



Birchwood Clipboard

APRIL 2008
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Class News

1-2 Language Arts

For the past five weeks, the children worked very hard on their Reading Rainbow Young Authors and Illustrators stories. We are proud of all of their hard work. Their stories and accompanying illustrations were very entertaining. We would also like to give a big thanks to all of the parents who spent time to help with this project. Whether you helped with typing, editing or assembling the books, we could not have completed the project, in the timely manner that we did, without you. THANKS!!

1st Math

The first graders have been exploring all kinds of measurement, including length, weight, temperature and volume. We learned that each kind of measurement uses specific vocabulary, such as pounds, gallons, degrees, and inches. A unit on geometry has introduced the children to such concepts as perimeter, area and volume. These are rather difficult concepts to grasp, but we listened to a story of a farmer who wanted to build a fence around his yard in order to keep his cows in. This helped with the idea of perimeter. Then we decided that, if this farmer wanted to plant grass for the cows to eat, he would need to know the area of the yard. These examples helped give perimeter and area useful application.

Second Grade Math

The second graders also reviewed measurement of different kinds, and then moved onto a unit on geometry. In this unit, they explored lines and angles. They found out that geometry has lots of funny words like perpendicular, congruent, obtuse, just to name a few. (One of the keys to becoming fluent in geometry is to talk the talk.) These concepts proved rather simple; it's the language that makes it difficult.

1-2 Music

In the 3rd quarter the first and second graders focused on music appreciation through listening to and watching musical performance videos; they learned the elements of music in an enjoyable and interesting way.

Plus, they studied the basic rhythmic pattern and musical notes to enrich their musical reading skill for further study.

They have done a wonderful job learning the notes from middle C to A and have sung the sofegey with hand sign. They enjoyed all kinds of fun things and games to help them to read notes and count different kinds of rhythmic patterns.

1st graders drew pictures of instruments connected to all the characters of "Peter and the Wolf" by watching the video.

It's really fun and educational! Through this they learned the sound and tone character of each instrument.

2nd graders watched the "Emotion in Music" video performed by the Dallas Symphony. They really learned how the music reinforced the animating movie or picture and created the dramatic effects in their daily life. The students picked up their favorite music or movie and each of them drew a picture connected to the musical notes for their projects.

1-2 Reading

The first and second graders spent the last several weeks diving into Junior Great Book discussions. They enjoyed reading and discussing stories such as *The Mermaid Who Lost Her Comb*, *Zlateh the Goat*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and *Blue Moose*.

The second graders used some of their extra reading time to send a letter from the class to an art company. They were frustrated with the poor quality of colored pencils they had been buying. The company responded with a letter to the class apologizing for the problems we had incurred. They sent new pencil sharpeners to give the pencils better points and lots of better quality replacement pencils for our class. The children were excited with the response and learned that voicing their concerns can make a difference!

1-2 Science

We have begun the fourth quarter with a unit on plants. We realized that plants and animals actually have a lot in common. Besides being living things, both plants and animals have similar needs, both "breath," reproduce, and have life cycles. We examined the germination process of a tiny radish seed and counted and compared the seeds of other plants. Now we are growing some plants that we hope will survive until summer and can be planted in home gardens when it gets warm.

1-2 Social Studies

We completed our unit on national holidays, symbols and monuments by learning about Mount Rushmore and the presidents on its face. We had a "bully" time learning about George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.

We are now learning about the eight presidents with an Ohio connection. We enjoyed eating pan buckeyes after learning about William Henry Harrison who had the "log cabin" campaign and made Ohio famous as the "Buckeye State". We

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sampled lemonade after reading about Rutherford B. Hayes and his wife, “Lemonade Lucy”. We are finishing books with illustrated facts about each president.

3-4 Language Arts

The students have taken a break from their autobiographies to enter the latest *Cricket* writing contest. This month’s prompt is to construct a story that includes a mummy. A few creative ideas that the children are working on include mummies that come to life, “un-dead” mummies, and family members pretending to be mummies. As you can see, this provides plenty of nightmare material for all parties involved.

3-4 Music

In the 3rd quarter the third and fourth graders really appreciated some music videos in addition to music lessons. Through the “**Emotion in Music**” program we helped students to know, to touch and to learn different expressions of emotion by various themes, styles and skills of music. The students even drew pictures related to the images, the sounds and colors of the music they appreciated. Based on this, I took a further step to help them to apply what they learned in this program to their daily life. The quality music they listened to will cultivate their sharp senses in their relation with people and surrounding things and thus they will become a person of keen feeling and rich emotion.

3rd graders have done a wonderful project of “**The Adventure of Peer Gynt**” through reading the book and watching the video. The music was by Edvard Grieg.

4th graders were so excited doing the project of “**Nutcracker and the Mouse King**,” while they were reading the related article and watching the video. The music by Peter Tchaikovsky. In every act the Tchaikovsky’s music and the performance was so vivid and dynamic so as to move the students to sing and dance.

3rd Reading

The third graders were busy readers during our biography unit. They even completed a biography project with illustrations and a summary of the book they read! All of the projects were well written and beautifully done.

We recently started a fantasy book unit, and our class book is Mr. Popper’s Penguins. It is a humorous book about a family who has penguins as house pets. We have been having insightful discussions in class about the book, with 100% student participation. While students are reading the class book, they are also reading individual fantasy books at home. At the beginning of the unit each student set a reading goal for themselves to reach by the end of the unit. I was pleasantly surprised by how willing the 3rd graders were to set a high goal for themselves. We have also been reviewing for the IOWA Tests that will take place during the week of April 21-25.

4th Reading

The fourth graders traveled to all sorts of interesting places around the world during our World Historical Fiction Unit! We had a large world map in the reading room with every student’s name on the side. When a student finished a world

historical fiction book, a piece of yarn was attached from their name to the country they “visited” in their book. You should have seen how many different places we visited and learned about! Each student also had a passport to keep track of all the places they visited.

Before spring break we started a fantasy unit, our class book is The Cricket in Times Square. While students are reading the class book, they are also reading individual fantasy books at home. At the beginning of the unit each student set a reading goal for themselves to reach by the end of the unit. I am proud of the fourth graders for setting high reading goals for themselves. We have also been reviewing for the IOWA Tests that will take place during the week of April 21-25.

3rd Social Studies

The third graders are in the midst of a month-long Pilgrim simulation game in which they work within a team to attempt to survive the rigors of the New World. The actual Pilgrims lost fifty-one of their original 102 settlers to starvation and disease. So far, the children’s teams have had a slightly higher survival rate, but check the list in the classroom, since many students and their loved ones are no longer with us. The class also enjoyed an informative and interesting presentation by Natalie El Gawahergui, Youssef’s mom, on Egypt and its 5000-year history. She also provided each lucky class member with a delicious homemade Egyptian dessert, craft, and toy.

4th Social Studies

Each fourth grader has chosen a famous person with an Ohio connection and is in the process of conducting a research project about this person. The children are using a variety of sources, including non-fiction books, an encyclopedia, and a website. They will display their research findings in a short paper with a bibliography and will follow up with a brief oral presentation after Spring Break.

3-4 Thinking Skills

See the **thank you note** signed by the students on last page.

6th Language Arts

We have been learning to listen to our own voice in our written compositions. We are trying to not only identify mistakes – punctuation, spelling, and grammar – but even more to listen for the flow of thought. It is surprising how often what we write and how we are thinking are two different things. As the students develop their ear, they also learn how to improve their own voice to make their compositions both thoughtful and colorful.

5-6 Math

Students in fifth and sixth grade are receiving a heavy dose of multi-step word problems last quarter. They are quickly discovering that it is one thing to be able to perform computations with decimals and fractions, but it is quite another to apply those skills to word problems. Students are also learning how to work well, that is, how to show their thought process in the manner in which they set up the word problems and how to derive solutions.

5-6 Music

In the 3rd quarter the fifth and sixth graders got into the “**Behind the scenes**” video, which is very fun and designed to enhance creative and critical thinking skills in children through exploration of visual and performing arts. Opening your eyes, you will find that rhythm is all around you. It is full of rhythmic patterns in our daily life, which you can feel and see and you will be stirred up to move.

Through learning “rhythm,” I gave students hands-on work. They created their own rhythm with pentatonic scale. At the end of the quarter, we will combine each student’s composition in different layers and different instruments to make a big ensemble.

Biography Project

5th and 6th graders have been doing biography research projects on Mozart and Bach. They watched videos, listened to music, took notes and read 2 related articles, filled out question sheet based on the articles and their notes. They had wonderful presentation and shared their ideas in class.

5th graders’ research on “Mozart and me”

I helped the students think about what they did at the age of 5 and think about the different and similar points about Mozart and themselves. I use the project to stimulate their imagination and to relate them to Mozart, which stirs up the desire in them to take Mozart as their personal example.

6th graders’ research on “Bach and me”

In the project I asked some interesting questions to draw their attention to Bach. For example, “If you could meet Bach today, what are three questions you would ask him?” The students’ typical impressions of Bach were that he’s a person of persistence and passion on learning and pursuing music. He’s a devoted person in that he pledged to write and play music in honor of God alone instead of his personal glory. He tried to express the meaning rather than “showing off” the ability of the instruments and voices.

5th Reading

The fifth graders are currently reading fantasy books in reading class. Our class book is Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt, and students are reading individual fantasy books as well. Babbitt is a very descriptive author so while we are reading Tuck Everlasting, students are required to write down words or phrases that appeal to one of their five senses. Students have also been using post-its to write down good and evil characters and situations that occur in the book. Near the end of the unit, students will be writing a book review for one of the fantasy books that they read during the course of the unit. We have also been reviewing for the IOWA Tests that will take place during the week of April 21-25.

5th Science

Congratulations to Alexander! His poster was chosen as the 5th grade first place Earth Day Poster by the Cuyahoga Solid Waste Division. Although there more than 600 entries from thirty-seven classrooms, Alexander’s poster is featured on the 2008-09 CSWD calendar.

A big thank you to all the parents who took time to help judge the fifth grade science fair projects: Mrs. Dennis, Mr. Lavisky, Dr. Qadeer, Dr. Oldenburgh, and Dr. Aamir.

Students studied the forces in the earth that work to change our planet outwardly and have moved to the universe beyond the solar system.

They are gearing up for a trip to Cuyahoga Environmental Education Center, May 6th through May 9th.

6th Science

A big thank you to the parents who took time out of their busy schedules to judge the science fair: Mrs. Dziak, Mrs. Dennis, Mr. Lavisky, Dr. Nair, and Dr. Sayed.

6th graders are studying animals – invertebrates and then vertebrates. They will continue their study of animals at Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center May 6th through May 9th.

7th Math

Having finished the units on factoring in our Algebra textbook, we are learning how to solve systems of equations and how to solve word problems that require two variables. These skills enable the students to attack a much broader range of word problems and usually saves them from the “Guess and test” method.

Our pre-algebra group is completing work with rate, ratio, proportion, and percentage. Hopefully this unit will help them determine good mortgage interest rates when they buy their first home!!!

8th Math

This would seem like a good time for eighth grade students to sit back and relax. After all, they already know where they are going to high school so it would be easy to take a break. But this group is eager to get in as much as they can in order to pass out of freshman mathematics courses and begin high school with upper level coursework. This is a wonderful attitude and I am quite proud of them.

7th Reading

Two authors of young adult literature provided enough excellent literature for a three week author study: thank you Katherine Paterson and Gary Paulson! The objective was to select from the options, analyze how a great storyteller constructs a plot, and learn to discuss plot structure in small groups. Following this, books on the theme of survival provided the impetus for further choice reading. This time the goal was to analyze the text for passages which would highlight the larger issues facing the character, to write this in our journals, and to receive feedback in a double-entry journal format. This worked well while this teacher was at home with a nasty virus. The communication back and forth by way of journals demanded strong writing/thinking skills and brought about some fun written communication. Poetry that has played a role in American history is a current class enjoyment. This class likes poetry of any sort, size and shape!

8th Reading

An overall objective for 3rd quarter was to link literature with explorations in poetry.

After reading *Romeo and Juliet* we watched the contemporary musical “West Side Story” to make comparisons, we wrote our own poetry and sonnets, and we did our own dramatic readings. Following the Junior Great Books discussion on the excerpt from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou (in which the poetry of the “black and unknown bards” of her heritage served to inspire the author to elevate her aspirations above the bondage of racism), we pursued our personal poetry study by an exploration of African-American poets. Next, the book *Night* by Elie Wiesel led to reflective discussion and poetry writing on the theme of loss. Currently, we are reading *Death Be Not Proud*, a memoir by an American writer whose son struggled with a brain tumor throughout high school. In spite of the suffering, he continued to achieve at the highest prep school standard through his courage, sense of humor and care for others. We will study the poetry of John Donne and other references as we seek the source of his triumph over death. Mrs. D. is pretty proud of her own students who manage to think all these high thoughts while dashing off History Day projects and running to competitions of all sorts!

7th Science

Congratulations to Serena! Her poster was chosen as the 7th grade “runner-up” Earth Day Poster by the Cuyahoga Solid Waste Division. Hers was one of more than 600 entries and will appear on the CSWD 2008-09 Calendar.

Jacob B, Thomas, Nathan, Isaac, Grant and Shawki won the in-class marble run contest. Their structure allowed a marble to roll for almost 30 seconds before it reached the floor.

8th Science

Congratulations to Ani for working on an extra science project and winning a third place at the North East Ohio Science and Engineering Fair. He was also nominated for a Discovery’s Young Science Award!

Students are finishing the year with human biology.

Power of the Pen

Birchwood students competed against more than forty schools at the regional Power of the Pen on March 1. The regional qualifiers included the following:

Seventh Grade: **Jacob B, Jacob D, Sam J, Ilona K, Thomas W**

Eighth Grade: **Sahar A, George B, Shulamite C, Anirudh D, Stuart F, Sarah L**

Congratulations to the eighth grade team who placed second in the competition. Overall, many of the students received at least one piece of writing which ranked first in their round. We hope many will continue on to the state level.

Birchwood School

A big thank you to **Mrs. Kufahl** who devoted her Saturday to help judge in the competition.

Future Problem Solving Competition

Results were overwhelmingly positive on this front. Three intermediate teams (7/8) and four junior teams (5/6th) are State Bowl qualifiers. Everyone will be going on to compete on April 4 and 5 at Solon High School. After tackling “Neurotechnology,” the FPSers will now be grappling with “Debts of Developing Countries.”

Intermediate Teams:

**George B, Ani D, Forde R, and Serena C.
Shulamite C, Jacob D, Sam J, and Lina W.
Jacob B, Issac Y, and Thomas W.**

Junior Teams:

**Carl Cao, Alexander I, Trevor L, and Hassan S.
Alex P, Sue R, Sunny R, and Hannah Y.
Zaem M, Miguel P, Miranda M, and Nardine T.
Deepak K, Munim, Clare P, and Nina R.**

Coaches’ picks and also attending the State Bowl are:

Lulu S, Jocelyn L, Ben W, Nathan C.

FPS Speaker

The 5th – 8th graders were privileged to have Mr. Kent Hageman, a vice president at Morgan Stanley, come to speak with them on the topic of “Debt in Developing Countries”. Students were led to an understanding of complex finance concepts by the manner in which Mr. Hageman broke them down into handouts, charts, examples, and thoughtful proposals to help solve the issue. His talk served as an important model of how to approach problems as a critical thinker. A big thank you to Alex and Michael’s dad! *Mr. Hageman commented that he was impressed with the attentiveness and intelligence of the Birchwood audience. Those are comments we love to hear*

Scholastic Writing Awards 2008

Ten of our seventh and eighth graders have been recognized with a Gold Key through the Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards, a prestigious national writing competition. As the Senior Manager of this national program writes:

Only the most accomplished works submitted to the regional programs of The Awards earn Gold Keys; out of 5000 submissions in the writing category of the Region-at-Large this year, 1000 works were given this distinction. ...All Gold Key works will be considered for the national level recognition.

Recognized for their creative achievement are these students:

Sahar A - Bird, Short Short Story Category
George B – Hang On, Sloopy, Humor Category
Nathan C – The Easy Way Out of It, Short Story Category
Jacques D – Beyond Haven, Science Fiction Category

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Oliver D – The Evil of Greed, Short Story Category
Sam J – They Called Them Thieves, Science Fiction Category
Jocelyn L – Dragons, Hawks, and Moonstones, Science

Fiction Category

Sarah L – Shot to the Heart, Short Story
Thomas W – Wings, Science Fiction Category
Isaac Y – The Ninth Section, Science Fiction Category

History Day

The 7th and 8th grade students had another stellar showing at the district level of the National History Day competition held at Case Western Reserve University on March 15. This year had the highest number of participants ever along with strong competition in every category. Thirteen Birchwood students qualified to continue on to the state competition in Columbus on April 26. Placing first in the Historical Paper category was Oliver D. His paper was titled *The Berlin Airlift: Showdown to Save a City*. This year a new category was added to the competition. For the first time, students could construct a website to convey their historical information. Jacques D. placed second with his website on George Crile, one of the founders of the Cleveland Clinic. In the group performance category, all three of our performances placed and will compete at states. In first place were Sahar A. and Shulamite C. with their performance on the Red Scares of the 20th century. Caitlin S. and Lina W. placed second with their performance on the All American Girls Professional Baseball League. Placing third were Riza M. and Ilona K. with their performance on the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In the individual documentary category, Ani D. placed first with his presentation on Japanese Internment in WWII. In the group documentary category, Serena C. and Jocelyn L. received an honorable mention and will compete at states. Their presentation focused on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. In the individual exhibit category, Sarah L. placed first with her exhibit on the bombing of Coventry, England in WWII. Lulu S. received an honorable mention for her exhibit on the Boston Tea Party. A number of students received special cash prizes from the Settlers Association of the Western Reserve for their presentations on a local history topic. Chris H. and Stuart F. received an award for their website on the Hough Riots in Cleveland in 1966. Forde R. received an award for his individual documentary on Vietnam War protests, particularly the events at Kent State. Congratulations to all these students and good luck at the state competition in April!! All of these History Day entries will be on display at the Open House in May. We hope you have a chance to see the fine work being done by our 7th and 8th grade students.

National Geographic Geography Bee

Congratulations to George B. for qualifying for the state level of the National Geography Bee! George is only the second student in Birchwood's history to qualify for the state level. After winning the school bee, George took a very hard written qualifying exam and was one of 100 finalists in the state to move on to the next level. Congratulations on your accomplishment!

Thank You from 3rd and 4th graders:

BIRCHWOOD FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

**CONNIE MILLER
HISTORY TEACHER
OF THE YEAR**

**AWARDED BY
NATIONAL HISTORY DAY OF THE
NORTHEASTERN OHIO DISTRICT AT
CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY**

***FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE
TEACHING OF HISTORY***