our own Birchwood community. Dr. Dileep Nair, from the Cleveland Clinic explained how advances in this field can help people with epilepsy. One exciting aspect of having Dr. Nair with us was that we had been reading a wide array of research articles on this topic and among these was news about what he and his colleague were doing. We were very proud that such up-to-date research was being conducted in our own city by one of our own parents who was standing right in front of us!

# MathCounts Contest

Congratulations to the Birchwood MathCounts team of George B, Shulamite C, Anirudh D and Jacques D. They competed against other public and private schools in Northeast Ohio and came in third place.

In the individual competition, Ani came in first place, George came in third place and Nathan C came in eighth place. These three students will compete in the state finals in Columbus, Ohio on March 9. Good luck mathletes!!!!

A special thanks to Mr. Ravi Annaswamy who worked with the students each Thursday afternoon from 3:30 to 5:30. His help was invaluable.

## Congratulations Birchwood Mathletes!

On Saturday, February 9, Birchwood math team entered the St. Ed's math contest. The seventh grade team made up of Shawki A, Jacob B, Serena C, Nathan C, Oliver D, Grant F, Deepak K, Mohammed M, Zaeem M, Clare P, and Isaac Y came in second place.

Deepak K came in third place overall in the individual competition.

The eighth grade team made up of Shulamite C, Anirudh D, and Jacques D came in second place also.

Ani came in second place overall in the individual competition.

## Leadership News

The school store, run by a 7th and 8th grade leadership team with the support of parent Loraine Farmer, is selling products with the new logo: t-shirts and water bottles are among the items that can be ordered. Order forms are being sent home and students can always pick up order forms in various places posted around the school hallways.

Sherry Marang has been the parent helping with the 7th and 8th grade Campbell's label campaign. This team reports 3,439 have been collected as of February 22 in the current campaign. Thank you to Mrs. Marang and Mrs. Farmer for their support of these leadership efforts.

Watch the hallways for a new character bulletin board on the theme of "they made it better for themselves". The leadership team takes time to 1) research people who exemplify the virtues that it took for people to overcome obstacles 2) quotes which uplift these virtues.

The safety team works under the direction of Ms. Samarin to be sure the hallways are monitored as the large groups of students enter the building after recess. This team has developed charts, graphics, rules, and even a constitution for hall monitors.

The library team has reshelfed every category on our shelves and brought these shelves up to tip-top shape. Their dedication is astounding.

The "songs" team have put order into the song books utilized by the opening times with Mr. Debelak. This group works with him to research and copy the enjoyable songs that are sung in these sessions.

The "lost and found" team has brainstormed every humanly possible method to bring the never-ending lost and found items to everyone's attention! If you are missing some special clothing item, you may encourage your child to check. At year's end all unclaimed items are given to charity.

## School Brochures

By now you should have received copies of Birchwood School's beautiful new brochure.

If you are interested in having more of these to pass along to friends or colleagues, you may contact the school office.

