



Birchwood Clipboard

The Lion's Roar

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Special Program Highlights

Service at Birchwood Our 7th grade class sponsored a school-wide service project for Haiti. The best window into their efforts is a reprint of their thank-you note to the school community:

Thank you very much for supporting our Haiti fundraising effort. You were very generous. We raised a total of \$529.30 from the one bake sale and donations. We especially thank the seventh grade families for contributing to the bake sale. We couldn't have done it without the treats you made. We are very grateful to you. All the money will be donated to a local organization who helps the earthquake victims. Thank you again for all your help. Sincerely, The Seventh Grade Class

The 7th and 8th graders wrote poems on the theme: *Looking into the eyes of a Haitian child*. They are displayed in the main entry hallway.

Cricket Magazine Story Contest Winners Exciting results are in from the October contest! Mrs. Kufahl's class won 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places plus 2 Honorable Mentions. See the full story inside this issue. Note: One of the parents called the editorial board to confirm something and when they heard which school he was from they exclaimed: What do they do at that school to teach writing? Their stories are so consistently creative!

Birchwood students make it to regional in POP competition and gain national recognition for math achievement! See the inside stories for the news about top awards earned in these contests.

Upcoming Science Night Thursday, February 25 7:00–8:00 in the evening

This night provides an opportunity to see samples of what is happening in **science classes throughout all of the grades**. Earlier in the day is **the 5th and 6th grade Science Fair**. This is the culmination of several months work on an original project using all aspects of the experimental design process. They will be on display in the evening for all to view. See the full story in this issue. Ms. Brown cites research from the National Science Foundation and a recent teacher workshop she attended which support the very thing Birchwood's Science Fair instituted 15 years ago.

Anyone with a scientific background...Would you consider signing up to come on Thursday morning, February 25 between 8:30 and 9:00 AM to provide feedback on the 5th/6th science fair projects? See inside story for details.

National Geography Bee Congratulations to Trevor L as the 2010 school-level winner of the National Geographic Geography Bee! This is Trevor's second year as the school winner. He is now waiting to hear the results of a very hard qualifying exam for the state-level competition that will be held in April. Best wishes in his quest to become Birchwood's first, two-year qualifier for the state competition.



Community Bulletin Board A big thanks to Mrs. Balic and daughter Mia for the design and contribution of the new hallway bulletin board: *News from our Community: A Good Tree Produces a Good Fruit*. Submissions about recitals, sports, and other outside school events are welcome!

Class News

Art/Science

Art and science have teamed up to create an Earth Day poster exhibit on Artsonia. Remember to register your child on Artsonia (www.artsonia.com) to be eligible for contests, awards and comments or just to view the gallery. Many of the art classes are working on projects that relate to Chinese New Year, dragons, masks and blow painting.

Gym

Throughout the second quarter the students had the opportunity to participate in the Push-Up Challenge. The third grade class had the highest participation, followed by the sixth grade and seventh grade. The third grade class receives a free Gym period to be filled with the activity of their choice. The top six students in the Push-Up Challenge were: 1) Bradley S, 2) Sachi G, 3) Clare P, 4) Maya D, and 5) Sue R. The students that made Honorable Mention were: Hadi B, Daniel X, Channin M, and Farah S. Great Job!

Kindergarten

During the month of November we received the visit of Mr. LeBlanc, who shared some of his experiences during the Vietnam War, and told us about the importance of celebrating Veterans' Day. The students were amazed hearing the stories and looking at the military garments, boots for the jungle, and medals of Honor. They also acted out how to be a paratrooper. What an experience!

We also received Mrs. Moner, who came two different times. The first was to teach the children the importance of washing hands to avoid germs. She brought puppets to tell the story, and the children enjoyed every minute of it. During her second visit, Mrs. Moner showed how the Pilgrims made butter. Then, one by one, we shook the bottle of cream until the butter was ready. She showed us how to set a table for Thanksgiving, and the students ate delicious bread and butter, all while practicing rules of etiquette.

After working on Native Americans, we visited the Natural History Museum. The students learned about housing, clothing, and food of the First Americans, and also about some of the games they played. At school they made clay pots decorated with indigenous designs.

Mrs. Barb Suttan, a professional storyteller, donated her time and told a story called Sody Salaratus. She asked the students to participate in the story and made the time more fun.

K-Math

At the math center, students started with the Wood Program and continue with the Singapore Program. They are able to add and subtract three digits and to solve story problems mentally.

K-Reading/Writing/Language

In the morning we have Instructional Reading time where students read and work on book reports, looking for action words or adjectives. We have three levels, and they are motivated to move forward and go to the next level. At the writing center, students write sentences, poems, and songs. They work on using the same type of letter, always aware of punctuation. The students write daily through varied activities. They organize their thoughts to create a story or write about a favorite topic. Because they choose the topic, students are motivated to create and complete works to read to classmates.

1-2 Computer

We have been working on stories in Microworlds Jr. The students have been creating pages with backgrounds and then adding in characters and objects that move around the screen. They further embellish with words and music that help tell their story. We also review math facts using online math games.

1-2 Language Arts

Recently the children began one of our favorite writing projects, the WVIZ Young Authors and Illustrators contest. This contest allows the children to write and illustrate their own stories. We do all of the work in class, from the initial brainstorming of ideas to the final editing, illustrating, and "publishing." We anticipate that, for the next two months, the first and second grade classes will be buzzing with activity.

1st Math

Wow! The first graders are making great strides in math. It seems that every week there is something new to learn. We started 2010 by exploring probability, and how the outcome of events can be predicted if we know the factors that influence that outcome. For example, we used a multi-colored spinner to predict which colors the spinner would land on, and then recorded the results of each spin. Similarly, we put several colored tiles into a bag and predicted which colors would be pulled. When the number of tiles changed



from color to color, it was easier to predict which would appear. But when there was the same number of tiles for each color, the outcome was more unpredictable.

Recently, the first graders began a unit on geometry. After sorting plane shapes, such as squares, rectangles, and trapezoids, to name a few, we moved on to solid shapes, like cubes, triangular prisms, and cones. We realized just how common these shapes are in the world around us, even right in our classroom. Currently, we are discovering the meaning of new terms such as “congruent” and “symmetrical.”

2nd Math

In second grade math, the “blue group” spent a number of weeks learning and practicing their multiplication tables. Many have become quite proficient and I am proud of their success. While this kind of learning is not always fun, it will pay off as the children get older and face the challenges of advanced computation and problem solving. The children have now moved on to learning customary units of measurement.

The “purple group” spent a lot of time solving challenging word problems of different types. By continually practicing, they are learning to identify strategies that will help them in the future. This group has now moved onto basic geometry, and the children are finding out that, while the concepts may be simple, the difficulty can be keeping all of the vocabulary in order.

1-2 Reading

The first and second graders ended 2009 by participating in two special reading events. Barb Sutton, a professional storyteller and friend of Mrs. Rodriguez, visited Birchwood School and performed *Sody Sallyratus* for kindergarten through second grade. The children enjoyed this humorous tale presented in an interactive style.

The second event was *Read for 2010*. On the last day of school before winter break we rang in the New Year early by reading for 2,010 seconds (33 minutes and 30 seconds). The children enjoyed many kinds of reading during that time including browsing through picture books, buddy reading with friends, reading chapters books, and following along with books on tape. Curling up with our favorite pillows and stuffed animals made the time more comfortable.

1-2 Science

Our invertebrate studies are complete, though we’ll continue to come across various “spineless” creatures as we explore

habitats. The first and second graders will learn about deserts, water habitats, grasslands, forest habitats, and prehistoric lands. We’ll wrap up our habitat studies in February by creating habitat dioramas. Come check them out at science night!

Each class enjoyed a winter walk in the park near the wetlands in December. Most of the water in the wetlands was frozen at the time, and the second graders observed that throwing rocks onto the thin ice creates a really neat, reverberating sound. (If you’re interested, this website can give you an idea of what we heard, though the sound is amplified through the use of underwater microphones: <http://boingboing.net/2010/01/17/cracking-ice-sheets.html>).

Though it was too cold to walk in the park in January, we were able to visit PETCO. Students had the opportunity to see some really neat animals up close (like a tarantula), and got to pet some animals, too. The majority seemed to like the ferrets and chinchilla most of all. Plus, everyone left with a bag of goodies at the end. What a great day!

1-2 Social Studies

The first and second graders finished their unit on Native Americans with a potlatch, a feast traditionally hosted by Native Americans from the northwest. Parents provided traditional Native American food and students had a chance to use the pouches and burden baskets that they made.

1st Spanish

The first graders worked objects in the classroom, memorized vocabulary, and completed exercises in the Spanish book. They used flashcards and played games about the new vocabulary. They also learned a song and played the game called “En la Pulga de San Jose”. This song is about the names of instruments.

2nd Spanish

The second graders worked with big numbers. They completed exercises in the activity book and they learned a song called “Salen flores cultivar” to practice the names of body parts.

3-4 Computer

We have been making PowerPoint presentations about our favorite things. The students put in pictures and animations to create a great presentation to share with the class. We are learning to search and use pictures from ClipArt and the Internet to enhance the presentations and make them shine. Then we put in sounds and animations for each slide to add in character to our presentations.



3-5 Language Arts

Way back in October, the third, fourth, and fifth graders wrote stories for a *Cricket* magazine contest. It was not until Winter Break, when teacher and students alike had long since resigned themselves to having no winners, that the prize notifications began to arrive. Students were asked to write about someone who had a special talent or power. Third grader Bianca H wowed the judges with her tale of befriending a girl who had been born without feet. Her sister, Alexis, in the fifth grade won second place for her story about an incompetent chef who has one redeeming quality, making good brownies. Vinny K, also in the fifth grade, earned third prize honors for his tale about a fire walker who used his talent to rescue others during a volcano. Two other fifth graders, Ammar M and Marco B, wrote stories of a magical doctor and a talented tap dancer. Congratulations to all these gifted young writers! Look for their stories and names in the February issue of *Cricket*.

3rd Math

The third graders recently finished working on advanced multiplication and division skills. While this was certainly challenging, the children definitely rose to the challenge, and I am very proud of each one of them.

We have now begun a unit on geometry, which has been a nice break from the (frequent) mental anguish of advanced “number crunching.” We started out by simply identifying and distinguishing lines, line segments, rays, and planes. While the concepts are quite simple, the vocabulary can be confusing. We have now moved on to measuring angles and labeling them as acute, obtuse, straight, or right.

Special congratulations go to Avi B and Bianca H who earned a bronze medal in the first Continental Math League contest that the third graders have taken. This is a great achievement!

4th Math

Like the third graders, the “green group” of fourth grade students spent a great amount of time the past few weeks advancing their computational skills in multiplication and division. Then they moved on to some concepts that relate to fractions, learning to find GCF (greatest common factor), LCM (least common multiple), prime and composite numbers, and exponents. These concepts lay the foundation for the next unit, which is advanced computation with fractions.

The “magenta group” spent time reviewing fractions and is now beginning a unit on basic algebra. They are learning how to “talk the talk” of algebra, with phrases such as, “the product of m and 15 divided by the sum of n and 50.” They

are learning how to evaluate expressions using the order of operations for expressions that include fractions, exponents and square roots. This is a challenge, but they are rising to the occasion.

Congratulations to Yamenah A, Grace C, and William L who earned medals in round two of the Continental Math League competition. Yamenah also earned silver in round three.

3-4 Reading

Both the third and fourth graders love to read and discuss Junior Great Book stories. Junior Great Books is a volume of excellent short stories, which after reading give way to a class discussion. After students read the story twice, once in class and once at home, we have a very lively discussion about that story. Students have to make sure that their conclusions are supported with evidence from the story. Sometimes our discussions can get quite exciting with half of the class disagreeing with the other half. JGB is an excellent way for students to look back in a story to find details, and to support their answers with evidence from the story.

The fourth graders have been working hard in order to complete their very own Lincoln book. As students read a biography about Lincoln, they are required to write down important facts in paragraph form. They are also in the process of creating their own illustrations to include in their book. You will be amazed with how many interesting facts they have already learned about President Lincoln. The fourth graders couldn't believe that Lincoln did not even attend school for an entire year as a child! Most of what he learned, he learned by studying on his own. As students are working on their Lincoln book in class, they are reading biographies about other famous people from the past at home. Students set a reading goal for themselves as well as a goal for extra activities that correlate with the books they read. I have been impressed with the high goals that the fourth graders have set for themselves!

The third graders have also been reading all sorts of different biographies about famous people from the past, such as: Helen Keller, Noah Webster, and Benjamin Franklin. I am amazed with how excited the third graders are to read biographies. Each day in class we take a few minutes to share a few interesting facts about the famous people we are reading about. At the end of the unit students will pick one person from history that they read about, and complete a biography project. The project will include a summary of the person's accomplishments, an acrostic poem that describes the person, and also a Venn Diagram – comparing and contrasting the famous person with themselves.



3-4 Science

The third and fourth graders wrapped up their invertebrate studies before winter break. They're able to name numerous examples from each phylum (though we grouped the three worm phyla together for our purposes). After that, the students learned about animal adaptations and concepts such as natural selection. I was very pleased with the mid-term exam grades, especially from the third graders who took mid-terms for the very first time.

During December, each class got a glimpse of the wetlands during their science outing (though they were mostly frozen). The timing for the fourth grade outing wasn't the best; we walked through plenty of drizzle and barely missed a downpour! The students learned that even though it's cold, there's still plenty of animal activity outside. We saw lively squirrels and heard various birds.

There were no outings to the park in January due to the weather. However, the third and fourth graders had the opportunity to visit PETCO. Students learned a lot about caring for a variety of pets, including their habitat and dietary needs. The coolest part was getting to hold and/or pet so many different animals: a boa constrictor, a ferret, a chinchilla (which might be the softest thing I've ever touched!), hermit crabs, a hamster, a turtle, and even a starfish! Hope to see you at science night!

3rd Social Studies

The students have continued to "WOW" me with their abilities. The research papers that I received were wonderful! From the feedback I received, the students seemed to enjoy learning about their chosen city and the overall experience immensely. They also enjoyed having the "Traveling Trunk" come from the WRHS. As you probably noticed, we have finished up the Cleveland unit and started back in the Communities textbook. The students loved having the break from the regular book and will get to do it again this month. Coming up in February the students will be enjoying the "Pilgrim Simulation", a program we do every year with the 3rd graders. The purpose of this simulation is to give students a closer look at the struggle that was part of everyday life in Plymouth Colony. Hopefully, by the end of the simulation, they will have a deeper and richer understanding of what the Pilgrims went through in the "New World".

4th Social Studies

The past month or so we have been studying the history of Ohio, moving away from the regional study of the country to take a closer look at the state we live in. Students enjoyed making salt and flour maps of Ohio to go along with the

unit. They also enjoyed eating "Johnny Cakes" while learning about John Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed. We will continue to work from the Ohio book throughout the 3rd quarter, enjoying more hands-on activities as we go. Ask your son or daughter to sing the "50 nifty United States" song to you to see how many states they can say in alphabetical order. We'll keep working on it here and there as the year continues.

Congratulations to Amir and Yamenah, our 4th grade representatives, for lasting as long as they did against the 5th through 8th grade representatives in the Geography Bee.

3rd Spanish

The students learned vocabulary about clothing, completed crossword puzzles, fill-in-the-blanks, and spoke sentences. Another subject was numbers. The students were very interested in learning big numbers and adding numbers by tens.

4th Spanish

The students learned numbers up to one thousand. They counted objects, resolved problems, and completed activities from the book. In addition, they also worked with the calendar and seasons. They talked about their birthdays and the festive events of each month. The students also shared their preference of the seasons, and completed activities in the Spanish book.

5-6 Computer

Although it is tedious, we have been working hard on typing. Good keyboarding skills are essential to writing papers and doing research. Students in 6th grade who have passed the typing test for their level are creating private website on a topic of their choice using Google Sites. Producing a good website requires planning and organization while learning to embed pictures, videos, and links onto the pages. Google sites is a great tool to learn to develop websites and is very similar to Weby, the program that the students will be developing their History Day websites through.

6-8 Language Arts

It may look as if your child is reprinting the same piece of writing repeatedly the last quarter. In reality, it should have been the rewriting and revising of a draft over a period of many weeks, hopefully with meaningful improvements. This is the writing process applied. If you compare the first draft and the final copy, you should see what it all entailed.

Each grade entered two writing competitions and thus had the opportunity to rehearse this process in its entirety twice.



Sixth graders entered the Letters about Literature contest where they had to analyze how a text gave them a new perspective in life. Together with the seventh graders, the sixth also wrote about their vision of the future for Weekly Reader. Beyond images from Wall-E, many envisioned a totally creative and futuristic way of life in the year 2010.

The Scholastic Writing Award is a national contest both seventh and eighth graders enter. After reading and analyzing published works of short stories, students choose a genre to write. Hence the writing process begins with ideas, prewriting, drafts, and revisions. Many of the eighth graders have also chosen to submit a second piece in the memoir category. In addition, eighth graders participated in the Stop the Hate Youth Speak Out essay contest, a local competition that aimed to “build bridges of appreciation, tolerance, and understanding between people of all religions, races, and cultures.” All of them were able to write about values and experiences that reflected citizenship and respect for humanity in their own lives. Results come out in the spring, but even if they don’t place, the life lessons many articulated are well worth the effort.

5-8 Math

Continental Math League Contest #2

Gold award

Munim M, Sunny R, Sue R, Hassan S, Alexander I, Marla B, Amir F, Brad S, Nicholas J, Sam Z, Kavya R, Christine B, Nate C, Cameron S, Hajira A, Shweeja D, Michael T, Maya R, Prathna K, Haley Y, Ammar M, Prithvi P

Silver award

Shawki A, Nathan C, Ben W, Zaeem M, Grant F, Trevor L, Vikas N, Hannah Y, Sean F, Jorgen K, Clive C, Kareem T, Darius Z, Marco B

Bronze Award

Deepak, K, Lulu S, Clare P, Shan S, Peter A, Naomi W, Dalya A, Sachi G, Sarah D, Alex P, A.J. S, Anthony C, Vinayak K, Pheby L

Continental Math League Contest #3

Gold Award

Darius Z, Vinayak K, Michael T, Maya F, Ammar M, Peter A, Naomi W, Clive C, Kavya R, Christine B, Nate C, Cameron S, Hajira A, Kareem T, Dhweeja D, Sunny R, Sue R, Hassan S, Marla B, Prithvi P, Nathan C, Munim M, Grant F

Silver Award

Anthony C, Dalya A, Sachi G, Sam Z, Alexander I, Trevor L, Sarah D, Abhijeet S, Shawki A, Deepak K, Lulu S,

Bronze Award

Pheby L, Haley Y, Katelyn V, Shan S, Jorgen K, Vikas N, Amir F, Hannah Y, Alex P, Sean F, Prathna K, Carl C, Ben W

Math Olympiads Contest #2

Gold award

Munim M, Nathan C, Deepak K, Zaeem M, Lulu S, Sunny R, Sue R, Hassan S, Alexander I, Marla B, Trevor L, Prithvi P, Brad S, Christine B, Nate C, Clive C, Dhweeja, Grant F

Silver Award

Shawki A, Alex P, Jorgen K, Hajira A, Sachi G, Anna H, Ammar M

Bronze award

Clare P, Vikas N, Sam Z, Hannah Y, Sarah D, Katelyn V, Vinayak, K, Michael T, Maya F, Darius Z, Prathna K, Haley Y, Ben W

Math Olympiads Contest #3

Gold Award

Clive C, Nate C, Kavya R, Dhweeja D, Sachi G, Hajira A, Alexander I, Trevor L, Vinny K, Maya F, Ammar M, Nathan C, Munim M, Zaeem M, Grant F, Sachi G

Silver Award

Darius Z, Pheby L, Deepak, K, Ben W, Carl C, Lulu S, Christine B, Cameron S, Kareem T, Hassan S, Brad S, Prathna K

Bronze Award

Marco B, Katelyn V, Jorgen K, Naomi W, Dalya A, Shawki A, Sunny R, Sue R, Marla B, Prithvi P, Vikas N, Sarah D, Hannah Y, Sean F, Ben W

AMC 8 HONORS

DISTINCTION

Top 1% Nationally: Munim M, Shawki A, Trevor L

HONOR ROLL

Top 5% Nationally: Zaeem M, Deepak K, Nathan C, Kavya R, Dhweeja D, Nate C

5-6 Reading

As many of you may have heard, it is with regret that I resigned from Birchwood School on Jan 15, 2010. This was not an easy decision to make; unfortunately, my family obligations and responsibilities required that I leave my position. The past four years have been very rewarding. I have learned so very much from my students and colleagues, well beyond teaching tips and book recommendations. It has been my privilege to get to know many of you, and I thank you for sharing your children and yourselves with me. I have enjoyed my time at Birchwood,



and I appreciate having had the opportunity to work with so many wonderful students, teachers, and parents. I will miss you. Thank you all for the support and encouragement you have shown me. I wish you all the very best.

Thank you, Jennifer Jackson

5th Science

Although the major focus is the scientific method and the original inquiry students completed "Earth's land forms" in the textbook and did some research on a scientist to create a mini poster for the "scientist wall".

6th Science

The major focus was science fair. They also completed a study of the different biomes and how the earth recycles its materials. They were each given a scientist to research and contributed their poster to the "scientist wall".

5th Spanish

Students learned question words and practiced asking questions in the class. In addition, they completed activities in the text book. They also worked with the verb gustar (I like), and they were able to express orally their likes and dislikes. The students worked with verbs of the first conjugation and learned how to ask questions.

6th Spanish

Students learned adjectives and conversed about their family and friends using the adjectives. After that, they worked with the verb gustar (I like) and used it in sentences related to food and activities. I am very pleased with the 6th graders because they have finished the PowerPoint presentation about Cuba for the Spanish program in April.

7-8 Computer

We have started a new challenge for the 7th and 8th grade classes. Students are working in groups to create a webpage for the Birchwood School Store. They are learning to work together on organizing the site, embedding pictures of the products for sale, and creating a functional order form. The sites are being developed through Google Sites and Google Docs. This has been a great learning experience and a good way to learn from each other. The completed websites will be judged by the class as well as by professionals in the web development field. The winning website will be posted as the official website for the school store.

7th Reading

We have begun *Junior Great Books Series 7* with the first story, "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut. This science fiction story highlights the issue of equality; and, our They

discussion hot spots centered around two big thoughts: 1) *If a government eliminates inequalities by forcing everyone to be equal, is that justice?* 2) *Did Harrison rid himself of the handicaps and declare himself emperor on television because he was ambitious or because he wanted to remind people of their own special abilities and usher in a new government?*

Our current class book is *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes. Set in Boston during the American Revolution, the book focuses on how the protagonist grows and changes due to the influences of people and the historical events taking place around him. This entails close analysis while reading. At key stopping points, students pause to discuss and write paragraphs. The culminating activity will be to link the paragraphs together into a five-paragraph essay. In the meantime, students are also reading books of choice from this era, reading speeches and essays from the times, and Mrs. D. is telling stories about frontier Ohio during this time period.

8th Reading

Culminating the unit on Norse mythology each student featured one mythological figure in a "meeting of the gods". Through the use of paper plate representations and voice dramatizations, students recreated portions of the myths and spontaneously interacted with one another at the summit. Did you know that the names of the days of the week originated from Norse mythology? Currently, this group of students is reading books by the award-winning author Madeleine L'Engle. Her novels invite readers to dig deeply and explore philosophical truths.

The other group has been tackling *Julius Ceasar* by William Shakespeare with a focus on the use of motifs of portents and letters. They are paying attention to the more famous orations with a view to each presenting one on the computer using "animoto" software.

7th Science

The lab was filled with rolling balls and falling meter sticks as students studied force and motion. They calculated their walking, skipping, and shuffling speed down the hallways and then graphed them. A couple of weeks ago they studied the plasticity of cornstarch and water and related that to how the earth's plates ride on the asthenosphere. They also contributed a scientist to the wall of scientists.

8th Science

Students tested osmosis by soaking raw eggs in Sprite, Coke, Diet Pepsi, Diet Sprite, water, salt water, and grape juice.



weighed the eggs before and after soaking for a day. The more sugar the solution contained, the more the eggs weighed. They also have a microbial column that has been growing microbes for 6-8 weeks. Two of the columns are kept in the dark and two are kept in the light. They've noted the different colors of the organisms in each. Book wise, they completed the chapter "Change over Time." They each picked a genetic disease, researched it, and prepared a poster to present the information.

7th Spanish

The seventh graders learned about Mexico City. They took a virtual tour to Teotihuacan, the ancient capital of the Aztec Empire about 500 A.D. They saw the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon, the Road of the Dead, and the Citadel. They also practiced using the verb "ir" (to go), "comprar" (to buy), "visitar" (to visit), and hacer (to do or to make) in the chapter about Celebrations in Mexico.

8th Spanish

Students learned about schools in Spain, activities in school and after school, places, school equipment, and excuses. In addition, they learned the past-tense and reflexive-tense of the verbs ending with AR, ER, and IR verbs. The students practiced translation and worked on their comprehension by reading stories about explorers and the Cubans in Miami.

5th and 6th Grade Science Fair

Did you know that the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and our State Science Standards are now stressing something that Birchwood School has been doing for years! The stress is on inquiry, especially original inquiry. This is something that all 5th and 6th grade students become "experts" in as they prepare for the science fair. Their projects, also, allow the students that need an extra challenge to dive into a topic that they own and take it as far as they can. Fifth graders learn the process and in the sixth grade they perfect the process.

Monday I was at a coaches meeting for Science Olympiads. Each teacher there was worried about how to teach their kids how to study for an event called "Experimental Design" in which students are given a question and materials to test the question. This is one event I was not even going to have the students study or learn because they are ahead of the game, in fact they are experts!

At this point in the science fair process students should have turned in an edited Review of the Literature and should be almost through with their testing so that they can compile

their data, make graphs, and write their conclusions and then abstracts. They will complete their "papers" and board these next few weeks.

Parents (aunts and uncles), there are so many of you with a scientific background, would you consider signing up to come on Thursday morning, February 25th between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. to "judge" something? YOU DON'T HAVE TO JUDGE ANYTHING. Just come, give them some encouragement and feedback on their process. You may be nurturing a future Nobel Peace Prize winner! Please e-mail Linda Brown at lbrown831@juno.com if you can come.

National Geography Bee

Congratulations to Trevor L as the 2010 school-level winner of the National Geographic Geography Bee! This is Trevor's second year as the school winner. He is now waiting to hear the results of a very hard qualifying exam for the state-level competition that will be held in April. Best wishes in his quest to become Birchwood's first, two-year qualifier for the state competition.

History Day

The 7th and 8th graders, along with four 6th graders, have been hard at work on their various History Day projects. This year, nine students are working on creating a website for their project, with a diverse range of topics. This is the third year that National History Day (NHD) has included this entry category. NHD has partnered this year with Weebly to make their website creation and editing tools available to students. Our students' projects cover topics as diverse as the Titanic, Henry Ford and the Model T, the Northwest Ordinance, the Bill of Rights, Paul Brown and integration in football, Charles Hall and the aluminum process, Alan Freed (Cleveland's own innovative deejay), George Eastman and the Kodak camera, and Alexander Graham Bell.

Power of the Pen

District competition for Power of the Pen was held on January 9, 2010 at St. Vincent – St. Mary in Akron. Representing the seventh grade class were Marla B, Sarah D, Alexander I, Trevor L, Hassan S, Hannah Y, and Prithvi P. The eighth grade representatives included Nathan C, Miranda M, Mohammed M, Lulu S, Nardine T, Benjamin W, and Grant F.

We competed against 16 other schools with a hundred contestants in each grade level. At the award ceremony Lulu was recognized for placing thirteenth place, while Trevor



received a medallion for placing twelfth. In addition Trevor also won a Best of Round award for one of the prompts. This competition is a unique event of on-the-spot creative writing. Students are pegged against five other contestants from different schools of the same grade level as they write impromptu to a narrative prompt. Given forty minutes, each contestant has to complete this three times – grueling, but rewarding at the same time.

Although all our students placed in the superior and honor range, only a percentage continues on to regional. Congratulations to the following students who will be competing in Kent on February 20:

7th Graders – Marla B, Trevor L, Hassan S, Hannah Y

8th Graders – Miranda M, Lulu S, Ben W

We greatly appreciate the magnanimous support of the parents who drove us, cheered us on, and fed us lunch: Nancy Isherwood, Jill Levin, Nermine Taleb Elsady, Rozina Sayed. We also thank Michelle Debelak who helped us judge the writing.

5th-8th Grade Earth Day Posters

The fifth through eighth grade students submitted posters for Earth Day. The focus this year was composting, i.e., reduce, reuse, and recycle yard waste and food scraps. Students were able to complete their posters in time for them to be scanned and they will appear on www.Artsonia.com as long as they had parental permission. Take a look to see!

COMPETENCY AND MOTIVATION Part IV Competency and Growth Mindset

Last month we explained that parents can have a great deal of input concerning their children’s emerging competency and motivation. They can guide their children to address small and great challenges, and then step-by-step walk them through the stages of effort that lead to success. But more importantly, not only should parents help their children establish early competencies, they should also help fashion a *mindset* that will propel children into a lifelong pathway that is motivated toward achievement, a life whose premise is to grow, blossom, and reinvent itself year after year, decade after decade. Carol Dweck, world-renowned Stanford University psychologist and author of *Mindset* –

the New Psychology of Success, calls this disposition toward life a “growth mindset.”

To understand the meaning of “growth mindset” it helps to understand its converse, a “fixed mindset.” With a fixed mindset, children (and often parents) believe that ability and talent are fixed: either a child is endowed with specific skills and talents or he is not. In this mindset, a child, after only a few experiences, makes assumptions about his innate abilities. For example, because he does not understand how to do a particular math problem, or how to write a clear paragraph, or hit a baseball, the child concludes that he “is just not good” in this area. Based upon this outlook, it becomes a child’s habit to make quick judgments about his abilities, and these premature judgments determine whether he will stretch forward toward greater competencies or use a contrived belief about “inability” as an excuse to give up.

Usually it is not in the child’s mindset (unless an adult intervenes) to reason, “It doesn’t matter whether I am presently good at mathematics or writing or baseball, because if I am not “good at it” I will study, practice more, and work harder. Eventually I will get it and I will do it well.” A fixed mindset, however, does not have strategies to face setbacks or failures. Instead the fixed mindset exercises coping mechanisms. The child will find someone or something to blame for his failure, “I am just not smart in math. This material is too hard. My math teachers are not good.” Furthermore, the fixed mindset lets the child shirk his responsibility to learn and consequently limits any achievement. Having a fixed mindset makes effort disagreeable and leaves the child without any strategies to improve and grow.

The growth mindset, on the other hand, looks at ability and talent as having expanding potential. It recognizes what research has confirmed: the brain is like a muscle and if exercised properly its capacity and functionality can grow. The growth mindset doesn’t care whether the child’s early experience at any given activity is successful or not because it knows that talent grows by effort. Through practice, exercise, self-discipline and perseverance, the child will become competent. With a growth mindset, the child develops strategies for facing challenges, dealing with setbacks and failures, finding new and creative pathways to success. The growth mindset enables. It empowers. In the course of a lifetime, those with a growth mindset are ever-expanding their skills and talents because facing challenges and solving problems has become a way of life. Those with a growth mindset are continually making their own life and the lives of those around them rich and full.

Next month we will examine the attributes of a fixed mindset and explore how to cultivate these traits in our children.